

Senate Growth and Development Committee 2017-2018  
Meeting Minutes 10.27.2107  
10:00-11:00 am  
Senate Conference Room, Hall Building

Present: Janet Barnes-Farrell, Tracie Borden, Jon Clark, Joerg Graf, Michelle Judge, Louise Lewis, Carolyn Lin, Min Lin, Carl Rivers (filling in for Greg Bouquot), Jeffrey Shoulson, Gina Stuart

Guest: John Volin, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Minutes of the 9.22.2017 meeting were approved.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of Academic Affairs.

Vice Provost Volin described the organizational structure of Academic Affairs, which is somewhat complicated and involves multiple overlapping organizational charts. Some key units include the Institute for Student Success (including ACES, First Year Programs, CAP, LSAMP and other related programs), the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Honors Program and other enrichments, and Regional Campuses.

Some of these programs emphasize building supports for success, especially among freshman and transfer students, first generation students, and students from under-represented groups. The university recognizes that these are groups of students who may face particular challenges navigating their educational path at the University. Other programs emphasize enrichments to the educational experience (such as the Frontiers in Research series that gives students throughout the university an opportunity to share their research).

Nonetheless there are areas of overlap (e.g., the ISS is under 3 different organizational charts) and maintain clear communications among the various departments and units is a challenge. One of VP Volin's goals is to make sure that right and left hand know what they are doing. A related goal is to try to reduce redundancies and look for synergistic opportunities.

In light of limited resources and regular budget cuts in the past decade (with no end in sight), he sees that the services offered by units like CETL are vulnerable to budget cuts and he wants to protect them. CETL actually brings in funds, but they go into the general fund which is used, in part, to absorb university-wide cuts.

Given all the important services provided through academic affairs, and the realistic assessment that additional cuts are something that we need to be expecting, he spends considerable time looking for ways to preserve those services. Some of his work is fundraising, especially for scholarships and other forms of financial aid, including aid for DACA, first gen, and under-represented groups.

A strategic initiative focusing on retaining our stellar assistant professors was described by VP Volin. It focuses on mentorship and advising, which tends to be somewhat variable at UConn, with pockets of excellence, but not a lot of consistency. The university has joined with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity and now offers their mentoring/advising program to all new faculty as they come in to the university (doing this via CETL). This program is also available (free of charge) to ALL faculty; several in attendance who are familiar with the program commented on its value.

His office also handles the Regional Campuses – he has been travelling around to the various campuses. The regional campuses have been hit (and potentially will be hit further) particularly hard; there is a lot of work to be done there.

Dr. Lin commented that the faculty retention issue is particularly important. Also, the whole budget issue has already had a negative impact on recruiting. How can we counteract this? There was some discussion of this challenge, with no clear resolution in sight. Another challenge that is raised by the budget situation is renewed pressure to solve problems by asking TT faculty to teach “more.” Academic Affairs has been trying to communicate that the benefits of such a strategy (which WOULD save money, over \$7M saved by requiring each TT faculty member to increase their courseload by one course) are far outweighed by the costs of that change (approximately \$40M in lost research external funds, etc.) As VP Volin explained, that is the message that we need to send to the legislature and more broadly to the State. He is also a strong proponent of communicating that research instruction (undergraduate) would be lost along the way. As a research intensive university, research and research instruction are central to our mission and are a key differentiating feature between UConn and other institutions that do not have research and research education as a central feature of their mission. Additional discussion regarding the impact of budget problems included the negative recruitment and retention impacts of pay freezes. Some strategizing about ways to address these problems focused on the importance of better communicating what we do to our students, to the legislature, and to the public at large.

A final topic of discussion centered on relationships between Schools/Colleges and the Regional Campuses. Several issues were discussed, including the following points:

- There is some perception that standards may be lower at regional campuses (this may affect students and may affect ability to recruit strong faculty to positions on those campuses). How can we combat this? One recommendation was to develop more of a “partner campus” mentality (an example of this model is Florida Atlantic University) rather than “central campus and junior campuses.”
- We seem to have moved away from the “expanded major” approach at Regional campuses – what has happened with that? The move has been to specific foci for various campuses – it is the responsibility of Departments and Colleges to make arguments to support foci at a particular campus. (A clear example is the Business focus at Stamford, which has resulted in considerable expansion of Business at that campus.) Sources of pressure for campus expansion also sometimes come from regional political groups.

The meeting adjourned 10:59 am.

Submitted by: Janet Barnes-Farrell 10.31.2017