Officers’ Musings

25 March 2016

The Faculty Senate met yesterday and considered the following issues on its agenda:

* Dr. Lisa Spence briefed the senators on the implementation of the new Email Retention Policy.  To date OIT has met with thirty-one departments regarding this transition, and it intends to complete the initiative by the end of October.  Senators expressed concerns about the lack of faculty input in the creation of the policy and, specifically, the default six-month deletion directive mandated by the system.  Dr. Spence affirmed her commitment to increasing faculty participation in future advisory panels.  She also emphasized that the new policy allows faculty to tag emails for retention for up to four years.  OIT also encourages faculty to save emails to other computer drives for longer-term storage.  Consultants are available to meet with individual faculty members and help them work through the process.
* The Senate unanimously passed a new Handbook policy (Section 502) entitled “Prohibition on Hostile or Intimidating Workplace Behavior.”  The main content of this policy was passed earlier in the year in the form of an anti-bullying measure.  With important revisions, however, it returned to the Senate in this new form and will be linked in the Handbook with faculty discipline and dismissal procedures.  Staff Council must also consider the policy before it can go to the Board of Trustees in May.  This document is considered an important step towards affirming that the institution does not tolerate such negative behavior on campus by providing aggrieved employees with a mechanism to file grievances.
* The Senate began a discussion about proposed revisions to the Biennial Review yesterday.  This debate is expected to continue through April in the hopes that a revised policy can be presented to the Board of Trustees in May.  FAC brought eighteen proposals to the Senate.  Debate focused almost exclusively on the first: a proposal to create a bifurcated process for instructors and tenure-track faculty.  Based on FACs findings, there appears to be widespread concern on campus that instructors who participate in the Biennial Review tend to suffer in comparison with their tenure-track colleagues.  Reports suggest that department and college evaluators find it hard to justify advancing instructors who “exceed expectations” in their only assigned category, i.e. teaching, ahead of tenure-track faculty who are rated exceptional in two or more categories: i.e. scholarship, teaching, and service.  Due in large measure to the need for extended discussion of the Biennial Review proposals, the Senate will meet for two special sessions on 31 March and 14 April ahead of its regularly scheduled April meeting.  Please contact your senators or attend these meetings if you wish to participate.
* Finally, ballots for elections to the 2016-2017 Faculty Senate went out today.  Please take the time to vote for your college’s representatives.  And, please consider joining one of the Senate and/or university standing committees.  Your participation is critical for the success of shared governance.  Many thanks for your support.