Officers’ Musings

14 August 2015

As the 2015-16 academic year approaches, the incoming officers of the Faculty Senate would like to take this opportunity to welcome back to campus all the returning members of the ISU community. We would also like to extend our greetings to the students, faculty, and staff who will be joining us for the first time for the 2015 Fall semester.

The active participation of the ISU faculty in university governance has long been a distinctive and distinguished characteristic of this particular academic community. We look forward to sustaining this legacy of shared governance over the next year and hope to strengthen it by encouraging your involvement in the process. Information about faculty governance can be found in three primary locations. First, the Faculty Senate has a website within the ISU homepage: <http://www2.indstate.edu/facsenate/> Links to Senate membership, meeting schedules, minutes, standing committee reports, and other faculty resources can be found here. At the moment, the website is awaiting its transition to Drupal and, therefore, will require some updating to come in line with the new academic year. As a result, a secondary repository for this material has been established at the University Faculty Blackboard site, which appears as the link **COM-ISUFACULTY: University Faculty** under your *My Courses* list. The Bb site will be updated regularly. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with this resource, in particular the “Overview of Faculty Governance” document prepared by the incoming Senate Chair Chris MacDonald. Finally, the Faculty Senate maintains an office in Gillum 103J, x3007. Should you need information or assistance, the new Senate administrative assistant, Shelby McConnaughey, will be available to answer questions or provide direction. We are happy to have her with us.

The first meeting of the 2015-16 Executive Committee takes place next week on 18 August at 3:30 in HMSU 227. The new Faculty Senate will convene on 27 August at 3:30 in Dede III. These meetings are open to the public. Senate standing committees will begin to receive their new charges in the next few weeks and should schedule their first meetings before the end of the month. The full membership lists for the Senate, Exec, and the standing committees can be found on the University Faculty Bb site. Please contact your representatives with any questions, comments, or concerns about the governance process or specific agenda items.

At this time, two issues appear likely to dominate the discussions between the Senate, its leadership, and the administration into the Fall semester: advising and the Biennial Review. At the Academic Administrators Retreat on Tuesday, Chris Olsen and Sue Kiger, the co-chairs of the Academic Advising Task Force, summarized the months-long committee deliberations and outlined the recommendations that they expect to submit to the Senate for review by September. These recommendations will be addressed in detail in the Musings as they become official.

At least in terms of the calendar, of more immediate import for university faculty is the Biennial Review. If you have not yet done so, or if you need to remind yourself of the process, please review the Faculty Performance Evaluation Model, as passed by the Faculty Senate on 2 October 2014. It can be found under Faculty Evaluation in the Faculty Resources link on the website of the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs: <http://www2.indstate.edu/academicaffairs/index.htm>

Unlike the 2011-13 iteration of the BR, the faculty reports for 2013-15 will draw from data uploaded into the Faculty Activities Database (see the FAD link at the Academic Affairs website and the August 2015 issue of *Academic News & Notes* for more details). You may bring questions and concerns about the Biennial Review to an Open Forum scheduled for 4:30 on 20 August in HMSU 407. In addition to this forum, college-level sessions on the FAD are also being scheduled, and the Senate officers intend to distribute an FAQ designed to provide answers to common questions about the process.

Over the summer two additional issues became topics of discussion between the Senate leadership and the administration. The first concerns the grievance process on campus, in particular the need to ensure due process and to establish clear rules for the adjudication of conflicts that cut across the student, faculty, and staff categories. As a consequence of these discussions, the president has expressed his commitment to see a university-wide grievance policy established on campus, one that ensures a minimum level of accountability and bridges the gaps between existing policies. Second, the recent introduction of photographs within the university email system has raised concerns about privacy protections for faculty and staff. Since current opt-out options are problematic, Exec will seek an appropriate solution with the administration.

The new academic year begins with two major initiatives that affect faculty. By now you should have received an email invitation to complete mandatory training for the *It’s On Blue Campaign*. And, a letter promoting the ongoing *Wellness Program* is being sent via regular mail.

As noted in *Academic News & Notes* a new withdrawal/drop policy is now in effect. Please see the newsletter for details. Finally, as you are well-aware from last year’s Musings, you will be expected to enter assignment grades in the Blackboard gradebook in a fashion such that students understand how they are doing in your classes. One of the things last year’s officers insisted upon was that interim and final letter grades, once entered into Blackboard, could be easily transferred to the portal so faculty would not have to double enter grades. Thanks to the work of IT and ORR professionals, the programming for that to happen was done and tested over the summer. We fully anticipate an operational system to be in place by interim grading season. You will get explicit instructions in the coming weeks, but the basic process is this:

1. You will enter assignment grades as they come in.
2. You will use the Blackboard grade center feature that allows you to match a grading scale to a summative percentage (or total) to produce a summative letter grade or your will hand enter your summative letter grade.
3. You will identify (in Blackboard) the summative letter grade to be transferred.
4. You will download the information from Blackboard into a spreadsheet. In the spreadsheet you will include “Last Day of Attendance” and any information regarding incompletes.
5. You will upload that spreadsheet into the portal grade entry system.

For at least this semester, and perhaps longer, the old system will be in place (in parallel) to make sure you can get your grades in on time.

We wish everyone a smooth start to the year.