University Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes  
March 12, 2013

In Attendance:

David Lopato, Jazz  
Wendy D’Andrea, NSSR  
Gary Vena, Drama  
Emily Barnett, Parsons  
Earl Scott, Parsons  
Cecilia Rubino, Lang  
Nargis Virani, NSPE  
Margaret Fiore, NSPE  
Diane Walsh, NSPE  
Elaine Abelson, Lang  
Ted Byfield, Parsons  
Peter Haratonik, NSPE  
Steve Kennedy, Parsons  
Aleksandra Wagner, NSPE  
Katarzyna Gruda, Parsons  
Jurgen Von Mahs, Lang  
Todd Lambrish, Parsons  
James Dodd, NSSR  
Susan Yelavich, Parsons  
Chris Stover, Jazz

Not Attending:

J.Y. Song, Mannes  
Frank Nemhauser, Mannes  
Teresa Ghilarducci, NSSR  
Chris Roselli, Drama  
Elaine Savory, Lang  
Warren Spielberg, NSPE

Susan calls meeting to order and asked for motions to approve the minutes from both the December and the February UFS meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes from December. The motion was seconded and approved. A motion was made to approve the minutes from February. The motion was seconded and approved.

Susan then reported about the co-chairs’ recent meeting with DVZ. The co-chairs asked about the status of the university’s finances. The New School intends to increase its endowment by selling the Mannes building and the Fashion building in
midtown. DVZ is also considering selling the President’s house and putting the money toward the school’s endowment.

Discussion:
Diane asked about the selling of the Mannes building. She had not heard anything about it before. Susan made clear that TNS is only selling the building, not Mannes. She said that the plan is to move Mannes and the Fashion school downtown. Todd said that he heard that the Fashion school would be moving into the new building, using it as a swing space until a more permanent space can be defined.

Susan also reported that the University is hoping to decrease “the melt,” which is when accepted students deposit but then end up not coming in the fall. The school is also considering early admission as a way to lock in students earlier in the process. Susan also reported that the TNS application process is now entirely online. Admission applications are up around the school about 3.8%. DVZ is also considering a tuition hike of about 3.5%. This tuition increase is not above inflation, and in fact TNS has been slow to make this increase by comparison to other peer institutions. Susan also shared that the co-chairs attended a recent Deans’ Council meeting and shared the amended UFS bylaws. The bylaws will be presented to the BoT in April and should be officially ratified by approximately April 15. The new increase and distribution of UFS senators across the university will be as follows:

Drama 2
Jazz 2
Lang 5
Mannes 3
NSPE 6
Parsons 9
NSSR 3

Every division will have a base of two representatives, with additional representatives prorated according to a calculation made by the Governance Committee, which in turn is based on FTF hours. All of the new senators will be elected to three-year terms.

Governance Committee Report: Nargis Virani, Chair

Nargis reported that the Governance Committee plans to have a meeting in order to discuss the election of the next class of senators. Nargis has asked that UFS representatives be in touch with point people in their division about holding elections for next year early enough that the current UFS will be able to vote for new co-chairs. Nargis passed around a piece of paper and asked the UFS members to write down where they are in their terms in order to get a sense of how many outgoing senators there are. Nargis would like to create some procedural guidelines to leave behind for subsequent UFS representatives.
Discussion:
Nargis asked the co-chairs if they would be stepping down after this semester. If not, would they need to be re-elected if they wanted to serve again? James shared that he would be stepping down at the end of the semester. Susan said that she was not sure of her term length. Chris shared that he had one more year on the senate but that in accordance with the bylaws all of the co-chairs would have to be re-elected again. The plan is to hold the election for new co-chairs at the May meeting. Aleksandra asked about how balances between FTF and PTF are calculated by each division. Nargis answered that this is something that will get determined on the divisional level. Emily shared that overall the senate is composed of 1/3 PTF. It was noted that the bylaws don’t mention PTF; though it allows their representation there are no overt guidelines. Ultimately it is up to the divisions to make sure that PTF representation happens. Nargis said she will compile information brought to her by divisional representatives and disseminate it to the UFS. A question was asked if the UFS would feel comfortable if the Governance Committee made a general recommendation that the UFS be a minimum of 1/3 PTF. Emily suggested that maybe the Governance Committee should talk about this first and then address the UFS as a whole. Elaine Abelson didn’t think it was a good idea to add more regulations, which may only prove to make things for difficult on the divisional level. It was suggested that maybe the language used should be “recommendation” instead of “regulation.” Susan shared that whatever language gets drafted isn’t going to be added to the bylaws before they go the BoT next month. James pointed out that the bylaws charge the Governance Committee to oversee these types of procedures. Wendy asked if extending the term length would affect PTF ability to serve. Susan noted that there are alternates and then thanked Nargis for being so proactive about seeing all of these matters through.

Infrastructure Committee: Ted Byfield, Chair

Ted reported that the Infrastructure Committee has not met but has discussed a great deal via email. In general the committee has questions about privacy, space allocation, and transparency of acquisitions. He referenced news about Harvard emails being hacked by the administration, as well as Aaron Swartz and the JSTOR scandal. He expressed alarm about hearing that the Mannes and Fashion buildings are being sold without any advance notice or consultation. Overall, Ted felt that the number and magnitude of impending issues exceeds the capability of what one committee can handle.

Discussion:
James asked why the committee doesn’t narrow down the scope of its issues to what is manageable. Cecilia shared that faculty at Lang are curious about the new building. She wondered how the faculty would be able to use the new space and what procedures are in place to book space. Susan suggested that the committee draft a list of questions that the co-chairs could bring to the PO and DVZ. That would at least be a start. Peter shared that unlike the FAC or the Governance
Committees, which have historical precedence, the Infrastructure Committee doesn't have a historical model.

For instance the news about the Mannes building doesn't get filtered down to faculty in any clear and consistent way. Similarly, NSPE is supposed to move to 6 East 16th Street but there still has been no information circulated in regard to the move. This is similar to the way that furniture gets purchased for university spaces; in general, these kinds of decisions are being made without faculty input. It was pointed out that this is not that there is a vast conspiracy, but rather that these decisions are not perceived as being the direct purview of the faculty. Jurgen pointed out that many of these issues are initially vetted but then that process is forgotten until an issue is raised again as though it were fresh. He felt that’s when rumors begin. Jurgen felt that the committee should make a list and do some research. He suggested that the committee make a concerted effort to find out who is in charge of certain procedures and decisions. Then once those people are located the faculty can insert themselves in the process. Things that are perceived as nebulous in nature have a tendency to cause a great deal of anxiety. The UFS should work to defuse this anxiety. Katarzyna felt that lack of transparency was a big problem, which the UFS has been trying to tackle but has never gotten past a certain point. She said that there was an intense period of people reading faculty email a few years ago. The UFS should look around and see what is happening elsewhere. Susan reinforced that clarity is important, but being realistic about what can be done with one committee is also important.

Nargis wondered if it would make sense to submit some of the questions that get drafted for the Provost and DVZ ahead of time, so that when they attend the next UFS meeting they are aware of these concerns and can speak to them directly. The issues around space and privacy should be addressed. Usually when the Provost and DVZ come they talk about what they want to talk about; perhaps for their next visit they can address some of the issues that are on the UFS agenda. Susan brought up the fact that the UFS needs to decide who will be invited to the open meeting in April. Susan shared that Bryna wanted to come to discuss handbook revisions but that Adrienne Marcus also wanted to come to discuss university curriculum initiatives. Emily relayed that she thought there was a Town Hall scheduled in the near future that would discuss space issues. Nargis clarified that this was not a university-wide town hall; perhaps it was intended for Parsons only. Wendy shared that infrastructure and faculty exist in a larger cultural framework.

Ted reiterated that the underlying issue is transparency and openness. Susan pointed out that representation on appropriate University committees is a problem for the Infrastructure Committee. It doesn’t have a sanctioned route of communications. James suggested that maybe the best route is to channel concerns and requests through the co-chairs. David shared that when he first joined the infrastructure committee he was surprised by how many virtual issues the committee deals with, as opposed to physical issues, which is what he normally would have considered to be “infrastructure.” James reiterated that information
isn’t deliberately being withheld, but is just the way that work gets done in a complex entity like TNS.

The question, then, is what is the main function of the committee? Cecilia shared that she appreciated DVZ’s service initiatives. Diane suggested that maybe some kind of diagram could be drafted that would show who in particular was involved with certain decisions. Ted suggested a “RFC” (request for comment) process and offered to draft one. Susan suggested that perhaps breaking down the committee and its issues/concerns by hardware and software would make things clearer and more manageable. Chris also suggested narrowing the focus to some very specific questions such as, who does the faculty contact in order to book space in the new building?

Nargis suggested that the co-chairs write an end-of-term report to leave behind for the next co-chairs. This would help maintain precedence about things the UFS and the committees have been working on. Chris reported that the co-chairs have been talking about having a UFS run Town Hall in the fall. The current co-chairs would act in an as advisory role for this Town Hall, in conjunction with the new co-chairs.

Faculty Affairs Committee Report: Elaine Savory, Chair (absent)

Elaine Savory was absent. In her absence Cecilia Rubino (informally) reported on FAC concerns and issues. She stated that course evaluations are now linked with a student’s ability to receive their grade for the course. This means that a student has to either complete the course evaluation or actively opt out of doing the course evaluation in order to receive their grade for the course. This is a positive step on the part of the administration and will increase student response. Cecilia also reported that two other issues being discussed by the FAC are the new third party faculty self-report system and the faculty handbook. The FAC has done a lot of work in regard to the Grievance Committee and the handbook overall but there are still a lot of questions. Cecilia was not sure if the handbook was meant to go to the BoT in April for approval.

Discussion:
Aleksandra asked if Cecilia could be more specific about FAC concerns. Cecilia shared that lawyers have been combing through the handbook and vetting specific language which could ultimately be problematic. Aleksandra expressed concern about this unclear information being shared with the UFS in the absence of the FAC Chair Elaine Savory but did feel concerns about the possibility of approving the changes to the handbook by the end of the semester considering there are still issues that need to be talked through, such as a leave policy. It was suggested that better clarity should exist between the UFS FAC and the PO FAC. James shared that his understanding was that some minor but significant changes are being made to the handbook. The handbook will be brought before the UFS as a whole, and then it will go to the BoT. James pointed out that there is a process in place and the administration isn’t going to try to make radical changes to the existing leave policy
without any faculty input. Susan pointed out that even with the handbook revisions coming to the UFS it isn’t a referendum from the entire faculty. Ted felt that the organization of the UFS isn’t such that it is disposed to handle all the issues coming its way and felt that the pace of important decisions being made has accelerated now that DVZ has settles into his executive role. Elaine wanted confirmation that the UFS was an advisory body. Susan replied yes and as such will need to know its limitations. James pointed out again that there has been an enormous amount of faculty involvement with the handbook revisions. Susan shared that she would prefer to stop revisiting the same problems over and over again. The co-chairs now have the ability to communicate with the entire faculty body as of last week, as they have been provided access to the full faculty email list. Katarzyna asked how the BoT is assembled. She thought that the president appointed members but was told by the dean at Parsons that the BoT elects members. The Parsons Council would like to know who is on the BoT and why. Susan said she would find out and share that information. Peter shared that BoT bylaws should be available online. James pointed out that the BoT is changing in a good way and that the UFS should invite Joseph Gromek, Chair of the BoT to come speak at a point in the near future.

In thinking ahead to the next UFS meeting, Susan reminded everyone that while the original plan was to invite Chris Ferguson (Associate Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management) and Liz Ross (PO) to the April meeting, that they will be invited to the May meeting instead, part of which will now be open. The new plan is for Bryna Sanger to come to speak about handbook revisions and for Adrienne Marcus to come speak about university-wide curriculum initiatives. Susan suggested that BoT Chair Joseph Gromek be invited to speak to the UFS in the fall.

Susan reminded everyone to familiarize themselves with the new third part self-report system Digital Measures.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and then approved.