

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, March 23, 2020

Present: M. Abraham, H. Berliner, K. Boston-Hill, C. Burnett, W. Caniano, C. Eliot, D. Harb

Prof Caniano asked Prof. Burnett, chair of the Planning and Budget Committee, to reach out to Facilities and Operations to find out how the deep cleaning is going so we can send out a memo of support. He also asked that the committee ask Catherine Hennessy, Senior Vice President for Financial Affairs and Treasurer and Dolores Fredrich, Senior Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel how this has may impact our finances going forward.

- The Planning and Budget Committee is meeting with them in April, along with the Provost.
- Residential students were refunded a certain amount for having to move out of the dorms early

Prof Caniano asked David Harb, chair of the Student Affairs Committee, to bring up the pass/fail option to the students and get their opinions.

- The Student Affairs Committee meets on April 25

A discussion followed about the pass/fail option:

Provost Berliner reported that after discussion with the deans, he extended the date for the pass/fail option to the end of the semester. This is the exact pattern we followed in 2012, with Hurricane Sandy. It is designed to give the students more options, given all the uncertainty that is going on. It can be modified.

Prof. Eliot, chair of the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee, reported that an informal survey of colleagues suggests that they don't support automatically going to pass/fail, because grades will benefit some students. He has not heard any persuasive arguments or much enthusiasm for a stronger policy, that is more universal than what we've already adopted.

The Provost reported that Kathleen Wallace, chair of the Chairs' Caucus, reported this after discussing it with the chairs. The one question she did raise, is that right now a student needs to make up their mind regarding pass/fail, before they know their grade. It's really at the end of the semester, that the grades are in. There have been some faculty that said a student should be able to wait until after they know their grade in order to select the pass/fail.

The Provost reported that back in 2012, there wasn't a significant number of students who opted for the pass/fail. In some areas such as physician assistant than the other clinical areas we accrediting agency will not accept a pass, and expect a letter grade.

Prof. Caniano reported that it impacts the student athletes as well, the NCAA has not yet made a statement to his knowledge about how they stand on GPA requirements.

Senior Vice Provost Abraham reported that the idea was that get the maximum amount of time for the student to make a decision, a faculty member can always guide them.

Prof. Eliot reported that one reason in favor of the more lenient policy where they can decide to convert what would otherwise be a “C” to a “pass” would be that many faculty have pushed back deadlines for work so students won’t have as many grades as early in the semester as they otherwise would have. He personally has encouraged his students to submit drafts of their papers, but won’t necessarily get their paper grades back until even after May 6. The Provost reported that this may be a reason to approve a waiver.

Prof. Caniano reported that we will have to be in touch with faculty and students so that they know these deadlines and how to operate, and if they have an issues with it, they need to communicate that back to us readily. If it becomes problematic, we need to know so we can address it in a different way. He asks that the chairs reach out to their committees and speak with their faculty in a robust fashion if they can.

The Provost reported he is also trying to explore extending the option for a student withdrawing from a class. There may be some financial aid ramifications involved in that, he is waiting for Jessica Eads, Vice President for Enrollment Management, to get back to him in terms of what we can and can’t do.

Prof. Burnett reported that he thinks there may be more students who need to take an incomplete and we should be thinking about how to sort of set up some sort of guidelines encouraging faculty to be more understanding about this that maybe they would be normal.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.