

MINUTES
Faculty Affairs Committee
December 14, 2020
Zoom

Voting Members Present:

Deborah Elkis-Abuhoff
Xiang Fu
Michael Heiss
Rina Hirsch (Chair)
Maureen Houck
Kris Lotier
Kevin McElroy
Brian McFadden
Rebecca Natow
Jean-Paul Rodrigue
Elisabeth Schlegel
Sylvia Silberger

Non-Voting Members Present:

Margaret Abraham (Sr Vice Provost for
Academic Affairs)
Elisabeth Ploran (AAUP President)
Holly Seirup (Dean, HPHS)

1. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m.
2. Minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved with minor amendments.
3. The committee reviewed and unanimously approved the updated FAC statement that Kris Lotier and Michael Heiss worked on to reflect the committee's desire to be included in future faculty-impacting initiatives. See Attachment A. This statement is being forwarded to the Senate Executive Committee.
4. The committee discussed FPS #46 "Peer Observation of Teaching" and the guidance that it provides to faculty with respect to observations of online teaching.
 - a. Rina Hirsch provided some examples of how faculty could protect their intellectual property in an asynchronous online setting.
 - i. Have EdTech create a Blackboard course for the observation into which content from a module is copied from an existing Blackboard course. Then have that new Blackboard course shared with the observer.
 - ii. Discussion board posts can be saved to PDF and posted as a document to that Blackboard course.
 - b. Holly Seirup indicated that evaluations of online courses will differ substantially for those courses that have the bells and whistles added on by instructional designers than for faculty that are developing their courses on their own. This is something the Blue Ribbon Committee will need to consider when updating the CTR instrument and Peer Observation guidance; see (d) below.
 - c. Elisabeth Ploran made the point that the suggestions Rina Hirsch made in (a) above would apply to asynchronous courses; but for synchronous online courses,

the observations would take place just like they would in person with an observer simply attending the Zoom meeting.

- d. Elisabeth Ploran and Margaret Abraham updated the committee on what is happening with respect to CTR and peer observation guidance. A Blue Ribbon Committee of 11 was created to revisit CTRs and Peer Observations; CTRs are being revisited for the first time in over 20 years. The goal is to make updates that will reflect long-term changes. Thus the committee determined that discussion of the FPS #46 should probably wait until the Blue Ribbon Committee proposes changes to FAC. The Blue Ribbon Committee is supposed to make proposed changes by April 2021.
 - e. Michael Heiss emphasized that the most important thing about FPS #46 and the observation process that faculty should keep in mind is that process of the observer and observee meeting both before and after the observation. In particular, meeting before the observation is critical to ensure that the conditions of the observation are agreed upon.
 - f. Kris Lotier mentioned that some faculty perceive the changes previously made to FPS #46 for online courses were made in light of the pandemic even though we made those changes over a year ago. Apparently faculty were confused by the concept of observing a module because we were not explicit in FPS #46 about modules applying to asynchronous online courses as opposed to synchronous online courses, which would be observed similarly to in-person courses. Once the Blue Ribbon Committee makes its proposals to FAC, we can ensure that the language is clear at that point in time.
 - g. Sylvia Silberger brought up the issue of adjuncts teaching 1-on-1 courses and being unable to be observed. Elisabeth Ploran and Margaret Abraham indicated that this has been brought up and will be addressed by the Blue Ribbon Committee as well.
5. The committee congratulated Maureen Houck on her retirement and thanked her for her outstanding service to the University.
 6. Rina Hirsch reminded the committee that they would be receiving an email from Caroline Schreiner soon regarding reviewing Special Leaves.
 7. Rina Hirsch also reminded the committee that Michael Heiss would be taking over as FAC chair in the Spring since Rina will be on sabbatical.
 8. The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 pm.

ATTACHMENT A

In September 2020, the full faculty of Hofstra University, via the Hof-Faculty listserv, received an email from Vice President for University Relations, Melissa Connolly, which begins as follows:

“In accordance with the commitment made by President Stuart Rabinowitz, Hofstra University is launching a new online system to report violations of University policies and codes of conduct. This new system was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Office of Human Resources and the Department of Public Safety.”

Although this message highlights the collaborative efforts of many groups across campus, it does not mention the Faculty Affairs Committee; nor any other branch of the Faculty Senate; nor the AAUP, the faculty labor union; nor any other faculty group.

The online system in question, Ethics Point, offers students “an accessible, reliable method to report incidents of bias and discrimination inside and outside the classroom, as well as raise other important concerns.” The Faculty Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate does not wish to comment on the merits of this reporting system. Rather, we wish to address procedural matters. Ethics Point reports can concern the conduct of faculty members, and so the existence of this reporting system has a direct impact on the terms of employment for faculty members. Therefore, we believe that faculty members--first through their elected representatives in the Faculty Senate, and then subsequently as a full faculty--should have been granted the opportunity to assess and address this reporting system before it was institutionally operationalized.

We issue this statement, therefore, in a spirit of collegiality, to affirm our own commitment to shared governance at Hofstra University and our desire to be included in all future administrative reforms involving faculty working conditions.