

Senate Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 12, 2020, 11 AM

In Attendance: Dinesh Pinisetty (Chair), Sarah Senk (Secretary), Matt Fairbanks, Christine Isakson, Cynthia Trevisan, Frank Yip, Lori Schroeder (Provost)

Absent: Elizabeth McNie (Vice Chair) [attending Cadet Success Initiative Off-site]

I. Course Evaluations

- Review the draft provided by Emergency Senate Task Force on Course Evals (Alex Parker, Julie Simons, Kitty Luce)
- Ditch question about what grade you expect to receive because it makes no sense on a Likert scale.
- Replace “I found this course to be worthwhile or valuable” with existing comment “I am interested in the subject being taught.” (Phrasing from our original evaluations captures how student feels about a subject going into a course (eg. if they are interested in a gen ed subject or not. So if they hate English or History or Math as a subject but like the class anyway, it speaks *highly* of the instructor). It’s also problematic to ask a student if a course is worthwhile or valuable if they don’t have the context to make that judgement. (eg. they may think their math course isn’t valuable until they discover two years later that they actually needed to learn that material to pass a major Engineering course).
- Separate into two parts: “Course Engagement, Preparation, and Technology” and “Learning Perceptions and Environment.” Move the online technology stuff to the preparedness section to make clear this is an evaluation of the TOOLS, not the instructor.
- Ditch question about “the course had regularly scheduled meeting” because it could be confusing to students (does it refer to whole class meetings, individual, office hours?) and the answer is already covered in section 6 (about regular and effective contact)

II. Chair Reports President would like to attend Senate Executive Meetings

- Provost reports that the President is worried that new resolution focused senate could lead to less communication. He would like for all of us to consider whether some things could be discussed in person rather than communicated in written resolutions. President hopes that we can have more informal conversations and expressed concerns to the Provost that resolutions will paradoxically lead to less communication.
- Committee explains to Lori that her immediate predecessor similarly advocated for in-person conversation and seemed resistant to putting things in writing when we first discussed the IBL department decision in late Spring 2020.
- Senk explains that communicating by resolution was a foundational idea for our new ByLaws. The reason is because as a small institution people think we can just speak informally, but the result is that people not in the room feel out of the loop, that it’s difficult to maintain accountability or follow-through. Resolutions are a way of making sure that we are a truly representative body and decisions aren’t being made by a select few. Resolutions preserve a record - for everyone who wasn’t in the room during those informal conversations - about the faculty senate consensus; they do not exist to embarrass anyone nor does they preclude other forms of communication that may happen behind the scenes. Senk mentions SJSU website as an example, shared by ASCSU colleagues. President does not have to approve every resolution, they can still be dialogic in nature. But doing things

“off the record” would represent “a step backward in terms of shared governance.” Senk adds later in an after-meeting email that “it will be extremely valuable to our institution if we embrace face-to-face conversation and discussion, but fundamentally we are a *representative body* and we have an obligation to preserve a tangible record of our decision-making for those who don’t have the privilege of being in the room. As I said at the retreat last year, so many of our problems stem from the fact that too many people think “we’re a small institution; we can just walk down the hall and ask questions face to face.” This may be a recipe for feel-good camaraderie for some – even *many*. But not all. I hope that moving forward we can communicate to the President why his concerns about Resolutions leading to *less* communication are unwarranted. I think we are all in agreement that informal dialogue is a healthy part of how we do things. But it is equally important to develop a formal and consistent structure for institutional memory.”

- Committee agrees it would be appropriate for the President to attend some meetings, and we should make a habit of calling administrators before the committee to answer questions and troubleshoot. **Action item: Pinisetty will schedule with the President a standing appointment to come to one executive committee meeting per month.** Senk recommends scheduling the first or fourth meeting of the month so we can “debrief” after the General meetings.

III. Report on IBL Curriculum Changes

- Trevisan discusses IBL meeting with S&M. Has questions about process. S&M didn’t see curriculum roadmap before meeting. Trevisan suggested S&M get a chance to explain what COM 100 is before cutting it and Dean Maier said no they’ll just cut it. Trevisan asked if it was decided by faculty (which they voted on) or Dean Maier, then got invitation to the meeting. But Cynthia sees roadmap today and saw class wasn’t there. Isakson said the department did *not* vote on it.
- Lori: Having Maier as Dean, not a faculty member, complicates curriculum approval process. Provost reports that she suggested getting faculty input, keeping them central to process. Provost clarifies she told Maier it would be great if faculty in IBL were talking to faculty in S&M and sounds like it’s taken shape. Provost says that if other faculty ask why Don isn’t centrally involved we should feel free to share it’s because the Provost told him to make sure the process involves faculty talking to other faculty.

Meeting adjourned.