

FacultyLine

Office of the University Faculty, 138 Fawcett Hall (775-2039 / 775-3560)
Faculty Line #222, September 18, 2017

Colleagues,

There are several conversations in which the Faculty must be a leading voice this academic year. Very tight budgets and accompanying austerity measures will be with us for at least a few years. Wright State's financial reserves have suffered in part as a result of the institution's effort to be what might be described as "everything for everyone." We can expect further targeted contraction of the University budget this year as President Schrader, Provost Sudkamp, Chief Business Officer Branson, and the Board of Trustees work towards keeping the University off fiscal watch¹.

As the University Faculty, it is our responsibility to help determine how to best use our resources to drive the University's mission and the success of our students. In some cases, this may require building consensus around priorities on which the Faculty have divided opinion. To accomplish this, it is essential that our Faculty Governance structures and processes are robust and that all faculty own responsibility for them. A well-considered and clearly communicated Faculty position on major issues in our purview is essential to the health of our students, programs, and institution.

In this *Faculty Line*, I would like to call attention to a few events and issues which took place during the September meeting of the Faculty Senate. Please contact your Faculty Senators² with your thoughts, concerns, and positions on these (and future) issues so that they can fairly and completely represent you in Senate deliberations and resolutions. Agendas and approved minutes of past Faculty Senate meetings are available online.³

Welcome of President Cheryl B. Schrader

The Faculty Senate was pleased to welcome one of the newest members of the Wright State Family, the seventh President of Wright State University, Dr. Cheryl B. Schrader. President Schrader's address to the Faculty is available online.⁴ If you haven't had an opportunity to hear from President Schrader, I recommend that you read her remarks. President Schrader's focus on financial sustainability, administrative transparency, and campus conversations will frame our recovery in the year ahead.

Academic organization realignment

The most recent major reorganization of our academic units was the creation of the College of Engineering and Computer Science in the '80s. Since that time, some programs and departments have been created, retired, or reorganized. Student demand and faculty expertise have migrated. Provost Sudkamp has asked the Faculty and the Deans to consider how academic unit reorganization might better align our current programs and departments to serve student success and facilitate faculty

¹ <https://www.ohiohighered.org/campus-accountability>

² <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate/about/2017-18-officers-and-members>

³ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate>

⁴ <https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/page/attachments/Faculty-Senate-Meeting-091117.pdf>

collaboration in related scholarship or new programs in growth areas. Budget and enrollment pressures add potential urgency to this conversation.

Unit organization is, fundamentally, under the purview of the administration, but this is an issue where Faculty support or concern should have significant weight. If we believe that our current organization is best for our mission, students, and programs, then we must make that case. If we see opportunity to better serve our students with available resources, then the responsibility to help guide the process towards that goal is ours.

This is a question which the Faculty must take with great seriousness. While there are certainly significant potential advantages to academic reorganization, there are also very real costs and risks. As these discussions take place over this academic term, please share your ideas, thoughts, and concerns with your Faculty Senators so that the Faculty can better recommend action in the best interests of our students and University.

Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs as Dean of the Graduate School

Over the course of the University's history, the Vice-President for Research has also sometimes served as Dean of the Graduate School (with an associate Dean handling most day-to-day matters). At other times, these positions have been separated. The current joint VPR/DoGS will be stepping down on September 30th. The search committee for his replacement has recommended that these positions be separated. President Schrader and Provost Sudkamp have delayed making a final decision on this matter so that Faculty can have meaningful input. As the search process is on hold until the question is resolved, this Faculty conversation has a short deadline: please let your Faculty Senators know your thoughts on this issue by Thursday, Sept 21. Hopefully, this conversation is already in progress in your college/campus/school. Included below are summaries of some arguments for and against splitting as discussed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

- *An argument to separate VPR and DGS positions:* The positions of VPR and Dean of the Graduate School require distinct skill sets. Historically, the role of the Vice President of Research was to oversee the administration of Research and Sponsored Programs. Over time, the duties of the VPR have expanded to include oversight of research compliance, technology transfer, commercialization, and various affiliated entities (i.e. WSRI). With the addition of these increased demands, individuals who have held the combined position of VPR and Dean have had to delegate duties (mostly on the Grad school side) to directors and/or associate/assistant deans. The general sense is that the Graduate School needs more attention at this time than it has received in the past so there is a need for a strong, full-time advocate for graduate education and scholarship.
- *An argument to continue with a single combined VPR/DGS position:* There can be an important linkage between the functions of these positions. The VPR should focus on student-faculty centered scholarship and funded research, and the Dean should focus on promoting graduate education. Splitting these positions may cause the focus of the VPR to shift further towards external funding even if it does not involve students, leaving students and the GS starved for the resources needed to grow graduate programs.

Administrative costs in these two models are assumed to be roughly equivalent. The joint position has historically required a highly paid individual meeting the qualifications of both positions along with an

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies to perform the day-to-day responsibilities of the office. Separating positions allows for a wider pool of applicants for both positions and need not require an Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Textbook affordability

The Faculty Senate Student Success Committee (SSC) has recommended a number of initiatives that could help reduce the burden of textbook costs for our students^{5,6}. The SSC appreciates that the Senate will not approve any recommendations which limit the academic freedom of our Faculty to choose any course materials that they deem to be best for courses under their supervision. Within that unyielding parameter, the SSC's proposed resolutions include:

- *Inclusive access*: A model by which instructors and curricular bodies may realize savings for students through University negotiation for significantly reduced bulk rates on instructional materials. Faculty would still use whatever book they determine is best for the students in their courses. This collective negotiating approach simply provides a means of securing the book at a strikingly lower cost for students (often 50-70% off list-price). It has been well received by faculty where it has been in place for several years (at Indiana University and in the community college system in Kentucky) and has also resulted in significant improvements in student success. Students may opt out and purchase the textbook through other means (or not at all), if so desired. (Used book sellers and wholesalers like Amazon lose a revenue opportunity; publishers and students are both well-served.) Faculty can expect that all students would have the textbook in hand the very first day of class.
- *Textbook auto-adopt*: Federal law mandates that Faculty adopt textbooks for their courses prior to the time that students can begin to register for them (invariably, many months in advance of the start of the course) to allow students ample time to purchase the text affordably. This resolution would allow the campus bookstore to assume, that (1) if a faculty member does not select a new textbook by the federal deadline, and (2) if the faculty member has taught the course previously within the past two academic years, that (3) the instructor will use the same textbook as they last used. The faculty member would still be able to adopt a different text after "auto-adoption", although such late adoptions would continue to have adverse financial consequences for students.
- *Support of state sales tax exemption*: A statement that the Faculty encourage and support exemption of post-secondary textbooks from state sales tax. Ohio law currently exempts 127 things from state sales tax.⁷ Textbooks are not one of those things that are tax exempt.
- *Open Education Resources*: A model to incentivize faculty to consider or develop free/open online content for their courses.

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<https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/uploads/2017/Sep/meeting/TextbookAffordabilityResolution-9-6-2017.pdf>

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https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/uploads/2017/Aug/meeting/Textbook_Affordability_Working_Group_-_08-17_Report.pdf

⁷ http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/02/the_taxes_you_dont_pay_all_127.html

Revision of the Faculty Constitution

Every four years the Faculty Constitution undergoes a constitutionally mandated review. Changes suggested by the review committee are now before the Faculty Senate.⁸ One significant change proposed is the elimination of Graduate Council and the normalization of the oversight of graduate affairs to more closely parallel the faculty structures used for the oversight of undergraduate affairs. Another significant change is the removal, from the constitution, of University Councils whose activities are independent of the Faculty Senate. Should the revised constitution receive an affirmative vote in the Senate, then all faculty will be provided an opportunity to vote to accept the revised constitution. A new constitution will only go into effect if a majority of the Faculty and the Provost approve the final revision. Let your Faculty Senators know if there are issues you wish them to amend on the floor before a final version is put before the Faculty for majority approval.

Please remember that the Faculty Senate is a representative body. Let your Faculty Senators know where you stand on the issues so that we can fairly and accurately represent the Faculty in our recommendations and official opinions. Faculty Senate meetings are open to all. The second Senate meeting of this academic year is Monday, Oct 9, at 2:30pm, in the Student Union Endeavor Room (E156 SU). As always, we invite you to join us.

Travis Doom, Professor

Faculty President

⁸ https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/uploads/2017/Aug/meeting/Constitution_QR2017_side-by-side.pdf