

FacultyLine

Office of the University Faculty, 138 Fawcett Hall (775-2039 / 775-3560)
Faculty Line #224, September 07, 2018

Colleagues,

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2018-2019 academic year.

We also welcome Provost Susan Edwards¹ to our Faculty. Provost Edwards was selected through a national search that concluded at the end of the previous academic year. Provost Edwards joined us full time on July 30th and has well begun the process of learning Wright State University's academic culture and programs. Please extend your welcome and support to her as she begins her role as our chief Academic officer. We also welcome back, to non-administrative Faculty status, past Provost Thomas Sudkamp. The Faculty Senate acknowledges Dr. Sudkamp's accomplishments, leadership, and service during financially challenging times.

Feedback requested on non-compensation issues under CBA negotiation

The Faculty Senate and the AAUP-WSU are separate entities (albeit with many shared members and interests). Many matters of shared governance have been clarified for ALL faculty by the codification in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) negotiated by the AAUP-WSU. Except for the enforcement and negotiation of the contract, AAUP-WSU is not part of faculty governance (although there is overlap in membership and sometimes leadership). In a complementary fashion, the Faculty Senate speaks to issues of shared governance and remains generally silent on terms and conditions of employment for bargaining unit faculty.

Several issues in the most recent contract negotiation between Administration and AAUP-WSU remain contested ². Some of these items are compensation issues, on which the Faculty Senate will not comment. Other issues potentially impact shared governance, academic freedom, academic policies, or the learning and research environment. The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate is considering the appropriateness of a resolution stating the position of the University Faculty, as a whole, on these non-compensation issues.

Over the next week, we encourage you to contact at least one of your college Senators³ (via email or in person) and discuss your position on this issue. Should the Faculty Senate voice the opinion of the Faculty on the non-compensation proposals under negotiation? If so, what precisely would you want to see included in such a statement/resolution? The Executive Committee will act (or not) in October based upon the nature of the conversations that take place over the upcoming week, keeping in mind the diversity of the interests that we are called to represent as well as the scope of authority of the Faculty Senate, as defined by the Faculty Constitution.

¹ <https://www.wright.edu/about/office-of-the-provost>

² <https://aaup-wsu.org/strike-related-materials/#PageJump2>

³ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate/about/2018-19-officers-and-members>

Classroom impact of ongoing negotiations

The Senate has continually expressed concern regarding the potential for negative impact of prolonged uncertainty regarding budget decisions, CBA negotiations, and other ongoing matters on our classroom environments. As professionals with a vocation for teaching, it is our obligation to make certain that we consciously and continuously make every effort to provide the best learning environment possible for our students.

In a recent joint meeting of the AAUP-WSU Executive committee and the Faculty Senate Executive committee, both leadership bodies were in agreement that Faculty take great care not to abuse the power differential between Faculty and Students in our classrooms. Unless it is relevant to the topic of a course, necessary administrative instruction, or a brief response to a student question, Faculty should not discuss the status of ongoing negotiations with students in class. Likewise, unless relevant to a course, students should not be provided with course-based incentives or disincentives for any student activism in support of or in opposition to ongoing negotiations. Reports of abuse of the Faculty-Student relationship will be taken seriously by all parties.

Financial update

This summer, the Faculty Budget Priority Committee was in regular contact with the Administration regarding the status of University Finance and Budget. It is the FBPC's understanding that the estimated operating surplus for fiscal year 2018 may be approximately \$10 million, which exceeds the Board of Trustee's minimum goal to increase reserves by at least \$6 million. It appears very likely that University-wide efforts have helped the WSU successfully avoid state fiscal watch. Analysis of the University's financial watch status, including the SB6 score for the previous budget year, will be more fully determined in the October audit. Because of the fall enrollment shortfall, continued budget vigilance is expected. The Faculty Senate Budget Priority committee is working with the Administration to restore some necessary flexibility to academic and research expenditures.

Academic Organization Review

There have been no summer update from the working group considering the status for academic organization review. The Senate has received two communications from units impacted by the proposed reorganization. These statements, from Teacher Education (TED) and Leadership Studies (LDR), are available to all Faculty as attachments to the September 2018 Faculty Senate agenda.⁴

Faculty governance in the event of parliamentary emergency

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring the health of our shared governance. We hope that negotiations will be successful, yet are obligated to prepare for the possibility of a strike by portion of the Faculty. In the event of a strike, some faculty committees and other shared governance bodies may run into unusual parliamentary situations. The Faculty Senate Office staff and current Faculty Senate Parliamentarian are not in the bargaining unit and will thus be available to help provide guidance regarding any parliamentary emergency. To help reduce confusion, please be aware of the following parliamentary rules.

⁴https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/uploads/2018/Aug/meeting/Senate_Agenda_2018_09Sept.pdf

Unless otherwise stated in the bylaws of a committee/body, the quorum for passage of business is a majority of the total voting membership of the body. A meeting can occur with fewer members, but no business can go forward. In the absence of a committee/body chair, another voting member of the body can call the meeting to order and then ask the committee to immediately elect a chair pro tem to preside for the session. That office is held until the conclusion of that meeting. There is not a provision in our Faculty constitution to choose Faculty President pro tempore to speak for the Faculty outside of a pro tem chair elected to conduct a regularly scheduled meeting of the Faculty Senate. Thus, the Faculty Senate will be silent if both the Faculty President and Vice-President are unavailable.

Final thoughts

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. Tentative agendas, final agendas, and approved minutes of all Faculty Senate business are available online for your consideration.⁵ Please contact your Faculty Senators⁶ with your thoughts, concerns, and positions on these (and future) issues so that they can fairly and accurately represent you in Senate deliberations and business.

Faculty Senate meetings are open to all. The first Senate meeting of this academic year is Monday, Sept 10, at 2:30pm, in the Student Union Endeavor Room (E156 SU). The Faculty Senate looks forward to hearing from and questioning President Schrader and Provost Edwards on the state of the University. As always, we invite you to join us.

Travis Doom, Professor
Faculty President

⁵ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate>

⁶ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate/about/2018-19-officers-and-members>