

Council of Department Chairs and Program Directors Minutes from November 29, 2017

Present: Oana Armeanu, Shelly Blunt, Glenna Bower, Brody Broshears, Andy Buck, Jeri Burger, Amy Chan Hilton, Charles Conway, Joan deJong, William Elliott, Abbas Foroughi, Mellisa Hall, Rick Hudson, Paul Kuban, Silvia Rode, Mayola Rowser, Jeff Sickman, Jack Smothers, Melissa Stacer, Sarah Stevens, Connie Swenty, Peter Whiting, Clarissa Willis, Ann White, Amy Wilson, Gabriela Mustata-Wilson, Emilija Zlatkovska

Meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairperson, William Elliott.

Minutes from October 25, 2017 meeting will be distributed in the next few days.

Announcements and Updates By Provost Ronald Rochon

Faculty feedback is important to guide the direction of online learning at USI. Specifically, what is happening in regards to distance education at many prestigious universities? [Academic Partnerships](#) (AP), who markets several of USI's online programs, made a presentation to the Board of Trustees. The Provost plans to invite AP to also make an open presentation to faculty members in January or early February 2018. The Provost asks that Chairs and Directors encourage faculty members to attend this AP presentation.

The Provost also referred to a recent article in the [Chronicle of Higher Education about online education focusing on recent events at Eastern Michigan University](#) that focuses on the relationship among faculty, curriculum, and programming. The Provost reminded the group that AP is only involved with the marketing for USI online programs, and that USI faculty members are responsible for curriculum, course content, and programming. Furthermore, the Provost stated that faculty members involved with the online programs marketed by AP are pleased with the outcomes so far. Finally, quality and rigor are vital to the success of our online programs, and are solely the responsibility of USI faculty members.

Following the discussion on distance education, Associate Provost Shelly Blunt made an announcement highlighting a change in [USI Final Grading Instructions](#). Specifically, the directions for a failing grade of an online class will be modified to require the last day of participation in the course, rather than the last time a student logged on to a class management system. These new instructions will be effective for Spring 2018.

Provost Rochon made an announcement to remind everyone about the memorial service for Dane Partridge planned for 12:30 PM in the atrium of the Business and Engineering Center. He also informed the group that if they teach until 12:50 PM, that they are more than welcome to join the memorial at any time.

The Provost also expressed thanks to faculty members in dealing with the untimely and tragic passing of a USI student and her sister in Indianapolis. The Provost urged chairs and directors to be supportive of our students, and if needed, please refer students to our [campus resources](#).

Furthermore, finals are a stressful time for students, and please be mindful of students that may need help. Please refer them to the Dean of Students; help us help them.

The Provost also provided background on the procedures for sharing University announcements. He stated that families are contacted first to determine what type of message, if any, is shared with the USI community. There is also no differentiation among announcements for students, faculty members, or staff. The Provost also shared that USI is the most sensitive community that he has been associated with regarding public notices.

An additional comment by Abbas Foroughi reminded the group of the educational fund established for Dane's son Hank; please contact Jason Fertig if you would like additional information.

Provost wrapped up his comments this morning by asserting to treat each other well, and when needed, please do not hesitate to use his office for issues and/or concerns.

USI Faculty Academic Funding Program (FAPP) Presented by Ann White and Jeff Sickman

Ann White provided background related to FAPP by sharing her observation that 70 percent of the current faculty members in Nursing and Health Professions are 55 and older. To begin addressing this problem, Ann White sought out a federal grant program to assist with the forgiveness of student loans to faculty members that choose to pursue a teaching career at USI. Upon discussions with Jeff Sickman, USI Controller and Assistant Treasurer, she realized that in order to support the financial and accounting requirements of the federal program, it would require a new full-time position. So, instead, Ann White and Jeff Sickman, along with support from Steve Bridges, developed an internal program and set aside funds to meet these needs.

Ann White provided a handout with an overview of the program. At the moment, this is only a draft of the guidelines, as Jon Goldman, Attorney, is reviewing the documents. The FAPP will be initiated through a pilot program in the College of Nursing and Health Professions to recruit new nursing faculty members. The process will involve an application and will be a needs based program.

Eligibility Requirements for USI Honors Program Presented by Sarah Stevens

Sarah Stevens provided background information on changing the eligibility requirements for students to be admitted to the USI Honors Program. The recommendations are to raise the High School GPA cut-off from 3.25/4.00 to 3.50/4.00, and to lower the cut-off scores from 27 ACT or 1290 SAT to 25 ACT or 1230 SAT. In addition, students will be required to complete an essay for admittance to the Honors Program. The proposed changes will align eligibility requirements for the USI Honors Program with other universities, such as Indiana State University and Ball State University.

In addition, the Director of the Honors Program will be able to conditionally admit students to the Honors Program if they do not meet the minimum GPA or test score requirements. In these

instances, the essay will serve as the evidence for conditional admittance. Furthermore, the proposed changes will hopefully help us increase the diversity of the students in the USI Honors Program.

A technical question was posed about the listed majors provided in the Honors Program; did this listing include second majors? Probably not, but Sarah Stevens will check to see if second majors are included, and if not, they will be added to the compilation.

A suggestion was made to establish a peer mentoring program; Sarah Stevens indicated that all new honors students are already paired with an upper class student in the program. Another suggestion was made to highlight students in the Honors Program through USI Today.

Sarah Stevens also expressed the need for standalone Honors courses, and majors with a lot of students should consider independent Honors offerings. Presently, most Honors students complete a contract to complete work toward meeting requirements. The current Honors contracts vary widely, from students proposing three additional pages of a term paper to a separate research project and paper related to course materials. There is also discussion among the Honors Faculty Council to add a capstone experience involving a senior thesis or project.

The Honors Faculty Council is also discussing an adjustment to the GPA for Honors graduates from 3.25/4.00 to 3.40/4.00. There is also discussion about having an entry GPA in the first year of 3.25/4.00, and then requiring a 3.40/4.00 to earn an Honors degree. If a student falls below these GPA cut-offs, they are on probation from the Honors Program.

New Business **By William Elliott**

- Due to the workshop planned next Wednesday, December 6 for the Strategic Initiative, the Chairs Community of Practice session will be scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 9 AM in UC 2006. Treats will be provided.
- As most of you probably have realized, the Academic Program Review process did not occur in 2016-17. William Elliott will be sending out a message to request reports from departments and programs that have completed a report. A review of these reports will be conducted in Spring 2018. Furthermore, William Elliott is working with Associate Provost Shelly Blunt to revise the timeline of the Academic Program Review process and tweak the content of the reports. These proposed changes will be discussed at the January meeting of the Council of Chairs and Directors.

Motion for adjournment was made at 9:32 AM by Rick Hudson, seconded by Jeri Burger, and approved by the Council. The next meeting of the Council will occur on Wednesday, January 31, 2018 at 8:30 in BE 3024.

Respectfully submitted,

William Elliott, Chairperson