

Faculty Senate Meeting

01 April 2022

Senators in Attendance: Rex Strange, Kim Delaney, Jason Fertig, Marilyn Ostdendorf, Mary Doerner, Jennifer Greene, Charles Conaway, Shannon Pritchard, Laura Bernhardt, Xavia Herrington-Chate, Jennifer Evans, Alisa Holen



Other Attendees: Kyle Mara, Mohammed Khayum, Amy Chan Hilton

- Held in BE 3024, called to order 2:31 pm.
- Approval of Last Week's Minutes:
 - Motion to consider and amend.
 - 2nd point, 2nd sentence – change to: “Chair noted that senate has developed a reputation...”
 - Amended minutes were approved unanimously.
- Chair's Report:
 - Leann Howard sent a campus-wide email about Faculty representation on a Student Publication committee. Technically these are Faculty Senate designated representatives, though the committee usually takes care of getting members themselves, then Senate will vote on the final membership. Rex asked LeeAnn to send the email, select nominees, and have Senate “vet” these nominees.
 - We need to build a list of committees such as this, because this is not the only one. Athletics Council is another example. Rex and former chairs will work to make a comprehensive list.
 - RCOB has filled all the necessary committee seats for the upcoming 2022-2024 cycle. This allows Rex to open nominations for At-Large positions.
 - Rex asked each Senate Sub-committee chair to submit a final report before our April 22 meeting.
 - There will be a Town Hall with Dr. Rochon and Dr. Khayum in association with Faculty Senate, Administrative Senate, and Staff Senate on April 19, 2022 from 2-3:30 pm.
- Provost's Report:
 - The Innovation Speaker Series took place on Wednesday featuring Steve Wozniak. Attendance was good (about 1000 people). Feedback has been favorable. We were able to record the presentation and can send that out to members of the USI community using USI ID.
 - Covid numbers are down. We had 7 positives last weekend and approximately 2-3 positives this week. Numbers are moving in the right direction.
 - The next Board of Trustees meeting will be May 5, 2022. Commencement will take place May 6 & 7, 2022. We will have an expanded platform party and in the audience at commencement than we had last year.

- We are starting to get data and a model from our Financial Aid Optimization Initiative. This is intended to help make sure our institutional aid dollars are disseminated the best way to help recruitment.
- We are continuing to work with Gray Associates to help us find a consistent methodology to look at our academic programs for growth areas and condensation. We started these discussions in the fall, but it's taken a while for them to get to the analysis. They are currently collecting data (previous 5 years) from USI offices to assess course offerings, enrollment, student payment (vs. institutional discounts) in classes, salary of faculty in courses, etc. The analysis uses the end of semester enrollment as a "snapshot". Our data will be presented in the context of national, state, and regional landscapes to identify growth programs and areas. Once they finish their analysis, the data will be provided as dashboards to the USI community in "layers" (ie. Deans first, then Chairs, etc). Gray Associates does not make decisions, they only provide data and models. USI will make the decisions. Gray Associates does find that cutting programs is often not the best policy. Small programs often influence larger programs in many ways. They often end up focusing more on types and numbers of courses offered.
- Dr. Khayum will look into whether or not 4th Covid boosters will be available to faculty on campus.
- The Provost's office is interested in starting a new initiative on faculty data collection. Often faculty are asked to supply information (engagement, scholarship, resumes, etc) multiple times a year. Every college has its own way of collecting, storing, and retrieving this information. The Provost is interested in making something more consistent across campus. There are services available, though they have costs to consider. He hopes to eventually have something to put in place that faculty can enter information into moving forward (not asking faculty for past data). The idea is that we can avoid repetitive requests. This would also help with Promotion & Tenure applications because the information would be centrally available. This is a forthcoming conversation.
- Charge 2022_07b – USI Merit Process Modification
 - Motion to discuss.
 - The Chair of Economic Benefits Committee contacted Rex and Provost Khayum early in the year regarding the idea for this charge. Rex feels that this addresses a hole within our system that should be addressed.
 - Rex already brought this up to President's Council, but it was not universally well received there. It is unclear exactly what concerns members of the Council may have.
 - The Provost notes that some colleges are very inconsistent across departments, other colleges are not. Some departments evaluate on the calendar year and some on the academic year. It's unclear across colleges if merit pay assessment is in the Chair's office or Dean's office. Even in those departments that have an established rubric, interpretation of that rubric can still be up for debate. Transparency will not necessarily address all of the existing issues, but there is an agreement that increased transparency is important.
 - The Provost would like changes to be determined/proposed by Senate so that we can encourage faculty buy-in. For the immediately upcoming round of contracts, he's asked

chairs to make it clear what methodology is used to make decisions. Chairs need to be able to explain what they're doing and how they're doing it.

- This will require quite a lot of work. This charge could go back to Economic Benefits Committee, but also could be an ad hoc committee, potentially including a representative from the Provost's Office, Chair of EBC, council of chairs, representatives from each college. The committee would need to work closely with Deans and Chairs as well.
 - There was a proposal to provide a small stipend for members of this committee. Dr. Khayum said his office would be willing to consider it.
 - Motion to approve 1st point in the charge to form an ad hoc committee to be tasked with the rest of the points presented in the charge. Membership of the ad hoc committee would be established next Senate meeting.
 - Unanimously approved.
- Charge 2022_08 – 2022 Proposed Salary Increase
 - Motion to discuss
 - Everyone seems to feel this makes perfect sense.
 - This would be delivered to the Provost and Deans with a request to consider this.
 - We're including a 2% raise as a line item in the budget moving forward.
 - Unanimously approved. Provost Khayum will take it to Steve Bridges.
 - Next Meeting: April 22, 2022
 - Adjourned at 3:56 pm.

Minutes recorded by Faculty Senate Vice-Chair Kim Delaney.

Name: Sally Vogl-Bauer (Optional)

Date of Submission: March 21, 2022

Name of Faculty Senate Representative:

1. Charles Conaway
2. Michael Strezewski
3. Stephanie Young

Complete the following items and submit this form to either your Faculty Senate Representative or to the Faculty Senate Chair for consideration by the Faculty Senate.

1. Charge Title:

USI Merit Process Modification

2. Background:

Provide an explanation of the background and context for the proposed charge. What problem, issue, or experience prompts the proposal of the charge?

Last year was the first time I participated in the merit process at USI as a faculty member. This experience showed me that the current merit process used for reviewing faculty performance has many issues that need to be reviewed/revise in order to provide consistency and transparency for these decisions. This issue impacts employee relations as well as morale because most faculty don't know how merit increases are determined (if merit rubrics are used, they are often not shared with faculty; when they are shared, there may be inconsistencies between how merit is determined versus how faculty performance is reviewed using faculty annual report (FAR) data). This also impacts those individuals charged with completing faculty merit reviews, as they would also benefit from clear, standardized, guidelines. I break down the specific concerns in item #3.

3. Action Requested and Desired Result:

Specifically state what action you would like the Senate to take and the desired outcome that you would like to see.

There are many action steps I would like to see addressed. They include the following: (1) I recommend the creation of an ad hoc committee to review/revise merit procedures, working in conjunction with Faculty Senate and the Provost's Office, having representation across colleges,

faculty, staff, and administration. The merit process impacts faculty across campus, so having representation across units is recommended; (2) Review the level of consistency of procedures across academic units. For example, College websites do not clearly indicate what the FAR guidelines are. This does not mean annual reports are not done, but there are inconsistencies with what is required when completing a faculty annual report. There is even less known when it comes to merit; (3) Determine what evidence/documents are to be used for making merit decisions. Faculty often assume that it will be faculty annual reports, but this may not be the case. Colleges may be using different types of evidence and all of this complicates what evidence is being gathered and used to make these decisions; (4) Review the level of standardization across departments within Colleges. For example, every department in the College of Liberal Arts has its own merit guidelines; (5) Determine what criteria should be used when making merit decisions. It should not be assumed that the criteria used for merit align with FARs. In some instances, there are merit criteria that may contain departmental-centric biases (that are often unknown by faculty). It is also unclear how balanced merit criteria are. Presently, there are not percentages or weights for how faculty are to be spending their time/being evaluated per each main criteria area (e.g., teaching, research, service); (6) Determine the time periods that are to be used for merit decisions. Is it the calendar year (January - December), the academic year (July - June)? Furthermore, how do these time periods coincide with evidence provided by faculty? For example, FARs often use calendar years. But if an academic calendar year is being used for merit, faculty may not have had opportunities to provide evidence for the entire time period. Whatever decision is made about the time period under consideration, it should be standardized for all individuals to aid in consistency and whether goals have been achieved within the designated period and to ensure that faculty have been able to provide evidence for the time period under review; (7) Address the lack of consistency in how information pertaining to merit is communicated and shared with faculty. At the present time, University contract letters are vague. They do not indicate a faculty member's previous year's salary, just the new salary. They also do not indicate the percentage of pay increase for the particular contract period. Faculty in some colleges receive formal verification of the size of their merit increase, but this does not happen for all academic units. In other instances, faculty receive no verification in advance of receiving their university contract letters; (8) Ensure that merit increases are assessed separately from salary compression increases. These two items are not the same thing and merit funds should not be used to correct for larger salary compression issues on campus. Salary compression is a real thing, but it should be addressed separately from decisions about merit; and (9) Determine a formal appeal or grievance process for merit decision

appeals. There is no formal process currently in place for appealing a merit decision.

4. Potential Resources:

Provide any information that can help Faculty Senate fully address the charge. Attach additional documents if necessary.

In order to fully address the items in this charge, this will require an extensive review of current practices across academic units. Therefore, based on the items listed, it is recommended that these items (e.g., FAR reports, current merit practices) be gathered at the committee level.

Items 5-7 are to be completed by Senate Chair or Secretary:

5. Senate Comments:

6. Action Taken by the Faculty Senate:

7. Action Taken by the Administration:

Action Taken By Senate:

An ad hoc committee will be formed to work during Summer 2022. This committee will be charged with addressing and/or investigating points 2-9 of this charge. Make-up of this committee will be discussed at our next meeting.

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Complete the following items and submit this form to either your Faculty Senate Representative or to the Faculty Senate Chair for consideration by the Faculty Senate.

1. Charge Title:

2022 Proposed Salary Increase

2. Background:

Provide an explanation of the background and context for the proposed charge. What problem, issue, or experience prompts the proposal of the charge?

In a recent Faculty Senate Charge submitted (USI Merit Process Modification), concerns pertaining to the current merit process are highlighted. (a) In light of the issues cited in the referenced senate charge, (b) numerous leadership positions in transition for academic units across campus, and (c) that the proposed salary increase is well below the current Cost of Living Adjustment figure for 2022 (which is 5.9%), it seems appropriate that the campus treat the proposed 3% salary increase in a way that acknowledges these concerns.

3. Action Requested and Desired Result:

Specifically state what action you would like the Senate to take and the desired outcome that you would like to see.

I would like to see Faculty Senate recommend to the President's and Provost's Offices that everyone receive a flat 3% salary increase for this year (if this has not already been done). Taking this action is appropriate in light of the merit process issues that need to be addressed. It also allows the incoming academic leadership to learn more about their respective academic units before weighing in on any salary-related issues. Finally, while the proposed 3% salary increase is appreciated, it is below the current COLA figure, and is also below the current inflation numbers. Thus, providing everyone with a flat 3% salary increase takes these factors

into consideration and helps everyone in light of the larger societal financial issues and concerns.

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The Cost of Living Adjustment figure came from the Social Security website ssa.gov/cola/

Items 5-7 are to be completed by Senate Chair or Secretary:

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7. Action Taken by the Administration:

Charge passed, will be forwarded to the Provost and Steve Bridges for campus-wide consideration.