

Senate Executive Committee Meeting (12/21/2021)

Attendees: Bets McNie (Vice Chair), Matthew Fairbanks (Secretary), Dinesh Pinisetty (Chair), Christine Isakson, Wil Tsai, Leah Wzyzkowski, Frank Yip, and Provost Lori Schroeder

- Senate Chair Updates
 - Met with Dean Michele Van Hoeck on Day of Dialogue event. They've got a few students and reps from other divisions on the organizing committee in addition to faculty.
 - Students are driving the topic development. Date has slipped, tentatively for the 15th or 16th of March.
 - Commandant Danielle Pelczarski is going to Norwich University, so is resigning her position here.

- Discussion of the President and Needed University Reforms
 - Pinisetty noted that the Department Chair policy is complete, which seems at odds with the current draft document of issues that McNie authored, which marks it as a 'failure'.
 - Pinisetty also talked over the RTP item in the draft document. Chairs are supposedly doing the RTP department committee training. Not sure if that's actually happening, but that's the policy.
 - Discussion of closed door General Senate meeting scheduling. Not December, January. Pinisetty originally thought that the meeting would be in December.
 - Discussing what we need to do to prepare for the closed door meeting. What do we ask Senators to do with their constituencies? Clearly don't want to ask them to vote. Language should be specific to say that the faculty are supporting (or not supporting) the Senate proceeding with the process. McNie supplied some language in chat: "Do you support having the Senate Exec moving forward with the development of a No Confidence Motion?"
 - Also from chat: "Should we also add to early January meeting a public (open) start to elect a new Senate Exec Member?" Conclusion: this will be added to the agenda, but no need to open the Senate meeting for it.

 - McNie notes that she always articulates the downsides of any argument/process (debate team experience!). Wonders if we have a strong case – lots of items, but we need specifics and we need evidence. There's a difference between unpopular Presidents and ones that deserve removal.
 - McNie continues: worried also about enrollment. Worries about the Senate being able to function effectively if this is not successful. Worries about the progress currently being made maybe not being seen to completion. Noted that one person we spoke to about this issue (Vice Chair Steffel, ASCSU) said that the prospect of a vote of no confidence gets the President's attention. What are our asks? What do we want to accomplish with this?
 - Isakson – noted that Steffel has sent a lot of links with information about VNCs (votes of no confidence). She also thinks the blowback and downsides are already happening.
 - McNie – noted, but the hiring committee is very excited about this new AVP of enrollment. Thinks they could do good work. Worried that the enrollment could get worse with a VNC.

- Tsai – said that he thinks the Corps is a major concern for students. Most commandants have primarily a military background with little to no student affairs experience. Feels that we need student affairs expertise now more than ever. Let’s emphasize the “civilian” or student affairs side of things. Noted Kathleen’s expertise at UCLA building a leadership program. Corps reform is something that could be one of our ‘asks’.
- Many nods from attendees. Tsai noted a junior ME who’s leaving because of their experiences with the Commandants, specifically Konecni.
- Pinisetty said that these discussions [about the Corps] have been happening. On paper, 80% of their focus and duties is leadership. Seems like they should be more open-minded in their hiring. Notes that currently, faculty aren’t on the hiring committees for Commandants, though Student Affairs conversely doesn’t serve on faculty hiring committees. Might be a point of contention if we push for faculty representation on Commandants hiring committees.
- Yip – we at least have the RTP process, which is documented and that faculty are experts in. No such process or documentation for Commandants. Noted that the re-emphasis of the military aspects of the Corps was done with no discernible data or evidence for why it was a good idea. The President seems to have a particular picture of what students here should or do look like, which just can’t work as a leadership model.
- From chat, Provost, “If we can successfully link ‘leadership’ to academic affairs and FYE, then there is a stronger argument for including faculty in Commandant searches.”

- Tsai circled back to McNie’s draft document on the various issues we have with the President’s administration. There are some items which perhaps aren’t well articulated, but communication is clearly a problem. Not sure how to quantify this, but there needs to be a culture change in how information is disseminated.
- McNie – I was hopeful when the ‘maritime university’ model was proposed a few years ago and concerned with the more recent developments (Cadet instead of Student, re-emphasis of military-style elements of the Corps, etc), but we need to challenge ourselves to articulate exactly what a maritime university looks like.
- McNie continuing - we need to be cautious. Very worried about blowback and problems with enrollment. Thinks that this University is in an existential crisis. Doesn’t disagree with what others have said, but is very worried about the potential downsides of this action.
- Wyzykowski – noted that she’s only been here for 2 years. Feels a little sad about missing the era when the vision of a maritime university was alive and well. Here to get her license, not be in the military.
- Pinisetty – noted Steffel’s advice about our asks being tangible and specific. Putting every bit of dirty laundry into this document is going to be a disaster if it happens. Noted that some of this is due to errors of previous VPs of Student Affairs. Kathleen has been here a year, is coming into a unique environment, we need to essentially allow her to continue her work.
- Yip – appreciates the sentiment, but we need to see changes being made with evidence backing them. What student learning outcomes are being served by marching maneuvers? These things need to be justified.
- Pinisetty – yes, but pointed out that (for example) orientation was already set by the time Mac Griswold (Dean of Cadets) and Kathleen McMahon (VP of Cadet Affairs) took their positions. They have good ideas about how to improve things.

- Yip – the President specifically has been aloof and derelict in addressing the issues we have on this campus. Noted the Gender Equity committee’s work being slow-walked through administration if it was completed at all.
- Pinisetty said he agrees that the policy was very slow, but part of the issue is Senate-side in terms of not having communication with administration in parallel with Senate approving draft policies.
- Yip – yet some things move very quickly, and others tend to be met with foot-dragging. Thinks the record will show that the foot-dragging occurs on items that are progressive in nature, that are trying to effect positive, modern change.
- Tsai – can we invite the Coast Guard to campus to explain what the *actual* requirement for the uniform is? Everyone should know. Realizes that communication through one contact is sometimes best, but this issue should be understood by all. Correction: MARAD sets this policy, not the Coast Guard.
- Isakson – agrees, and thinks that these regs are not set in stone. We too often assume that things that are currently a certain way are the way that they *must* be.

- Pinisetty – perhaps this can be addressed with SLOs. If the value of the uniform is articulated thus, it can create buy-in.
- Yip – We as faculty ask students to do all sorts of things, and those students need to put aside their hobbies for a minute to do those things, *and they generally do them*, which is amazing, and it’s because we can articulate to them why they being asked to do it.
- Some more discussion of this point (SLOs for uniform standards and other Corps activities).

- It was noted that Sci&Art consultant report will be useful to have in this discussion. Tsai said that Katie/Krystal (University Academic Advisors) may have some data about students leaving that may be helpful.
- Provost mentioned that when she got here, she asked that this student data be gathered, because it wasn’t being formally gathered. She has it for 3 semesters. Are you asking for this information to be expedited for this semester?
- General agreement that having this data would be useful. It would need to be shared carefully for privacy reasons, but Provost will share with Senate Exec soon.
- Pinisetty – noted that exit interviews for staff and faculty are currently kept to only CLC. And that Evan Chang-Siu was not interviewed (according to Evan) upon his resignation.
- Isakson said that she’s working within ASCSU about the exit interviews (standardizing them, getting data from them).

- Fairbanks was asked for his opinion, because he was typing a lot and not speaking. Fairbanks noted that McNie and Pinisetty had effectively articulated his concerns. Fairbanks noted that evidence for some of these issues might be difficult to articulate because some issues don’t have specific events and information associated with them (e.g. communications, etc.).
- Pinisetty noted that some communication issues may have been due to certain individuals within administration. Perhaps President can’t be blamed directly for that.
- Yip responded that someone needs to be responsible, and the President is the supervisor of these people.

- Yip – we have some many things that seem to be breaking down, but there doesn't seem to be accountability as they happen again and again.
- McNie – these issues should be articulated in the draft document she started so that they're part of record and we can start gathering evidence. Please everyone contribute to the document when you can.

- Scheduling the closed door meeting. Email this week for a 1/6 closed door meeting. Reasoning for the delay to January is to allow more deliberation, more information gathering, and give Senators more time to consult with their constituencies.
- McNie – thanked everyone for their input. She wanted to let us know that she will continue to challenge us, poke holes, etc, but we don't want to go into this with any sort of 'group-think'. I want to make sure this is done properly, and that's why I'm taking that role.
- Others thanked McNie for this, agreed that this was an important part of the process.

- Senate Policies, Website, and Committee Staffing Issues
 - Pinisetty noted that the Senate policies and committees are behind schedule. Need first drafts of the various committee policies. McNie noted that many license faculty have refused to serve on the cruise committee, which makes staffing it difficult.
 - The research task force is meeting. They're looking at the research center as well as the process for scholarly activities.
 - Fairbanks said he was taking the website issues seriously. Minutes are the most acute issue in his view. Some of that is because meetings have been busy, but he also could have more timely in producing drafts and shepherding them through to approval.
 - Pinisetty noted that we all have a role on the website issues. Committee pages and other bits do not compare well with other CSU campuses.
 - Some discussion of the ARC process. Tsai will be working on updating the policy and instrument after the current process with the School Deans is complete. He asked the Provost to ask the President what questions were objectionable in the evaluation, because that was an issue in the Captain's review last cycle.
 - Pinisetty recalled that the questions weren't necessarily the issue, but rather faculty using their responses in a way that was not conducive to a formative review.
 - Tsai noted that we're opening up the policy for revisions, so let's try to get everything done on it so that we're ready for the next year's evaluations.
 - Pinisetty – noted that we need to consider *a lot* of Senate policies this coming semester and summer. Tsai agreed and brought up the revision of the Senate RTP committee as an example of a thing that just wasn't on our radar at all this year.

- Open Floor
 - Pinisetty – for your information, the plan is for Senate meetings to continue on Zoom through the academic year.
 - Yip – noted that DFW rates will be high this year. There are COVID issues, but also the tutoring center has gone by the wayside. It's an urgent issue. Would appreciate it if the Provost could reach out to the particularly impacted courses' instructors to see how their students can be best supported.

- McNie – received a grant for \$25,000 for student success when Matt Tener was still here. It's been languishing a bit, but we need to appropriately use that money. She will send out information on the proposal, etc.
 - Yip – expressed his appreciation for the President's message about the incident on Friday and his addressing it as a hate crime.
 - Provost Schroeder and Pinisetty noted that the student is being made whole to some extent by the University. Wyzykowski noted a student led GoFundMe regarding the incident as well.
 - Some discussion of who was affected by the incident. Clarification: one vehicle had its tires slashed. One motorcycle knocked over and vandalized.
 - PEAC is the current place for an official safe space for LGBTQ+ students. Wyzykowski noted the need for security cameras to deter incidents like the one that occurred on Friday.
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- Meeting Adjourned