

Senate Executive Committee Meeting (2/24/2022)

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

- Minutes
 - *2/15/2022 minutes approved by unanimous consent* after small amendments and clarifications to the record.

- Masking Policy Discussion
 - The campus masking policy has been a topic in recent administrative meetings. The Health & Safety Task Force made three recommendations: (1) no changes, (2) masks optional, and (3) masks until end of the semester. The Provost suggested to administration that faculty and Senate Exec be consulted prior to a decision being made.
 - Some context: Vallejo has lifted its masking requirement and state masking requirements are also being lifted.
 - Isakson: my opinion, leave the masking policy in place. She noted the prevalence of the new Omicron variant. She also noted her observation of a whole class and instructor without masks in recent days in violation of the current masking policy.
 - McNie: some sort of half measure is probably not the right decision. “Fish or cut bait.” Faculty opinions are definitely split on the issue, so any decision is unlikely to be popular.
 - Tsai pointed out the similarity between us and K-12 schools, and K-12 schools are still requiring masks currently.
 - Fairbanks noted that our vaccination rate is higher than typical high schools. Fairbanks suggested that the decision should be based on data like the data cited in campus-wide email about masking earlier this month.
 - Moorhead: What are students doing out of class? Wyzykowski – in my experience, they’re not masking at all. Moorhead wondered whether we’re significantly reducing spread with masking essentially only in classroom.
 - Isakson: it would protect faculty who are as a group more vulnerable to COVID.
 - Tsai noted the mandatory weekly testing in K-12 schools (not just for unvaccinated individuals), which is a good tool for detecting spread. We only require this for unvaccinated individuals. Other Senate Exec members mentioned that testing is optional in other counties around the Bay Area.
 - Pinisetty: masking policy shouldn’t be an individual faculty decision. Confusing and inconsistent. A decision should be made one way or the other for the whole University.
 - More discussion. Even within Senate Exec, there are a variety of opinions. Several suggestions that the decision shouldn’t be about how we feel, but whether the data supports it. A couple of us would definitely retain the masks. Others leaning toward dropping them. Others in the middle but wanting clarity in the policy.

- Student Exit Interview Data and the Student Experience

- The student exit interview data supplied to us by Provost Schroeder was discussed.
- Pinisetty asked for Wyzykowski's input as a student as to what factors are affecting student retention. Wyzykowski noted the uniform for orientation and the uncomfortableness of the female version. Also that female students are often intimidated or concerned about the male-dominated student population.
- Wyzykowski continuing from chat: "...the culture is difficult. I think we've all thought about dropping out because of one thing or another whether it's the course load, interactions with other students, or just realizing sailing isn't for them." Continuing, "Also recruiting at local schools and not requiring students to live on campus could help. That way the new students have a connection to the area."
- Provost Schroeder from chat: "FYI, I have talked with Natalie [Herring] about developing an ongoing retention group (which is a best practice carried out on most campuses, we're behind). I believe we also need a COMPREHENSIVE plan for persistence and completion and will be pushing Natalie on that."

- The discussion moved to orientation. Provost Schroeder noted that she's not the lead on it but sees that everyone should have a stake.
- Tsai: there are definitely issues with orientation. He noted that he was on the planning group for orientation last year, and perhaps concentrated too much on the "academic day", believing that was his role in the planning process.
- McNie – we need a paradigm shift. A complete reworking. Students need to start forming friendships, networks during that time.
- The number of students (about 10% of the total population) leaving after orientation was brought up. Provost Schroeder noted that figure includes students who never arrived as well.
- Tsai – one of my concerns are these 2-3 hour lecture format sessions. A different model is needed. Need short things and need active learning. The Provost noted that faculty probably have some ideas about how to do that, and Senate Exec emphatically agreed.
- Yip: I agree with McNie [which rhymes nicely]. We really need to completely change the approach. There's a mentality that they need to be programmed every minute of every day. Students are hustled from place to place. The belief seems to be students will get in to trouble otherwise, which is ridiculous. They need time for themselves and to do basic things like talk to financial aid and their advisors.
- Wyzykowski from chat: "People are here to be at boat school. They should be playing around on boats more or building things with engineering so they can be introduced to the program in a fun way." She also noted the Sinbad games during her orientation being a lot of fun.
- Pinisetty agreed with the idea that a big change is needed. He also noted that we [faculty] needed to justify 3 hours of time for programming during academic day, which is odd when the same standard doesn't seem to be applied to other programming.

- Question: So, what can we as faculty do to help this situation? We know the complaints, but what to do?

- Provost Schroeder noted that there are a lot of ways faculty can have a role. Faculty voices and expertise should be in the room and helping shape the agenda.

- Yip: we really need to get rid of the idea that free time = bad. This prompted some discussion. There was general agreement. The Provost noted that student affairs professionals elsewhere also sometimes assert that the constant programming is a good thing, but she disagrees.
 - Tsai – the FYE [First Year Experience] stuff is being presented at the Deans and Chairs meeting in an hour. Pinisetty should ask the question of how faculty can be involved. Mac Griswold is one of the leads on the orientation planning.
 - Wyzykowski stated that the theme of ‘treat students like adults’ that she’s hearing resonates with her. In some ways, it felt that she was a freshman for 3 years. She also mentioned that the no-family-contact-after-capping policy is weird and uncomfortable. She also advocated for some truly free time during orientation - just clear the mind and sit if you want.
 - Tsai: we in Academic Affairs should model this proposed behavior. No long lectures for instance. Active learning, not lecturing. Pinisetty noted that at least in ET, their time wasn’t generally lecturing. There was time for advising. He personally spoke for only 15-20 minutes.
- Open Floor
 - Fairbanks asked about the timeline for Senate elections and the census date for determining the number of Senators. Pinisetty is on it but indicated that asked HR for the faculty list a month ago, followed up, and never received it. He’ll look for another source.
 - Fairbanks asked about how the “safety stand down” went last week on the TSGB.
 - Moorhead: it wasn’t a safety stand down, it was only a meeting. The student fall and a crane operation safety incident in which a stop was called and not followed were discussed. Some suggestions were made: central whiteboard for listing unsafe areas of ship. “Caution tape fatigue” was discussed. Acknowledged that it was everywhere, left up, and people routinely ignore it. Only outcome: another meeting to figure out how to integrate these things into ship SMS.
 - Pinisetty: we should discuss MT’s Appendix K, in particularly the passage that maybe belonged in the Appendix and maybe not. Steve Browne indicated he wanted to keep the language because the expectations shifted per administration. For example: differing opinions on whether it was a requirement to have a masters degree before hiring or whether it could be completed during tenure-track.
 - Yip: that makes sense, but it seems like the language should be part of a MOU or something of the sort. Pinisetty agreed. Appendix K should speak to people within the RTP process, not people who might one day be in that track.
 - McNie: appreciates the issue but given the lack of feedback over a long timeline, we should defer to the department. The department voted for it. If it gets kicked back at higher levels of review, maybe then we can revisit.
 - *Tsai, Moorhead, and Fairbanks all indicated that they would also defer to the department. Pinisetty will move the Appendix forward in the process.*

- International Experience (IE) Oversight Committee: One volunteer (Julie Chisholm). Thoughts on how to proceed? McNie and Pinisetty suggested tabling it. Interest may increase when IE comes back post-COVID.
- JEDI Committee policy: No volunteers to write the policy. McNie will write it. She thinks that most people don't want to write policy but would volunteer to be on the committee once established.
- Pinisetty: Department Chair evaluation survey is almost complete. He's basing it on the Department Chair roles and responsibilities document. Bagheri, Malaquias, Trevisan, and Browne will be contacted to see if they will be evaluated. Pinisetty anticipates circulating the survey next week.
- Pinisetty will subsequently work on the sabbatical policy.
- Fairbanks updated on the Budget Oversight Committee policy that he volunteered to draft. He noted that our parallel structure (University Budget Advisory Committee *and* a Senate Budget Oversight Committee) is a little unusual. Pinisetty suggested contacting East Bay that has a similar structure. The Budget Oversight Committee was apparently suggested by former Provost Opp.
- Selection of the TSGB captain for this summer's cruise. There was some confusion here from Pinisetty on the kind of faculty involvement desired by Captain Pecota. Provost Schroeder clarified that Captain Pecota wants ideas for who will be captain, but not faculty representatives on the selection committee. Pinisetty originally thought it was representatives.
- Yip commented that this practice is precisely what we want to get away from. The selection should proceed by committee like every other position across the University instead being appointed by fiat.
- Clarification on Graham Benton's email about the extension of the Provost's RTP letter deadline: it wasn't Senate Exec that was consulted, it was the Senate Chair (Pinisetty). Pinisetty noted that President made the decision after this consultation. Pinisetty noted his rationale in approving of the extension was that 5 weeks was given for Senate RTP review and only 3 weeks to Provost. Also, CFA leadership [Steve Runyon] was consulted.
- Yip asked for a list of peer mentors from McNie. He noted that student interface on Passport is different. They can see tutoring, we can't, so faculty can't easily recommend specific students. McNie said she would send out the list asap.
- Yip: we're losing Alejandro [Cifuentes-Lorenzen] and Kate Randolph from Sciences and Mathematics. The research task force will require more members, because they were both on it. That task force is vital. If you look at the faculty resignations on campus, there's a lot of faculty who won the outstanding research award on that list. Provost Schroeder agreed with the importance of it. McNie assured Yip that she would find volunteers or do it herself.
- Pinisetty: students getting paid for research work issue has been resolved. Parker was involved in the meeting, so is apprised of the situation. Yip thanked the Provost for looking into and solving the problem. Provost noted that the indispensable Rhonda Pate

has devised a workaround. The problem was apparently a CSU policy that states students can't receive stipends while also being an hourly worker.

- Tsai suggested Fairbanks draft an 'ask' for information on budget committee policy. Tsai can share with the ASCSU. Pinisetty also offered to send the 'ask' to the Senate Chairs committee.
 - Reform resolution feedback: it's been very quiet. Tsai encouraged everyone to be talking with your departments about it. Pinisetty indicated that the ET department has had the discussion and will be in communication.
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- Meeting Adjourned