School of Science Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
10/18/2013

Voting Members Present: Simon Rhodes (Dean), Beth Neal-Beliveau (Psychology/President), Horia Petrache (Physics), Patrick Morton (For Vitaly Tarasov, Mathematical Sciences), Dennis Devine (Psychology), Christoph Naumann (Chemistry and Chemical Biology), Yao Liang (Computer and Information Science), Jiliang Li (Biology), Lin Li (Earth Sciences)

Non-Voting Members: David Skalnik, Doug Lees, Jeff Watts, Snehasis Mukhopadhyay (Computer Science [past president]), Michelle Salyers (Secretary)

Visitors present: Jane Williams and Charles Goodlett (Psychology)

1. Introductions – President Neal-Beliveau called the meeting to order at 2:03pm.
2. Approval of agenda - President Neal-Beliveau called for approval of the agenda and it was approved with no additions.
3. Approval of minutes - President Neal-Beliveau called for approval of the past minutes and these were approved with no additions.
4. Comments by Dean Rhodes
   • Ongoing searches in Biology, Chemistry & Chemical Biology, Computer and Information Science, Forensic and Investigative Science; Psychology, and Mathematical Sciences (chair)
   • Parking is not going to be privatized.

5. New Business – P&T Guidelines (Charles Goodlett - CG)
   Topic to discuss - what things do we need to think about updating for the P&T guidelines; One issue is the letters from evaluators. There are differences in how schools phrase the letters (e.g., Indiana law allows for faculty to see them). We were reminded that the discussion in P&T meetings should be focused on the candidate and not the format of the dossier. CG said that this situation has improved compared to when he started a few years ago. Dean Rhodes (DR) said that in the past, the School brought in someone to run dossier workshops and this has been helpful.
   We can have higher standards in the School than campus. Our lecturer standard for promotion is different. For example, CG says that the School is enforcing the dissemination aspect (rather than peer review as the campus guidelines do).
   Solicitation for external assessments is the main difference that needs to be addressed. CG showed us the template letter in the campus guidelines. There is a statement that the campus guidelines say is mandatory to include letting the letter writer know that the candidate may access the letters, and that the university is legally compelled to give access to the entire dossier. This is from the university counsel and is required of all schools. We cannot have a statement in the letter saying that the person signed a waiver. In actuality, the waiver is unenforceable, and is viewed as coercive. CG showed us sample requests from different
departments in the past year, several of which were out of compliance with the university standard. CG says these are legal and practical issues—how do we get people to write letters. DR reminds us that we do want letter writers to provide analytical feedback. We hope they will still provide objective and comprehensive analysis. CG says that some departments are using a waiver. Other schools are not using this. Horia Petrache (HP) asked if other schools ask for faculty to use waivers. And CG says no, the other schools on campus do not use waivers. Under what conditions can faculty see the dossier? CG says that a formal process is not required, all a faculty member needs to do is ask. Snehasis Mukhopadhyay (SM) reminds us that there are rights of faculty and rights of the letter writer. IU is on the side of the faculty member, and Purdue is more on the side of the letter writer (saying only under legal request could the candidate see the letters). SM asks if the concerns are new since the school was doing this for 28 years. CG says it is recent within the past few years. DR reported that someone in the School of Medicine has seen that the past 10 years, the letters have been more bland and positive; perhaps less critical. CG says we ask writers not to make a judgment, but that they often still do. Patrick Morton (PM) asked about the law and whether the names of the letter writers were known. His prior University shared the letters, but de-identified them. SM says that Ohio State did a similar process. Jane Williams (JW) says there is a right to know “accuser” if there was a lawsuit. CG says we can ask University Counsel, but they are the same people who wrote the paragraph request to begin with. It may be worth getting it on record so that if we need to change our template, we can do that.

CG said the other issue on letter writing is Section 5 reference letters (internal letters) – there is a lack of clarity of how they are obtained. Campus says that the Chair has to request the letters and that the letter is addressed to the Chair. But we have lack of clarity on where letters go that are requested by the faculty member, e.g., letters form collaborators in research go into the research section. We can clean that up in the SOS guidelines.

DR to remind us that if we disagree with campus guidelines we may need to question those (rather than always acquiescing).

JW commented on the lecturer guidelines and the original emphasis was “scholarship,” but there is no shared definition, so there are different interpretations (e.g., peer reviewed journals should not necessarily be the criteria for lecturers). JW reminded us that lecturers are not just judged on what happens in the classroom, but other things should be accounted for. President Bethany Neal-Beliveau (BNB) said we have a list of types of things that can count. JW described a case where a lecturer put forth peer-reviewed research, and the discussion was whether promotion to full lecturer should count because the emphasis should still be teaching (and this was not like a scientist position where peer-reviewed research is more important). So, even with peer-reviewed research for a Lecturer, there should also be pedagogy. CG said usually scholarship related to lecturer ranks are usually bringing teaching practice to other universities, presentations, etc. Even internal grants from Center for Teaching and Learning are peer reviewed and could count.

CG noted a couple of processes he thinks are now fixed. The first point was negative decision; the faculty can formally request reconsideration in writing, detail what is erroneous or unfairly evaluated, and the entity must give a formal response within 2 weeks. We now have a signature process in place so that the candidate has to sign that they received the report. DR has given candidates the page out of the guidelines and recommended that they pursue
reconsideration – that with a negative vote on tenure, can do a reconsideration request. If there is a reconsideration process started, the information has to go back to all the prior committees. CG says we are okay on the process, but it may be that not all the faculty outside of the P&T committees understand it.

CG also brought up the page limit issue. The campus says that faculty can have 50 pages. The SOS guidelines say “usually 25,” but CG says we are hurting our candidates if we require them to have less, because the campus allows up to 50.


JW said she hopes that all departments have conversations about the Plan and get feedback. Only 2 faculty responded to the survey asking for comments. Jane is here to get feedback from us, to also answer questions, and to encourage more conversation about them. Comments can be made on the website, or send them directly to Jane or Bethany. JW said that DR hoped that the strategic plan would get rolled out at the same time as the building. BNB asked if there was any pushback on areas. JW says one area was external funding – that some disciplines have different views on this, so making external funding a cultural expectation may not fit them. The Strategic Plan group will take comments back to reconsider ways to address concerns. JW described where some of the numbers came from for new goals, and that some of these can be changed. It is difficult for some things to be quantified (e.g., number of students in Honors Program). Some data we do not have yet. For the goal of “Innovate,” Psychology gave some ideas (e.g., collaborative articles). JW welcomes other ideas for things like this. Some have more action items in them and lend themselves to a plan. But, we need to recognize that departments may need to develop their own action steps – these will not be the same across departments. Also, some departments can have bigger impact on some areas. But as a School, we want to move forward, so what strengths can each department bring.

Michelle Salyers and Dean Rhodes excused themselves for other meetings.

HP said that this is a plan for the next 5 years – it doesn’t say will these numbers increase over time or should we actively do things differently to achieve goals. JW responded that we need to have goals; research goals may be met by the hiring of new faculty, but with other goals, we need to be more planful to achieve. Some responsibilities fall under the Deans, other under the Chairs. HP asked how worried should we be to meet these goals? JW responded that the School has goals that we as a group all want to attain. Christoph Naumann (CN) reminded us that sometimes these numbers can back fire; if we need to increase numbers, people may publish in lower-tier journals to increase numbers. JW reminded that we still need specific goals to move forward.

HP asked if there will be an evaluation next year to see if we are moving towards our goals. JW said that these data are already being collected and we could put together a report to see how we are meeting our goals. Yao Liang (YL) said we need to look at the Plan as a whole, not the individual numbers, or by individual, or department, etc... Patrick Morton (PM) reminded us that goals are really important, but the key is support for doing what the individuals want to do. There is support across the board in making it possible for people to do what they do best.

JW asked if the Strategic Plan had been talked about at Faculty meetings? Answer seemed to be no, except for Psychology. HP said it will be taken more seriously if Jane/Eugene
come to faculty meetings. PM suggested maybe they should provide a list of questions for the
departments to consider.

SM asked how important are the actual numbers and keeping track of how well we are
reading the goals. JW said the Dean wants 3 documents: 1) postcard size with what school is
and what our mission is; 2) Strategic Plan without numbers; 3) Strategic Plan with numbers. SM
asked should this be a topic at Faculty Assembly? BNB replied that it will be main topic at Fall
Faculty Assembly. PM said it can be a source of inspiration.

CN asked if there are data so we can look at trajectories of these numbers? Doug Lees
(DL) responded that it is difficult to obtain some of these data.

Old business – Jane Williams and the Student Satisfaction Survey Instrument

JW said she will send out a fairly lengthy explanation of the new instrument and how
the data was to be used. Working groups are being formed to review the lab, recitation, and
active learning forms. Another working group will be formed to examine the online process for
administering the surveys and see if there are best practices that can be instituted to increase
response rates. We are being proactive. The School is also comparing data from paper vs.
online versions of the surveys from the past three semesters. Mark Federwisch will be taking
over the implementation of the surveys. JW said that Mark will set up a data-protected site
where chairs can go in and access the data.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.