

## **Minutes of Meeting of Newark Faculty Council, Oct. 16, 2017**

### **Minutes by Beryl Satter, NFC Secretary**

**Attendees:** Ashaki Rouff, Fran Bartkowski, April Benasich, Adriana Cuervo, Jane Gilman, John Graham, John Kettle, Joseph Market, Rosa Oppenheim, Brandon Paradise, Beryl Satter, Alan Sadovnik, Ted Szatrowski, Mary Rizzo, Jerome Williams, Ray Williams, Laszlo Zaborszky

**Guest:** John Gunkel

**Unable to attend:** Alex Gates, Suresh Govindaraj, Robert Snyder, Edem Avakame

1. Provost Jerome Williams began with a short overview. We made fifty new faculty hires this year. The hires were partially an attempt to address the issue of faculty diversity; although we are proud of our diverse student body, at the base point of 2010 the diversity of the faculty lagged behind. We are making up for that gap with recent hires. Now, as a result of our recruiting efforts, the Rutgers Business School is the most diverse in the nation, aside from the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Provost Williams also reminded us that Central is willing to cover 50% of salaries for up to three years for hires of faculty from underrepresented categories.
2. Discussion then turned to how to evaluate teaching. Bonnie Veysey and the P3 Collaboratory will pull together a response to teaching evaluation needs. The PRC has turned down cases because of teaching, but they need more input on how to evaluate teaching. Central would like Provost Williams to identify a few outstanding teachers so that we can have a "Teaching Hall of Fame" or some similar sort of distinction for our best teachers.
3. John Gunkel talked about possible ways to help students who have been denied schooling because of the hurricanes in Houston and Puerto Rico, including having such students take a semester here at Rutgers-Newark. Students who can show they were enrolled at, say, University of Puerto Rico could come here for a semester instead. We'd have to identify appropriate students and faculty. This is a Rutgers initiative, not one shared by other schools, but we are investigating if other schools might have programs we can share in. If an individual displaced student wants to say here after the semester, that could be possible, but we want to be sure to communicate clearly that we are not trying to poach students from their home institution. The students would be treated like "visiting students" – they would pay their tuition at their home institution but be able to take a semester here. Gunkel noted that housing will be an issue as we are currently at 99% capacity – but displaced students could be given priority for housing that comes available.
4. Provost Williams noted that we've surpassed 13,000 students for the first time, which is good news but also challenging. We are working in keeping a balance between meeting the needs of local, in-state and out-of-state students. He also described executive training that is available in

New Brunswick to train those who want to take on administrative positions (we don't have this in Newark). We are sending people to the New Brunswick trainings, therefore.

5. Provost Williams said that we were revisiting our Academic Integrity Policies because we currently have different standards for different problems. For example, for plagiarism we need "clear and convincing evidence," while for sexual assault we only need a "preponderance of evidence." The federal government is now pushing for a single standard for widely disparate crimes (plagiarism vs sexual assault). The question of why we would need a single standard was raised. The answer is that it is now federal policy that this be the case. Provosts are now meeting on this issue and would like input from faculty and deans.
6. There was a long discussion of the Teaching Excellence Center proposal. Some of the points are summarized here.

"praised the proposal but noted that we need more than "two questions" on the SIRS student surveys. Questions on level of course difficulty and work load must also be included. Also, the two questions recommended are "yes/no" questions. This is silly. At the very least, the answers should be on a scale. Finally, the language in the TEC report blames faculty for the low participation in SIRS surveys. Obviously, the problem is the movement online of the surveys. ... proposed that we find a way to do the surveys in class, during class time, through wireless connections and also asked about teaching observations. Who observes who? Would PTLs observe full professors? What would the policy be on that? Would we have a policy for remediation if the teaching report is negative? How would we help teachers improve?"

"noted that it was foolish to make the student comments voluntary. We need their comments for faculty development"

"we adopt a question: "How would you rate your own contribution to the work of this course?", ... found the student responses to this question to be honest. ... also has a written mid-semester response on how the course is going, which we could all adopt. "

"Suggest: we look at how other universities rate teaching and there are some documents on this that could be shared with us."

"suggest a standard subset of questions for the student evaluations to which other questions can be added. We must have student answers be on a scale (not yes/no). We should be able to compare across departments that way. The standard questions should be balanced, but also tailored to specific disciplines (labs, seminars, etc.). It was noted that that in (CMBN), only the director could undertake the teaching observations. This would produce an enormous workload for the director. There could also be a problem (if the director doesn't do all evaluations) of peer evaluations in which the evaluator is not himself/ herself a skilled teacher. Would the person evaluated have a chance to respond? Can we accept that teaching portfolios will vary by department?"

“flaws in the SIRS surveys (if we did medical studies as we do SIRS surveys, people would die). Blamed SIRS for a decline in teaching quality, as people teach easier courses in order to get better responses on SIRS. We need higher response rates. We should copy other universities’ methods, for example by delaying final grades until the SIRS survey is in. ... also suggested a breakdown for each course on how the grades are given (percentage of As, Bs, etc.). When outsiders evaluate teaching, they look at graded papers, etc – not just at the syllabus. Will our evaluators be willing to do this? He once took over two sections of 150 students and found that they had been evaluated incorrectly.... noted that a star teacher would do well in research as well.”

“. In SIRS evaluations, ratings tended to be lower for mandatory courses, for courses graded on a curve, and for very large classes ... faculty has not been involved in writing evaluations or giving teaching feedback... suggested that faculty across the university confer on how to give proper teaching feedback.”

“If we did a large document about teaching, its suggestions could be cherry picked by the Ad Hoc Committee or the administration. How do we evaluate without SIRS?”

“we need more than SIRS for evaluations”.

“we should state that SIRS only measure a percentage of teaching strengths. We need additional measures.”

“warned that we should be comparing types of classes (rather than classes in general). It’s easier to get good evaluations in smaller and more exciting courses.”

“evaluations by peers can be unreliable. Faculty members are not trained in what to look for. You’d need two evaluators for each one. We don’t have a consensus on what makes a good teacher. For example, some see lecturing as inherently bad, while others are masters at lecturing and should not be graded down because they lecture. We shouldn’t privilege one form of pedagogy over another.”

“in some fields, only the faculty director would have the expertise to do the teaching evaluations”

“one year, as undergraduate director, did about a dozen teaching evaluations of PTLs and TAs (this hadn’t been done in several years, so the faculty member had to do all of them). On one hand, doing so many made it possible to compare who was and was not an effective teacher. On the other hand, it was hugely labor intensive. No one should be asked to do this sort of work without either financial payment or a teaching reduction.”

“the TEC report mentioned in passing that SIRS and other standardized evaluations often express unconscious student biases against women teachers and teachers of color. What will be done to correct for those biases?”

“agreed that doing many teaching observations was a lot of work.”

"teaching was reviewed each semester by a different person. We should articulate what makes a good teacher."

"all methods have pros and cons. We should each articulate what makes good teaching. Do people with weak evaluations ever improve as teachers."

"yes, they improve. If we didn't believe in that we would not be teachers."

"some SIRS questionnaires have a deadline before exams, and some after. This can distort results".

"An event in previous system in place in one department of teams of observers (one junior, one senior) summarized. In this case, the senior evaluator remarked afterward to the junior evaluator that it was worse class ever observed. Yet when the junior faculty was asked to sign the evaluation written by the senior faculty member, it was a glowing report. Reports of class observations now tend to focus on basic teaching capacities questions (is the voice level appropriate? Is the board writing legible? "

"evaluators needed to be trained to detect their own biases before evaluating others. "

FINAL resolution: Rather than have a subcommittee discuss the issues further, it was suggested that everyone write their thoughts on improving the TEC document and send them to the executive committee.

7. **The NFC chair then moved to another issue and presented a critical email from** a student who did not approve of the NFC supporting the larger Rutgers statement on inclusivity on campus (email was dated 9/6/17).

In response it was said that we should keep ideas open. Anything can be political.

8. A final topic of the meeting was the issue of the electing PTL representatives to the NFC. Lazlo Zaborski noted that there are 350 to 450 PTLs on campus. If we want proportional representation on the Newark Faculty Council, we obviously have way too few PTLs on the NFC (he had a document graphing the numbers). There are 12 categories for how non-tenured teachers are defined. How do we send out nominations for two or three seats to almost 500 people? Ken Kressel, who was Zaborski's predecessor, doesn't recall how this was done. It seems that Janice Freidlander did it for him. Only .5% of contingent faculty are represented on the NFC, compared to 5 to 7% for everyone else.