Faculty Senate Minutes

Meeting No. 4, Fall Semester 2022

(Plenary Session)

9th December 2022, 14:00

Room A402

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Omondi called the meeting to order at 14:02.

In attendance:

- Professor O
- Professor Hsieh
- Professor Omondi
- Professor Han
- Professor Ryoo
- Professor Houghton
- Professor Hong
- Professor Pennings
- Professor Jeong

Acceptance of Agenda

Approved by all.

Approval of Prior Meeting's Minutes

Approved by all.

Committee Reports

The provost was asked to speak. He wished Happy Holidays to all.

Executive Committee

The executive committee reviewed the Senate's role over the past semester and discussed possible courses of action for the next.

Some of the committee reports are still not quite to the level that is expected. Chair Omondi has created templates to help the committees to meet these expectations. Concerns about the quality of the work from one committee were aired and expressed to the chair of the committee in question.

The executive discussed the possibility of increasing the membership size of each committee. Presently committees consist of 3 senators. This number was chosen due to the time commitments needed by each senator. However, it is possible for committees to request assistance from others if needed. Presently, it does not seem that any committee has so much work that they would be overwhelmed and need this assistance.

Next semester, the Senate will finish the work from this semester as well as begin working on new ideas. The senators should spend some time thinking over the holiday, about what the Senate should aim to achieve next semester, with input from their constituents.

Academic Personnel Policy

The APP introduced five proposals to the Senate.

1. Within the tenure review process, the description of the external letter collection process is ambiguous and needs to be clarified.

During the SUNY Korea tenure review process, faculty outside of SUNY Korea must write reference letters supporting the SUNY Korea faculty candidate; these letters are included as part of the candidate's (tenure application) file. Before this can happen, the candidate must submit two separate lists of names of professors, and the SUNY Korea administration then picks which of the professors on those two lists will be contacted to write reference letters. Currently the letter collection process for tenure review is ambiguous and needs to be re-visited. This issue has already arisen during the tenure process for some members of the SUNY Korea faculty. Paragraphs 2.4.5.1 and 2.4.5.2 shown below, are from page 57 of the Faculty Handbook.

> 2.4.5.1 This division of the file should contain all solicited recommendations (outside referees, faculty and students) other than those of supervisory of the candidate. It is expected to contain substantive written evaluations from at least six authorities from peer and/or aspirational US or international institutions in all cases of promotion to higher rank or continuing appointment or both. These letters must be from distinguished scholars who, at minimum, have rank higher than that of the candidate, and preferably have rank of full professor. The letter writers should not be collaborators within last four years, colleagues, members of the candidate's graduate department during the time he or she was a graduate student, or postdoctoral supervisors. Such letter writers will be referred to in this document as mandatory letter writers and their letters as mandatory letters. In addition to these six mandatory letters, up to four other letters may be solicited from authorities who might not necessarily satisfy the requirements of mandatory letter writers.

- From paragraph 2.4.5.1, the file needs to include letters from "at least six authorities from peer and/or aspirational US or international institutions"; and those letter writers are referred to as "mandatory letter writers".

Paragraph 2.4.5.2 describes the administration's ("department's") process of selecting those (at least) six authorities, from the two separate lists that the candidate has suggested.

> 2.4.5.2 The candidate may suggest a list of four to six mandatory referees from peer and/or aspirational US or international institutions, from which the department will choose three. In addition, the candidate may suggest no more than four other referees from which the department may choose at most two. At least three mandatory referees from peer and/or aspirational US or international institutions, and no more than two other referees are to be chosen independently by the department.

The purpose of 2.4.5.2 is to distinguish between letter writers from aspirational institutions and those who aren't. The issue with this is that the wording becomes confusing when comparing it 2.4.5.1.

- The first ambiguity has to do with whether the phrase "will choose three" suggests that the department must choose exactly 3, or whether the department may end up forced to choose 4 (from the candidate's first list). If the former, then the department could have the freedom to nominate and select one referee totally independently of the candidate's lists. If the latter, then the department would not have such freedom.
- The second ambiguity has to do with the terms "mandatory" and "other", used apparently in different ways in 2.4.5.1 versus 2.4.5.2. Presumably, the referees chosen from the two lists described in 2.4.5.2 are exactly referring to the "(at least) six authorities" mentioned in 2.4.5.1. However, to add to the confusion, 2.4.5.2 (inappropriately?) distinguishes between "mandatory" referees and "other" referees, and the last sentence of 2.4.5.1 also refers to "other letters".

The Academic Personnel Policy Committee proposes that the Administration clarifies the following:

i. The use of the phrases "will choose three" and "at least three mandatory referees" in 2.4.5.2.
ii. The use of the phrases regarding "mandatory letters" or "mandatory letter writers" versus "other letters" in both 2.4.5.1 and 2.4.5.2.
iii. Whether the term "colleagues" in 2.4.5.1 also included any undergraduate classmates during the candidate's undergraduate education.

A vote on this proposal was called by Chair Omondi at 14:23 and seconded by Professor Hsieh. The result was unanimous in favour of the proposal.

2. Changes need to be made to the Grievance Resolution Committee Guidelines.

The Grievance Resolution Committee Guidelines refers to a "Department of Academic & Student Affairs" although as of December 2022, SUNY Korea has no such department, and it should instead read "Department of Academic Affairs". There is also no "Associate Dean of Academic Affairs" currently at SUNY Korea. Finally, it should be clearer in this document that it pertains to those situations where students are either/both Person(s) Filing Grievance (PFG) or Person(s) Being Accused (PBA) and not when PFG and PBA are both faculty members. In this situation, the correct procedure is instead to be found in the Faculty Handbook.

The Academic Personnel Policy Committee proposes that the Administration makes changes to the Grievance Resolution Committee Guidelines.

Chair Omondi called for a vote at 14:26. This was seconded by Professor Hsieh. The result was unanimous in favour.

3. There is conflict between what is written in the 'Grievance Policy' and 'Disciplinary Policy' chapters in the Faculty Handbook.

A change needs to be made to the Grievance Policy chapter. For example, on p. 76, Article II, part 1(a) mentions that "the Department Chair shall attempt to resolve the matter at the Department level if the grievance is within a department" but does not take into account the possibility that the grievance might be against the Department Chair, creating a fundamental conflict of interest.

Furthermore, the Grievance Policy chapter describes an organizational procedure potentially resulting in disciplinary outcomes that include termination of appointments or the reduction of benefits. However, it is the Disciplinary Policy that is expressly written to anticipate the possibility of litigation. These two chapters should be reconciled, especially regarding any mention of disciplinary action in the Grievance Policy.

The Academic Personnel Policy Committee proposes that the Administration makes the changes outlined and reconciles the *Grievance Policy* and *Disciplinary Policy* chapters in the Faculty Handbook.

Chair Omondi called for the vote called at 14:28. This was seconded by Professor Hsieh. The result was unanimous in favour.

Chair Omondi commented that presently SBU is going through the reaccreditation process, necessitating a visit to SUNY Korea in the fall semester. There are 7 sections to the accreditation body's policies. The key criteria number 3 for section 2, is for the university to have a strong grievance policy, so the committee is addressing this this at a good time.

4. The Faculty Handbook should be updated to account for the voting rights of the Faculty Senate's permitted membership.

Presently, the new Faculty Senate is not recognised in the handbook. Therefore, the handbook must be updated to account for the Senate's voting rights, in particular those members of the faculty that are eligible to be Senators.

Questions were asked on what needs to be added. At present, the Faculty Handbook (Chapter 2, Article IV) describes what at many other institutions is called a faculty assembly. All faculty would be eligible to vote in an assembly, but only elected senators in a senate. There should be a clear definition of the two in the handbook, along with their relationship to one another.

The Academic Personnel Policy Committee proposes that the Administration makes changes to Article IV of Chapter 2 in the Faculty Handbook to ensure the term "Voting Faculty" accounts for the rules of the Faculty Senate.

Chair Omondi called the vote called at 14:33. This was seconded by Professor Hsieh. The result was unanimous in favour.

5. The Faculty Handbook should be updated to account for the voting rights of some types of Assistant Professors.

The Academic Personnel Policy Committee proposed that the Administration makes changes to Section 2, Article IV §3 to ensure that faculty members with the titles of *Assistant Professor of Engineering and Technology Practice* and *Teaching Assistant Professor* are also have voting rights.

Chair Omondi called for the vote called at 14:35. This was seconded by Professor Hsieh. The result was unanimous in favour.

Provost Hefazi stated that the version of the Faculty Handbook currently available to the Senate is out of date. There is a more recent version from May 2022, which it is presently unpublished.

Many of the issues addressed by the senate had already been identified, but the Administration was waiting for the committee to report their findings before making changes. Changes to the Faculty Handbook will be presented to the Senate for review.

Chair Omondi will write up the recommendations and send them to the Administration.

Education Council

The Education Council have been discussing three issues since the previous Senate session.

1. The Centre for Learning Excellence.

On 30th November, a workshop was held by Dr. Dreamson on the use of Brightspace, with just under 40 people in attendance. Before the workshop began, a survey was distributed, to address the potential value and concerns of the faculty regarding the proposed Centre for Learning Excellence. Twelve people completed the survey. The results showed a want for the centre to exist, with a mean of 8.5 on the importance of its existence.

This survey will be followed up with an electronic survey in the spring. As per Professor's Quan's suggestion at the previous Senate session, a further survey will be distributed to department chairs.

Additionally, the council has been discussing when would be best to open the centre, owing to the expense of operation. Presently, the leading suggestion is for the centre to be open during the inter-sessions, and at the beginning of each semester. This is when faculty have the most time for professional development, and thus should be able to use the facilities available to them.

2. Acceptance of the Duolingo English proficiency test

In the English department, there is a serious disparity in the quality of work completed by those students who entered the university using Duolingo for their English requirement and those who took other examinations. This has led to a far larger workload for the professors.

Professor Houghton asked the provost as to whether this could possibly be changed. The provost stated that while this is a potential issue, the home campus claims that its study shows little difference between the results of those admitted with Duolingo and those not. As this is an admissions policy, the home campus would need to change their requirements as well. SUNY Korea is currently exploring a precollege style program to supplement the language skills of the students to address this issue.

Director Oliga, of the English program, stated that the English program on the home campus also had the same issues with Duolingo. However, while the home campus's official requirement is a score of 105, in reality, a score of over 120 is needed. This is possible due to the size of their application pool. Professor Houghton then spoke of the contextual differences between SUNY Korea and the home campus. SUNY Korea finds itself in a much more difficult situation, as this is an EFL school and not and ESL school like the home campus, which makes the university's position unique and the problem more sizeable. Chair Omondi asked Professor Houghton to make an official writeup for the Senate.

3. Size of the committees

The Education Council feels that committees of only three people are not large enough for constructive discussions. This was already clarified by Chair Omondi during the Executive Committee's report.

Chair Omondi stressed the importance that the survey, to be distributed to the whole faculty, is constructed carefully to ensure that the results are what is needed. The committee must make sure that people will actually use the CLE and not just want one.

Campus Environment and Faculty Welfare

The Campus Environment and Faculty Welfare Committee asked that people give feedback via email on their suggested IDA program (see the minutes of the previous meeting). Professor Hong will visit the home campus during the inter-session and ask for feedback from the faculty on their IDA system.

The committee received no feedback during the last month, so the proposal was not prepared for this session.

Academic Planning and Education Services

The APES has continued discussing three issues.

1. Graduate Students Research Assistantship.

The Academic Planning and Education Services Committee are looking into the costs for graduate students. Presently, it is difficult to recruit graduate students, as while they receive a stipend for the work, they must still pay about $3,000 a year for their tuition.

There was some debate over the specifics on what TAs and RAs receive from the university, as well as what is normal at Korean institutions.

2. Teaching Award

The Academic Planning and Education Services Committee are looking into the possibility of creating a teaching award for outstanding teaching at the university. The provost asked for the governing body to take a broad approach when deciding what makes an excellent teacher, especially if the recipient receives a monetary reward. Chair Omondi asked that the committee works on deciding the criteria.

Prof. Hong raised concerns that it could become a rotation system, as happened on the home campus when they ran out of recipients. Further concerns were raised on how the award would be judged and how to ensure fairness, as such, the evaluation would need to be based on faculty judgements, and not students. The provost suggested judging the award based on competency in the field, pedagogy, student activities, etc.

Professor Hsieh suggested a teaching innovation award. The provost recommended that this be part of the criteria for the teaching award.

The provost suggested using annual evaluations to make the judgements easier. The award could be presented only when deemed necessary and not necessarily on an annual basis.

Professor Hsieh suggested that SUNY Korea has a better teacher appreciation day, as is in line with most other universities in Korea.

3. Internal Research Funds

The APES have been speaking about six funds, most of which require expenditure from the school. Concerns over the potential application pool were raised, with the former Lead Let program

being used as an example. It is possible that the program may need extending to the entire IGC, as otherwise there may not enough applications, and everyone who applies will receive a grant.

Chair Omondi asked that the committee look for ways to support and motivate more research that does not require money, as the institution does not have a lot to spend. Therefore, any Senate proposals involving money must be clearly justified, for example, those professors on tenure track already have a great motivation to publish research.

Professor Houghton reminded the committee that they are also serving teaching faculty and not just research faculty. The present list of suggested research funds makes teaching faculty ineligible unless they are publishing substantial amounts of research in their own time, owing to the different demands of their jobs.

Any other business

No other business.

Adjournment

Chair Omondi adjourned the session at 15:17.