

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes of 25 October 2023

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Professional Concerns Committee was called to order at 12:31 p.m. on 25 October 2023, via Webex conferencing by John Miller, chair.

Members Present: Jennifer Bott (substitute for Timothy Palmer), John Jellies, Michael Kahwaji (substitute for Elizabeth Terrel), Richard Meyer, John Miller, Rena VanDerwall

Members Absent: Karen Schieman

Advisory Members Present: Joe Erskine, Eric McConnell, Sara Meiser

Ex Officio: Zeljka Vidic

Guests: Jayne Fraley-Burgett, Director, Disability Services for Students; Reetha Reveendran, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs

Quorum

A quorum was present with seven members in attendance, of the five needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

Miller proposed adding a discussion of the MOA 23/XX-*Review Cycle for Academic Conduct Policies* to the agenda, as it was inadvertently omitted from Unfinished Business.

[MOTION] It was moved by Jellies, seconded by VanDerwall, to accept the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Jellies, seconded by VanDerwall, to approve the minutes of 20 September 2023. With one abstention the motion carried.

Reports of Officers

Chair Miller reported that Disability Services for Students (DSS), the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the University Ombuds, and WMUx are in the process of generating training materials in conjunction with PCC.

Ex Officio Vidic did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

McConnell discussed the need to recruit faculty members to serve. A request should be presented to The Faculty Senate is to call for additional faculty to represent departments.

Erskine reported that everything is as expected.

Unfinished Business

Fraley-Burgett reported on possible training for faculty regarding student accommodations and noted the following:

1. There are changes to the GoWMU DSS portal so that faculty can view all student accommodations.
2. DSS is working on videos for faculty regarding reasonable accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
3. Space for testing accommodation is limited.
4. 23% of WMU students identify with a disability.

Meiser discussed the Hardship Withdrawal and Academic Integrity policy, which currently raises questions from mental health and equity perspectives. For example, African American and International students are overrepresented in both the hardship and academic integrity violations. Prohibiting a student from receiving a hardship withdrawal due to an academic integrity violation creates a subtle layer of punishment and creates barriers to success/wellness for at-risk students. Further discussion revolved around whether the existing Academic Integrity policy should be reviewed/revised to allow hardship withdrawal.

Some important discussion points were:

1. the effects of mental health on these challenges, as well as on the traditionally underrepresented populations
2. suggestion for an additional level of review so that the integrity of the academic enterprise, as well as the students' integrity, is being upheld
3. consideration for prohibiting implicit bias
4. front end of support for students and faculty
5. importance of not teaching when in crisis

PCC suggested that the Faculty Senate Executive Board consider making the equity concerns, particularly, a part of a broader conversation for the Faculty Senate. The PCC will consider the adjustment of the affected policies as a part of its future agenda.

Chair Miller reported on MOA 23/XX-*Review Cycle for Academic Conduct Policies*. The MOA recommends Academic Conduct Policies be reviewed on a five-year cycle. Chair Miller sent and will re-send a link to the MOA file. Further discussion was postponed.

New Business

None.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Jellies, seconded by Palmer, to adjourn the meeting at 1:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Professional Concerns Committee will meet next on 15 November 2023 via Webex at 12:30 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by John Miller, Chair

Minutes approved on 15 November 2023.