

Minutes of the Meeting held March 14, 2008

Present: Cuppoletti, Welsh (UC); Casper (KSU); Lopez, Bloemer (OU); Milburn, (Central State); McKee (OSU); Bernhard, Muego (BGSU); Ahuja (YSU); Sudkamp (Wright State); Fenwick (UA)

Chair Cuppoletti called the meeting to order at 12:20.

The minutes of the February 8, 2008 OFC meeting were approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Dr. Cuppoletti noted that Ms Bevan of YSU, and keeper of the OFC website, is retiring. OFC would send flowers and a note. Mark Vopat of YSU would take care of the website, but not other communications among or from OFC.

The Chair then handed out copies of a press report from the Association of American Publishers detailing their response to Ohio SB 151, which would regulate text book prices and options for college students. They raised concerns that the bill would actually raise textbook costs while limiting textbook choices.

Dr. Cuppoletti also noted estimates that the textbook rental program mandated by SB 151 would cost an initial \$1m to start up, plus \$500k per year afterwards to maintain, and would require at least 12k feet of space to house the rental textbooks.

New Business

There was a brief discussion of questions to pose to Senator Tom Roberts of the Senate Education Committee, and one of the sponsors of SB 151, during the upcoming teleconference.

There followed a brief discussion of proposals requiring universities on quarter systems to change to semesters. Dr. Cuppoletti stated that such a change would cost UC \$20m. Moreover, about half of all Ohio college students were attending schools that operated on quarters.

Erica Castle, Senator Roberts' aide, introduced herself to the OFC.

Dr. Cuppoletti then outlined the questions that members of OFC had regarding SB 151. These included concerns that the costs of the proposed textbook rental program were prohibitive for Ohio universities to undertake. There were also concerns about the regulation of where textbook royalties were to go, and how the value of those royalties

would be determined.

Dr. Cuppoletti pointed out that OFC supported OhioLink initiatives for e-books, and that OFC was suggesting that a task force of faculty help develop a strategy for reducing textbook costs.

The conference call with Senator Roberts began at 1:30.

Q: What is the current status of SB 151?

A: It is in a “holding pattern.” Revisions have been proposed and a substitute bill may be introduced.

Q: Are there concerns in the Senate about the costs that the textbook rental program would shift to the universities?

A: We appreciate the costs to the universities. The bill is an attempt to get a dialogue going (on textbook costs). Universities might address these issues on their own.

Q: OFC support the OhioLink initiative, and would be willing to help with a task force that would address textbook costs.

A: Thanks.

Q: Many faculty write textbooks and sale them at cost to students to help keep costs down. Would limiting (or eliminating) royalties to faculty for writing textbooks reduce these efforts?

A: The Senate appreciates these faculty efforts.

Q: Faculty increasingly have the ability to provide textbook information well in advance of teaching a course (e.g., through Blackboard or WebCT) and would be will to do this if it would help.

A: The Senator again expressed his appreciation for these faculty efforts and would take into consideration the idea of a faculty task force. Bill 151 was a “fallback position to general policy,” requiring universities to address these cost issues, but universities could address the issues on their own.

Dr. Cuppoletti thanked Senator Roberts and Erica Castle for taking their time and engaging in these important discussions with OFC. The conference call ended at 2:00.

OFC members then discussed some of the issues and possible strategies for containing the costs of textbooks. These included: (1) expanding OhioLink; (2) getting ISBN numbers of required textbooks out sooner to students to enable them to purchase them from alternative sources; (3) the role of faculty in developing guidelines for implementing any programs; and (4) looking at “best practices” from universities’ Associations of Student Governments.

Campus Reports

OSU

Extended “governance” rights to non-tenure track clinical faculty, e.g., right to be elected to the university senate, with limits in the number that could be seated

UC

Has \$1.4b debt, but no plan to address debt.

Central State

Student enrollment expected in increase in the fall. The provost had passed away.

KSU

Continues to move to responsibility based budgeting, with two committees working on it. The faculty senate had passed a “family friendly” policy that allows probationary faculty to request extensions of the probationary period for family or medical reasons.

OU

Faculty senate had passed a resolution asking for the Board of Trustee to include a non-voting member of the faculty. The provost had yet to sign the resolution. Should the faculty senate appeal directly to the BOT? There was some discussion of the faculty-BOT relationships at other universities. Both UC and BGSU have faculty serving as non-voting board members.

BGSU

Was revising Charter concerning grievance procedures regarding RTP. The provost had instituted a new policy in which the administrative stipends paid to department chairs would no longer be incorporated into their base salary when they stepped down from the chair position.

UA

The chair of the philosophy department had been removed from that position by the dean of Arts and Sciences. Although no reasons were given by the dean for this action, it was widely believed that the removal was in response to the philosophy chairs’ questioning of an “implied” A&S policy that chairs be in their office/on campus during regular

university operating hours (8am-5pm, M-F) unless receiving prior approval from the dean for their absence. The dean publically denied that such a policy existed.

YSU

The NCA had conducted its 10 year accreditation site visit to YSU, and YSU had been reaccredited. There would be future focus visits in the areas of assessment and distance learning.

A tentative labor contract between administration and faculty appeared to be in place early; contract expires next year.

There was an ongoing search for a new provost.

Wright State

There were ongoing contract negotiations between the administration and the AAUP.

The university was working on 3 and 5 year plans.

Academic programs had been asked to develop plans for a 1-3% cut in operating budgets.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30.

Next Meeting, April 11, 2008

Respectfully submitted,

Rudy Fenwick
Secretary, Ohio Faculty Council
Department of Sociology
The University of Akron
fenwick@uakron.edu