Approved 2-16-16

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
JANUARY 19, 2016 - 3:15-5:00 P.M.
INTERNATIONAL CENTER, ROOM 115


1. CALL TO ORDER : 3:15

2. Approval of Agenda for January 19, 2016

   Agenda was approved.

3. Public Comments (2 minute time limit per speaker; 10 minutes total for comments)

   None


   Minutes were approved as amended.

5. President’s Remarks – Lou Anna K. Simon

   The Governor’s State of the State address is tonight and will address issues related to the State’s budget. The budget may be portrayed as having surplus. There are specific difficulties to be addressed, e.g., the roads bill, increasing health care expenditures, issues related to the Detroit Public Schools, the current water crisis in Flint, and specific changes in accounting procedures that will require unfunded liabilities to be placed on the balance sheet.

   From our position, we continue to have diversity in applications; it is clear that the Capital Campaign is going strong; there continue to be increases in research dollars; and other scholarly output is growing. The institution’s inlying fundamentals are strong, yet the context around us may become problematic and uncertain as we prepare future budgets.

   There is concern at the Federal level that the current election activities will make it difficult to deal with budget issues related to the sequestration that is in place. On the positive side, the President’s proposed budget shows support for increased research spending.
Our campus dialogue continues to include human rights issue that are important for today and for the future of the academy. The challenge is to find the balances in the conversation that will make the University strong for the future.

We as a University should be proud of our engagement in the advice and commentary related to the identification of the water crisis in Flint. The MSU extension staff has been a positive contributor to the conversations surrounding the situation. Our MSU colleagues will continue to be major players in the decisions that resolve the crisis situation.

6. Provost’s Remarks – June Youatt

The Provost appealed for assistance from faculty following the Board of Trustees’ authorization of a planning process to enhance recreation, fitness and movement on our campus. We are seeking your input, she said, on what types of changes would make you want to participate in these types of programs. What types of facilities would you like to see, and what types of programs should be included. An exploratory work group will be formed to address the initiative. The chair is Dr. Joe Carlson, College of Osteopathic Medicine. If you are interesting on serving, send an email to Kathy Burns in my office. The exploratory is being formed and will be ready to go in a couple days.

The second appeal is for your help in addressing issues identified by students concerning the interactions in the halls as well as in the classrooms. It has become clear that we need to expand our conversation regarding inclusiveness in our classrooms. We need to create environments of respectful interactions where faculty and students are engaged. How can we promote learning and how can we mutually learn from one another? I invite self-nominations for those who would like to be a part of the discussion.

7. The Steering Committee Chairperson’s Remarks – Professor Mary Noel

The position of Secretary for Academic Governance is open. Interested persons should contact Dr. Curry’s office. Also, the call for nominations for the at-large members of the Steering Committee has been distributed to faculty. Encourage your colleagues to consider placing their names in nomination.

How can we have the necessary conversations in Faculty Senate that address the issues that are of importance to our campus? Rather than just deal with the reporting and actions of the committees, we should be able to engage regularly with colleagues on issues of concern.

8. OLD BUSINESS

NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

University Committee on Curriculum–November Report, Professor Gerald Urquhart, Chair

Motion was made to move the report to the Faculty Senate. APPROVED.

President Simon discussed the recent activities surrounding the future of WKAR.
The explosion of wireless communications has resulted in inadequate spectrum bandwidth to supply the demand for personal and commercial users. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) owns the “spectrum” and gives it to users, free of charge; it can likewise retrieve it for monetary value. The FCC has been approaching television stations and assessing their value. MSU had to identify by January 6, 2016 whether it would participate in a reverse auction in which the price goes down with bidding rather than up. WKAR’s monetary value in the auction was valued at approximately 200 million. We were faced with a decision to sell, but lose the ability to participate in the rise in digital programming; or retain WKAR and invest in its future in the digital environment. We decided to invest in WKAR rather than selling. In making our decision, we considered the mission and programmatic foundations on which WKAR was established, the engagement of students and faculty in teaching and learning in the digital world, the potential for research and innovation by our faculty in applications and programming and our responsibly for public service across multiple audiences. We reached out to Detroit Public Television to enter into a partnership with them in their developing of PBS programs for learning in children. They have research dollars and technology for building programs such as PK University, the Veteran’s Channel and Kids Television; and we have the expertise to create educational content. We have challenged WKAR to engage our faculty and resources and participate as a leader in educational content in the digital world.

Procedures for Initiating Academic Governance Discussion, Professor John Bell, University Committee on Faculty Affairs Chair

It is important that the faculty initiate and conduct meaningful discourse that leads to good decisions regarding key issues in a manageable form. The attachment on today’s agenda describes one part of the process, and is how we bring forward issues for discussion in a manageable form. Currently, issues are brought to the faculty through the Steering Committee. The goal is to be responsive and proactive on issues of importance in a transparent process.

Professor Sticklin suggested developing and using a standard initial transaction form to identify issues for discussion. Professor Nails emphasized that, in addition to the form, the comments offered during Faculty Senate/University Council meetings would also be an initiation point.

President Simon commented on the discussion by reminding the Senate that MSU has a committee-centric governance system. The major conversations are conducted by committees to thoroughly vet the issues. The documents that are approved by the Faculty Senate/University Council follow the work of the standing committees. A second consideration is the role of ad hoc committees. In the 1980s and 1990s many decisions were recommended by ad hoc committees outside the governance system. The Faculty Voice era reined in the ad hoc groups and put the discussions back in the governance system. One of the challenges is to balance the work of governance with its need to participate in the things that make the University better. Many Universities are tackling the bigger issues with their Faculty Senates rather than in working committees.
Professor Noel encouraged members of the Senate to offer their thoughts on the mechanisms for having meaningful discussion.

Professor Sticklen made a motion, seconded by Professor Nails, to continue the conversation at future Steering Committee and Faculty Senate meetings. Motion APPROVED

10. COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR
    NONE

11. ADJOURNMENT: 4:35