

Fairmont State Faculty Senate

Minutes, 2/10/26

Members Present: **J. Tomlin** (SocSci, ExCom), **Jason Frazer** (COBA, ExCom), **Bob Niichel** (CompSci, ExCom), **Troy Snyder** (Humanities), **Paul Reneau** (HHP), **Deb Hemler** (AcAffairs), **Derek Nuzum** (Library), **Kylie Ford** (AAD), **Joe Ferguson** (Aviation), **Stephanie Jones** (CSM), **Candice Moench** (Education), **April Townshend** (NatSci, ExCom), **Rebecca Cepek** (ACF), **Jim Matthews** (AcAffairs), **Tim Oxley** (AcAffairs), **James Long** (Math/CS), **Alyssa Schwartz** (Humanities), **Tabitha Lafferre** (ET), **Chris Moss** (SocSci), **Jason Bolyard** (ET), **Kara Burgard** (BSN), **Gina Fantasia** (COBA), **Moshe Machlev** (BehSci),

Guests: **Kurt Meader** (HLC Steering Committee), **Josh Smallridge** (HLC Steering Committee), **Allen Bedford** (Provost), **Mike Davis** (President), **Brian Selmeski** (Presidents Office), **Spencer Flanagan** (Student Engagement), **Janna Bredeson** (Student Affairs), **Rachel Cook** (Proxy Ganga Sharma, NatSci)

1.-3. Order, Agenda, Minutes: Call for approval of agenda. Approved with change to include report from HLC. Minutes from January moved to approve. Approved.

4. Address of President: Mike Davis: Over 250 people attended day at the Capitol. Only school with more than us was WVU. Day of Giving coming up on Feb. 26. This year's goal is \$800k. Last year we raise around \$710k. Five new administrative rules/policies have been accepted (details in Message from the President to all faculty). Enrollment is up around 3% from last spring. And Fall enrollment (2026) looks to be around 5% up from last year. Presidential Speaker series coming this Thursday on Civility and public exchange of ideas/perspectives. Parental Leave Policy has been investigated and it appears we can create a policy since HLC rules would not apply to us. No questions.

5. Old Business: Curriculum Proposals 25-26-01, 02, 03. Moved to approve as group by P. Reneau for second reading. Seconded by Fantasia. No discussion. Approved by voice vote.

6. New Business:

Major Items- Curriculum Proposals 25-26-04, 05, 06, 07,10,11,12,13,14,15,16. Moved to approve by Reneau as group. Seconded by Hemler. MacLennan voices appreciation for the detailed comments from Senators on these. No Discussion. Motion carried by voice vote for first reading.

Minor Items- Committee on Committees. Niichel and Bolyard have agreed to serve. Need for three volunteers. Moench volunteers, along with Ford, and Sharma. Slate approved by voice vote.

7. Provost: Dr. Bedford: Four Items: Possible adjustments to Spring 2027 calendar, Academic implementation plan, Gray DI Data Analytics, Academic Admin Searches. **First**, Feedback suggests moving spring 2027 start one week back (from Jan. 11 to Jan 19). The three week break caused several problems, and even though the new compressed break looked good on paper, it was not worth the problems in implementation. Provost suggested this change (proposals due to the Calendar Committee by Feb. 20). Calendar Committee to provide guidance on this proposal (four week break, new start date, placement of spring break, start and end of academic sessions/ any adjustments needed to meet required days in class). Discussion of Calendar Committee Members (and whether entire committee is needed to review and accept these changes). Question from Schwartz about whether this change would be in place for several years rather than year to year? Yes, the idea is to get something set in place that can stand for some time. **Second**, Academic Implementation Plan team site (AcademicAffairs Strategic Planning) can be accessed with request to see working documents for implementation plan. Timeline is available to view there. Working group meeting in December suggested five focus areas (Academic Program Portfolio, Student Academic Success, Professional Support and Development, Cultural Enrichment, Regional Service) are available in more detail in this team site as well. Dr. Bedford walked Senate through slide that shows how this AIP aligns with strategic vision of the university in measurable ways. Slides will be made available on the team site as well. Please see the team site (AcademicAffairs Strategic Planning) for full version of the entire slide deck presented by Dr. Bedford. **Third**, Gray DI Data Analytics looked at Academic Program Economics (market opportunities and internal financial and enrollment dynamics). These datasets have been examined and reviewed and Dr. Bedford is ready to move forward with recommendation for five year term funding model. Slide includes breakdown of five year costs. Anticipates that these data implementations could save at least \$1m over 5 year period and possibly \$2m. Question from Townsend about potential training for how to use this data. Workshops and trainings would be made available asap for larger engagement with datasets. Comment from Fantasia about making these workshops as accessible as possible so the larger community can capitalize on the findings as much as possible. Dr. Bedford says its important to be clear about what we do and don't get as far as insights into the institution from this data. Retention data, for instance, will not be covered by this. Extended discussion about the quality of data being provided by Gray DI. Question from Snyder about what "strategic funds" means. \$12.4 million pulled from various sources last year and put aside toward the implementation of strategic vision. Any objections or concerns need to be forwarded to the Provost by the end of this week. **Fourth**, four searches currently going for academic administrative searches. Those candidates will be on campus the end of February and first week of March. ExCom will have meetings with these candidates. These searches have deadlines for applicants by the end of this month.

8. Reports:

b) ACF: Cepek: ACF met on the 23rd of January. Several Legislative items would affect higher education. The first deals with food insecurity. The second would provide federal funds

for exchange and collaboration with Irish Schools. Third would establish the WV Collabratory. Pres. Davis adds that he reached out about this for more information and clarification. Another act involves the micro credential act. Expected to pass. Senate bill would restore voting rights to faculty and students on BOG but not much hope of passage. Some concerns regarding one stipulation in these laws that would prohibit public funds from going to “low earning” degrees, but this is not expected to pass. President Davis voices opposition to “punishing” those degrees twice since state policy already prioritizes certain degrees over others in their funding formulas. Fantasia reiterates those concerns and opposition to such an initiative. Two senate bills would address accreditation and DEI (Bill 414 and Bill 476). Unlikely to pass, but unclear as of now. ACF requests feedback from faculty regarding AI and online learning. They would like to send out a survey which Cepek will forward to the ExCOM for review. Comment from MacLennan showing support for the Irish exchange bill.

c) BOG: Schwer: Not present. No significant business reported to Senate.

d) SGA: Grant and McDonald: Not present

e) Staff Council: Nuzum: Staff Council cancelled their Jan 28th meeting. Rescheduled for Feb. 25th.

9. Miscellaneous:

a) Kurt Meader, HLC Steering Committee Update. Process of preparing for HLC review is in motion. (April 2027 is next review). Desire by committee for broad engagement and involvement. Tomorrow a survey should go out to staff and faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses related to HLC criteria. Workgroups that are formed at this point will be using the data as evidence for the review. Broad participation is very helpful and requested by the committee. In March, survey results will be viewable. Draft suggestions will be due in May. May and June will be writing groups/reports due from those members. IN Fall, steering committee will review the first draft, to be followed by open meetings for input/edits from faculty and staff. Revisions planned for October/November. Spring 2027 will be final round of reviews and edits.

10. Open Forum:

Niichel reminds about PPS committee. Reneau says PPS Chair Elizabeth Savage will send out an email with survey next Monday. It will be open until March 4. Verification email will be sent from President Niichel confirming it is the real survey. Reneau reminds senate about the format for the survey (same as last year). Niichel asks about comments from last years survey that were directed at colleagues/administrators rather than the President. There was a discussion of adding a line to the instructions to address this. Open to suggestions. Fantasia comments that it is appropriate to remind via email on the purpose of the survey, but not to constrain feedback with changes to the instructions. Cepek says comments that don't pertain can just be ignored. Reneau adds that these are anonymous. Comments are only seen by the Committee, ExCOM,

President, and BOG. Not open to wider viewership. Extended discussion about how or whether to address those including irrelevant comments in the Survey. Bedford asks if faculty are aware that the comments are read by the BOG.

Need to do the Nominating Committee to select officers for next year in April. Request from Niichel for anything that needs to be taken to Calendar committee meeting. Comment from MacLennan and Eades about issues to raise at meeting for Niichel. Townsend offers preference for 8 week before spring break. Niichel says broad agreement on this. Frazer asks to know more about return after Thanksgiving. President Davis says not coming back after thanksgiving is horrible for student retention and this is the reason that return week is so important before finals. Again, Fantasia raises concerns about student athletes missing too many classes. Scheduling needs to be addressed on this. Comment from Townsend about “Tuesday as a Monday” scheduling solution.

Long Award created last May, is accepting nominations until March 1. Rereading of the qualifications. Solicitation for nominations via email to the ExCom.

Townsend advertises First Generation Student Panel will be hosted in March (students and faculty). MacLennan announces AAG will be hosting watch party for the Geography society’s conference in the GIS lab. Eades announces information back on Spring Gala. Catering guides available. Gala Committee is empowered to make those decisions. Faculty Welfare wants to participate in the Gala with potentially a Photo Booth, etc. Gala Committee meeting again Next week. Advertise for Baskets for the Gala Raffle as well.

Nuzum adds two items: Faculty needs survey from Library closes tonight at midnight. Second, Falcon altitude check is initiative to help failing students at midterms get back on track. Request to participate in this and incentivize attendance in this for students.

Adjourned at 4:33.