

Report for the University Committee, 2015-2016 Academic Year.

The members of the University Committee for the 2015-16 academic year were Kristin Vespia (fall semester), David Voelker, Christine Vandenhouten, Patricia Terry, Clifton Ganyard (summer), Andrew Austin (spring semester), Christine Style, and John Lyon, Chair.

The University Committee had a very active agenda for the 2015-16 academic year

System Wide Issues

The Wisconsin State Budget for the 2015-17 biennium in addition to reducing state support for the UW System by 250 million dollars removed from state statute the language that addressed tenure in the UW System. The Regents of the UW System were directed by the budget bill to draft and approve policies for faculty tenure, post-tenure review and program discontinuance by the spring of 2016. Each campus was offered the opportunity to provide guidance to the Board of Regents in the form of position papers and participation on workgroups to draft the new Regent policies. The UC drafted position papers dealing with program discontinuance and faculty lay-offs and had participation on multiple policy development workgroups.

The development of the Regent policies regarding tenure and program-discontinuance occupied a significant amount of the UC time and energy during the fall semester. After drafts of these policies were made public, efforts were made by faculty reps and faculty executive committees of all of the UW campuses to modify the language of the proposed policies during the early part of the spring semester. Final Regent policies were approved by the Regents in late spring. These policies included minimal modifications to address the concerns of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin. In late spring a large number of the campuses, ours included, passed motions of no confidence with the UW System President and the members of the Board of Regents based upon the content of the Board of Regents policies and the manner in which the collective voices of the faculty of the UW System was dismissed.

The combination of state budget cuts and low tuition revenues continued the budget shortfall that required the campus to draw down fund reserves for another year. The UC was kept informed by and provided advice to the Chancellor and Provost regarding efforts to increase tuition revenues and contain costs. Late in the spring semester, the projections of tuition revenues for the next few semesters did not indicate that the campus would achieve the desired financial improvements. The UC was informed of the steps that would be instituted to address the budget shortfall. These steps included not filling some faculty and staff vacancies for the next academic year or longer.

Changes in state law and Regent policies required that some aspects of our faculty by-laws be amended. The UC with the assistance of the SOFAS began this task in the spring semester. The regents requested that each campus submit their proposed policy for Post-Tenure Review to the Regents in the Fall 2016 semester for Regent approval. No request for a campus-based Program Discontinuance Policy was requested from the campuses. The UC drafted a Post-Tenure Review policy that addressed each of the points of the Regent policy and kept the operation of the policy within the current faculty governance structure. The UC drew upon the expertise of Dean Furlong and Dean Mattison in the development of the draft of this policy and their assistance was very helpful and appreciated by all members of the UC. The plan is to have the Faculty Senate review, modify and approve a Post-Tenure Review policy early in the fall 2016 semester.

The UC chair advised against working on a UWGB faculty governance policy regarding program discontinuance and faculty lay-off. The reasons given were we were not required to do so by state statute or by Regent request, we already had a strong program review policy on campus that would address when a program should be considered for discontinuation, and the recently approved Regent policy was very explicit as to how a program could be discontinued and how faculty lay-offs as a result of a discontinued program would be handled.

In addition to cutting state support for the UW System, the last budget reduced the role of faculty participation in shared governance to that of advisory. The grim result of this change in state law is that the faculty no longer has an equal voice to that of the administration in all matters that pertain to academic and faculty policies. The extent to which the role of faculty in determining academic and faculty policies has been reduced was demonstrated at the UW Regent meeting that was hosted by UWGB in the spring of 2016 when the Regents approved a UW Madison campus policy regarding program discontinuance and faculty lay-offs that was rewritten and substantially changed by the Regent legal counsel. The Regents essentially wrote the policy for the UW Madison campus and approved it without the consent of the UW Madison Faculty Senate. Of all of the changes that were made to UW System policies in the last budget bill, this change in the role of the faculty in making academic and faculty policies is the most destructive to the structure of shared governance in the University of Wisconsin System.

Campus Issues

The UC and faculty senate addressed some major campus based issues during the 2015-16 academic year. Among these issues were the restructuring of the academic areas into four colleges, faculty workload as it related to an increase in faculty teaching loads, an annual review policy, a merit pay policy and qualifications for faculty and teaching academic staff.

The UC supported and the Faculty Senate endorsed the restructuring of the academic administration from one composed of two colleges into one composed of

four colleges. Concerns expressed about the restructuring addressed the costs involved in the administration of four colleges instead of two, the potential loss of collaborative teaching and scholarship activities between faculty members in different colleges, and the representation on elective and appointed governance committees. The advantages of the restructuring included increased representation of the academic programs inside and outside of the university, increased accountability of the deans and program chairs for student recruitment and retention and for program development and advancement.

In the fall of 2015, UWGB was the only institution of the eleven comprehensive campuses with a stated 21-hour teaching load. That semester, UW System President Ray Crosse requested that we transition to a 24-hour teaching load. The UC accepted this request fully believing that once our actual teaching efforts were appropriately credited to our teaching load that the majority of the faculty would be over the 24-hour expectation. The UC set about the task of identifying the important aspects of our teaching contributions that are not credited or give sufficient credit to our teaching loads. These teaching efforts identified included the supervision of graduate student thesis work, supervision of undergraduate research projects, supervision of student independent studies and internships, teaching of graduate level courses, teaching on-line courses, teaching of very large classes, and new course development. In addition to the range of teaching activities that were identified as being uncompensated or under compensated the UC learned that the individual budgetary units and the Deans demanded flexibility in the assignment of teaching loads such that the load of individual faculty members could be adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of the program and to recognize the full contributions of the individual to the needs of the university. In recognition of this need for flexibility and with the intention of protecting faculty from excessive teaching assignments, the UC developed and the Senate passed a "Teaching and Workload Policy" on April 27, 2016.

The Chancellor informed the faculty that he expects annual reviews to be performed on all university personnel. Currently, probationary faculty and some teaching academic staff are required to have annual reviews by faculty code. The chancellor's edict would only impact tenured faculty and senior lecturers. The UC did not see any need to produce a change in the faculty code to address this issue and seeing that much more important business was at hand informed the Provost that he and the Deans and Unit Chairs could work out the details of this issue.

As part of System President Ray Cross's desire to reduce the balance in some UW System accounts, each campus was given a base budget adjustment to address faculty salary issues. The criteria to be used in the determination of who should receive salary adjustments were left to the individual campuses. The UC was kept informed as to the progress that was being made to determination of who would receive what from this pool of monies. The final group of recipients and the criteria and justification used to select these individuals was not shared with the UC.

Early in the fall semester the university received notification from the higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools of a statement of their expectations for the academic qualifications for faculty and teaching academic staff. The UC drafted a statement that was consistent with HLC document and the Faculty Senate approved a modified version of this document. The result of this policy will be that some teaching academic staff will have to be identified as being appropriate to teach their courses based upon their professional experiences in addition to their academic credentials.

Normal Business

The UC recommended and the Faculty Senate approved the merger of PEA and URS.

The UC recommended and the Faculty Senate approved the new MS program in Health and Wellness Management.

The UC recommended and the Faculty Senate approved of a series of changes in the faculty code dealing with the administration of the Graduate Program.

The UC recommended faculty status for a number of faculty and members of the teaching academic staff.

The Faculty Senate approved the awarding of an Honorary Degree.

The UC made a number of appointments to governance committees and made recommendations to the chancellor for appointments to his committees.

Respectfully Submitted Aug. 2016
John M. Lyon, UC Chair, 2015–16 Academic Year
Associate Professor of Chemistry - Retired