

FACULTY CAUCUS MINUTES
Thursday, December 15, 2016
1:30PM PH 300

Present: D. Ayers-Darling, J. Baumann, C. Bolton, E. Bush, L. Charbonneau, S. Crocker, A. Doughtie, A. Fried, R. Fuoco, A. Haines, D. Kelly, S. McCall, A. Miller, C. Miller, A. Radlowski, J. Roberts, G. Searles, H. von Strunck, G. Warchol, J. Wilcox

Guests: L. Cooley, R. Haubert, R. Pucine, S. Reynolds, T. Thomas, R. VanWagoner, J. Woodrow

CALL TO ORDER

The Caucus was called to order at 1:33 p.m. The meeting began with some time to discuss the topic at hand, followed by a visit from President VanWagoner and Vice President Reynolds to address any questions and concerns.

Discussion

C. Miller remarked that she will email the Spring meeting schedule before winter break so that faculty can put it into their calendar. She then welcomed R. Pucine, who has agreed to facilitate questions regarding the changes to the calendar.

There is a proposal going to the Board of Trustees to change next year's fall and spring calendars so that classes will start on the Wednesday after Labor Day and end on the 15th of December. The Spring semester will start a week after Martin Luther King Day, with the last day of classes on May 7th and grades due on the 14th. Enrollment Management Council (EMC) brought this topic to Cabinet, and then the Calendar Committee, earlier in the semester.

C. Miller emailed President VanWagoner and Vice President Eannace with the concern that most faculty do not seem to have a strong issue with the calendar change but, rather, the fact that faculty voice should have been brought into the discussion sooner to hear about it, process it, and talk about it.

The justification for the calendar change comes from one year in which enrollment increased when we began after Labor day. In 2001 there was a 15% increase in new student enrollment that went back down afterwards. EMC was unable to determine why the College made the change at that time.

Some comments and concerns expressed by present faculty included the following:

- A number of faculty expressed that the revised calendar could be positive for several reasons (for example it will make it easier for students who take on a summer job), but they were also concerned that the changes were made without faculty input and without much transparency, which seems to be a disturbing trend across the college. Faculty would like to be asked for their input before decisions have been made, not afterwards. This kind of comment was made repeatedly throughout the Caucus meeting.
- Several factors need to be considered when making this decision, such as students disappearing after Thanksgiving or the weather at the end of the Fall semester. We

should put this decision on hold and consider coming back to it next year so faculty have time to provide input, rather than moving on this with little thought and consideration from faculty.

- A concern was expressed that this decision has been rushed without time for discussion. There is a sense that the administration has done this purposefully.
- There are numerous scheduling issues, including the logistics of scheduling labs. Trying to find time for a 3-hour lab that doesn't conflict with classes typically taken in the same semester can be a challenge. Calculating Carnegie hour times for labs will be important, and unlike lecture, labs can't be split up into 10 minute pieces. The change in calendar will result in a decrease from 15 to 14 labs.
- How will these changes impact time between classes?
R. Pucine: At the moment, considering changing M/W/F to 55 minute meetings and T/R to 85 or 90 minutes. Still 10 minutes between classes.
- A concern was expressed that the longer class-times will make it more difficult to hold students' attention.
- Another concern is that it will be hard to include 15 weeks of material in 14 weeks by just adding 10 minutes to each class. Similarly, what will happen to 4 hour classes?
Some responses to this concern included:
 - A reminder that we, as faculty, can be innovative and adapt to change.
 - Other colleges work with a similar calendar. For the lecture, as long as we have the same amount of time, we can cover the same amount of material, except for labs. Clean-up and set-up takes time, so you can't do more than one lab in a meeting.
 - There was a concern about the nursing program, but it was remarked that the nursing faculty had said they would be okay.
- There has also been a change from 3 days of final exams to 2 days. Will this increase conflicts with students?
- C. Miller heard some comments via email as well, including:
 - The calendar change will provide a longer break between the end of summer classes and the start of the Fall semester.
 - Somebody who had been an adjunct at a previous institution that underwent a similar change remarked that they were originally concerned, but it wound up being a good thing.
 - There was a request for summer classes to start a week sooner, so that students don't lose the momentum from the Spring semester.
- As a follow-up to the summer comments, it was suggested that we might be able to pick up two weeks in the summer and get a full 14 weeks in the summer. However, it's uncertain whether anybody would want to teach another full semester in the summer.
- Is this decision being driven by data? For example, did they track the number of students who tried to enroll after Labor Day?
R. Pucine: Admissions probably has that information. The EMC has received a report that we lose a certain percentage of students because we start later.

- Is there a trigger for committees to have conversations with Caucus before decisions have been made? Is there a way to create a cultural change? A suggestion was made to write a statement when return that we need people to reach out to Caucus early in the process.
- The veteran population will be negatively affected by this change, since they only get paid for days they are in classes. Some of these students only take intersession classes so that they can make rent.
- Will this change make it more difficult for faculty to pick up overloads?

Forum with the President & Vice President

C. Miller summarized the conversation by stating that the general consensus is that there are some logistical concerns and questions, as well as the feeling that the faculty were not provided an adequate opportunity to process and discuss this decision. One conclusion the Caucus reached is to reach out to different groups about contacting Caucus sooner so that we have time to respond appropriately.

The timeline of the decision was approximately:



If this had been a planned conversation, Caucus could have been included at the November meeting.

A request was made for the data used to inform this decision. The statistics about the impact on enrollment came from EMC. Data from 1999 and onward was examined, and the only year with any positive jump was the semester that began after Labor Day. EMC maintains a wiki page that can be accessed from the MVCC website, and all the documents can be found there. S. Reynolds commented that she could send the data.

A similar request was made for the number of students who tried to attend after Labor Day but who were unable to register. S. Reynolds responded that we have late registration set for a certain date, but we know students come after that. There is a process in place to conduct interviews with the involved students the entire week after classes have begun. We know how many students we let into the College after classes have begun, but we cannot know how many we've lost. Additionally, after we eliminated late enrollment, we improved student success. This has been tracked every semester to make sure the policy is still working to our advantage. If that changes, we will change the policy.

A question was asked about the faculty make-up of the Calendar Committee. The response was that it started out very large and then dwindled down. However, the EMC does have some faculty. S. Reynolds can email the charter.

Another question was asked regarding predictions for enrollment moving into the fall. R. VanWagoner stated that we will likely be staying at 4% decrease, with more projections to follow

after the Spring census date. The College is also waiting for clarification from SUNY regarding dual enrollment. We do not charge dual enrollment students directly for tuition, but we may have to change that.

A concern was expressed regarding how this will move forwards in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Faculty also want to be included in the discussion, but are uncertain of the nuances involved in the changes. A primary concern expressed was about being involved in the logistics and scheduling. Traditionally the schedule rolls over from one year to the next, and faculty will need to have the opportunity to review draft schedules beforehand. There are complex interactions among classes. For example, a biology class may be needed for Allied Health but not necessarily general science, which effects different groups of people. The schedule may require several iterations in order to find the best balance.

R. Pucine commented that right now, figuring out the timing for the standard MWF/TR classes needs to be decided first. This decision should be set forward in the first week of January, so a draft schedule can be shared during department meetings. Faculty members commented that collaboration needs to take place between departments, not just within, because programs include classes from across departments. For example, math, physics, engineering, and chemistry; biology and allied health; welding and technical English.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Radlowski