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Mānoa Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Minutes of June 22, 2009

Present: David Ross, Mary Tiles, Martin Rayner, Susan Hippensteele, Lei Wakayama, Martha Crosby and Shirley Daniel

Invited: Dean Christine Sorenson and Assistant Dean Bev Pateman, College of Education

The committee introduced themselves to Dean Sorenson and Asst. Dean Pateman from the College of Education. Sorensen and Patemen requested a waiver of the 20 student cap on WI courses. This would be to accommodate a small number of elementary education cohorts which exceed the cap by 3 students or less.

Chair Ross indicated that there is a procedure to request a waiver from the WI class size limitation. It generally involves a standing committee of the Senate, which is not currently on duty. He expressed his reluctance to make policy exceptions outside of the normal process. Hilgers described prior situations in which faculty were allowed to over-enroll WI courses when they had experience of drop rates/attrition that would likely result in an eventual enrollment within the 20 student limit. It was clear that this option can not be initiated by the administration, but by the faculty teaching the courses, and only if there is strong reason to believe that this attrition would really happen. Other creative ways to meet demand without changing the cap were discussed, such as splitting the sections, shifting faculty from other low-enrollment courses in the CoE, mixing cohorts, or using graduate assistants to bring down the student/faculty ratio, were discussed. Sorensen and Pateman made arguments against all these proposals. Hilgers and Hippensteele reiterated that the concern is that when exceptions are made too often that it becomes accepted as a new policy without faculty senate review. SEC would like to avoid this. The SEC encouraged the COE to work within the flexibility currently provided in the policies and procedures of the WI rubric already existing.

Dean Sorenson and Asst. Dean Pateman left the room.

The SEC discussed the issue further and noted that there remain pressures on the enrollment caps for WI classes, and that we should be aware of this on-going problem.

Chancellor Hinshaw and Gregg Takayama entered the room.

Chair Ross asked for the status of the budget and the issues of the furloughs proposed by the Governor. Hinshaw indicated that things were on hold as the unions and the governor are in negotiations and a number of lawsuits are underway. The SEC and the Chancellor then had a lengthy discussion of the budget, including possibility and consequences of pay cuts, furloughs, retirement incentives,

Hinshaw repeated that she is not at the negotiating table, that this is handled at the UH System level. She thinks that a town hall type meeting might be a good idea. She is not sure what UHM can do, but she was glad that we were proactive in looking at budget cuts earlier on.

Hippensteele mentioned that UHERO and others have indicated that cutting state worker pay levels may have a detrimental “domino” impact on the overall state economy.

Hilgers asked about what was happening in California. Hinshaw noted that the 3 California systems are not like the UH single system which includes Research I, comprehensives and community colleges together.

The committee asked about the UHM's portion of the budget cuts. Hinshaw doesn't like to treat federally-funded employees differently, just as a matter of principle. UC and Wisconsin have not excluded such employees from furloughs, while ASU has. She believes that the federal funds can be redeployed for other items and for the most part not be lost.

In summary, those parties who are negotiating are not saying much. There is no settlement yet about whether the current UHPA contract will remain in force if no agreement is reached by June 30.

Ross inquired about the cash flow realities of the cuts. Hinshaw mentioned that we get paid quarterly, and that we will have to try to look for other funding. Other states and universities have already gotten their stimulus funds, and she doesn't understand why the governor hasn't released those yet.

Hippensteele inquired about who has the power to claim financial exigency. Hinshaw believes the UH System and BOR have the power to do that. We must look for other revenue funds.

Even the stimulus funds are one time payments and will not sufficiently meet cash flow needs.

Hippensteele inquired about whether the prioritization process will still be used. Hinshaw indicated that she would still follow prioritization even if financial exigency is declared.

We discussed obvious massive inefficiencies elsewhere in the System. With a new president and the current economic situation, there may be a window of opportunity for aligning priorities, and putting forth UHM's agenda.

Hinshaw believes that there are opportunities such as distance learning and she is surprised that this is not more widely utilized at UHM. People who want to take distance ed courses cannot find them. Daniel mentioned that the Deans must be brought on board for this to work and for more distance education courses to be offered. Hinshaw also discussed the need for good articulation to serve students across the system.

Hilgers inquired again about academic priorities and autonomy. Hinshaw replied that there may be areas where financial circumstances limit what we can do, but it should also be driven by academic priorities. The UH System should also be asked to do a prioritization, not just UHM. Hilger reiterated that it is important for the faculty and the administration to continue to dialogue about these issues.

Ross mentioned that there are differences across campus about what can be done. Will there be larger classes? Will faculty be teaching more? Will research expectations change? Many on the faculty feel that they are working at 100%+ and can't do more. But without more specifics about how the budget cuts are going to happen, not more can be settled.

The SEC expressed concern about what the faculty who are off campus are going to come back to (e.g. furloughs, layoffs of colleagues, grad students being gone.) The concern is that decisions will already be made (perhaps by the administration and Deans) by the time the faculty come back in the fall. It would be best if the decisions were not already a fait accompli.

Hinshaw mentioned that she is trying to buy time.

The committee encouraged the high level administration to push for autonomy regarding any budget reductions that are imposed. The committee also encouraged the administration to try to get control over the UH workforce, particularly the union participants, separate from other state agency unions.

The committee also discussed dropping a week off of the semester, and provided the history of why the UHM has a longer semester than other similar research universities. Hinshaw also would like to gain control of the position number count. She also mentioned formula funding as a potential benefit for UHM.

The committee discussed the need for a communication plan to inform the community about the value of UHM. The faculty are concerned members of the community and are willing to help as much as possible to ensure the future of Hawaii.

Hinshaw mentioned possibility of removing or temporarily waiving the out of state student enrollment cap.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30.

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