

McLennan Community College Faculty Council Minutes
October 19, 2012

The McLennan Community College Faculty Council met Friday, October 19, 2012, in MAC 238. The meeting was called to order by President Lise Uhl at 10:00 a.m.

The following Council members were in attendance: Bob Ammon, Brenda Atchison, Derek Clapp, Vince Clark, Anita Diebenow, Donna Ewing, Elaine Fagner, David Fleuriet, Deborah Focarile, Donna George, Deborah Hewitt, Kent Hoeffner, Paul Holder, Bill Howard, Steve Hull, Sharon Kenan, Whitney Luce, Lesley Weber Plemons, Cathy Prause, Miley Pulliam, Mary Sides, Stephen Swanson, Frances Turner, Lise Uhl, and Gail Wade.

The President of Faculty Council emailed the minutes of the September 21, 2012, meeting to Faculty Council members September 24, 2012. No corrections were noted.

Guests

Starfish Early Alert System

Stacy Taylor and Laura Wichman attended the meeting to provide an overview and to answer questions about the college's Starfish Early Alert System. They reported that the system has been renamed—it is now called "My Success," and it appears under Tools in Blackboard. The system can do four things: set flags/record comments; send kudos to students; track attendance; and set up system-wide auto alerts when needed. Success coaches, students, faculty, and others work together to ensure at risk students are identified and helped before they drop out or fail.

Intern in Higher Education Doctoral Program

Cynthia Morris attended the meeting with Gail Mays, a student intern, so the intern could observe how Faculty Council functions. Gail is a third-year student in Mary Hardin-Baylor's higher education doctoral program.

Old Business

Formation of a Tenure Committee

The President of Faculty Council reported that she clarified the purpose/mission of the new Faculty Council Tenure Committee after meeting with the Vice President of Instruction (VPI). According to the VPI, the committee will have a mentoring function and it will provide information to faculty regarding the tenure process. The number of committee members and the name of the committee remain to be decided.

Faculty Handbook/Survivor's Guide

The President of Faculty Council reported that the administration does not think a Faculty Survivor's Guide is needed at this time since MCC's Personnel Handbook is readily available online. FC members asked if a "Cliff Notes" version might be possible. The President of Faculty Council explained that funding would not be available, since this is not an approved expenditure.

The President reported that the Vice President of Instruction suggested waiting while this topic is on the “back burner” for consideration. FC members 1) commented on the need to know “who to call for what” when referring students or when contacting campus personnel with questions; 2) recalled a helpful “to call” list that the college compiled when the campus was under construction and employees moved to temporary locations; and 3) noted that faculty need a type of one-stop-shopping that is similar to the one-stop-shopping for students.

An FC member suggested adding pictures of employees to messages in the college’s email system. Several members agreed that this addition would benefit all faculty members.

New Business

Recommendation Regarding Advisory Committee for Academic Freedom

The President of Faculty Council asked FC members for recommendations for a pool of six people for the Advisory Committee for Academic Freedom. She referred to information in the "Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure" policy (Policy F-III-a) that describes an Advisory Committee and a Hearing Committee. The President included excerpts from the policy in the Council’s agenda that was emailed prior to the meeting.

FC members asked if non-tenured faculty should serve on the Hearing Committee since the person going before the committee might prefer having only tenured faculty on it. Members asked for clarification regarding the number of tenure/academic freedom committees and the duties of the committees, stating that they would like to understand better the function of the committees before electing members to serve on them.

The President of FC stated that she would obtain the requested information, and she asked if she could communicate with FC via email since the administration wants to have the committee(s) in place as soon as possible. Members agreed that the President could communicate via email.

Upward Evaluations

The President and Vice President of Faculty Council reported that a faculty member asked the Vice President of Instruction why the college does not conduct upward evaluations. The VPI referred the matter to Faculty Council.

FC members generally agreed that the rationale for conducting upward evaluations is 1) “to make the college a better place”; 2) to allow faculty to evaluate directors/administrators just as students evaluate faculty; and 3) to have information that shows directors/administrators how they might improve. They noted that a “supervisory” type of evaluation is probably not relevant since division directors are not called “supervisors.” The President stated that the VPI would like to see a generic, institution-wide evaluation if FC decides to recommend an upward evaluation. The President referred to a document the VPI created that is entitled “Upward Evaluation of Instructional Faculty at MCC.”

The President of FC discussed research she conducted to determine if other institutions are using upward evaluations. She found that Baylor University has “direct evaluations” in which faculty and staff evaluate their deans, since they do not have directors, and Hill College has not

conducted upward evaluations since the 1990s. Tarleton University has not responded to her inquiry yet. FC members discussed previous instances in which MCC conducted upward evaluations. One member stated that FC inquired about conducting upward evaluations two years ago, but the idea was “set aside” because SACS was ongoing at that time.

An FC member stated that the topic of upward evaluations is complex and should probably be studied by an ad hoc committee that could look at the following aspects:

- Does FC want to do this?
- If so, how does it want to do it? (For example, who evaluates whom and how many levels up?)
- What instrument should be used at the various levels?
- How is the information going to be used? Who will see it?
- How many faculty would be comfortable evaluating levels above their direct supervisor?
- Just as with student evaluations, upward evaluations could become a “personality thing” instead of a matter of competency.

Faculty Council members agreed that researching other institutions is helpful, since there is no need to reinvent when it is possible to borrow (or perhaps buy) best practices.

A motion was made and seconded to have the Faculty Council look into direct evaluations. The motion carried unanimously. A motion was also made and seconded to have the Faculty Council form an ad hoc committee to explore and report to the Faculty Council the possibilities and advantages of direct evaluations. The motion carried unanimously.

A Faculty Council member asked if membership on the ad hoc committee should be limited to Faculty Council members or if it could include non-FC faculty. Members of the Council informally agreed that the ad hoc committee is merely looking into the possibility of conducting direct evaluations, not formulating the evaluations, so an FC committee is appropriate. Members of the Council noted that a future committee could be charged with formulation, and non-FC faculty could serve on that committee.

Policy Items

Temporary Full-Time Faculty Policy

Discussion on this topic focused on whether FC should recommend that the administration formulate a policy on all aspects of the temporary full-time faculty, including privileges, responsibilities, and the duration of their positions before they are converted to permanent full-time positions.

The President referred to the current policy (Policy F-V-d, 4), which was included in the Council’s agenda, and asked if FC members thought the Faculty Council Policy Committee should consider this issue. Comments from FC members were as follows: temporary full-time faculty carry a large portion of the workload; faculty are not shown respect for what they do if they are relegated to temporary full-time status; and departmental workloads could be distributed more evenly if temporary faculty moved to permanent positions. A Faculty Council member

noted that it is sometimes difficult to get permanent full-time positions approved due to budgetary concerns.

A motion was made and seconded to have the Faculty Council Policy Committee investigate and develop a clear-cut policy that could be recommended regarding temporary full-time faculty. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjunct Faculty Absence Policy

Discussion on this topic focused on whether or not the current policy regarding adjunct absences should be changed to allow adjunct faculty members who are absent for professional development purposes not to be penalized by having to pay for the cost of a substitute in their absence.

The President referred to the current Sick Leave Policy (Policy F-I-d, 5), which was included in the Council's agenda, and asked if FC members thought the Faculty Council Policy Committee should consider this issue. Comments were as follows: professional development should be a consideration; work with student organizations should also be considered; and there is a need to define what constitutes an "excused absence."

A motion was made and seconded to have the Faculty Council Policy Committee recommend a more clear cut absence policy for adjuncts due to professional development. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Sharon Kenan
Faculty Council Secretary