

Minutes
Faculty Senate Executive Committee Emergency Meeting
Friday, December 1, 2006 10:30 am
503 Hale Library

Present: Adams, Boldt, Cauble, DeLuccie, Guzek, Knapp, McCulloh, Schultz, Smith, Spikes, Trussell, Turnley, Turtle
Absent: Clegg, Fairchild, Herald, North, Ransom, and Rys

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:35 a.m. by President Adams.

2. Evaluation procedures for deans

This meeting concerns an issue with an evaluation of Dean Kuhlman in Salina. A recent evaluation of Dean Kuhlman was done electronically with permission of KSU administration. The stated intent of using the electronic process was to make the process more efficient. After the fact of the responses being processed, a member of the advisory committee in Salina has objected to the use of the electronic survey because the use of the electronic survey did not follow handbook policy.

Guzek, the Salina representative to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, stated that the members of the Senate caucus in Salina have been polled with this question: Have the results of the evaluation of the Dean of the College of Technology been compromised by the use of electronic methods?

One member of the caucus responded that although he trusts the system, he knows of members of the faculty at Salina who feel that the results could have been compromised and the electronic method may have lowered response rates. Other caucus members believed that the results were valid and there was no problem, although one remaining caucus member had also heard that the response rate was possibly lowered due to the electronic method. The caucus members themselves had confidence in the system, but had heard of others who were concerned.

Campus administration was asked what the normal faculty response rate to a paper survey would be as compared to the electronic survey in Salina. Dyer pulled previous Manhattan campus surveys that ranged from 43% to 61%. The electronic response rate in Salina was 65%. Cauble wondered if it could be possible if persons who were deterred by electronic ballots could be surveyed in paper. Concern was expressed that since there was no way to verify who voted electronically, there would be no way to determine if anyone voted more than once.

The current problem is that the advisory committee that drafts the report based upon the responses is very far along in the process. The committee has a Dec. 20 deadline, but the chair of the committee has to leave by Dec. 18.

In discussion, it was pointed out that a precedent has previously been established in the Department Head surveys conducted on the Manhattan campus. However, the University Handbook procedure regarding the Dean's evaluation specifically describes mailing the survey and the responding faculty dropping a sealed envelope in a sealed box.

A member of the Executive Committee asked about the campus climate at Salina. Guzek responded that he feels relatively new to the Salina campus. He perceives the climate as one that has improved remarkably even in the few years since he arrived. In the past there has been a contentious atmosphere, but he sees a lot more collegiality now. However, a rumor has started that the resignation of a department head so closely followed the closing of the response period for the Dean's evaluation that there is some perception of the two events being related, and the resignation was not the choice of the department head.

An Executive Committee member commented that there is a history of distrust preceding the arrival of Dean Kuhlman and we need to be sensitive to that fact. Another committee member emphasized that we need to look at the raw facts of the requirements outlined in the handbook versus the actual procedure used to administer the survey. There is a great reluctance to accept the procedurally incorrect process just because there is a deadline that is looming. There is great concern about ignoring the requirements of the University Handbook just because a mistake was made. Another committee member expressed that we cannot go back in time, and when it all comes down to the basic facts, the Dean serves at the pleasure of the Provost, so the information from the survey and subsequent report is advisory.

A big concern was expressed that the events that occurred since the processing of the original survey could impact and influence any results of a repeated survey. The advisory committee has already seen the results of the original survey, and it is difficult to tell them to ignore the previous results.

There are two basic questions the Executive Committee has been asked to address:

1. Has the technology used compromised the process?
2. If it did, what do we do about it?

The majority of Salina Faculty Senate Caucus feels that the electronic process did not compromise the evaluation. As a result, they did not address the second question.

Spikes advocated finding a reasonable position on this challenge. He recognizes that the handbook procedure was not followed. A process is clearly outlined and was not strictly followed. Mixed feelings about what to do as a result are a problem. The procedure is clear and it was a big mistake on the part of the university administration to approve the suggestion to use an electronic voting process. We need to figure out how to not let this happen again, but it would be challenging to go back and re-do the process. Although the pragmatic solution—letting it proceed without going back—is not an ideal solution, we can try to make sure it doesn't happen again.

President Adams called for a vote on the questions the Executive Committee has been asked. The result of the vote on the first question is this:

Has the technology used compromised the process?

Answer: 6 Yes 4 No

Because the results of the first vote indicated that the process was compromised, then a vote for suggestions as to a remedy was needed on the second question:

If it did, what do we do about it?

Schultz moved that the advisory committee move forward with the results of the evaluation survey with a note to the Provost that there is a concern that the handbook policy was not followed. Knapp seconded. Discussion followed. Spikes wants the committee to think about the future and the merits of some type of involvement of the Senate to monitor the process. McCulloh had to leave, but recommended that we ask the Provost require that the survey be done again and the handbook policy be followed. Vote on Schultz's motion to move forward with the results of the evaluation survey with a note to the Provost: Yes 6 No 3 (this vote was taken after McCulloh left, and he had emphatically expressed that the survey needed to be redone on paper. The vote was based on Schultz's motion, and was not a vote on McCulloh's suggestion to redo the survey on paper.)

Knapp commented that since the policy was not followed, any future variations from policy should be asked about prior to the implementation of the variation.

DeLuccie expressed extreme distress that we had a breach of the stated handbook policy. She believes the Provost should have ordered that there be a resolution of the procedural breach without needing to consult us. She is concerned that by asking the Executive Committee for an opinion, the blame is essentially passing to us for the results of any unpopular resolution of the difficult situation.

Smith asked what prevents the university from re-doing the process and getting a paper survey. Why not just adjust the deadlines? Why not ask the faculty of Salina if they want to re-do the process on paper? Give the Salina Faculty the opportunity to decide if they want to have a new paper survey.

DeLuccie is gravely concerned a widespread perception will be created that the Executive Committee has endorsed the concept of not procedurally following the handbook. As a committee, we need to provide a clear rationale about why we voted the way we did. We need to provide a clear message to the provost that there are grave concerns and we clearly do not like recommending ignoring the handbook. Spikes asks that we charge Faculty Senate President Adams to take a message to the provost that we do not want to see this happen again, and Faculty Senate representation in the Dean's evaluation process needs to occur in the future to insure that we follow the handbook. Knapp reiterated that there is a culture that the administration doesn't check the University Handbook first to insure that procedure is followed. DeLuccie stated that it implies a lack of respect for the faculty. There is a "validity versus reliability" issue. Others expressed large concerns that a lot of problems would be created in insisting that the survey be repeated. Spikes referred to Smith's point: One thing that has to happen is a visit to the Salina campus, meeting with faculty, recognizing a big mistake, and giving them the opportunity to say "OK with it" or "Redo the process".

Cauble recommended that we explain to Faculty Senate what happened and express why we voted the way that we did. Adams invited a minority report from Executive Committee members who disagree with the majority decision of the committee.

3. The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Trussell