

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for September 5, 2024

Hybrid Meeting (GH 240 and Zoom Conferencing Software), 3:15 pm

Members in Attendance: Deborah Amend, Amanda Brockman, Whitney Darnell, Kathleen Fuegen, Shannon Fredrick, Jaesook Gilbert, Rich Gilson, Patrick Hare, Rachelle Janning, Ken Katkin, Alexis Miller, Jered Moses, Makoto Nakamura, Joe Nolan, Tamara O’Callaghan, Michael Providenti, Holly Riffe (Chair), Ihab Saad, Amal Said, Gang Sun, Emily Taylor, Jessica Taylor, Maggie Whitson

Guests in Attendance: Janel Bloch, Jacqueline Emerine, Grace Hiles, Suk-hee Kim, Provost Diana McGill, Jason Vest

Members Not in Attendance:

1. Call to Order, Adoption of the Agenda
 - The meeting was called to order at 3:17pm.
2. Adoption of the minutes from the May 2, 2024 meeting
 - The May 2 minutes were adopted as distributed.
3. Chair’s Report and Announcements
 - Please connect to the PCC Canvas site. Let the Chair know if you have a problem connecting.
 - Please attend in person if possible. The meeting will be hybrid for those who cannot.
 - There was a failed effort to change the meeting time from 3pm to 1pm last year. If this group would like to re-address that, let the Chair know.
 - If you have any issues you would like to have taken forward and addressed confidentially, let the Chair know.
 - There has been one Executive Committee and one Faculty Senate meeting. There have been issues related to DEI. The Boone County Senator’s website has information. Faculty need to protect services to students.
 - Provost: We are committed to providing the necessary curriculum to ensure students are prepared for the workforce and that programs remain accredited. Whatever laws are passed, NKU will remain compliant with those laws. The performance model can no longer address underrepresented minorities, and the CPE is currently looking at what they mean by “underrepresented” (e.g. low income, first generation).
 - Questions for the Provost:

- What is your experience of providing input into RPT decisions? What is the role of the faculty RPT committee versus other levels in the process?
ANSWER: The committees within colleges do things differently. Committees should demonstrate how well they know their own handbook. There are 4 independent levels of review to ensure the handbooks are followed and that there is no bias. The dossier is thoroughly reviewed, a letter is written, then the recommendation letter from the faculty RPT committee is read. Usually, the letters align. When they do not align, more time is given to the dossier. Subsequent review could result in the provost's initial decision changing.

- DISCUSSION:

- The Statement of Collegial Governance in the Faculty Handbook contradicts the provost's process. The Handbook says faculty bodies have primary responsibility in certain matters and their recommendations should be implemented except for compelling reasons. The compelling reasons should be stated in writing. The presumption should be that the faculty letter is correct unless the faculty committee did not follow the Handbook. RESPONSE: The Chair, Dean, and Provost are responsible for reviewing the dossier under the RPT guidelines in the Handbook. When the Provost does not agree with the faculty committee, compelling reasons are given in writing.
- How often, as Dean was there a disagreement between the faculty committee's negative recommendation and the Dean's review? ANSWER: Maybe 1-2 times per year. It is more common that disagreement is at the chair or dean level than Provost level.
- There was a request for data concerning RPT recommendations and the provost's decisions. RESPONSE: That data will be shared with the committee.
- Motion to table this discussion.

4. Possible Vote: Change in Bylaws, Automatic Transcription

- BACKGROUND: This motion could not be voted on in the spring due to a lack of 2/3 of the entire committee being present. Bylaw changes require 2/3 approval of the entire committee membership. The Executive Committee determined that departments that have not selected committee members will not count against quorum. The motion is to restrict recording and automatic transcription without the committee chair's approval. "Neither committee members nor guests are permitted to record or automatically transcribe meetings without the permission of the committee chair."
- DISCUSSION:
 - A member agrees that automatic transcription should be restricted as it is often inaccurate but disagrees with the restriction on recording. The meeting is open, and we can't prevent people from recording under the law. Why have a policy that can't be enforced?

- Discussions are compromised when there are concerns that recordings could be taken out of context and shared on social media.
- There are concerns that the recording could be used to get credit for service when they are neither attending nor participating.
- These rules would regulate how committee members function. There isn't a problem with that.
- Request to confirm at least 2/3 of the committee membership as of today is present. There are 5 departments that have not selected a representative. All members are present (22 members plus the chair).
- VOTE: The motion is to add the following to IV. F. in the PCC bylaws: "Neither committee members nor guests are permitted to record or automatically transcribe meetings without permission of the committee chair."
 - Out of 22 current voting members: 19 are in favor, 2 opposed. THE MOTION PASSES.

5. Discussion items: Reporting of Attendance & Grading Due dates

- BACKGROUND: Reporting attendance and grading, particularly in 7-week courses, should be the 3rd day of the 7-week period. If students are reported as non-attending, they are dropped, and the student is notified that the faculty dropped them. Some students re-enroll unless there is a waiting list for the class. The Registrar says this is not a registrar issue. However, it is the registrar who has set the third day deadline for 7-week courses.
- DISCUSSION:

- The date was set to allow students to re-enroll. But the dropping and re-enrolling can be a waste of time and students might panic.
- When should the date be set to record attendance? The federal requirement is that it is done by mid-semester? ANSWER: (J. Vest) The issue was that when the date was mid-semester, students who didn't attend were responsible for their full bill.
- This is also an issue for 15-week courses.
- The registrar's office does not immediately drop international students – they could lose their student visa. But they don't get financial aid.
- What is a reasonable drop date?
 - If the attendance report is due on Wednesday, the last day to add should be Tuesday or noon Wednesday. Students are dropped on Wednesday and add it back on Thursday.
 - (J. Vest) Currently, for full-semester classes it is 1 week; 7-week is 4 days (Thursday); 5-week is 3 days. These are self-imposed deadlines aligned with 100% tuition reimbursement.
- Canvas access is cut when students are dropped. They don't have access to course materials before they re-enroll. Students often discover they've been dropped when they can't access Canvas.
- Should we ask for the date to always be one week? Could the 7-week deadline be moved to noon on Friday?

- There have been issues with textbooks not being in on time.
- For 15-week courses, having students being able to re-enroll can be a good thing.
- It can be very difficult for students to succeed when they come late to a 7-week class.
- The email that says “Your professor has dropped you...” is also an issue. The professor only records attendance.
 - The provost has asked for that message to change but it hasn’t happened yet.
 - The tone of this letter creates problems for the teaching environment. This is a problem created by the registrar’s office.
- Suggestion that the attendance reporting window in 7-week courses is Mon-Thur - faculty who want students to re-enroll could report attendance earlier, those who don’t can report it later.
- Grade reporting - it had been negotiated to allow an additional business day. Faculty would like 2 additional business days. The registrar has not been cooperative. This summer grades were due after 1 business day. If faculty are late reporting grades on a very tight timeline, students can lose things like employer tuition reimbursement.
 - Instead of 9am, could the deadline be at least 5pm? Wednesday at 5pm?
 - The registrar indicated the deadline is required because these are sequential courses. However, that rationale is not applied to the 15-week classes in the spring to summer.
- 2 years ago, PCC addressed additional time to report grades and there was a conversation with the registrar - there was substantial pushback from the registrar to extend the deadline by 2 days. However, data shows there are significantly more outstanding grades from 7-week courses than regular semester courses. Faculty are struggling to meet this deadline.
- Is this something the provost’s office can work on? ANSWER: (J. Vest) Yes.

6. Discussion item: Grievances

- BACKGROUND: A subcommittee of PCC looked at the grievances policy. This discussion is about a portion of the policy that would define grievances in the Handbook. It also adds that a negative RPT recommendation from the provost is grievable (up to the provost level there are “recommendations” for which “reconsideration” could be sought).
- DISCUSSION:
- Could an administrator who also teaches grieve something related to their teaching?
 - No. Administrators would use an HR process.
- This is about who can serve on the peer-review committee. If one can’t serve on the committee, they can’t use the process.

- Suggestion to look at the definition of faculty status in the Faculty Senate Constitution and align with that.
 - Suggestion to add chair and school director to list of those with administrative contracts in the last paragraph of the attachment.
 - Suggestion to delete the phrase “illegal discrimination” from the document. Faculty should not be making a legal analysis. Legal issues should go to the General Council.
7. Discussion item: RPT policy as schools merge
- Discussion postponed.
8. New Business
- None at this time.
9. Announcements
- There are 3 updates to the research misconduct policy. This will be on the agenda in 2 weeks. The documents are in Canvas. Andrea South, Chair of IRB and Craig Holloman and Anita Southwick from Research Grants and Contracts will be in attendance.
10. Adjournment (4:33pm)

Submitted,
M. Providenti, Secretary

Voting item: proposed changes to PCC by-laws

- **BACKGROUND:** The motion is to add the following to IV. F. in the PCC bylaws: **“Neither committee members nor guests are permitted to record or automatically transcribe meetings without permission of the committee chair.”**

- This recommendation for change is in line with the University Curriculum Committee which voted to not allow automatic transcription. The 2 main arguments (as PCC chair understands) is that
 - no one knows where the transcription will be housed following its use and
 - in general, the committee members want to understand who is recording their comments and why.

- **DISCUSSION** from May 2, 2024:
 - The recording of events on phones is commonplace and it empowers minorities.
 - The initial discussion was to prohibit AI transcriptions due to the errors or inaccuracies that it might create. The issue was not about the prohibition of audio recording.
 - Given the various modalities by which people join the meetings, recordings may also have inaccuracies. However, the committee chair can permit recordings with this revision of the bylaws.
 - We also don't want committee members to not speak for fear of voice recordings being widely shared on social media. We could say no one can record except the secretary, the secretary can keep the recordings in case there is a proper request for the recording for a proper purpose.
 - This policy is a statement that we want to know if we are being recorded and why.

VOTE: The motion failed with 14 in favor and 3 opposed.

(Bylaw changes require 2/3 of the committee full committee – 2/3 of 26 members is 18 members who would be required to vote in favor. There were not enough committee members present and voting to reach 18 total votes.)