

Faculty Senate Minutes #426

November 13, 2014

1:30 PM

Moot Court NB

Present (43): Chevy Alford, Andrea Balis, Ned Benton, Adam Berlin, Claudia Calirman, James Cauthen, Kashka Celinska, Artem Domashevskiy, Janice Dunham, Jennifer Dysart, Peggy Escher, DeeDee Falkenbach, Joel Freiser, Terry Furst, Katie Gentile, Lior Gideon, John Gutierrez, Maki Habermeld, Hunter Johnson, Karen Kaplowitz, Tom Kucharski, Vincent Maiorino, Xerxes Malki, Jay Pastrana, Edward Paulino, Frank Pezzella, Raul Romero, Raul Rubio, Francis Sheehan, Charles Stone, Robert Till, Fritz Umbach, Daniel Yaverbaum

Absent (10): Marsha Clowers, Silvia Dapia, Maria Kiriakova, Lou Kontos, Carmen Kynard, Kyoo Lee, Melinda Powers, Dainius Remeza, Ian Seda, Staci Strobl

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Adoption of Minutes #425 of the November 13, 2014, meeting
3. Announcements & Reports
4. Election of 2 faculty members for the Director of John Jay Online search committee
5. Election to fill a vacancy on the College Council Executive Committee
6. Faculty Senate proposals regarding the Pilot of the Online Student Evaluation of Faculty
7. Update on the implementation of the workload mitigation initiative
8. Update on Senate request for a NYS COOG advisory opinion about the open meetings law

1. Adoption of the agenda. Approved.

2. Adoption of Minutes #425 of the November 13, 2014, meeting. Approved.

3. Announcements & Reports. Noted.

4. Election of 2 faculty members for the Director of John Jay Online search committee

The Senate elected Professor Adam Wandt (Public Management) and Professor Gabrielle Salfati (Psychology).

5. Election of a College Council/Senate member to fill a vacancy on the College Council Executive Committee

The continuing faculty members on the Executive Committee of the College Council are Professors Ned Benton, Carmen Kynard, Karen Kaplowitz, Raul Rubio, Francis Sheehan, and Robert Till. The Senate elected Professor John Gutierrez.

5. Faculty Senate proposals regarding the Pilot of the Online Student Evaluation of Faculty [Attachment A]

The Senate reviewed the problems regarding the administration's proposed online Student Evaluation of the Faculty (SEOF) which had been identified by the Faculty Senate at previous meetings and it then reviewed the Faculty Senate's proposed solutions to those problems [Attachment A].

Recommendation to Issue #2 was revised: it was changed from "All students must complete the SEOF in class and submit it" to "All students must be offered the opportunity to complete the SEOF in class and submit it." Issue #16 was also revised so that it becomes a recommendation that the Online SEOF pilot be reviewed with a report to be issued every semester during the two-year pilot.

With these changes the Faculty Senate's proposals for revising the pilot Online SEOF was endorsed by the Senate by a vote of 27 yes, 0 no, and 2 abstentions.

6. Update on the workload mitigation initiative implementation

Provost Bowers met with Ned Benton, Adam Berlin, and Karen Kaplowitz (representing the Faculty Senate) and with Jama Adams and Angela Crossman (representing the Council of Chairs) to jointly develop a proposal for allocating the workload mitigations dollars.

Senator Benton proposed the following method to the group: exclude department chairs (who receive a notable amount of reassigned time) and distinguished professors (who have a 1/1 teaching load) and those faculty who are receiving their 24 credits of contractual reassigned time as junior faculty; then exclude faculty who have banked more than six credits of reassigned time.

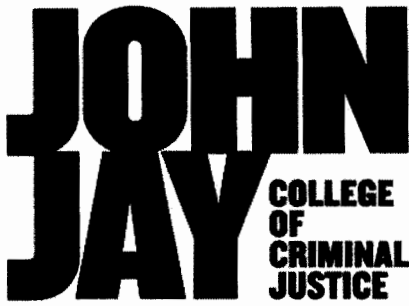
The \$304,000 currently allocated for workload mitigation would enable the remaining faculty to receive a course release every other year. Provost Bowers responded very positively to the proposal and will announce the program shortly. She said she will term the program "workload

mitigation program” as the faculty has long done and no longer “faculty excellence program” which she had been doing.

7. Update on Senate request for a NYS Committee on Open Government advisory opinion about the open meetings law issue

After receiving his copy of the Senate’s letter to the NYS Committee on Open Government asking for an advisory opinion on whether the Open Meetings Law had been violated at John Jay, President Travis wrote to CUNY Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs asking for his ruling on this question. Vice Chancellor Frederick Schaffer’s response was reviewed by the Senate in addition to President Travis’s cover email to President Kaplowitz.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.



ATTACHMENT A

*Karen Kaplowitz, PhD
President
Faculty Senate*

*899 Tenth Avenue, Room 229T
New York, NY 10019
T. 212.237.8724
F. 212.472.8506
kkaplowitz@jjay.cuny.edu*

To: Provost's Task Force on Online Student Evaluation of the Faculty
From: Professor Karen Kaplowitz, President, Faculty Senate
Date: November 10, 2014
Re: Issues regarding Online SEOF and suggested solutions

Dear Task Force Members,

I write on behalf of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Working Group on the Online SEOF and several faculty experts who worked with us on developing this document. Because the deadline for this document precedes the Faculty Senate's next meeting, which is Thursday, November 13, this represents only those named at the end of this document; however, this document is on the agenda of the Faculty Senate's November 13th meeting for endorsement and I will apprise you of the Senate's action immediately afterwards. While these issues were all identified by the Faculty Senate, many of the solutions were developed subsequently by those named below.

Statement from Representatives of the Faculty Senate

The use of Student Evaluation of Faculty in the personnel process whereby faculty members are reappointed, tenured, and promoted became policy at CUNY in 1975. This policy clearly long precedes online SEOF.

CUNY Manual of General Policy

ARTICLE V FACULTY, STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION > Policy 5.01 Academic Personnel Practice > 3 Student Involvement :

3 Student Involvement

The Board of Trustees affirms its commitment to the consideration of student evaluations in faculty personnel decisions involving reappointment, promotion

and tenure, according to the provisions in the governance plan in effect at each college. (BTM,1975,09-22,005,___)

- ◆ *Issue #1:* The proposal before the College Council in October 2014 did not provide any details about the administration of online SEOF, nor ways to address concerns of the faculty, nor information about the pilot, about what is going to be measured and compared and how.

Recommendation: Revise the proposal so that it includes this information.

- ◆ *Issue #2:* A concern that has been voiced from the beginning and consistently is the student response rate. It is the concern that is most often expressed by faculty members. The question is how do we ensure that faculty members are evaluated by data and by comments that do not represent only outliers – by only students who feel either strongly positive or strongly negative? How do we ensure that the response rate is statistically reliable enough to be used? How can we ensure that the student response rate is as high as possible and, certainly, not lower than the response rate achieved with paper?

Recommendation: Mandate, by making it part of the proposal that the College Council will be voting on, that all student evaluations be administered in class by permitting students to use their laptop, e-pads, smartphones, or other devices and by providing computer kiosks in the public areas near classrooms during the two-week SEOF period that students may use if they do not own such a device. The two-week period shall not be extended, just as it was not extended when paper was used, except under extraordinary circumstances such as if the internet is down during the two-week period. All students must be offered the opportunity to complete the SEOF in class and submit it; upon hitting submit, access to that course's evaluation is closed to that student.

- ◆ *Issue #3:* Third parties currently issue FOIA requests and post SEOF information on their websites which is very easy for them to do when SEOF is conducted online because the data are already digitized; if they issue a FOIA request from John Jay now, they would have to scan many tens of thousands of pieces of paper to digitize the comments because all our comments are on paper. Many faculty members do not want written comments or numerical data to be made universally available online.

Recommendation: Provide the numerical data in the form of bar graphs, with the median score marked on the graph, and provide them after converting them to images. Provide the written comments by converting them to images as well. Have both the graphs and the written comments be presented with a striping background to prevent third parties from using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software. This would prevent indexing of the data, both numerical and written.

- ◆ *Issue #4:* Sometimes students write statements that are factually untrue or even libelous; currently, faculty members may initial each written statement, indicating that they have seen them, and may also write responses to correct factually wrong student statements and to contextualize student comments, thereby often clarifying and correctly misunderstandings and misrepresentations; these written comments by the faculty member are then attached to their students' SEOF comments.

Recommendation: Provide the option for faculty to have their written comments posted online next to the student statement that is being responded to.

- ◆ *Issue #5:* Ensure that the SEOF online experience most closely resembles the paper SEOF experience.

Recommendation: Each semester each instructor will be instructed to go online to choose the class period during the two-week SEOF period for administering the online SEOF, based on the instructor's syllabus. That class period will be the only class period that the evaluation can take place; if the faculty member is absent, the faculty member can choose a subsequent class period. The spigot for the online SEOF will be opened at the beginning of that class period and (a difference with paper SEOF) the spigot will close 24 hours after the class period for any students in the class who are absent or who do not have an electronic device with which to fill out the SEOF and if the computer kiosks in the public areas have lines that are too long to accommodate all the students and for those faculty who do not want students to leave class for that purpose and possibly miss classwork.

- ◆ *Issue #6:* Science courses often comprise labs, recitations, and lecture sessions but only one link has in the past been sent to each enrolled student in such classes. What will be done to ensure that faculty members are evaluated for each of these activities, which are very different?

Recommendation: Have different codes such as Chemistry 101 – 01A – Lecture; Chemistry 101-01B—Recitation; Chemistry 101-01C – Laboratory for each such course.

- ◆ *Issue #7:* Some courses are team-taught but students receive only one link for that course and there's no way to know who the student is evaluating.

Recommendation: Have a code for each instructor of a course which each instructor can provide to the students in the course. For example, if Professor Karen Kaplowitz and Professor Melinda Powers co-taught a course, the students in that course would receive two links: Literature 326-01KK and Literature 326-01MP.

- ◆ *Issue #8:* While students have the option of not filling out the paper SEOF, our experience has been that when there is nothing else for students to do during that 20-minute class time period, virtually 100% of the students present do fill out the paper questionnaires. However, with online SEOF, there will be no way to prevent students from spending their online class time period surfing the web, reading and answering their email, visiting their Facebook page or Twitter, or playing solitaire. Such activity can lead to an unacceptably low student response rate, a rate so low as to be statistically invalid.

Recommendation: Include as policy for the Online SEOF pilot that any response rates lower than 66% of enrolled students shall not be considered in the personnel process although it will continue to be used for self-reflection and self-improvement by faculty and for purposes of mentoring for those faculty members who choose to share the results with their mentors.

- ◆ *Issue #9:* Sometimes students stop attending class without withdrawing; often they do not withdraw because of financial aid requirements. Students will not be penalized by financial aid giving agencies for completing a course with the grade of F because they tried, but students are penalized if they withdraw or stop attending. This is not a problem with paper evaluations because the students are not present to fill out the SEOF. But students continue to receive the link for online SEOF even if they haven't attended for weeks or months. Students who have not been present are unable to make provide informed evaluations and they may, logically, be the most negative for reasons having little or even nothing to do with the faculty member.

Recommendation: Require the vendor to exclude students who officially withdrew from the course and give faculty members the option to identify students who have been consecutively absent for more than two to three weeks (to be determined) prior to the evaluation period.

- ◆ *Issue #10:* With Online SEOF being new and the policies that we will be adopting also being new, guidelines will be needed.

Recommendation: Guidelines should be drafted by the Task Force and the College Council Committee on SEOF and the Provost's Office that faculty will be required to read to the students on the day the chosen for the evaluation.

- ◆ *Issue #11:* This is a two-year pilot at the end of which time the College Council will be voting on whether to continue with the online delivery mode or using another mode.

Recommendation: The pilot goals should be agreed to in advance so that appropriate and relevant benchmarks for comparing the paper and online modes can be decided upon in advance.

- ◆ *Issue #12:* The Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC) proposed an amendment to the proposal whereby the baseline will be adjusted semester by semester. Will this amendment be included in the proposal? What is the purpose of doing this? Was this done with the paper SEOF? Are there benchmarks that must be reached semester by semester?

- ◆ *Issue #13:* Who will have access to the online data and when, where, how?

- ◆ *Issue #14:* What role will the Faculty Senate, Council of Chairs and Student Council have in the ongoing evaluation of the pilot?

- ◆ *Issue #15:* Will student comments be censored or redacted for any reason? If so, who will do the censoring, what standards will be used, where will the uncensored version be kept and who will have access to it?

- ◆ *Issue #16:* What data from the four-year online pilot has led to the conclusion that to evaluate the effectiveness of online SEOF requires 100% of course sections to conduct online SEOF?

Recommendation: The Online SEOF should be reviewed, with a report issued, every semester during the two-year pilot.

Sincerely,

Professor Karen Kaplowitz (English)

Professor Fritz Umbach (History)

Professor Francis Sheehan (Science)

Professor Adam Berlin (English)

Professor Raul Rubio (MLL)

Professor Daniel Yaverbaum (Science)

Professor Kashka Celinska (LPS)

Professor Melinda Powers (English)

Professor Ned Benton (Public Management)

Professor Keith Markus (Psychology)

Professor Adam Wandt (Public Management)