

Villanova University Faculty Congress

Academic Year 2016-2018

FACULTY CONGRESS MEETING

March 20, 2017

**Present**: Aronté Bennett, Joseph Betz, Jerusha Conner, Gordon Coonfield, Alice Dailey, Mirela Damian, Angela DiBenedetto, Rick Eckstein, Marylu Hill, Stephanie Katz, Christopher Kilby, Rory Kramer, Michael Levitan, Eric Lomazoff, Peggy Lyons, Mike McGoldrick, Joseph Micucci, Alan Pichanick, Catherine Warrick, Kelly Welch, Dennis Wykoff.

**Absent:** Sheryl Bowen (NIA), Danai Chasaki, Sohail Chaudhry, Jennifer Dixon (NIA), Diane Ellis (NIA), David Fiorenza, Ruth Gordon (NIA), Shelly Howton (NIA), Jeremy Kees, Elizabeth Petit de Mangé (NIA), James Peyton-Jones, Salvatore Poeta (NIA), Michael Posner, Rees Rankin, Quinetta Roberson, Jennifer Ross (NIA), Joseph Schick (NIA), Mark Wilson (NIA), Rosalind Wynne, Tina Yang (NIA).

**Other Guests:** Liesel Schwarz (University Staff Council).

The meeting convened at 1:30 PM in Room 300, SAC.

**Housekeeping**

1. Jerusha Conner welcomed Liesel Schwarz from University Staff Council.
2. Minutes from the February 22, 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.
3. Jerusha reminded the FC members to please encourage their colleagues to complete the HERI survey, which will close on April 15th.
4. There was a brief Benefits committee update with responses from Ray Duffy regarding the initial priority issue areas posed by Faculty Congress on behalf of departmental responses. It was announced that certain benefits that were previously thought to be “sunsetting” might not be discontinued after all. A question was raised about a discrepancy concerning matching contributions and whether it corresponds to salary or monthly contributions. Jerusha recommended that members share with this concern with their respective departments.
5. Jerusha invited FC members to participate in a conversation with Schwartz Silver Architects, the firm working on the master plan for the redesign of the Library.
6. Jerusha reminded FC members about Research Ethics at VU 2017 week (REVU), co-sponsored by Faculty Congress. The webinar is related to the Belmont report concerning research ethics working with human subjects. FC will co-sponsor and help to publicize.
7. The Faculty Teach-In Series was launched on Friday, March 17 with a talk by Dr. Grannas to great success. FC members are encouraged to continue spreading the word about upcoming Teach-In sessions.

**Discussion of Standing Committee Reports:**

In an effort to better focus the discussion of the FC, members are now asked to read the committee reports (appended to the agenda) rather than spending time in the FC meeting reviewing all of the committee reports. Members are asked to identify issues from within the report that need to be elevated to full discussion.

At this point, Jerusha asked if there are issues to raise for further discussion from the standing committees or whether there was any new business to report or add.

Joe Betz noted that some retired faculty are concerned about getting reserved seats at basketball games.

Awards Committee: FC began the review of the candidates submitted for consideration by the Awards Committee. Faculty candidates were nominated through student and faculty submissions, and the committee identified the top choices in the various categories.

As FC began the balloting process, questions were raised regarding how the nominations were solicited, and how the candidates were vetted (i.e., there were no syllabi collected, no class visits, etc). Michael noted that there were too many candidates to make classroom visits possible. The committee was asked how it narrowed the nominee list down, and Michael stated that they went from the list of submitted names, read through student recommendations, and then went with the top candidates with multiple recommendations.

At this point, it was noted that it was difficult to make the decision for the top candidates since there was not an adequate amount of criteria to make that decision. Jerusha stated that these were valid questions to raise, and she asked FC members to email her or Catherine with concerns or recommendations for how to proceed. The FC will re-consider at a later date how to proceed next year.

On a final committee report note, Jerusha reminded the FC that the Parental Leave Policy Committee still needed a faculty representative, and she urged FC members to consider volunteering.

**New Business:**

1. Under new business, Jerusha asked for any further feedback on the Ombudsperson proposal (Appendix III to the agenda). In a brief discussion, further questions were asked regarding the hiring qualifications, and whether applicants should already possess the necessary training, or whether they could be trained on the job. This question impacts internal hires, who might not already have the requisite training, versus external hires. The same question arose regarding whether applicants should already have received certification in the International Ombudsmen Association. Internal applicants would not necessarily have that certification to start. Finally, the question was raised whether the ombudsperson should have an academic background. Recommendations were offered to clarify the hiring qualifications to allow for both internal and external applicants. There was a motion to approve, and FC voted yes (with two abstentions) to sending the proposal on to Staff Council and the Graduate Student council.
2. Charles Murray visit 3/30: a lengthy and vigorous discussion ensued regarding the upcoming lecture sponsored by the Ryan Center featuring Dr. Charles Murray, W.H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, speaking on the topic "What Does Trumpism Mean for Liberty in the Long Run?" FC members were concerned about Murray’s background as the author of *The Bell Curve* (1994) and the recent campus protests at Middlebury College surrounding his visit there in February. Jerusha shared a letter from Dr. Colleen Sheehan, director of the Ryan Center, regarding why the Ryan Center invited Murray, and what they hoped to achieve by this event. Serious concerns about Murray’s scholarship and racism and sexism were discussed, as well as concerns about maintaining open dialogue and reasoned debate as the hallmarks of a university. Multiple viewpoints were shared and discussed. FC members were disinclined to lobby for dis-inviting Murray; suggestions were made to encourage dialogue and debate through vigorous and unfiltered Q & A at the event, if an alternative format is not approved. As the conversation continued, many members felt this event offered the opportunity to debate the merits of his scholarly approach, as well as an opportunity to model for our students an approach to civic discourse befitting a university of national stature. The importance of reading Murray’s work in order to respond to it was also underscored as critical to entering the discussion.

Jerusha asked FC members how they felt called to respond to the event. The decision was to encourage attendance at the talk to support vigorous and informed questioning; in addition, FC voted in favor of a statement that articulates commitment to free and open discourse and intellectual exchange, and transparency around funding for outside speakers. A resolution to this effect will be presented at the next FC meeting. There was also consensus that faculty should support the follow-up events sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Submitted by Marylu Hill, Faculty Congress Secretary

April 25, 2017