

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 31 October 2023
4:00 p.m. – Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Julia Albarracin, Chair; Everett Hamner, Vice Chair; Denise Gravitt, Secretary
ALSO PRESENT: Manoochehr Zoghi, Provost; Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager

1. *Proposed changes to President and Provost evaluation surveys for 2023-24*

Senator Hamner, the Executive Committee representative to the Senate Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance (CPPP), explained that most of the changes proposed by this year's committee are minor – updating names and titles, removing “interim” before “provost,” or date corrections. He said the committee wants to add “Decline to respond” as an alternative to identifying the college/unit of the survey respondent. He explained there has been some concern historically about the Library being such a small unit that that their faculty were worried about remaining anonymous.

Senator Hamner pointed out that a question on the survey about gender has historically been included without asking for any other identifiers, such as race. He related that last year's committee had apparently wanted to remove this question but did not get to it, but this year's committee voted unanimously to remove it. He added that if there is a particular need to survey respondents according to race, gender, or other identity characteristics, the committee would be willing to do this in future.

Chair Albarracin remarked that no social scientist would remove a gender question and would probably add other characteristics questions because they can be very helpful when breaking down the data. Senator Hamner originally abstained when the committee voted to remove the gender question, but what convinced him to lend his support after more conversation was that there are no other identity category questions on the survey, and it seems strange to only ask about gender if you are not going to ask about race, ability/disability, religion, or any other area that might be perceived as influencing a pattern of responses. He asked if the committee wanted to develop the question more fully, but they did not. He thinks there should either be a rich portrait of diverse identity characteristics or none.

Parliamentarian Robinett said this discussion occurred when he served on Faculty Senate a few years ago and the survey was revised. He said one of the concerns the committee had at that time was that with rich descriptive characteristics it could be possible to identify who submitted the responses. Senator Hamner pointed out that this would still be possible with some faculty based in the Quad Cities or small units. He said this led to a lot of conversation among committee members about how to protect the raw data so that faculty feel comfortable being candid. His understanding from this conversation is that the raw data never leaves the committee; only summaries go forward to any other audience.

Senator Hamner asked if there is any reason to include identity characteristics on the survey in order to compile a rich profile of the responses to identify any patterns. He does not know if this has been done in the past or if anyone has analyzed whether the responses of female respondents differ significantly from those of male or nonbinary respondents. He believes the only thing the committee does with the comments is to break them into positive, neutral, and negative categories and briefly gesture toward their subject matter. He said the committee does not feel that this survey is very revealing or actionable; he is not sure that a .15 improvement on a question from one year to the next tells the Provost or President anything valuable. Provost Zoghi stated the most valuable results from the survey are the verbal comments. He asked if the comments are posted on the Senate website. Ms. Hamm responded that in general they are not; only the summaries are posted. She explained that the Provost's full comments are given to him and the President; the President's full comments are given to the President and the Board of Trustees. Last year, new procedures allowed the Executive Committee to see all of the comments while the rest of the senators could not. Chair Albarracin thinks the comments should be grouped thematically rather than positive/neutral/negative.

Senator Gravitt asked why respondents are asked to complete questions related to gender or college if there is no way to tie this information to responses so that, for example, the Provost or President could see if a high percentage of females responded negatively to a certain question or there was a large number of respondents from one college who responded positively to a certain question. Parliamentarian Robinett responded that when the survey was administered through CITR, there was more analysis of the data obtained through Qualtrics than what there has been since the committee took over doing more of the data analysis. Ms. Hamm clarified that CITR used to provide the raw data but it has always been the committee that did the data analysis. Senator Hamner added that it is entirely possible for the committee to do the kind of analysis that Senator Gravitt suggests; it is just a question of whether there is the interest and commitment to do this, and currently there is no charge on CPPP to do so. He thinks that unless the Executive Committee or Faculty Senate tells CPPP that they want more granular analysis, the reports will be similar to those from past years. Parliamentarian Robinett thinks the President and Provost are good at discerning patterns in the qualitative comments and that CPPP is good at writing a summary that highlights the key issues in regard to that.

Senator Hamner wonders if it is valuable for the President, Provost, or anyone else to be able to discern patterns according to gender, race, or other categories within the comments in order to see, for example, if there is a particular group that is feeling especially enthusiastic or underserved. Chair Albarracin thinks this is very important information. Senator Gravitt thinks it could potentially be useful information if there is any indication that there is an issue; otherwise, the information does not really matter. She added if there is an issue it would be helpful to see what group needs to be addressed in order to determine if the issue is endemic, one-time, or situational. She thinks the question should not be removed in case this comes up.

Senator Hamner observed this sounds like the committee should not only leave the gender question in but flesh out the identify questions more fully. He thinks it would be helpful to have an explicit promise at the front of the survey that the raw data goes nowhere beyond the committee and convince faculty that they can be open and trust the process since it would be very difficult to identify a comment attached to a Latina full professor or male Quad Cities A&S professor, for example because no one is doing that level of individual analysis. He noted that the committee will only look at larger patterns, such as whether there is a statistically significant difference in BIPOC faculty's experiences versus white faculty's responses. He thinks if this is what the Executive Committee wants there should be unanimity on sending the survey back CPPP with a request to expand. Chair Albarracin thinks it may be useful to collect the additional data even if it is not reported out because the committee may find something meaningful from it. She added that the more characteristics that are collected, the more identifiable the respondent is, but, as a social scientist, she at least wants to know how males and females feel about the Provost and President, although more characteristics would be better. Senator Hamner stated that while he usually thinks more data is a good thing, it is also helpful to ask if the data will be used and, if not, why the question is being asked. He reiterated that if ExCo cares about this, they need to convey to the committee that there is a desire for this kind of granular analysis, and he thinks Senator Turkelli, who serves on the committee would be enthusiastic about doing that work.

Chair Albarracin asked if CPPP would be upset about the Executive Committee's resistance to removing the gender question. Senator Hamner believes they will. He reiterated that his support for removal is based on not including other personal identity questions. He thinks the Executive Committee needs to recommend either removal of the gender question or adding additional identity questions. Senator Gravitt would prefer to see additional characteristics questions added.

Senator Hamner observed that if the gender question can be skipped and not answered, then the value of the attempt to build an understanding of patterns and groups who are responding in certain ways would be minimal. Ms. Hamm said she will double check as to whether this question is optional. Senator Hamner stated that if the question is not required, it will not result in usable data. Chair Albarracin responded that people are usually given the option of choosing "prefer not to respond" to this question because some people may not identify in any way or not want to explain how they identify. Senator Hamner believes it will be impossible to say if a particular demographic was answering a certain question in a statistically significant way if the respondent data is optional. He stated that if questions about gender, college, Unit A or B, years of service, which campus, etc. are optional, the committee is only getting a numeric picture of who its respondent pool is, which is interesting but is not the same as being able to identify the pattern of response by females to a certain question in a statistically reliable way. Parliamentarian Robinett noted that ten percent of respondents did not answer the gender question on the 2020 survey. Senator Hamner added that there was a

32 percent participation rate from the faculty in 2020, which Senator Gravitt noted is not a statistically valid percentage. Senator Hamner thinks CPPP supports eliminating the gender question partly because they cannot do anything with the results to this question that is meaningful; they cannot say there is a significant pattern in faculty's responses because the respondent level is so low as it is. He noted that while ExCo has expressed interest in adding more rich data, it does not change the fact that the survey typically has a statistically insignificant response rate, and a lot of time and energy will be put into trying to get at information that will not be available unless there is some way to incentivize faculty response. Senator Gravitt added it will not be an objective, selective sample because a random, diverse population is not being chosen but rather respondents are clearly people who have something to say.

The Executive Committee decided to invite the CPPP members to the next ExCo meeting to continue this discussion.

2. *Returning to in-person meetings*

Chair Albarracin attended a state Council of Illinois University Senates (CIUS) meeting two weeks ago. Of the eight universities represented, all but WIU and Chicago State had returned to meeting in-person. She was told that WIU's Faculty Senate may be in violation of the Open Meetings Act, so meetings will need to return to in-person with a zoom option. Parliamentarian Robinett spoke with WIU attorney Torie Smith who informed him the requirement to meet in person was paused during Covid but was reinstated in May 2023 when the national emergency was lifted. He explained that under the OMA rules, quorum must be established by the members in the room for the meeting; Faculty Senate will need 15 senators to be physically present to make quorum in order to hold the meeting. Senators will be able to attend online if they must be away from Macomb for professional reasons, such as those based in the Quad Cities, or if they are ill. Parliamentarian Robinett added that a meeting could be held on minor issues without a quorum but no votes could be taken until quorum is established in-person.

Parliamentarian Robinett will communicate with senators about meeting in-person beginning with the first meeting of the spring semester (January 23). He added that if a senator will not agree to attend in person, the Executive Committee may have to hold a special election to replace that individual. Guests at Senate meetings will have the option of attending via zoom or in-person as desired.

Senate councils and committees, such as ExCo, CAGAS, CGE, CCPI, etc., are not subject to the Open Meetings Act and can continue to meet via zoom and/or in-person, as desired.

3. *Faculty Senate meeting of November 7 cancellation*

Since the only item on the agenda for the November 7 Faculty Senate meeting was three guest speakers, that meeting was cancelled by the Executive Committee. Ms. Hamm will reschedule the guests.

5. *Questions for Provost Zoghi*

Senator Gravitt has heard that no faculty searches will be approved, and it is unknown about administrative searches. She asked if Provost Zoghi can confirm or deny this rumor. Provost Zoghi responded there is a soft freeze in place, so only mission critical positions will be considered or approved, and those are very few. He added this is in response to the Board of Trustees' instructions to "curb the budget." He noted that there have been four or five resignations or retirements that are mission critical, so there will be a handful of hires throughout the year.

6. The Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager
and Recording Secretary