

Washburn University
General Faculty Minutes
January 20, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Farley called the meeting to order at 3:30 via zoom.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made (Barker) and seconded (Schmidt) to approve the minutes of the November 11, 2020 General Faculty meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously without edit.

III. OPENING REMARKS

From the President

- Excitement for the new semester; great to see faces of both students and faculty on campus.
- Students are giving positive feedback regarding the pandemic learning environments. They are still struggling however, missing friends and family. Please provide empathy and access to counseling resources.
- There is a COVID committee that continues to meet weekly to discuss measures required to ensure campus remains safe and successful.
 - i. There is more CARES money this year; efforts are being made to be more creative with it. Financial aid has been exploring ways for students to receive aid via this source.
 - ii. Hopeful that the vaccine may mean life will return to mostly normal soon. Work is being done to get the WU community access to the vaccine, with the potential to be a site for distribution in Topeka.
- Despite all hopes and efforts, the December graduation needed to be cancelled due to the risk such an event would put attendees. Graduates still received the Alumni Association membership and diploma cover they would have been gifted at the ceremony. A small celebration did take place to recognize Sibberson award winners.

From the Vice President for Academic Affairs

- Mazachek echoed the words of Farley; there is a lot of great work being done on campus.
- Specific thanks to Tiffany McMannis and others at the student health center, as well as to Jennifer Ball, for keeping the COVID responsibilities under control.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Requiring General Faculty Approval

21-4 Proposed Faculty Statement on Support for Freedom of Expression

- Barker moved to bring the proposal forward; Gonzalez-Abellas provided a second.
- Byrne was able to provide background. A draft of this statement was created in AY2018; after the cancellation of a graduation speaker by Wichita State University Tech in summer of 2020, it was deemed vital to revisit this work.
 - Members of the committee: Ball (J), Byrne, Wagner (T), Havens, Holthaus, Wasserstein, Jackson, Bluml, Fried, and Frank.
- Morse explained that most Kansas universities moved to pass a statement with KBOR after the event at Wichita. It was deemed important that this statement pass through Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, and General Faculty to demonstrate the campus wide support. The language used in our statement is stronger than that at other universities; we are trying to protect faculty voices more clearly.
- Smith (I) asked for clarity regarding the application of this statement. Concern that there may be places in which expression should be limited.
- Moving forward with details regarding the process, Mazachek stated that WUBOR will be unable to address this at their February meeting, as eStaff needs time to prepare for presentation. The statement will be seen by the Board in April.
- Snyder inquired whether there are plans for the addition of language regarding power differentials in access to expression. There is concern that the statement could further empower those with greater levels of access. Byrne and others confirmed that the intent of the statement was to ensure all have equal access.
- A poll was taken for voting purposes. Of those present (147), 88 percent voted yay, with six individuals voting against and 12 abstaining. The statement was approved without edit and will move forward to WUBOR for consideration.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Sullivan (C) will be leading efforts around Apeiron this spring, please reach out with questions.
- Erby announced the start of the WUmester. The theme is sustainability; there are great events and challenges sponsored by the university. Check them out online and encourage student involvement.

- Erby nudged those teaching general education courses to participate in the diversity and inclusion related general education audit. Please check your email for details
- Grant (E) communicated a request for more information regarding the cases of fraudulent unemployment claim which had been brought forward in an email from other faculty. Mazachek asked those who are seeking more information to contact Teresa Lee, as she is leading the effort at addressing this issue.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30