Graduate Student Senate
Senate Meeting
Tuesday February 18 2014
Campus Center 917

Minutes

Present:
Officers: Robin Anderson, Samantha Sterba, Adina Giannelli
Senators: Alexandra Prince, Kathryn Grasha, Christoph Krumm, Katrina Rieger, Robert Kane, Tim Sutton, Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau, Javier Campos, Kathryn Accurso, Dani O’Brien, Emily Campbell, Matthew Donlevy, Jared Starr, Ian Coupal, Phillip Geer, Maureen Gallagher, Kimberley Sawyer, Travis Salley, Colleen Ashley, Jeffrey Stupak,
Others: David Vaillancourt (Associate Dean of Students), John McCarthy (Dean of the Graduate School), Timothy Anderson (Co-chair, Joint Task Force on Resource Allocation).

Robin Anderson called the meeting to order at 4.03 PM. Colleen Ashley moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and Jordan Bosse seconded. The minutes were approved with 16 votes in favor and 3 abstentions.

Announcements: Dean McCarthy made a presentation about the PFF. Robert Kane said he was concerned about grad students pushing out full professors from teaching courses. Dani O’Brien expressed her concern about how this program would affecting already existing TA’ships. The dean said this will not eliminate assistantships at all and is not a replacement for TAs. Travis Salley asked if the number and range of colleges participating can be increased. The dean answered that it was open to expansion and we already have a number of grad students working in the four colleges. Colleen asked if these assistantships would be funded, and the dean replied that they would be, as project assistants. Markeysha asked if these positions were filling pre existing faculty positions. The dean said he didn’t know but he would look into that. He added that this was not about taking existing jobs from people. It was focused on enhancing experience of grad students rather than cutting costs of the host colleges. Maureen Gallagher, who taught previously at Smith, explained how the process of the Four Colleges hiring UMass grad students works. Matthew Donlevy asked how the funding would work. The dean said this was not about creating new assistantships but encouraging departments to do more teaching-related mentoring. Maureen said that this will be useful especially for specialized teaching scenarios such as language teaching which cannot be addressed by existing programs which were more general. Javier asked about the plan for students who don’t have TAs. The dean said that this is for students on RAships who don’t have teaching experience. This is not a solution for funding shortages in general. Dani O’Brien said that in the Education departments, TA’ships are being cut drastically, so this could be seen as a way to shrink them further. The dean assured her that he would guard against that, and added that that is a more serious problem and needs to be tackled separately. Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau said the problem arises because this program is being introduced against the
backdrop of the larger problem of TA shortages, and that bigger problem should be addressed as well.

Committee updates: Tim Sutton presented an update from the Campus Planning committee. He was interested in hearing about issues facing departments that are being relocated from Bartlett without the assurance of comparable space in their premises. Robin presented an update on the GSS’ UMPD resolution: the officers had met with Dean of Students and Interim VC Enku Gelaye and Chief of Police John Horvath. Markeysha added that she had also reached out to SGA, CMASS, the Grad School and the Dean of Students’ office.

Adina presented motions for funding: S2014-04: Kathryn Accurso from TECS introduced the proposal for a conference and its associated refreshment costs. Jared Starr asked for the figures of the total budget for ad hoc funding. Adina replied that $1200 had been spent out of $4000 total. Also the TECS GSO is directing all their existing funds to this as well. Jared added that this was unanimously approved by the Finance committee. Matthew Donlevy moved to approve and Jared seconded. The motion passed with 19 in favor and 3 abstentions.

S2014-05: Melanie from Eco GSO said their previous career panel was well-organized and very well attended. She said they wanted to continue with coffee socials which also had a good response. She explained that they were requesting Ad hoc funding because they are a new GSO and do not have line-item funding. Jared said he would abstain because he is from the same department. Robert Kane moved to approve and Dani O’Brien seconded. The motion passed with 20 in favor and 2 abstentions.

Dean McCarthy asked to be recognized and requested that the OPD be informed about such initiatives like career panels, so that they may also be able to help financially in some way.

JTFRA presentation: Timothy Anderson, co-chair of the JTFRA, introduced the task force and said it grew out of strategic planning initiative, since it was evident that resources are the most important issue in the strategic planning process. He said the task force wants simplicity, clarity and transparency in the budgeting process. They seek balance, among other values and principles to come up with budgeting scenarios and recommend budget models to the chancellor that are best suited to our strategic plan. So far UMass budgeting has been very centralized. The new proposals for RCM type models make each department or unit responsible for its resources. So if a unit cannot generate income it disappears. We are exploring different ways this model can work for us given our own needs while still safeguarding the common good.

Matthew Donlevy asked what these six principles were. Prof. Anderson said they included Balance. Phillip asked what was meant by balance? Prof. Anderson replied that it was balance between undergraduates and grads, among different disciplines, etc. Travis Salley asked how far we’ve come with this model, and if we were looking at other universities. Prof. Anderson said we’ve hired a consulting group called Huron and they have a lot of experience with this kind of planning.
Juan Manuel asked what our peer institutions were and who would be good examples to follow. Prof. Anderson said Indiana and Florida are bad examples, Michigan and Illinois have implemented it in a good way, but each university is unique so we have to develop the model in our own way. Prof. Anderson then continued to list other values that were part of this process.

Dani O’Brien asked if it isn’t a conflict to encourage collaboration on one hand and isolate departments based on funding units, like RCM on the other. Prof. Anderson replied that we have to design the model so that the values such as collaboration and the common good are maintained. Phillip Geer asked who would ultimately decide on the funding model. Prof. Anderson said the Task Force will recommend it to the chancellor and he will make the final decision. He has been to two other universities that have gone through these processes. He added that his home department, Chemical Engineering has gone through it already and explained the department’s experience with this type of model. He said the department ended up with more revenue and a generally positive result.

Juan Manuel asked if recruiting and attracting students and faculty of color would be part of changing the budget model. Prof. Anderson replied that the diversity enhancement will be dealt with centrally and also delegated to departments who can look at this with more local knowledge of diversity in their own disciplines. Juan Manuel said this was a good opportunity to make diversity one of the principles. Prof. Anderson agreed and said the commitment was there, and they should probably make it more explicit. Stefanie Robles said there was a danger in leaving this issue to individual departments. Robert Kane said we should have another discussion about diversity in general rather than talk about it in this discussion.

Samantha asked about the scope for including academic freedom in the budgeting model. Prof. Anderson acknowledged that that was a good point and we have not discussed it so far. Dean McCarthy said that this discussion is about money, and this model by itself can lead to chaos if every department is left free to do its own thing. But the values are there to provide a set of restraints and framework to ensure that larger interests like diversity and academic freedom are served. Tim Sutton asked if the RCM model would exacerbate the existing situation of funding cuts and shortages. Prof. Anderson answered that the model will preserve the holistic and common good nature of public education.

Robin moved to adjourn, and Dani second. The meeting was adjourned at 5.25 PM.