
FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE SPECIAL MEETING

**February 7, 2019
12:50 P.M. ENG 117**

Present: Mike Banish, Lori Lioce, David Johnson, Christina Carmen, Monica Dillihunt, Carmen Scholz, Laird Burns, Vladimir Florinksi, Gang Wang, Tim Newman, Jeff Weimer

Guests: Dean Greene, Dean Lane, Dean Mahalingam, Associate Provost Wren

➤ **Faculty Senate President Mike Banish called the meeting to order at 12:52 pm.**

➤ **Dean Greene**

- Thank you for giving us the chance to be here today. Our goal is to receive input from the senate in regards to the workshops that we are hosting. Our goal is to improve retention and graduation rates. It started last year; the Provost Office initiated discussions with the faculty. The Provost really asked us to come up with something we could do within the colleges to continue the discussion. Our proposal has been summarized in the handout. The handout captures our vision for the retention workshops. There are some things that we are working with the Provost Office to advance at a university level, advising, etc. The workshop will discuss what is at the faculty level. There are three areas that we identified that faculty are really well positioned to help in. They are promoting class attendance, early notifications/feedback, and student connection with the campus. This is to come up with ideas to help connect students. Research shows that faculty is effective in this area.
 - Carmen – I find this interesting to hear. Our opportunity to advise was taken away from us. Now, you come back and want us to be involved but we can't advise. Small departments would love this, but we don't see the students. In chemistry, in large classes we can't identify chemistry majors because we can't see them. How do you expect a professor to notify students with 200 attending? We have outside obligations aside from teaching.
- I understand all the points you are making. The goal of these sessions is to share ideas from the faculty. We specifically did this at college level. Our goal is to facilitate discussion among faculty that can share with each other things that are effective in their areas. Where we started with this was benefit from others, there isn't a silver bullet that will fix this. We are trying to set one thing in stone that will work. We need ideas for different actions. Within each of the three areas, we want faculty to identify with what would be successful.
 - Shankar – We have to keep in mind our growth. The approach we took was to promote discussion. We expect thoughts from each college and share across campus. There may be ideas that are limited to large classes. It needs to make sense to you and your class ultimately. It is just a sharing of ideas. Ultimately it's at ground level.
 - Tim – I want to mention that I appreciate these areas identified; I think they are key areas. This group the last 5-10 years has tried to work in these areas. We feel like we are swimming upstream. We aren't allowed to cap our class size and to

accommodate regardless. Not being able to cap, fights against us. I think at the macro level, anything we do will not allow us to move the needle. We have to address the macro issues too. We are told we can't cap class sizes, some have been told to not assign homework. We need change at the faculty level and at the system level.

- Mike – You are aware that chemistry is a good department in regards to retention and graduation rate. Carmen has a 100 level class. Advising was taken out of the department's years ago, against what the faculty said. We have lost 100 level classes in engineering for the departments. Some wanted this that was under resourced. Some departments wanted to keep them and were told no. To be told the faculty needs to do this, I can't interject what is happening in certain classes. You are asking faculty to do these things that are out of area. Education doesn't have 100 or 200 level classes.
- Carmen – When I was Chair, I suggested separating the classes by majors. When I came with this proposal, I felt I had asked for something that was dumb and extreme. I will speak about the issue, but some colleagues don't say anything.
- Mike – They don't want to be bothered because they are told with no with all their ideas.
- Laird – This is an opportunity for windows to open but it doesn't need to be open for a short time. Carmen isn't the only ones complaining about advising. We have a hybrid model that seems to work. This welcomes the students to talk with us and then see advising to make sure their times are working. I think the openness is temporarily here.
- Monica – We don't see out students until they are juniors in education. All the courses they take prior to us are GER's. Once they get to us, we have a flowchart and pattern. In order to be admitted into the program, they have a faculty advisor. They have to be in schools at certain times, so our courses accommodate that. Once they get to us, they stay. Some we do counsel out. Some that is too late because they are juniors.
- Lori – Nursing started to incorporate some language in 200 level courses.
- Monica – We are held by state standards and accrediting agencies.
- Lori – I am really excited because they are putting time towards making a solution.
- Dean Greene – We wanted to share this out. In the pilot session we did, at the end we wrote everything down and recorded it. We tried to get it down to key ideas. Our intent was to circulate that across campus. I think initially we were going to keep it within the college, but realized that needed to go out.
- Shankar – We are also trying to plan a catch all session for those who missed. I learned some things from the business college.
- Dean Greene – We tried to mix people together for the discussion. We had some in there that taught smaller sessions, online, hybrid. We don't have answers we are just trying to facilitate ongoing discussions. This allows a faculty member to here a new idea or share an idea. Some solutions can be too costly. We are looking for ways. Our advisors weren't in our sessions. Faculty knows our advisors and the goal wasn't to replace or change, but to compliment mentorship. Faculty mentors are still critical. Our faculty works well with our advisors. It isn't either or.
- Laird – Is it possible to set up a Google doc location for ideas and best practices? I have ideas for improving attendance and grades. I give them the opportunity to

speaking and I give homework. I use these tricks. I am not saying it is best practice but I want to see what others have figured out.

- Shankar – What is the class size?
- Laird – 25 to 75.
- Shankar – We have unique ways on how people integrate attendance.
- Jeff – I will follow on Laird's comment. In regards to my time here, there is a wealth of ideas at the faculty level. It is not as though faculty doesn't confront them or want to solve them. What I see is those ideas when generated get knocked down and go nowhere at a certain level. The statement here is enlisting faculty or empower faculty. I hope the working group would take that sincerely. I would hope that advising is taken serious. We have wonderful resources, but we have no initiatives on this campus for the faculty senate locally. We don't have chat groups just for the faculty on the university. Why are we in a technologically advanced place and we ignoring that? We will help you, we are enthusiastic. I don't remember who the Dean, advising, or the President was when I was going through the school but I knew the faculty.
- Laird – Our Dean pushed us to use online training. It was a human, verbal wiki.
- Mike – If we look at our majors, CPE for example, at one class 83% was retention from 1-2 year, then the third year it was 43%. In Chemical Engineering, we know the primary class that causes our retention problem. That is a critical date point. If I look at education, they don't get them until their juniors, and retention drops. Where was the problem? If we don't know the data point, anything I do in my 200 level class or Laird in his 300/400 level class, makes no difference. Retention is not a standalone topic. For all of us, whether we have influence or not, we need to identify the bottleneck for our students. We then employ things for our students.
- Dean Greene – I think we have common ground in this. I am not disagreeing with what you are saying. There are other grounds we need to push on. When you look at the reason students leave, some can be addressed and some not. There will be some things that are out of our control individually. With these workshops, there may be things that are in our control. If we spread the energy and effort around, try new things, we can be optimistic in the outcome. We are advocating for things that are not best practices for us within the constraints we have.
- Mike – One of the tasks given to Dr. Johnson and Dr. Lioce was to go out to Chairs and Departments to see what they thought. I would suggest they still go ahead with that.
- Dean Greene – If the information gets shared back. I am not sure I understood the purpose of the survey at first. I think the idea was clarified to share ideas. I would say they complement each other. In my previous institution, we moved the needle some.
- Mike – Retention isn't a standalone issue. Some schools thought very highly of a program call Map Works. It is a ten minute survey the students take.
- Monica - The students take it when they first come in as freshman. They found that some of these questions were predictors to show what students need to be watched or what students needed plans developed. It could be used for housing, student services, and faculty. If a student puts any input in that survey, any person related was notified to help the student.
- Laird – Would it have to go through URB?
- Mike – Yes, for what we would use it for.

- Monica – Charger360 lets you flag something but who sees it?
- Mike – We are going to get a demonstration of this. The parent company is something else. Sky Factor Map Works is who makes it. The people at the workshop said it was the greatest thing.
- Dean Greene – Then on the backend you need ways to help.
- Monica – We used Charger360 but where does it go? We asked the same for this and it flags people automatically.
- Tim – I think someone needs to take a look at Charger360. I think we have to do something else to contact the student.
- Shankar – The interface wasn't very appealing.
- Dean Greene – We need a user friendly alert. It would be costly for you use the system. There are products and solutions out there but on the backside what happens? There are movements to help address that. I think Student Success Center is making strides there.
- Lori – I am really excited that you are doing this. Hopefully this will collect thoughts. Is it possible for you to zoom? It is very easy to do that and those that aren't on campus can be apart.
- Brent – Problem with zoom is some can be done but some can't be because we broke out into smaller group.
- Laird – I have never seen a list of best practices. As a researcher, I think we need to take the time to find best practices within retention and among other colleges.
- Dean Greene – I think we are looking for the sharing of ideas that our faculty have done with our students. I think we know that what works for a 30 person class may not work for a 250 class. I imagine those things exist.
- Laird – Is there someone somewhere that can look some of this up in their extra time?
- Dean Greene – We aren't trying to tell you what to do.
- Laird – As bright as we are here at UAH, we aren't the only ones with this problem. There are things we could do that would help solve these issues.
- Dean Greene – This is feasible for us to do with our faculty.
- Carmen – I agree there is not a silver bullet, but we are unique at UAH because we are engineer heavy. We have a student population that isn't very social with one another. I think community building would help our students. When you watch them they sit in their cars until class starts. We need a community. Some colleges/departments have figured that out. When I have Chemical Engineering students at senior level class they are bonded. That is something we need to create for our large population.
- Monica – The large population of autistic children is the second highest in this area. Those kids that were in K12 are now in our classes. They may be intelligent but haven't worked through their social skills. We have to adjust for those.
- David - I think the Chair level survey didn't focus on the community issue. I think it's just throwing all things at the wall. I think it is consistent engagement.
- Laird – Whatever data we get, I ask that we can see it.
- Mike – One thing that concerns me is you have said more than once that we are resource limited. I have spent the last three years looking at the budget book. I don't believe that statement at all. One thing we don't look at in terms of retention, we gain financially if our retention increases. We refuse to spend to gain that extra. We want the magic bullet without using these resources. That is pretty much the

collective opinion of the faculty. There has to be resources put into this if we are ever going to solve this. At your previous institution where you saw success, I doubt it was resource free.

- Shankar – We are making all the push we can.
- Vladimir – For me, we don't know the disease but all the symptoms. I haven't seen really the problems we have identified.
- Dean Greene – In the sessions we do address those. We do know that lack of attendance is associated with poor performance. The issue of connectedness is not new. These are things that we tried to diagnose first. There are other issues; financial comes out of the Hanover study. We aren't asking faculty to do that. Our effort was to identify some of those things. We don't know all those things. They gave us free responses to those too.
- Laird – Do we have access to that study?
- Brent – Yes, we do.
- Laird – That will help us support these ideas.
- Dean Greene – I am sympathetic to that comment. We don't know that treatment will fix that condition.
- Mike – I really want to highlight what Carmen said. We say attendance/connection. Dr. Scholz gave you a trial solution to you. I am probably one of the most frustrated here. There are solutions that have been put forward for years now, but have been washed under the rug. Retention is not a single variable. There are things that have to come together. If we don't do some of those things, it's pointless.
- Christina – Would your department be able to do that?
- Carmen – We can't do that. They are advised centrally.
- Mike – We don't see them as freshmen.
- Carmen – We connect with those students who seek us out and want to shadow with us. Those who come to me aren't the problem kids. I need to interact with the others that won't come to me. We have no access to them. As a chair, I tried to push that undergrads had to see their advisor once a semester. It failed because it wasn't conveyed.
- Christina – You have motivation to see all your students. With central advising, could there be a mechanism for those who want more direct relationship. I would like to mentor personally. If a particular department wants to do that could there be another line be added that has to be signed by that mentor.
- Tim – Our faculty proposed that same thing and it was turned down.
- Carmen – I am not blaming the advisors, they are overworked.
- Lori – That is why they put FYE's in place. Do you have FYE's in place to do that?
- Mike – I think we need to grab the data and nail down the problem.
- Laird – One area had two departments and one was high in retention and one was low. They didn't even understand their own issues. They thought the opposite of themselves.

➤ Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.