Meeting minutes for November 15, 2017

I. The meeting was called to order at 2:48pm

II. Welcome of new elected Senate members by the Senate President.

III. Approval of Minutes: October minutes approved.
    Agenda approved by acclimation.

IV. Report from the Administration: (Gingerich)
   a. There’s an upcoming visit of the candidates for the position of Vice-Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School. Open meetings and conversations with the candidates will be on Monday, Tuesday, & Thursday. They will take place in the multipurpose room in Feliciano School. I encourage everybody to attend.
   b. Student retention numbers (see handout): we need to address this situation and pay attention. The freshman-sophomore retention/return rate for Fall 2017 is lower than in recent years. Vice-Provost Jim German examined the data in more detail, but he is out of town and not able to attend the meeting. Analysis of the data showed that gender and ethnic background were not factors. However, the need for financial aid, first-generation students, and students unprepared for college had some correlation. More detailed data were given to the Deans. We need everyone to pay attention to this.
      (Trubatch) The numbers on the handout are forward-looking retention targets.
      (Gingerich) Correct.
      (Trubatch) The concern from the Administration is the number of students returning this fall who were first-year students last fall.
      (Gingerich) Yes.
      (Trubatch) So the handout does not show which programs lost students this fall.
      (Gingerich) What we really need now is to look forward.
      (Alvares) I’ve had a few students state that cost [of tuition] prevented them from returning.
      (Gingerich) It’s important to mentioned about 20% students who don’t come back had a GPA of 3.0 or greater. They don’t show up in the early-alert system because they’re doing fine. We don’t know. Maybe it’s cost. Starfish has a program called Kudos that might help with this.
      (Sullivan) Did Advisers and academics get this data? I didn’t.
      (Gingerich) All advisors.
      (Sullivan) I didn’t get it. Is there anything that is going to be done?
      (Domine) How faculty can make an impact?
(Gingerich) I don’t have full information, it’s only an alert.
(Domine) I said it before, a 3-semester system would alleviate financial aid issues. Summer is the key.
(Gingerich) Leveraging financial aid for retaining Freshmen may help. 3 indicators were mentioned from Kentucky University and their retention is higher than 80%. State Data shows TCNJ is more demanding for entrance and admissions, and Rutgers has better retention than we do.
(Specchio) Is age a factor?
(Gingerich) I don’t know
(Nurse) We see [many] sections of College writing. They are unprepared. Maybe prepared people haven’t got patience with unprepared students. The unprepared students do transfer to community college and when they come back they are excellent students.
(Gingerich) We want to keep prepared students.
(Sullivan) We dropped remedial courses. Any impact?
(Gingerich) These are basic fundamental skills. We need to reassess the changes that we made.
(Misra) It’s very important: first-year Math and Writing. Will remedial courses come back?
(Gingerich) Remedial courses aren’t coming back but we do recognize that some people are not ready.
(Saltzman) I’d like clarification about the high performers.
(Gingerich) About 20% of students who do not return have a GPA of 3.0 or over. Some were just plain drop outs.
(Saltzman) Some that left the University in my classes were very high achievers.
(Gingerich) We need to work on better mechanisms to detect those that might leave.
(Speechio) Retention is linked to the economic situation. Now that the economy is doing better the retention rate is falling. That maybe something you want to correlate.
(Brook) Take some of the basic college writing and math courses and add a 1-credit help session.
(Gingerich) We are doing that.
(Trubatch) Not in Mathematics.
(Gingerich) We are doing that in Writing 106.
(Berisha) How long is it been happening?
(Gingerich) Last year, was the first time. We had never been below 82%.

c. Digital Accessibility Policy:

(Fleming) Canvas and all the digital publications of the University need to be accessible. All the information on Canvas, digital publications, instruction material, online courses, PDF, etc. are included. In addition to moral and ethical considerations, there is a legal component. There’s a draft policy prepared in order to be compliant with the federal requirements. There’s not impact on teaching, there’s an impact on the material. In the implementation plan, we are focusing first on new materials. In December, you’ll be seeing some emails. Going forward, we will open a website that will make information available to you.
(Trubatch) How do we migrate?
(Fleming) You’ll receive guidelines and rules on how to follow and more general in December.

(Trubatch) What is the legal situation? What kicked this whole thing off?

(Maria Anderson) The Office of Civil Rights of the US Department of Education did a survey of public websites of higher-education institutions. They have software that audits websites for accessibility. If a website had errors in accessibility, they were flagged, and the institution was notified. The organizations that fail to comply have 3 years to solve the failings. Montclair State University has agreed to become accessible. Enforcement actions will put pressure on IT software companies interested in developing software to comply the digital accessibility policy.

(Gingerich) When did it come to our attention?

(Anderson) We received a letter in mid-2016. At that time, we were already migrating the University Web site to WordPress.

(Trubatch) I support making materials accessible I am most concerned about implementation. This policy cannot just be a mandate, but must come with resources. If not done carefully, people will not put their creative content on our Website. Instead, they will post on non-University Websites. A colleague from another institution had issues with this when her institution complied with the accessibility policy. We had no idea this was so imminent. We need a lot of thoughtful people. The Library has a lot of expertise we should utilize.

(Sullivan) Could we have an example? What would happen with a PDF?

(Fleming) In December, there will be a summary with instructions. WordPress because has templates to ensure accessibility. There are tools available. This is what we are monitoring.

(Trubatch) What about research scholarship and creative work?

(Fleming) Everything should be accessible.

(Alvarez) Some online classes have 10-30 videos per classes. Many of them are not closed captioned. How is it possible to convert them? It’s 100s of hours.

(Fleming) We need a do-able timeframe and resources to achieve it.

(Domite) There is a list of exemptions listed. Do you have something in place regarding exceptions?

(Fleming) Nothing today. It’s got to be do-able. If something is a true unacceptable burden on the University, we can make an exception.

(Misra) One, I will probably be retired before this rolls out. Two, there should be tools. This is a tech issue. I think it’s a technological issue rather than content. Everyone should not be running around to fix their content.

(Domite) It’s both.

(Trubatch) This a burden that the University has. The concern is that the burden of making changes is not pushed onto the authors of the content. If I make content, like an exam, I have to collaborate with the resource center.

(Fleming) Yes agreed. It is the University community’s responsibility. The goal is to go beyond the need to declare a disability. That being said there is no question... It’s a legal and an ethical burden but the frontline shouldn’t be affected. Collaboration between departments should be available.

(Wolfson) The published minutes of Board of Trustees are messy. The documents are off-center and hard to read. Maybe that should be fixed.

(Fleming) That’s one of the easy things.
I’d like to address the aggressiveness of the timeframe. It should be a more thoughtful timeline. Were we forced into this timeline, or did we volunteer?

We have hired a consultant who has worked with other institutions. They are working with us on all the variable aspects. We’re feeling okay about having a plan. At the moment we’re feeling confident that we will meet those dates.

With Acrobat you can run OCR on documents and that will do the straightening for you. If we’re trying to convert PDF files to be readable, it might only be a small sum to get us there.

Is there any rule regarding our archives? We’ve got old syllabi, etc.? Is there a date?

The policy defines archives as exempt.

I wonder if the Department of Education is providing funding or is Montclair State providing funding?

Montclair State is responsible.

How does affect our use of Jstor, is it compatible with the Policy? Is the Policy compatible with other databases?

The Policy does not include third-party resources.

We have 1 librarian helping people with disabilities at the library.

Be careful with Jstor because there are bad photocopies and it’s hard to read.

I agree, but we can’t control that.

What about students posting in Canvas? Does it apply? Will students receive guidelines?

The Policy does not apply to student-authored content.

But student content is on Canvas.

Jstor includes support for accessibility.

We will provide updates as this situation evolves.

Constitution amendment up for 3rd reading and vote (see attached)
  a. Vote: 23 for, 2 ab, 0 no
  b. Amendment is passed.

Council Reports
  a. Academic Affairs (Domine)
    i. We are in the early stages of developing a set of recommendations regarding the University’s curriculum action processes. We encourage and welcome input from Senators and the wider University community. When ready, the proposed recommendation will be presented to the full Senate for review and approval.
    ii. We are also in the early stages of deliberating a set of recommendations regarding how academic policies regarding programs are implemented, how they are assessed, how the faculty members are appointed and the decision-making processes pertaining to academic programs. We welcome additional input from senators and the wider university community to develop recommendations and bring to the full senate for review.
    iii. Committee Reports
1. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (Dyer)
So far, the Committee has approved 15 new programs. The Committee has also discussed how often the courses are offered. We sent information to members and ask as many people as possible to respond. The importance of involvement cannot be overstated. A lot of work is done by a few people. On the committee there are 18 voting members and 8 non-voting. It’s a shameful thing that we often barely have a quorum. Typically 10 voting members show up. We need people taking more interest.
(Sullivan) The College-level Curriculum Committees are supposed to be doing the work so when it gets to you, it takes less time. We should give feedback, maybe through website, to provide information to everybody.
(Dyer) We are interested in doing something like that. We’d like to make the process more transparent.
2. Gen Ed Committee (McDermid)
We are still working on how to help people re-certify their courses. In spring semester, we’ll start making recommendations on World Cultures and new-student seminar.
3. Graduate Council (Gainor)
The report of our last meeting is included in the materials that were distributed. The Graduate Council approved the following curriculum actions, to be effective for Fall 2018: Alterations to MFA in Dance, MA in Music with a concentration in Music Education, MA in Clinical Psychology, the PhD in Math Education and the BS/MAT Dual Certification in Inclusive Education.
The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 13th at 3:30PM.
4. Academic Information Technology Committee (Jacobson)
We are trying to schedule a meeting. We’ll focus on a software for advising and mentoring. Open-sources materials, as well as access and accessibility will be discussed.
(Alvares) I was told about upgrades in Canvas, do you have some information?
(Fleming) We could update you... we do stay very current and on top of new software. It is a good topic for discussion in the AITC. If there are needs out there they should flow to Yanling Sun.
(Alvarez) Do we contact service desk IT department?
(Domine) New business?

b. Administrative Affairs
IT (Murray) Accessibility is very important. There is an opportunity for a group of people with interest to provide input. Dean Hunt and the Library members can participate. If you know people interested in participating, please let me know.

c. Student Affairs (McDermid)
We are collecting information on the Health Insurance issue.
VII. NAL (Wolfson)
   a. Local is investigating a paid leave policy. We put together a Committee.
   b. The Union is working with HR regarding past overpayment and underpayment several individuals in the Unit. So far 66 people had been affected. Most of the errors occurred between 2011 and 2015, ranging from $22,000 to a few hundred dollars under- or over-paid. It happened due to different issues, for example, fractional employees, change of status, sabbatical leave compensation. It’s a complicated matter because it affects pension, health insurance. So, please pay attention to your pay and if you identify any error please send it to me to see it.
   (Salzman) I’d like to check some points of my pay, is there a place where we can check?
   (Wolfson) It’s difficult to know what’s taxable and non-taxable. Giving feedback from what people said. It’s not clear. It’s not a 10-minute conversation but start in Workday. Many of the mistakes were made by people who no longer work for Montclair State University.

VIII. Elections (Field)
   a. We will be having spring elections and that there will be several open seats.

IX. Report of the Senate President (Trubatch)
   a. Strategic planning will be preceded by groups who will meet for SWOT analysis. The Provost aims to have a draft Strategic Plan by the end of spring semester.
   b. The Senate Executive Board discussed with the Administration the value of collecting input from end users regarding issues with administrative systems such as those run by the Registrar’s office and Grants accounting. Moreover, the Executive Board suggested the implementation of ticketing systems to track service requests. President Cole stated this is not the time to implement a new tool. The Senate is an important body to detect systemic problems. Tony Pemberton, Chairperson of Administrative Affairs Council and Doug Murray, Senate liaison for administrative IT issues are points of contact to share information about systemic, ongoing issues.
   c. Course fees: We no longer have courses fees and needs for courses are handled through course-expense accounts. These budgets for these accounts are determined through the University budgeting process. However, many of us have no experience with this process. The Executive Board requested
   d. Final-exams schedule: There is schematic schedule, but there are a lot of exceptions and conflicts that need to be addressed. The Office of the Registrar has stated that they are prepared to make necessary adjustments in a timely manner. Specifically, the December Senate meeting will be on Wednesday of finals period. If anyone has a conflict please contact the Office of the Registrar.
   e. Life-Cycle Computer-Replacement Program: OIT is developing a website for when you are due a new machine. I did not see clarification on the role of Deans. It may be unit-dependent.
   f. Last meeting, we discussed getting the word out about the Senate’s accomplishments and pending items. We asked that college school meetings be the place it is disseminated. Did that happen in your last college meetings?
      CSAM yes
      CEHS yes emailed a memo
CART yes
SBUS no

X. New Business from Senate

(Sullivan) We need to coordinate the course scheduling when it comes to adjuncts, when there isn’t rooms available. We are losing very good adjuncts and it’s a problem.

(Murray) I talked about that with the Provost and Leslie Sutton

(Bellum) We asked for clear guidelines from the Provost.

(Trubatch) We will follow up on that.

The meeting was adjourned, 4:22 pm.