

UDMPU General Membership
Minutes of the January 11, 2007 Meeting

Present: Kris McLonis, JoAnne Isbey, Mike Canjar, Su Homant, Cindy Gillham, Barry Dauphin, Bob Ross, Nihad Dukhan, John M. Dwyer, Stokes Baker, Roy Finkenbine, Tricia Thomas, Larry Zeff, Libby Blume, Mary Lou Caspers, Jerry Cavanagh, Vivian I. Dicks, Liz Roberts-Kirchhoff, Gail Mitchell, Greg Grabowski, James Graves, Michael Barry, Doug MacDonald, Joslen Letscher, Salomeia Schlick, Linda Slowik, Maureen Anthony, Todd Ray, Katy Snyder, Stephen Manning, David Koukal, Heather Hill-Vasquez, Mary Higby, Carol Weisfeld, Prasad Venugopal

Announcements

The meeting began at 12:50 with announcements by Canjar. The first announcement was that elections for UDMPU officers would be held at the next general membership meeting, which is scheduled for March 27. Positions which will need to be filled are president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer.

The second announcement was that Father Stockhausen's reply to the letter sent out by the union board expressing extreme dissatisfaction with Stockhausen's position on the 403b giveback has been posted on the union website. A copy of that reply has also been emailed to faculty members in the union.

Upcoming vote on the shared governance pilot proposal

Canjar gave a summary of the history of the shared governance trial period: After lots of pushing for years on the part of faculty for shared governance, a pilot proposal was developed and approved for a 1-year trial period beginning in May 2005. The administration requested a postponement of the final vote on the proposal, which extended the trial period. An updated version of the proposal was sent out for review in December of 2006. Once the shared governance proposal is approved, the no-layoff clause in the current UDMPU contract would continue for eighteen more months.

Weisfeld, in her capacity as president of the McNichols Faculty Assembly (MFA), then took the floor, announcing that the MFA had passed final amendments to the constitution and bylaws in the previous week. She said that these documents would be posted through the Shared Governance Task Force on Monday, January 15. The voting on the shared governance proposal will most likely be via Flashlight and scheduled on or around January 19. One big change from the initial proposal is that the Shared Governance Task Force will continue indefinitely to monitor any unforeseen issues that might come up with implementing the shared governance structure; the membership on that task force will change in three years. (Elections for new MFA members will proceed in March of this year if the proposal is passed.)

Weisfeld expressed her opinion that the structure is working very well. Twenty-four different items and documents have had decisions made by the MFA, and to her knowledge none of those decisions had been overturned by the University administration (although compromises were made in some cases to arrive at a consensus between all parties). But, key decisions such as program review are yet to come! Weisfeld stated that she didn't consider the upcoming vote to be a vote for or against any type of shared

governance. Finally, she thanked the committees that had worked so hard developing and implementing the shared governance structure over the last year and a half.

Weisfeld then answered questions from the membership in attendance regarding the upcoming vote and the shared governance structure itself. McLonis pointed out that the current Vice President for Academic Affairs is in favor of greater autonomy for faculty and that this might have had much to do with the success of the governance structure so far. McLonis asked whether Weisfeld believed the structure had enough “teeth” to deal with a possible negative change in the University administration; Weisfeld said she believed that the structure could deal effectively with such a change.

Cavanagh raised concerns about the extra level(s) of “bureaucracy” that have been created via the governance structure and the possibility of faculty becoming burned out from work on committees and/or teams. Weisfeld replied that another level of “bureaucracy” can be very helpful for smaller units that might otherwise not have much help in creating worthwhile change or opposing changes they might regard as negative. As for the fear of faculty feeling overworked or sensing that their work on committees and/or teams is sometimes discounted, Weisfeld acknowledged that teams in particular have had trouble getting their work recognized and that there is currently a lack of clarity as to whom the teams report. (In response to an earlier question from McLonis, Weisfeld had clarified that team proposals go to the clearinghouse as well as to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.)

At this point Venugopal expressed his agreement with Weisfeld about the problems that the teams have been facing. He said that faculty members should be well-acquainted with the charges of the teams on which they serve, and speak up if it is evident that the charge is not being followed in the activities of a given team. Instances of non-compliance with a charge should be brought up with the chair of the team; if the chair is personally responsible for the non-compliance, a faculty member should bring the problem to the attention of the MFA.

Zeff asked how amendments to a team’s charges could be proposed. Weisfeld stated that either an individual or a team could propose an amendment to the MFA. Koukal suggested that a leadership team might be an appropriate body for directly overseeing the teams. Zeff stated the possibility that the underlying problem with the teams is political in nature rather than structural.

Several faculty members expressed their opinion that the governance structure to be voted on, while not perfect, has been very successful so far and that, if it is passed, it will continue to work well with ongoing faculty participation and improvements to the structure made as necessary.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:42.

Respectfully submitted,
Kris McLonis