Minutes of the May 26, 2020 faculty meeting

The meeting was called to order at 4:03pm on Zoom by Dean Adrian Randolph.

I. The minutes of the Faculty Meeting of February 18, 2020 were approved unanimously.

II. Recommendation of candidates for Weinberg College degrees to be awarded at the June Commencement.

Dean Adrian Randolph read the recommendation that degrees be conferred to students who have successfully completed degree requirements during the 2019-2020 academic year. A total of 729 Weinberg students will be awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree on June 19, 2020. A total of 20 students enrolled in the School of Professional Studies will be awarded a degree by the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences on that day, with two earning a Bachelor of Philosophy degree and 18 earning a Bachelor of Science in General Studies.

Dean Randolph moved for a vote and majority approved.

III. Financial Update: Preparing for FY21

Associate Dean of Finance and Business Operations Danny Fisher provided an update on FY20 finances and forecasting for the FY21 budget within the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dean Fisher stated that there are several budgeting models currently under review with the assumption that there will be a 5%-10% budget cut for the upcoming fiscal year.

Professor Nina Gurianova asked if, due to the pandemic, there was any effect to the University budget concerning Northwestern issuing bonds. Dean Fisher stated that he understands there is a moratorium on issuing bonds until the University starts retiring some debt and since that is the case, bonds have no effect on the budget at this time.

Associate Professor Jillana Enteen asked why the employee benefits are not significantly less in the third quarter of FY20 if the University was no longer contributing to employee retirement. Dean Fisher stated that the University is saving the money and he would need to reduce the appropriation level if he were to also reduce the benefit amount.

Professor Rebecca Zorach asked what commitments have been made for graduate enrollment. Dean Randolph answered that the University has already made commitments for FY21 and that there will be discussion in the future regarding FY22 and how many graduate students the College will be able to enroll.
Dean Randolph addressed the large financial cuts that will need to be made by the College.

IV. Faculty Affairs: Probationary Period Extension Policy

Associate Dean for Faculty Edward Gibson reported that the University has granted a one-year probationary period extension for tenure line faculty members due to the pandemic. All tenure line faculty in their probationary period during the 2019-2020 academic year are eligible and the extension is automatic with the possibility to opt out. Additional information is listed on the Provost’s website.

V. Fall Educational Contingency Planning

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs Mary Finn reported that incoming students are permitted to defer for a year. Additionally, current students are permitted to step out for a quarter or more with no explanation if they are in good standing.

Dean Finn stated it is undecided whether undergraduate students will return to campus for classes in the fall, or continue to take classes remotely. The Faculty Assembly is projected to decide by mid-July whether students will return to campus. If students do return to campus, social distancing practices will guide how faculty, students and staff interact with each other. Due to social distancing, only 25% to 30% of the physical space on campus would be used and because of this limitation, all faculty are being asked to prepare to teach their fall 2020 courses remotely, even if students return to campus.

Dean Finn reported the creation of the Educational Contingency Planning Group. Its objective is to collaborate with the central administration, and the other schools, to ensure continued outstanding instruction, excellent and timely advising, and effective continuity of all processes that support faculty, students and staff.

Professor Mark Witte asked if there would be more time between classes to allow for cleaning of the spaces after each instruction period. Dean Randolph explained that there is currently a coordinated effort underway to examine the class schedule and ensure cleaning can take place at appropriate times.

Professor John Alba Cutler asked if there is consideration to allow student to take classes P/NP, similar to this spring quarter, due to the limited amount of interaction professors will have with students. Dean Randolph stated the current plan is to return to quality grades in the fall quarter, but that issue will be decided by University leadership.

Professor Helen Thompson asked if facemasks would be required on campus. Dean Randolph stated that they would be required on campus. When professors are teaching,
there may be a face shield instead so that students will be able to see the professor’s full face.

VI. Research Ramp-up Planning

Discussion postponed due to time.

VII. Retiring faculty

Dean Randolph thanked the retiring faculty for their service:

Susan Hollis Clayson - Art History
Judy Ledgerwood - Art Theory Practice
Hsiu-Ling Robertson - Asian Languages & Culture
Larry Trzupek - Chemistry
Burton Weisbrod - Economics
Christopher Herbert - English
John Bushnell - History
Michael Sherry - History
Ken Seeskin - Philosophy
Kamal Seth - Physics and Astronomy

There being no further updates, Dean Randolph thanked the faculty in attendance and the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Greg Pritchett, Executive Assistant to the Dean.