UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION ON RETURN TO WORK

Renee Bishop-Pierce, Penn State Scranton

Maureen Jones, Health and Human Development

(Positional Resolution)

Background

In early June 2020, a resolution was drafted about “faculty choice” with regard to the then-tentative possibility of Penn State returning to residential education for the Fall 2020 semester. Within days of drafting the resolution, Senator Renee Bishop-Pierce of Penn State Scranton, who is Chair of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs, and Senator Maureen Jones of the College of Health and Human Development, who is chair of the Senate Committee on Intra-University Relations, circulated a message containing the draft resolution addressed to all of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all of the Senate’s Standing Committees asking for input, support, and guidance. As passage from the earliest message contains the following plea:

We feel that this needs the immediate attention of the senate for several reasons:

1. Faculty are continuing to express their concerns and fears. We want to help allay some of those fears, if possible, while maintaining strong, positive shared governance with the administration. We would be remiss in our role as senators and committee chairs if we did not give faculty an opportunity to express their concerns. Faculty need to see that their Senate is working for them.
2. Faculty would like to be able to contribute to helping find solutions and providing input as we plan for the upcoming semesters.

It is critical to get input on this resolution from the committee chairs to help us prepare a document we can all support.

After robust discussion via e-mail correspondence, which lasted for approximately one week, composed of more than sixty discrete messages, resolution drafters Senators Bishop-Pierce and Jones reviewed the feedback they received, incorporated it, and then reformatted the draft into the resolution presented herein.

Senators Bishop-Pierce and Jones subsequently shared the new draft with Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Kathy Bieschke and University Faculty Senate Chair Beth Seymour in a meeting scheduled, unsurprisingly, to discuss the resolution and gather additional feedback on the draft. The draft was then circulated again to all of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all of the Senate’s Standing Committees asking for their support. The draft received unanimous support. The resolution was then submitted for consideration by Senate Council in their June 23, 2020 meeting.

UNIVERSITY SENATE COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS IN SUPPORT OF THIS RESOLUTION INCLUDE:

Senate Committee on Admissions, Records, Scheduling, and Student Aid
Kathleen Phillips, Chair
Maura Shea, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Committees and Rules**
Victor Brunsden, Chair
Annie Taylor, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Curricular Affairs**
Mary Beth Williams, Chair
Harold Hayford, Vice-Chair
Suzanna Linn, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Education**
Michele Stine, Chair
Stephen Van Hook, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Education Equity and Campus Environment**
Kimberly Blockett, Chair
Brian Redmond, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs**
Rene Bishop-Pierce, Chair
Josh Kirby, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Faculty Benefits**
Ira Saltz, Chair
Denise Costanzo, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Global Programs**
Brian King, Chair
Martha Strickland, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on IAC**
Mark Stephens, Chair
Terry Blakney, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Intra-University Relations**
Maureen Jones, Chair
Karyn McKinney-Marvasti, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Libraries, Information Systems, and Technology**
Ann Clements, Chair
Francesca Ruggiero, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Outreach**
Andrew Freiberg, Chair - confirmed
Cindy Simmons, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity**
Roger Egolf, Chair
Ira Ropson, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on Student Life**
Timothy Robicheaux, Chair
Jennifer Nesbitt, Vice-Chair

**Senate Committee on University Planning**
Jim Strauss, Chair
Frantisek Marko, Vice-Chair
UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION ON RETURN TO WORK

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, the President asked faculty, staff and graduate students to deliver synchronous courses in a remote learning environment, online advising, online mentoring, online career counseling, and various forms of online support vital to our functioning as a University;

WHEREAS, the faculty, staff and graduate students responded, delivering courses in a remote, synchronous learning environment, taking on additional workload to ensure that teaching and learning continued with a minimum of interruptions;

WHEREAS, the faculty are scholarly experts in their fields and disciplines, who design curriculum, and who are granted academic freedom to deliver courses in the ways that are best matched for their courses, students, and expertise; and

WHEREAS, the faculty deserve the right to articulate what they consider are the best circumstances for learning in their particular course or courses;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT:

As the University plans for this year, we should follow these principles:

1. THAT faculty, staff, and graduate students should have input on any decision that impacts teaching and learning;
2. THAT maintaining faculty positions is a high priority in fiscal decision-making; and
3. THAT faculty are free to exercise academic expertise with regard to the format and delivery of their course(s) as they see fit.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES REQUIRES faculty, staff, and graduate student input on decision making and some assurance with regard to job security for faculty:

HENCEFORTH, faculty, staff, and graduate students deserve more input in decision making, and, therefore, the University Faculty Senate affirms:

- That there should be faculty membership on all University committees, taskforces and special committees working to research, solve, and/or monitor issues that impact teaching and learning (publishing committee membership and charges);
- That faculty, on an individual basis, be consulted to assess the needs and challenges for their respective in-person courses;
- That faculty determine how best to deliver their courses;
- That faculty at each campus and college have the opportunity to problem solve the best options for the specific needs of each student body;
- That the University honor faculty judgement regarding health and safety related to in-person teaching and all other academic activities, according to current public health guidelines;
- That faculty be included in development of monitoring strategies (i.e. development of incremental monitoring of cleaning procedures, adherence to polices, testing outcomes etc.) to ensure a safe return to in-person teaching; and
- That faculty be provided with up-to-date monitoring results to provide input and revise strategies regarding health safety standards

THEREFORE, LET IT ALSO BE RESOLVED, that if the University or Academic Unit cannot provide a safe on campus environment for faculty, staff or students, then faculty will be granted their rights to shift course delivery to remote or online method.

HENCEFORTH, faculty request that the University:
• Provide no contest to unemployment insurance claims for faculty released due to economic issues;
• Provide current, and, if needed, increased support and resources (including resource sharing across all campuses and enhanced library services), for remote education and the transition to and from remote learning platforms;
• Treat SRTEs as formative assessment until further notice;
• Manage and monitor barriers to promotion and/or tenure resulting from COVID 19 issues;
• Give current faculty priority when assigning teaching or other compensated work; and
• Give high priority to redirecting funds saved from cancelled/postponed events and travel disbursements in spring/summer/fall 2020 toward faculty related purposes, including non-tenure line faculty needs.