

West Virginia University at Parkersburg
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2018

SENATORS PRESENT: Andrew Walker (Chair), Kathy Frum (Vice Chair), Missy Spivy (Secretary), Chris Cunningham (BOG Representative), Holly Dexter, Rebecca Duckworth, Joel Farkas, Rebecca Hoff, Cheryl Mader, Al Newhart, Gary Thompson (ACF Representative), President Jane Milley, Alice Harris (Executive Vice President), Chad Crumbaker (Vice President of Academic Affairs), Debbie Richards (Special Assistant to the President for Policy and Social Justice, Scott Poe (Director of Human Resources)

The meeting was called to order at 12:20 pm.

Old Business:

Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting on March 21 were approved unanimously.

Faculty Absence Policy

Dr. Milley, Executive VP Harris, VP Crumbaker, Debbie Richards, and Scott Poe attended the Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the Faculty Absence Policy. Andrew Walker shared that there would not be a need to revisit the history of the development of the policy since all participants were aware of the history. He identified four areas that he felt needed to be addressed after reviewing the HR response to the Senate's policy: 1) The number of days absent were reduced to ten 2) The change of the word "consecutive" to "cumulative" 3) The elimination of parental leave and 4) The proposed policy needing to go into effect by July 1 2018.

Pres Milley expressed her desire to get something accomplished within the limits of the law. Andrew asked if the proposal was put on the May Board of Governor's agenda, would it be possible for it to go into effect by July 1. A senator asked why the proposal needed to be passed by the BOG by July 1 and it was explained that July 1 is when all benefits go into effect for the upcoming academic year. The Senate was assured that there would still be time for the policy to be passed and put into effect for the 2018-2019 academic year.

The group discussed the Family Medical Leave Act. It was asked if there was any reason why an employer could not do more for their employees than what was stated in FMLA and the answer was no. The Senate expressed their desire for the scope of this policy to be further reaching than FMLA. FMLA does not require an employer to compensate their employees for missed days. The Senate proposal states that compensations should occur.

A discussion of past practices when faculty members had to be absent several consecutive days took place. It was shared that the past practice had been for faculty to be compensated to the end of their contracts. It was shared that this had not been the case in every instance and that was why the Senate had been working on this policy for the past three years. The Senate's concern was that since practice was not policy, nothing guarantees that the practice will be consistently followed unless it was put into policy. A policy would guarantee the "practice" would be followed by all administrators in the future. It was mentioned that the HLC had mentioned that the institution needed to be sure policies were put into writing so that what occurred would not be dependent on who was the current administrator. It was decided that an Answer Book policy would need to be made so that there would be procedures for administrators to follow when a long term faculty absence occurred.

VP Harris stated that currently the institution is financially able to implement the practice of compensation for faculty during long term absences. She stated that we have done this in the past in practice and that it could be written into policy so that this practice is consistently followed.

Pres. Milley stated she would like to get a legal opinion concerning the policy. She also voiced concern that there might be a problem with this policy if the institution ever were in a position to not be able to handle this policy financially. VP Harris suggested that it could be written into the policy that prior to changing this procedure, the Faculty Senate will be given 90 days to look at the change.

Both the president and executive vice president voiced support of the faculty. The president felt a policy is needed but the Senate's policy needed to be simplified and an appeal process would be needed. She also voiced concern that paying the faculty member for the entire contract might be too liberal. Scott Poe did not feel that the policy needed to differentiate between family members or parental leave. He felt it could be collapsed into the category of "serious health condition." It was the consensus that documentation from a physician be required and alternative work assignments offered when possible.

Gary Thompson moved that VP Harris, with guidance from Dr. Milley, Scott Poe and Debbie Richards, will seek legal counsel, simplify the Senate's proposal and present it at the next Faculty Senate meeting in two weeks. Kathy Frum seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm. The next meeting will take place on April 18, 2018 at 12:20 pm in the President's Board Room.