Bloomington Faculty Council
Student Academic Appointee Committee Meeting
28 November 2023

In attendance:
Carolyn Calloway Thomas
Deboarah Snodden
Ejiah Beaton
Joshua Paschal
Jodi Kutzner
Amanda Diekman
Allen Davis

2:00 Prof. Calloway Thomas opens the last meeting of the SAAAC meeting. David Taylor and Sara Stefani are not able to attend. We begin with the reading of the minutes: Approve: 7, No: 0, Abstain: 0

- Note: Prof. Calloway-Thomas remarks that we should indicate who is present at the top of the minutes with the names of those who are in attendance.

Two major items on the agenda:
1) Mentoring: The push for work here grew out of the notion that many were taking too long to graduate. Graduate council gave attention to this matter and have improved mentoring as a result. This discussion will look at whether there is a need to discuss this further and/or the need to improve. Departments are supposed to have a mentoring program (e.g., the College is on top of this—has documentation, ideas/expectations of professionalization, has documentation outlining what mentoring is, what the difference is between metoring/advising). Today's discussion will be a brainstorm as to what Grad students are hearing and what the committee's role should be.
    a. (2:10) "Not all advisors/mentors are created equal". Many grad students confuse their mentor and advisor. If this is indeed a requirement (mentoring guidelines), then this is not followed by all department. It may be a suggestion and not a department wide policy; it is not quite clear what the charge is for the different departments David will do some digging as to what this policy is (Prof. Calloway-Thomas remembers that there may have been some language re: this policy during her tenure as president of the BFC that mandated that all faculty members at a specific rank had to participate in mentoring). Suggestion that departments be more vocal about it if mentoring is indeed a mandated part of their program.
        i. (2:12): 'How widespread is this?' Jodi recalls some 4 some-odd instances (in her department) where people mentioned not having good relationships with their advisors or saying that their advisor wasn't helping them. But in many cases, the advisor is tenured faculty, they

won't be told that they need to start doing this. But it's a small percentage, yet an important percentage.

    ii. (2:14) "What does the preparation for teaching look like in other departments? (Joshua)". Jodi mentions that she is an AI and a teacher of record. Advisor told her to put a minimal amount of teaching; she was provided her own template.

    iii. (2:15): "Were you given a syllabus?" Jodi mentions she was provided a template. Prof. Calloway-Thomas mentions that many AIs must have some experience teaching or a Master's to teach standalone courses.

    iv. (2:17): "Do you feel well equipped [to TA/teach]?" Jodi did due to her previous experience. In many programs there are classes that provide their own syllabus. Some programs learn how to teach the first eight-weeks and then teach in the latter eight weeks. Some departments are required to have pedagogy classes to support graduate students' teaching.

    v. (2:18): Elijah mentions that in some programs (like his), AIs can never be instructors of record. He also mentions how expectations (policies, etc.) in some areas that are known by faculty from five years ago are not as known by the graduate students who might not have been here as long.

    vi. (2:21): Joshua mentions that in the hard sciences graduate students are left alone (e.g., CHEM). Graders who are assisting with large lectures/head assistants run the course, around 6 AIs run the course, 1 is managing the others, which can create an odd dynamic which they are not taught to manage. In PHIL, Diss chair is your course supervisor; Joshua finds this a good thing.

b. (2:23) Prof. Calloway-Thomas: "Does the mentoring center act as a point of emphasis for everyone on campus? Is that where you are supposed to go?"

    i. "I've never heard of it" (Joshua). Someone from Prof. Calloway-Thomas' department is a mentor. Joshua mentions that in PHIL, they already have a program, where new students are assigned a mentor upon entering so they wouldn't use this program. But, are other departments using this?

    ii. (2:25): "Should we recommend as a Committee that everyone have a mentor?"

        1. To do this, there should be some clarification about what the difference is between an advisor and a mentor.

            a. (2:27) The University graduate school does have this distinction written out expressly as to what these differences are (as does the College). Advisors take care of the academic things, the mentor takes care of lifestyle, health, psychological concerns and an advisory-mentoring committee can be comprised of the same faculty.

    iii.   Faculty opinions
1. (2:28) Prof. Snodden heard of a female grad student (CHEM) not being listened to by/manage the other grad students (e.g., they're not grading, etc). But some feel afraid to reach out to the instructors about these issues and need a mentor to help manage this, especially in small departments where speaking out might diminish future opportunities (e.g., letters of recommendation, etc.).
   a. Suggestion: a mentor for teachers. It's a lot of extra work, but how about a mentor for the teachers?
      i. Joshua says that in his department there is an NTT who does reach out regarding how to approach teaching. Found it helpful to have as a resource.
      ii. Also, some professors have had their AIs/grad students going over time for work (20 hours is university guideline), but in some cases this isn't possible.
         1. This is related to the idea of grievances, somewhat. But more importantly, the creation of the Ombudsman's role.
   b. Joshua says that we can ask "what are things that departments are doing to prepare AIs?" It is wildly inconsistent between departments.
      i. We should find out what is happening in other departments, perhaps though a questionnaire re: what is happening in other departments re: preparation and training?
      ii. Joshua mentions "the Wellness Survey": what happened to that?
   c. Is there a formalized system where grad students could tally and list their time and duties. If there is a log, there is black and white data.
      i. (Calloway-Thomas) AIs now are supposed to use Koali to log hours. While 20 hours is a strict time, there are programs that cannot do that when there are exams. This too is unequal between departments (some departments require an average of 20; others have a strict 20 hours)
c. Housing
   i. We will remove this from our agenda; falls somewhat out of our purview.
d. (2:43) Other news:
   i. Committee to report on housing, but acknowledges that it shouldn't be in this committee's purview (Joshua).

        ii. (2:45): Union cards are being collected, call for a raise in minimum wage. 51.69% of confirmed SAA card signatures (while not a "Union" yet, this collection of cards is a significant symbolic effort to show their desire to form a union). They will continue to sign until January. State law requires that the Board of Trustees first sanction a union for a positive vote of unionization result in its creation.

e. (2:51) Meeting next semester?

        i. By January 7th approximately, David will send a Doodle poll to see if this time or another time will work.

f. (2:52) Prof. Calloway-Thomas concludes meeting.