

Bloomington Faculty Council, Student Academic Appointee Affairs Committee Meeting

January 23, 2024

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Redbud Tree Suite, IMU

Present: Elijah Beaton, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, David Daleke, Allen Davis, Amanda Diekman, Jon Macy, Joshua Paschal, Sara Stefani

Regrets: Michael Courtney, Jodi Kutzner, Deborah Snaddon, David Taylor

The meeting was called to order by Joshua Paschal at 2:00 pm.

1. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. No priority items were brought up or added by the committee members.
3. Paschal gave a report on the IGWC union election letter presented to President Whitten's office and discussion followed.
  - a. On January 16, just before the BFC meeting, the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC) organizers gathered at Franklin Hall and submitted to President Whitten's office a letter to her and the union cards that had been signed during the card drive. The letter outlined two requests: 1. A raise in SAA stipends, and 2. That the administration recognize the need for a collective bargaining agreement with graduate students and allow that the IGWC be allowed to call a vote among the graduate students on the issue of whether or not to unionize.
  - b. Discussion began first about the wage issue. The numbers for the living wage request came from the MIT Living Wage Calculator for the IU Bloomington area but pro-rated for a 10-month appointment. There was support for a living wage for SAAs but the College of Arts and Sciences is running a deficit right now. Concern was stated that the issue needs to be discussed further and departments' ability to educate future students needs to be considered.
  - c. The stipend is an important issue, but the more important point is the need for a collective bargaining unit and holding an election on unionization. Questions were raised of whether a union would solve the issue, what the consequences of forming a union would be, and what course of action would lead to the greater good, especially in terms of the CAS's budget deficit. Many of the graduate students would feel more comfortable having a stable union that could be a forum where they could raise their concerns. Also, the second point of the IGWC's requests – that a vote be held – is free and there would be no cost involved in starting the conversation. IU is starting a budgetary reconstruction right now and will be restructuring things. Part of the reason the CAS is running a deficit is because tuition money is not going to the College of Arts and Sciences and there are bigger structural issues here. Most SAAs are in the College of Arts and Sciences, and people are worried and anxious about the issue. They aren't sure how to make change without a union, since these decisions are made by the higher administration. There were questions about what effect this will have on future students and the Provost's question about where is the money for all this to come

from? Budget estimates are done ahead of time as well as the creation of salary pools. Tuition is the biggest driving model, and there is a likelihood that there will be a decrease in undergraduate enrollments in the coming years, which could be a source of deficit. The objection was raised that all of this might be true, but that the graduate students shouldn't have to be the ones to suffer for this deficit by not receiving a living wage. Staff on campus are unionized, and the faculty have the BFC and the AAUP as ways to voice their concerns, but the SAAs don't have an organization to act as a forum and support them. They are the most vulnerable group on campus. If the CAS is not receiving enough of a share of tuition money, then President Whitten could do more to advocate on behalf of the CAS and the Humanities and Social Sciences in general. All of her attention and advocacy seems to be focused on the sciences and technology fields.

- d. Discussion then shifted to the administration's desire for departments to generate revenue by receiving grants. Most of the grant money comes from STEM fields. Those in the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences mainly come from fellowships, not grants. There is a mandate that you must get grants. In response, it was stated that it's not a mandate, but there is very strong encouragement. Even in some fields that have departments related to the sciences, not all programs are big grant getters, and grants are competitive and require a lot of work. IU has a much larger percentage of Arts and Humanities students than other schools in the Big10 and fewer science students. But those big external grants don't really solve the problem because they often aren't big enough to fund a Ph.D. student. They're often barely big enough to cover the science research, much less a student.
4. Daleke discussed the Biennial Report to the Provost on SAA stipends across units, and comments followed.
  - a. The BFC SAA committee is in a place to make recommendations to the Provost about SAA stipends. The BFC used to make recommendations about SAA stipends much like they do with regard to faculty salaries, but that role got lost for a while and stipends stagnated. This group can regularize that process. The recommendation was to look at stipends by discipline, but will that only give us the stipend component? Do we want to look at total compensation numbers? Some places look at stipends and fellowships. The Provost asked for minimum stipend numbers for next year so that IU could stay in the top half of the Big10. The data placed us at the same level as University of Illinois. In terms of cost of living, IU is pretty comparable to other Big10 schools in rural areas.
  - b. It would be good to get this group involved in researching this question. One of our previous discussions was based on how to gather this data. Should there be a survey of individual DGSs? It was reiterated that the other issue of concern to SAAs is not just the stipend, but also self-governance. The BFC is a forum for that, and if stipends are codified in policy, then that policy is set regardless of who is in administrative roles. However, many SAAs will not appreciate the argument of "just trust the faculty." There appears to be a lack of trust in the faculty.
5. Paschal asked about future agenda items, and Daleke stated that he would like a working group to put together the biennial report. It was agreed that Daleke would lead our next meeting and that we would work on this report at the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:03 pm.