

CLA Senate Agenda  
February 10, 2020

**1. Approval of Agenda**

Approved unanimously at 2:32pm

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Approved unanimously at 2:32pm

**3. Dean's report**

The Dean's report consists of two items:

*Academic restructuring*

The Dean reports that he has no real update about the status of the Interim Chancellor's academic reorganization proposal, although he knows that some CLA faculty have been nominated for the taskforce. The Deans wrote to the Provost asking if we can wait for four months, given the new incoming Chancellor, and she is considering it. It will likely have a longer timeline than originally expected, perhaps one year.

*Budget update*

The Dean reports that the next year's budget looks okay, with no apparent cut scenarios. CLA is close to having a surplus this year, which means there will be an operating margin. He is hopeful that we might proceed with some hiring, because some the needs are clear. He anticipates "flat budgets," at a minimum.

*Questions*

There are four questions for the Dean.

1. A Senator asks when departments will hear about hiring. The Dean expects, given the delay of this announcement until August in the past two years, that the soonest we will know is June. Because a few departments would need to start their search process by August, and because some departments are getting "desperate," he is continuing to check in with the Provost about this. CLA has given a "huge amount of vacation savings" to the university, so he is hopeful that we will have some good news.

2. A Senator asks if the Dean's Faculty Travel Fund will be reinstated next year. The Dean is hopeful, but doesn't know for sure yet.

3. A Senator asks if the Dean's Faculty Research Fund will be reinstated next year. The Dean says he will not give this up, noting that this fund wasn't even reduced this year (although because there were more applicants than usual, not everyone who applied was funded or funded fully).

4. A Senator asks about the status of the computer replacement program. The Executive Assistant to the Dean (EAD) answers, saying that they have received mixed messages about this, so the program's status is still unclear.

Dean's Report ends at 2:44pm.

#### **4. Lotsa Helping Hands**

The EAD explains this initiative to crowdsource help for the Dean and his family from faculty, specifically (at this time) providing dinner on Fridays when the Dean undergoes chemotherapy. The website (displayed on the screen) is operational. Anyone who wishes to help should send her a note expressing a wish to "do something" in order to be added to the email list. It is likely to be a long road, so there will be lots of opportunities to help over time.

There are four questions for the EAD.

1. A Senator asks if the information on the screen will be in OneDrive. The EAD says that she will collect emails and then the Dean's daughter will follow up.

2. A Senator asks if we can share this information with our departments. The EAD says yes, and is happy to share the slide if anyone wants it.

3. A Senator asks how the EAD is doing with everything going on. The EAD emphasizes that the Dean is feeling so much better now than in the fall, and is "so happy" about the outcome so far of his treatment, that they are all very optimistic about the future.

#### **5. Moderator's report**

The Moderator welcomes new Senators and explains the Senate's remit, particularly with respect to curriculum governance. CurriLog is now being tested by CSM and will

hopefully be operational by fall. Departments should be aware that the transition will likely happen during the summer, and that they may want to make changes to the department system if they are working on course proposals before the fall.

The Moderator recently emailed the Provost to ask for CLA representatives on the academic restructuring taskforce, but has not received a response. She will check in again this week, though the matter seems less pressing now with the upcoming Chancellor changeover.

On an issue from last semester, the Moderator reports that she is continuing to work on the TA guidelines, and will meet with Judith Goleman and Bala Sundaram to discuss next steps.

The Moderator invites all Senators to let her know if they have concerns or initiatives they would like the Senate to take up this semester. She and the Executive Committee can provide help as needed for doing this.

There are no questions for the Moderator.

The Moderator's report ends at 2:50pm

**6. Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee to approve the following  
NEW courses:**

The Moderator explains Senate voting procedures, and notes that there are some minor errors on the AFRSTY One Forms. The EAD states that these have been corrected.

- AFRSTY 204: Afro-Latin America
- AFRSTY 280: Special Topics in Africana Studies
- AFRSTY 308: Africana Feminisms in Black Diaspora
- AFRSTY 490: Internship

Motion to approve as block approved unanimously at 2:52pm.

A Senator asks whether the AFRSTY 490 should include a statement indicating flexibility about whether the internship must be unpaid, since students in financial need may prefer otherwise. The Moderator will confirm this with the new AFRSTY Senator when he returns from travel.

Approved unanimously at 2:55pm.

**7. Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee to approve the following changes to existing courses:**

- GERMAN/MLLC 365L: Masterpieces of German Lit:
- JAPAN/CINE 385L: Topics in Japanese Cinema
- MLLC/ ARABIC 260L: Imagining the Modern Middle East
- POLSCI 451/551: Queer Theory and Politics

Motion to approve as block approved unanimously at 2:55pm.

Approved unanimously at 2:55pm.

**8. New Business**

**a. Electronic Writing Proficiency Portfolio Committee (EWPPC)**

Professor Neil Bruss (Chair of Faculty Council Gen Ed Committee) explains the history of the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) at UMB. The WPE dates back to 1976, when it was created to serve as a gateway to the Junior year. At that time, 80% of UMB students were transfer students, so the WPE was deemed necessary to ensure that incoming students had an adequate critical reading, writing, and analytical skills. It was at first just a 3-hour exam, with questions given on an assigned set of readings. The Portfolio option was first added for students with learning disabilities, but later it was made an option for all students. However, the Gen Ed Committee and others involved with the WPE have long wanted something more connected to coursework, rather than assigned reading packets that were not continuous with students' courses of study. With the help of a 2015 grant from the Davis Foundation and after much study, the EWPPC chose an electronic WP Portfolio (EWRP) option that functions through Blackboard. Students who are registered for an Intermediate Seminar (IS) will also be in the EWRP, so their papers will upload to both platforms. This allows IS faculty to discuss the EWRP with students and provide support through the IS. The EWPPC also replaced the 25-page "challenge essay" with a reflective essay about the student's development as a reader, writer, and critical thinker since arriving at UMB. This option yields, in the EWPPC's opinion, "thoughtful pieces on the student's own development" at the end of their first two years. Transfer students remain a challenge, but there will still be in-person WPE options in order to meet diverse student needs. The next step is to work with departments to ensure that ISs are up and running and that faculty engage with the new system. Professor Bruss further explains that there are two structural differences in

the new system: 1) papers submitted via Blackboard saves a “huge” amount of time previously spent chasing down faculty for student papers; and 2) the reflective essay option has produced “really thoughtful” results so far. Citing his recent experience of being the only TT faculty member grading a batch of WPE essays (all other graders were NTT faculty), he stresses that faculty are “extremely sick of” all the work that goes into the WPE and are eager for an alternative.

### *Discussion*

The Moderator notes that she has graded the WPE and thinks the EWRP sounds great. However, the Senate Executive Committee wondered whether students will be instructed in how to write a “reflective essay.” Professor Bruss says yes, in the IS. He also hopes that “signature courses” can be additional sites coaching students for the reflective papers.

A Senator asks how signature courses will be identified. Professor Bruss responds that they are working on this.

The Moderator suggests setting a word or page limit for the reflective essay, and replacing “not advised” (in relation to group projects) with “not allowed.” Professor Bruss thinks these are good ideas.

A Senator asks how we would use the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Index. Professor Bruss replies that the GenEd Committee can’t second-guess or overstep faculty in evaluating student work, including possible plagiarism.

A Senator asks if the ISs adequately teach students to write about their own writing, and wonders how EWRP grading will assess “non-normative” writing mechanics, vocabulary, etc. Professor Bruss believes that ISs do work on improving students’ ability to put sources in dialogue, and articulate and support arguments, which are the qualities they are looking for to show readiness for Junior year. In terms of diction and vocabulary, the rule of thumb is that the writing must be comprehensible by the average reader.

A Senator asks how the EWRP will deal with the possibility that the reflective essay might differ from submitted course papers when students have received extensive feedback on the latter, help from tutors or instructors, etc. Professor Bruss emphasizes that students should be learning through revision in any case, but if concerns appear, they would speak with the student and instructor.

The Moderator adds that the new system, with the reflective essay, gives students an opportunity reflect on their language and writing as well. Moreover, ENGL101 and 102 do teach reflective writing.

A Senator asks how we know that students are submitting papers (on Blackboard) that they actually wrote. Professor Bruss acknowledges that plagiarism may happen, and they use SafeAssign to help catch these instances.

The Moderator invites other questions or comments; there are none.

The discussion ends at 3:22pm.

#### **b. Chancellor search**

The Moderator explains that this agenda item was originally meant for the Senate to vote on endorsing the single candidate, but since the offer went out today, this item is moot.

#### **c. Alternative Scheduling report**

The Moderator explains the origins of the Task Force and its report, asking whether the Senate should endorse it and, if so, how we might lend support to ensure that its conclusions are implemented, given what we've heard about resistance from the Administration. The Moderator also recalls Senate discussions in spring 2019 about the possibility that the new scheduling could encourage or pressure further increases in online course offerings.

A Senator asks, with regard to Composition courses (which would continue to be taught MWF), whether we creating an inequitable situation where adjuncts and TAs will be asked to spend more on parking since they teach most of these classes. The Moderator agrees that this is a concern, although the main concern of the Director of Composition is limited classroom availability, which could lead the Administration to raise course caps—again, a burden that would fall mainly on NTT faculty.

A Senator wonders what the “point system” means in terms of teaching in “prime time” versus on Saturdays, and wonders what the impact could be on female instructors with childcare responsibilities.

Another Senator argues that we should table this discussion because the report is so long. She also notes the problem of Performing Arts faculty who perform on weekends and could not teach on Saturdays—would they be penalized somehow?

A Senator recalls that during his fall presentation to the Senate, a taskforce member seemed anxious that the Administration would resist the report's recommendations. She suggested that we might consider inviting the Provost to answer questions about this.

Another Senator suggests that we should think about how to mobilize students around this issue, if needed, given the taskforce's findings related to student preferences for the alternative schedule.

A Senator suggests bringing in not just the Provost but also faculty and Administration members of the Task Force, for accountability purposes.

A Senator asks whether the Dean can tell us more about the Administration's response to the report; perhaps he could advocate for it in tandem with the Senate. The Moderator will speak with the Dean about this.

The Moderator presents options for the Senate's next steps (vote today to endorse the report, take another week to review the report and vote by email, or table until March). Given the Senator's concern about voting without having read the report, the Moderator states that she will talk with Faculty Council, the Dean, and taskforce members to learn more about the likelihood of the report's recommendations being taken up. The Senate will revisit this matter in March.

## **9. Adjourn**

Meeting ends at 3:43pm.