Kent State Stark Faculty Council Minutes

November 20, 2015

I. Chair Earley called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

II. Secretary Moneysmith called the roll and determined a quorum was present.

Attendance by Constituency:  
I: Sebastian Birch, Leslie Heaphy, Lindsay Starkey.  
II: Mitch McKenney, Brad Shepherd, Dee Warren.  
III: Clarke Earley, Matt Lehnert, Relja Vulanovic.  
IV: Daniel Castaneda, Keith Lloyd, Jayne Moneysmith.  
V: Lucas Engelhardt, Deepraj Mukherjee, Relja Vulanovic.  
VI: Greg Blundell, Eric Taylor, Don Thacker.

Ex-officio: Assistant Dean Bathi Kasturiarachi, Interim Dean Denise Seachrist.

Guests: Thomas Norton-Smith and Gwendolyn Purifoye.

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve: Councilor Heaphy.  
Second: Councilor Thacker.  
The agenda was unanimously approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes of the October 16, 2015 Meeting

Motion to approve: Councilor Vulanovic  
Second: Councilor Tobias.  
The minutes were unanimously approved.

V. Chair’s Report

A. January Council Meeting. Chair Earley reminded councilors that Faculty Council will not meet in December. Our January meeting is scheduled for January 15, which is the Friday before the start of the Spring semester. Agenda items will be due 9:00am on Wednesday, January 13.

B. RCFAC Report—November 13th Meeting. Chair Earley reported about this meeting at last week’s Fall Faculty meeting, but he shared highlights of the meeting. Enrollment on regional campuses is down overall, and discussions on cost-saving measures continue. It is probable that several of the regional campus dean positions will be combined. Our campus is unlikely to be affected significantly by any of the changes currently being discussed. The current plan is that distance-learning courses will be offered at the regional campus tuition rate but will normally be available only to regional campus students.
C. **Provost’s Advisory Council—November 17th Meeting.** Provost Diacon reported that several administrative searches are progressing or planned for this academic year, including deans for Stark and Geauga. The Provost indicated that candidates for the Geauga position are being informed that this position is unlikely to exist after two years.

The provost also reported that this office has almost completed a report to be sent on Program review. This report is focused on DFW rates. He indicated that he does not expect significant changes as a result of this report.

In response to a question, he indicated that the University is close to being finished with the University handbook, but this will not be finalized until after contract negotiations are complete. The Provost stated that departments and units will not be required to change their handbooks.

D. **Website.** Chair Earley indicated that he has been posting unofficial summaries of Faculty Council meetings shortly after the meetings. These are incomplete and not meant to replace the official minutes in any way. The goal of this is to provide information to faculty in a more timely fashion (as minutes cannot be distributed until officially approved). He also has set up an email system on this site that allows users to select full-time faculty based on different criteria (department, constituency, building, etc.) and send messages to these individuals. Use of this system requires users to log in. Chair Earley asked those interested in using the system to see him.

When Chair Earley asked for questions, Councilor McKenney indicated that he had been in a meeting where the Provost made a comment about some handbooks not making any mention of promotion from associate to full professor for regional campuses and perhaps that situation should be remedied. He asked if this issue came up at all in the Provost’s Advisory Council meeting. Chair Earley said that the issue came up at 1UC but not at this meeting. Dr. Seachrist added that regional campus full professors primarily fall in three disciplines. The Provost is planning to speak with chairs and directors about including differential language about qualifications for full at the regional campuses vs. the Kent campus. Dr. Norton-Smith expressed surprise that units will not need to make any revisions to their handbooks in light of the University handbook, as that was not the message we had heard earlier.

VI. Dean’s Report

A. **Global Education.** Dr. Seachrist reported that she had been asked to join a global education advisory board. A group of faculty interested in global education and research has also been formed; it would be beneficial for those interested to attend.

B. **New Security Manager.** James Anderson is our new Security and Safety Manager. He is a retired police officer and is well-suited for our campus. He has many fresh ideas. His first day will be November 30.

C. **Campus Safety.** Jeff Futo and Bill Buckee from the Kent Campus were on campus Monday to talk with the Administrative Cabinet about campus safety. We are taking serious measures to ensure a safe environment. For example, we are looking into installing a mass notification system that ties into all of our buildings.

D. **Implementation Group from 1UC.** There was originally a meeting of this group today, but Dr. Seachrist canceled it to create the opportunity for greater consultation and to
clarify some issues related to DL on the regional campuses. They have discovered that the Penn State system already has a plan in effect that will be studied carefully to assess whether a similar model could be implemented here.

E. New Attendance Verification System. Dr. Seachrist indicated that she had attended an academic leadership group meeting, convened by the Provost, during which a new academic presence verification roster was discussed. Instructors will receive this roster in week 4 and can click a simple radio button to indicate that everyone has attended class so far or can de-activate those who have not attended. This verification is tied directly into financial aid. The system could be ready next semester, but it may not be available until this fall. In response to questions, Dr. Seachrist explained that this new system does not replace NF or SF grades. Councilors also expressed frustration that instructors do not get some type of electronic confirmation when a student drops the course. Dr. Seachrist indicated that she will take these concerns to Melody Tankersley.

F. New Policy for Adding Courses. Beginning next semester, students can self-add courses only during the first week of the semester. During the second week of the semester, students can request admission into classes by petitioning the instructor directly. Instructors will be able to access a workflow through Flashline that will make it faster and easier to respond to the student’s request. The requests will have been checked before they reach the instructor to ensure that the student is eligible and that there is room in the course. It is important that instructors respond to the student right away. If the instructor would rather not have the student add, that is fine; just don’t keep the student waiting.

G. Book Orders. Dr. Seachrist emphasized the importance of faculty submitting book orders promptly by the deadline. The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires that book information be made available to students before they enroll in a course. Faculty are required to give book orders to Barnes & Noble. Several councilors expressed dissatisfaction with service they have received previously from the bookstore and questioned why they couldn’t communicate directly with students about books and bypass the bookstore completely. Both Dr. Seachrist and Dr. Kasturiarachi indicated that telling students to go to Amazon or another online vendor can still be problematic because students often have scholarships or other support that requires them to use the bookstore to purchase their books. If the order is given to Barnes & Noble that doesn’t mean that students can’t purchase the book from another vendor if they choose to do so. If no books are required, the bookstore order should indicate that. Students need to be able to print out the book order when they print out their schedules.

Dr. Seachrist shared that another frustration related to the bookstore is that the campus is closed during break, but Barnes & Noble wants employees to come in for three days to attend to issues such as online orders.

H. Campus Closings Due to Inclement Weather. At a recent meeting of Regional Campus deans, campus closing were discussed. Over the past years, thinking about campus closings due to snow or extreme cold has changed with different administrations at the Kent Campus. Now it is less likely that Kent will close. On our campus, this decision falls on her. There may be times when classes will be canceled but the campus may stay open. If the temperature with wind chill is 20 degrees below, the campus will be closed. It is important that each person feels safe, so there may be situations where individuals determine that they are unable to make it to campus.
At the end of her report, Dr. Seachrist was asked if she had any additional information about the possibility of some campuses losing their deans. She indicated that the Provost is talking to many people about this, and she has voiced her concern. She believes that every campus needs leadership. If services have to be combined as a cost-cutting measure, perhaps that would make more sense at a lower level.

VII. Assistant Dean’s Report

A. Courses with Low Enrollment. The Provost’s office requested DWF data for certain courses. That report also included low enrolled sections, with 10 or fewer students. In each case Dr. Kasturiarachi had to justify why the class was run with that low number. One good result is that it became clear that some efficiencies could be made. He will be getting in touch with a few departments about this situation.

B. Online Summer Teaching. The regional campuses are coordinating so they have an appropriate number of sections system-wide. The focus is primarily on English, psychology, sociology, computer technology, and history. Faculty from other campuses can request to teach our courses in the summer, but the deadline for requesting them has now passed.

C. Re-Purposing Space. There are two campus spaces we are seeing if we can re-purpose: the Geology Lab in Main Hall and the Nursing Lab in Fine Arts.

D. Meetings with Faculty. Dr. Kasturiarachi is continuing his meetings with each department to discuss their particular needs. He also will be meeting informally with first- and second-year faculty post-RTP to ensure that everything is going well. Along with Brian Gardner he is meeting with faculty in the Science and Nursing building about issues that might remain in the building.

E. New Hires and Searches. We have two new hires who will be starting soon: our Outreach Program Coordinator for Multicultural Initiatives, and our Outreach Program Coordinator Global Education Initiatives. Both will report to the Dean’s office. Their offices will be in the Center Core.

On the faculty side, we are planning for searches in Computer Science, Mathematics, English, Nursing, Communication Studies, and Music. More details will be forthcoming.

F. Send-Off for Shenzhen Students. We will be holding a program completion celebration for the Shenzhen students in the Main Hall Auditorium at 4:30pm on December 2. All are welcome to attend.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. PAAC. Councilor Warren reported that the committee continues to review travel requests quickly, with five additional requests since she reported at last month’s Council meeting. Councilor Taylor asked if PAAC would be the correct group to fund a faculty advisor to a student organization that was going on an approved trip. Councilor Lehnert mentioned that when the student organization he advises went on a trip, SLAB paid for him to go, too.

B. Committee II. No report, as the committee currently does not have a charge.
C. **Colloquium Committee.** Councilor Starkey reported that the first faculty colloquium, held last Friday, was a success, with 24 people attending. Dr. Ann Martinez (English) and Dr. Greg Smith (Biology) gave presentations. The next colloquium will be held at 5:00pm on Friday, February 19, in the Science and Nursing Building Nursing Lab. The Nursing faculty will present information on heart health for Heart Health Awareness month.

D. **Treasurer/Social Committee.** Councilor Heaphy indicated that the coffee fund is currently solvent. She appreciates the concerted effort of people to clean up after themselves that she has seen lately. Tuesday, November 24 is “Snack Day”: faculty from three different departments will furnish snacks to share. The Social Committee hopes to sponsor a similar event each month that will rotate among the different buildings. The annual holiday dinner will be held on Saturday, December 12. Councilor Heaphy stressed that staff members are encouraged to attend. On December 15 and 16 holiday potlucks will be held, in Fine Arts on the 15th and Main Hall on the 16th.

E. **Handbook Committee.** No report. The committee does not yet have a charge.

F. **Technology Committee.** On behalf of Dr. Neaderhiser, Chair Earley reminded everyone to fill out the survey on technology that has been sent out, even if you are not a big technology user. That information in itself could be useful. The deadline for responding is Sunday night at midnight.

G. **Ad hoc Space Committee.** On behalf of the committee, Councilor Engelhardt reported progress to date. The committee’s charge is to write a report about the possibilities of faculty members customizing their office spaces. His goal is that this report would include proposed policies and procedures for office customization that would be communicated to new faculty members who wish to make their offices their own.

The Space Committee met with Brian Gardner on Tuesday 11/17 to begin discussion on three items: University-provided office furnishings, bringing personal furnishings into faculty offices, and bringing unused spaces into productive use.

In general, it seems that much of the “policy” on the first two is a set of tacit, unwritten rules and procedures—somewhat informed by real rules, like fire codes and ADA compliance standards—but also with unwritten conventions (like trying to create a physical barrier between students and faculty by desk placement) and liability concerns mixed in.

In order to accommodate the desire for faculty customization of office space, Brian suggested it would be workable to have a set of standard configurations that faculty could choose between—assuming that the configuration fits their individual office space. Exceptions to these configurations could be requested.

There is currently no codified procedure for making or answering faculty requests regarding changes to their office space. The result is that the standard answer is usually “no”—sometimes unnecessarily. But, in absence of a clear policy and procedure, “no” is safer than yes. It was noted that the restrictions on what is allowed in a faculty office seem stricter than what is allowed in a dorm room. This is hard to explain on the basis of safety or liability concerns. So, the committee is looking into what standards exist on the Kent campus for both dorms and faculty outfitting of offices to potentially serve as a benchmark or starting place for our policy here.
On bringing unused spaces into use, a number of ideas were presented: a dedicated, properly appointed lactation space to supplement the spaces that are currently available on request for (but not dedicated to) that purpose; a faculty computer/printer room for those offices that are further from larger faculty work spaces; student study spaces; or a neutral meeting space for faculty or faculty with students. Brian suggested that many of these ideas could be workable, depending, of course, on the specific spaces being discussed.

After the report, several councilors mentioned possible additional uses for unused space. For example, Councilor Lloyd indicated that the Writing Center space is way too small, and the director, Dr. Sloan, has tried for years to get more space. In response, both Dr. Seachrist and Dr. Kasturiarachi indicated that space for the Writing Center had not been brought to their attention and indicated that they would welcome a conversation with Dr. Sloan. Councilor Warren indicated that she had an idea for the space in Fine Arts, and Dr. Kasturiarachi said that she should consider putting something in writing. Councilor Blundell asked if some space might be freed up in the library (for the Writing Center or other purpose). For example, there are some physical archives that don’t often get used that could be digitized, which would result in some empty space. Dr. Seachrist responded that some conversations are taking place about the periodicals. Some of those materials are owned by Stark State. Councilor Warren also mentioned that colleagues have brought up the need for secure space to keep IRB materials.

G. **Ad hoc Memorial Garden Committee.** On behalf of the committee, Dr. Norton-Smith and Councilor Shepherd reported on the efforts of the committee to date. The committee met with Brian Gardner on the 16th to discuss the best site for the proposed garden that would also fit into the building plan (as additional buildings on campus are projected for the future). NW of the clock seems to have the most potential; Dr. Norton-Smith and Councilor Shepherd projected an image of the conceptual map of the campus to show Council the area in question. Members of the committee will be researching similar projects at other campuses and contacting the horticulture department at the Salem campus.

IX. **Old Business**

None

X. **New Business**

None

XI. **Announcements**

A. Councilor Heaphy asked that everyone pay attention to student projects that might be suitable for the student conference in the spring, and to let colleagues from other campuses know that their students can be involved. This year they will be using digital commons to create an archive of the materials presented.

B. Councilor Tobias indicated that there is still time to come upstairs to play games for the Extra Life fundraiser to benefit Akron Children’s Hospital.

C. Councilor Vulanovic reminded everyone that the public math lecture titled “What is it Really Like to be a Biostatistician?” will be held tonight at 6:00 in Room 203 Main Hall.
XII. Adjournment

Chair Earley adjourned the meeting at 3:39 PM.