Kent State Stark Faculty Council Minutes

SPECIAL MEETING

April 10, 2015

I. Chair Norton-Smith called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM.

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


Ex-officio: Assistant Dean Bathi Kasturiarachi

Absent: Sebastian Birch, Matt Lehnert, and Beth Campbell

Guests: Associate Provost Wanda Thomas and Provost Todd Diacon

III. Approval of Agenda

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

IV. New Business

Discussion with Provost Diacon

Chair Norton-Smith welcomed Associate Provost Thomas and Provost Diacon. Provost Diacon indicated that he and Associate Provost Thomas were here to consult with us on issues related to the search for our campus dean.

A. Dean Search Procedures. Provost Diacon began by saying that he wanted to walk us through the usual calendar for campus dean searches and then make a few other remarks. Referring to copies of the policy for regional campus dean searches that Chair Norton-Smith had provided, the provost said that he was glad that we were familiar with the policy.

Using the recent Trumbull dean search as an example, Provost Diacon said that we would start in July or August to get the search committee together and send out an RFP to search firms. If we wondered why he preferred to use a search firm, he would be glad to discuss that issue.
By mid-November we should be at the airport interview stage, with candidates coming to campus in January. If all went well, we would have our candidate by March. The new dean will begin on July 1, 2016. Internal applicants would be accepted, but not with what he termed “a wink and a nod.” It will be a true national search. We may end up hiring an internal candidate, but it is not a foregone conclusion. We will do this search the way we do all of our searches. He trusts that we will get a good pool and that when candidates get to our campus, they will be impressed.

Chair Norton-Smith asked the provost if he could tell us why a search firm would be used. Provost Diacon cited two primary reasons:

1. We will be doing several other administrative searches in the coming months, and search firms do a great deal of the leg work, thus saving time.

2. Search firms have access to candidates that we would be unlikely to see otherwise, thereby creating a more robust applicant pool.

Councilor Heaphy asked if the title of the dean might be changed because last year Provost Diacon had mentioned the title as a probable obstacle in attracting stellar candidates. Provost Diacon replied that a change in nomenclature was a recommendation of the One University Commission, but he does not have control of the outcome. He does think that the title issue is likely to be resolved prior to the start of our search.

Councilor Thacker asked if we should assume that Interim Dean Seachrist would be continuing in her role for another academic year since the search committee will not even be formed until July-August this summer. Provost Diacon replied that he had not yet thought about it and had not discussed continuing with Interim Dean Seachrist. However, he would prefer to have her continue unless we saw a reason not to.

Chair Norton-Smith replied that we have had enough transitions in recent years, and Councilor Heaphy said having a different interim dean would cause a lot of upheaval with no gain, an idea with which the other councilors concurred.

Chair Norton-Smith indicated that it looks like the Provost will need names of potential committee members sooner rather than later. Discussion then ensued on issues such as exactly how many faculty names were needed; what the faculty selection process had been in earlier campus dean searches; and how staff, administrative, and student representatives had been chosen in earlier searches.

Realizing that the Geauga Campus would also be engaged in a dean search, Councilor Shepherd asked if the two applicant pools would be combined, and Provost Diacon replied that they would not. Councilor Shepherd then asked if the two searches would have the same search firm. Associate Provost Thomas said that it’s possible, but an RFP will be sent out to determine the firm. She also indicated that there may be some virtue in working with a search firm that is familiar with the campus, such as Greenwood/Asher and Associates, Inc., which ran our last successful dean search. Councilor McKenney asked if we might get dual applicants; in response Associate Provost Thomas said that search firms have applicants apply directly to the search firm’s website.

Provost Diacon indicated that we get applicants from two sources, our advertisements, such as those that appear in the Chronicle, and those that the search firms find. Associate Provost Thomas advised us to look at ads from previous dean searches to figure out what we would like to change, so we are not drafting our ad from a blank page.
B. Desired Qualities for Our New Dean. Having gone through the relevant procedures, Provost Diacon then asked Council what qualities we wanted our new dean to possess.

He noted that last year, Council had indicated experience with capital projects would be important for our dean, but what else did we want? For example, does the campus leader need to be tenured? Council felt strongly that the dean should be tenured. Provost Diacon indicated that the only slight wrinkle is that the Kent department has to decide on tenure. He explained that currently some campus deans have faculty rank and some do not. He said the candidate could give a verbal acceptance, and then wait until he or she finds out the tenure decision before formally accepting. There would be a formal vote by the department, but it would be likely to happen quickly.

Councilor Heaphy indicated that the dean has to have skill sets that the typical department chair wouldn’t have, such as building facilities and working with multiple levels of staff. They have to have the ability to understand and manage “budgets to building” and be able to make tough decisions.

(At this point, Provost Diacon congratulated Councilor Heaphy for recently receiving the well-deserved Ohio Academy of History Teaching Award.)

Councilor Lloyd added that the dean needs to be good with people. Not a show-off or a star, or someone socially awkward, but someone in the medium range who can get people to work together.

Chair Norton-Smith noted that experience with personnel procedures is imperative because of the high number of personnel actions we handle on our campus.

Provost Diacon asked if experience with a union would be necessary, and several councilors indicated that familiarity with unions and shared governance could be helpful.

Councilor Shelestak said that it would be essential for our new dean to understand the uniqueness of the regional campuses. At Stark we are similar to a small liberal arts college but have many of the expectations of a large university, and we have to be able to balance that.

C. Possible Changes in Kent Campus Commencement. Diacon Provost then asked if he could have a few minutes to ask us about another issue. President Warren has asked him to oversee changes in how commencement is conducted on the Kent campus; these changes would not change commencement ceremonies on the regional campuses at all. President Warren would like to have a big-name speaker at commencement and hold the ceremony at Dix Stadium. Students would just stand up by college, instead of everyone’s name being called and walking across a stage. Then, the next day, another smaller ceremony—perhaps by college—would be held where all names would be called.

The “pros” of this change would include more pageantry, more prestigious speakers, and better parking and infrastructure to handle a larger number of attendees. We would have the freedom to carry out some big ideas, for example, shooting fireworks at the moment when everyone moves their tassels.

The “cons” would include potential weather issues, logistical issues, and traffic flow.
The August ceremony would be canceled but not the December one. We will need to look into how to handle August graduates.

Councilor Sturr said that holding the smaller college ceremonies a day later would be likely to reduce attendance. Councilor Shelestak supported that idea, explaining that in Nursing a separate convocation is always held. If it is scheduled before commencement, on the same day, students will go. If it is on a different day, they won’t.

Councilor McKenney said that more personal time at the college ceremony might be something that students at Kent have not experienced before. Several councilors said that our students like the atmosphere at our ceremonies and touches such as the clapping gauntlet—an idea which Provost Diacon freely admitted that he stole from our campus to implement at Kent ceremonies.

Provost Diacon said that if there was a terrible storm—a gully washer—they would combine Arts and Sciences and Education in the MAC to hear the speaker.

As the discussion with Provost Diacon and Associate Provost Thomas concluded, Chair Norton-Smith indicated that it fell to Council to come up with faculty names for the Dean Search Committee. He proposed that we ask for self-nominations. Then at the May 1 meeting of the old and new Councils, we will make our selection from the names we receive through self-nominations. Councilors all agreed with this approach, so Chair Norton-Smith indicated that he would craft a message for both TT and FTNTT nominees.

V. Adjournment
Chair Norton-Smith adjourned the meeting at 3:30 PM.