Natural Sciences Chairs Council

January 21, 2021

1:00pm – 3:00pm, ZOOM

In Attendance: M. Chao, K. Cousins, D. Maynard, B. Haddock, M. Jetter, T. Burch,

J. Torner, G. Escalante, D. Rinebolt, T. Valencia, R. Hernandez, S. McGill, S. Pantula

Approval of Minutes

* Minutes of January 4th meeting were approved.

Announcements by Chairs

* Dr. Torner reported the physics department is dealing with the challenge of hybrid courses (labs) since at the present time face-to-face attendance is not allowed.
* Dr. Torner also reported the physics department is dealing with a significant number of students who enrolled in the lecture part of a class but not the lab section.
* Dr. Torner reported that Dr. Usher was able to work with the library for the distribution of materials needed for labs.
* Dr. Torner reported the physics department will hold its first department meeting for the semester tomorrow.
* Dr. Chao reported the biology department is also dealing with the challenge of the hybrid courses.
* Dr. Chao also reported there is anxiety in the department concerning the COVID vaccinations.
* Dr. Jetter reported the math department is busy checking to make sure students are enrolled in the right GE courses.
* Dr. Burch reported the nursing department is dealing with the loss of clinical sites due to COVID.
* Dr. Burch reported nursing students and faculty have concerns regarding the vaccine.
* Dr. Haddock reported that he has been dealing with a lot of repairs that need to be dealt with in the building. Their freezer has been repaired to accommodate the County’s COVID vaccine storage issue.
* Dr. Haddock reported the kinesiology department is also dealing with the hybrid courses concerns.
* Dr. Cousins reported the chemistry department is also dealing with the hybrid labs issues.
* Dr. Cousins reported they are seeing a lot of last minute enrollments in classes.
* Ms. Valencia reported the mid-year projections are due in February. She is sending information to the ASCs and has asked the department to get the information back to her within two weeks.
* Ms. Valencia reported that the provost is looking at the workload so chairs should be sure and check their faculty workloads.
* Ms. Valencia also reported that professional development funds need to be spent by May. The funds will not be available after that.
* Dr. Maynard reported the computer science and engineering department has received 37 applications for their director position. The department is also busy dealing with the ABET re-accreditation.
* Dr. Maynard reported the geology department has received 11 applications for the chair position. They are awaiting the approval from the diversity person to approve the pool so they can move forward.
* Mr. Hernandez reported there are two virtual events that will take place in the next month. Paul Naik, who was chosen as last year’s outstanding alumni for the College of Natural Sciences will share his experiences and answer questions from students in a webinar on February 24th at 1 p.m. Additionally, Rita Colwell, former director of the NSF will give a talk, “Climate, Oceans and Human Healthcare; What Cholera can teach us about COVID-19 on February 16th at 11 a.m..
* Mr. Hernandez also reported that he is working on an event for Black History Month for the college.
* Mr. Hernandez reported that he is working with Graduate Studies to promote our graduate programs.
* Mr. Hernandez reported that he is also working with Dr. Cheryl Brandt of the nursing department to get information out about our two certificate programs.
* Mr. Hernandez reported that he is working on a student success virtual event for students receiving the scholarships and the donors who fund the scholarships.

Announcements by Administration

* Dr. Escalante introduced himself as the new Dean’s Fellow and he was happy to be joining the leadership team. He explained that he is currently working closely with the STEM Center & student success.
* Dr. McGill thanked everyone for their input for the mid-year report.
* Dr. McGill reminded chairs to encourage their faculty to use Navigate to record faculty advising appointments, and if they think that will significantly underestimate, to track them at the department level.
* Dr. McGill reported that the college is now at 4367 FTE and our target is 5047 FTE. That puts us at 89% of target.
* Dr. McGill shared a spreadsheet showing courses that students have tried to enroll in but are full. She asked the chairs to review it and respond to her suggestions for opening additional seats.
* Dr. McGill shared spreadsheets with information showing preliminary Fall 2021 classroom allocations at SBC and AY 2020-21 courses scheduled at PDC. She asked chairs to look over both spreadsheets in preparation for the Fall 2021 classroom allocation and AY 2020-21 PDC schedule planning meeting on Monday.
* Dr. Pantula reported that he has started to receive requests for sabbaticals. In the past we have approved all sabbaticals but this year due to the budget cuts there may be restrictions on the number of sabbaticals approved. If that is the case, he asked if there was a preferred method for choosing which ones to approve? Dr. Torner suggested we delay a decision until we know the number of applications received.
* Dr. Pantula requested the chairs provide a list of items to be purchased if the money is restored. Dr. Jetter said she would prefer more faculty and not items, and reminded that she would like to replace a couple of her serialized FT lecturers who retired recently. Dr. Burch said she would also prefer more faculty as the nursing department is stretched really thin.
* Dr. Pantula reported he had sent out an email to the chairs shortly before the meeting containing notes from the iSLAB meeting. Dr. Burch mentioned that she would like to have a meeting (Forum) about space in the college.
* Dr. Pantula asked the chairs to be sure and speak to their faculty about DFWI rates and encourage them to check their SOTEs for student commentsand look for opportunities for improvement in Spring semester.