Natural Sciences Chairs Council

November 15, 2021

1:00pm – 3:00pm

In Attendance: M. Chao, K. Cousins, K. Dajani, C. Todd, L. Mian, B. Haddock, M. Jetter, T. Burch, J. Torner, G. Escalante, D. Maynard, D. Rinebolt, S. McGill, S. Pantula, R. Hernandez

High Performance Computing Initiative (HPCI) – Youngsu Kim

* Youngsu Kim gave a presentation on the HPCI.

Approval of Minutes – November 1, 2021

* Minutes of the November 1st meeting were approved.

Announcements by Chairs

* Dr. Jetter reported the Math Department is busy working on the process of hiring new faculty. They will probably be busy with interviews until the Thanksgiving holiday.
* Dr. Jetter reported the Math Department is holding a memorial service for Peter Williams, this Thursday, November 17th at 5:30 in the Commons.
* Dr. Dajani reported the School of Computer Science is starting their interviewing process for hiring new faculty. He reported that they have filled the position for their ASC and are looking forward to her starting at the end of the month.
* Dr. Dajani also reported the school is busy working on the new degrees they hope to begin offering.
* Dr. Haddock reported that the Kinesiology Department is in the beginning stages of their search for a new department chair.
* Dr. Haddock reported that now that students have begun registering for spring semester classes the department is dealing with Q2S issues. There are also issues where there are one or two students at PDC who need a course to graduate.
* Dr. Todd reported the Geology Department is continuing to work on their new faculty search too. They hope to begin interviews starting the first part of December.
* Dr. Chao reported the Biology Department is beginning the process of on-campus interviews starting next week.
* Dr. Chao shared that the Biology Department had a COVID incident in their seminar class. In the past they have allowed students to attend the class even if they were not enrolled in the class. This has created a problem in that they do not know who all were in attendance that day and so notifying students of an exposure to COVID will not be completely possible.
* Dr. Mian shared that the Health Science Department is busy with their faculty searches. They are currently involved in the telephone interview process for the applicants for the department chair position. He reported also they have made a decision on the ASA position and awaiting the results of the background check. They are hopeful she will begin working by the end of this month.
* Dr. Cousins shared Chemistry and Physics students involved in the Center for Advanced Functional Materials are giving posters and talks at the Southern California Council on Undergraduate Research (SCCUR) conference, including student research using the Pacific &IXEDE systems that Dr. Youngsu Kim spoke about. Also interviews have happened for the CREST II staff person.
* Dr. Torner shared that the Physics Department has just recently completed reviewing all 104 applications that they received for their future faculty position.
* Dr. Torner also reported his department is having the issue with Q2S as well. Additionally, the Physics Department has the problem of their classes filling up and they cannot enroll more students because of a lack of space and students not wanting to come to campus three times a week.
* Dr. Torner reported he was busy too trying to convince students to apply for research positions.
* Dr. Burch reported the Nursing Department is busy with their faculty searches as well. They have not had a high turnout of applicants which is a little disappointing.
* Dr. Burch also reported that the department is still dealing with the issue of finding clinical placements for their students. This is especially difficult at PDC.
* Dr. Burch reported that the current time block system being used by the university has made it very difficult to schedule nursing classes, as they don’t fill the typical time blocks. There was a discussion among the chairs about the difficulties they are experiencing with scheduling labs because of the time blocks.

Announcements by Administration

* Dr. Escalante reported that the Science Success Center is being painted and is looking really nice.
* Dr. Escalante reported the Science Buddy Program currently has 20 students signed up to work with new students.
* Dr. Escalante also reported that he is working with Dr. Maynard to devise an early bridge program with the community colleges.
* Dr. Escalante reported the event with Sarah Robles (the Olympic weightlifter) was very successful.
* Dr. Escalante reported the STEM Center counselors are extremely busy right now with the registration for spring semester in full swing.
* Dr. McGill led discussion of the draft policy statement she circulated via email last week concerning the qualifications for teaching a 6000+ level class. The draft statement was based on prior input from chairs. One new suggestion was to consider whether instructors of graduate courses should also be involved in doing research too. There seemed to be agreement that faculty supervising graduate student research should be active researchers themselves, but no clear consensus that faculty teaching 6000-leve courses should be active researchers. Another comment was made regarding the potential difficulty in finding lecturers with a doctoral degree to teach 6000-level courses in some fields, but it was pointed out that the policy allows for exceptions. Ultimately no changes were made to the draft policy statement that had been circulated and it was approved by consensus.
  + In general, instructors of 6000-level courses within CNS should hold an earned doctoral degree in a relevant field. If an exception is needed in order to hire someone with particular professional expertise required for the program, the program coordinator and chair should submit to the Dean the candidate’s CV and a description of the particular expertise that this candidate brings to the program. The Dean may approve exceptions in cases in which a candidate holds a master’s degree and has extensive professional experience that is relevant to a specific need in the program.
* Dr. McGill informed the chairs that CEGE will check enrollment in classes for winter intersession on December 1st. On December 2nd they will let the departments know which classes will be dropped.
* Dr. McGill reported that the college is at 58% of target for spring semester. She asked chairs to share their strategies for ensuring that enough seats are being offered for Spring courses. Chairs pointed out that
  + For course sequences, chairs use past pass rates in the first course in a sequence and current enrollment in the first course in sequence to estimate number of seats needed in the next course in the sequence. This results in some students being on a wait list for the next course, until grades are available for the first course in the sequence. Once students who did not pass the first course are dropped from the second course, students on the wait list can get in.
  + There was consensus on the need to communicate to students the department’s plans for accommodating students in courses that are full. Students should know whether being on a wait list is a dead end or whether they are likely to get into the course eventually, either because others are expected to drop or because more seats will be added (if the waitlist remains small) or a new section will be added (if the waitlist gets large enough).
  + Some chairs don’t open new lab sections until existing lab sections are full. Others open many lab sections and then close sections that are not needed.
  + Several chairs indicated difficulty in finding lecturers to teach sections that added. They agreed that committing to full-time lecturers would help with this. Dean Pantula asked chairs to include any requests for converting part-time faculty budget to full-time serialized lecturers should be included along with requests for tenure-line faculty in their 3-year projected plans for new faculty and staff hires and projected equipment needs.
* Dr. McGill reminded the chairs that summer build is in process right now and they need to have their rooms reserved by December 17th.
* Dean Pantula spoke to the chairs about the cabinet meeting and the issues that are most pressing right now – equity gaps and DFWI rates. He asked the chairs to think about ways to deal with the equity gaps and send their suggestions to him.
* Dean Pantula informed the chairs that all colleges are refocusing on faculty advising to supplement centralized advising.
* Dean Pantula thanked the chairs for all the work they are doing and reminded them to be careful over the Thanksgiving holiday