

Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes

November 11, 2020

8:00 am – 9:30 am

Zoom

Attending: Kanakadurga Singer (Chair), John Pasquale, Mark Rosentraub, Annalisa Manera, Rachel Goldman, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Rebekah Modrak, Michael Hess, Priti Shah, Chitra Subramanian, William Schultz

Absent: Sergio Villalobos

Guests: Provost Susan Collins, Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost

8:03 Chair Singer called the meeting to order.

A topic was carried over about lessons learned and how the committee can help with two-way communication about the process related to WilmerHale.

Provost Collins offered some updates. SACUA has set up a group explicitly to address the WilmerHale report. The president plans to provide an update to the Board of Regents on December 3. The Board will be identifying an outside consulting firm to help accomplish the climate we want and deserve. The interim umbrella policy has been amended so that any allegations against senior staff in the provost's office and in OIE would not report up to the provost's office but to Kevin Hegarty, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. That change was effective October 1.

Provost Collins requested feedback on how the new SACUA group will work in this space. Professor Goldman is serving on the committee. She explained that a central set of questions the group has that doesn't relate to OIE is about how things are might change in the screening process for leadership positions. When graduate students, staff, faculty, etc. are interviewed, many people are involved to identify issues. The question was posed asking how this will be done in the future to avoid promoting and reinstating leaders who are predators, and to make sure such a thing doesn't happen again. Professor Goldman inquired about what training is available to identify issues. She stated that a number of deans were recently reappointed, and there didn't seem to be a new process for that.

Provost Collins indicated that dean searches do come through the provost's office. She stated that searches, processes, and reappointments matter. She affirmed that deans and individuals in leadership roles need to be meeting high standards of integrity. She expressed her commitment to this principle. She stated that representatives from the school and colleges are included in the process, as well as nominations from SACUA. Provost Collins indicated that including SACUA has always been important, there are mid-term 360 reviews and annual reviews. It is important to have the opportunity to address situations when people don't come forward.

It was acknowledged that OIE is not charged with searches, though information from OIE needs to be part of the process. It was also stated that searches for VPs are led by the president's office.

A member expressed that the president and provost are the best source to increase confidence in leadership. Briefings are seen as positive, but it was suggested that more interaction would be helpful to restore confidence. Talking without interaction does not directly reach the faculty.

A member stated that commitment to high standards of leadership is not happening at the school level. A culture of fear was described where people are afraid to speak out.

Chair Singer spoke about communication and when it is working and when it is not. Chair Singer encouraged transparency during the reappointment process. She asked how input from the review process is formalized, and if reviews are negative, then what happens next?

Provost Collins indicated that she meets monthly with the deans, and often more frequently. Annual reviews provide an opportunity for conversations about challenges, what things are important for attention, and the opportunity for follow up discussions.

Additional discussion about the 360 review took place. The 360 review is longstanding. About 10 years ago, it was moved to the middle of the typically five-year appointment, instead of the 4th year, to give the dean the chance to address issues that arose. It was asked whether there is there anything in the 360-review process that can be added to proactively look out for problematic behaviors. Provost Collins is also looking to answer this question and improve the process.

It was noted that deans can be asked to address faculty and staff directly in response to an evaluation and distributing it to the provost's office.

It was asked if it is possible to use an outside firm to ask about how a person works with others during interviews for a leadership position. This has not been done for dean searches at this point, but it could be considered.

A member encouraged more interactions and described a recent visit by the president to a class as a really positive experience to improve confidence. Provost Collins indicated that both she and the president will be participating in outreach. It is helpful to know who to reach out to or meet with. She is open to suggestions. The online environment is really challenging to connect with people. Town halls are challenging because when 2000 people attend, the event has to be managed in some way.

It was suggested that AAAC and Senate Assembly consider what venues would be good for the provost and president to visit.

It was stated that SACUA has been asking for greater involvement with dean searches for years. Putting a SACUA member on a committee would be helpful. There was a suggestion to ask faculty for suggestions for administrator roles with a suggestion that SACUA reach out to schools for nominations. Provost Collins affirmed the commitment to continue the practice of including SACUA nominees on dean searches.

Provost Collins affirmed that she takes input from faculty and staff when identifying interim deans seriously. She referenced the School of Pharmacy as an example. She also encouraged SACUA to reach out before identifying nominees as well.

Provost Collins expressed an interest in working together on searches. She said that this topic can be addressed again.

8:40 Faculty feedback on planning for Winter term

Chair Singer asked that committee members provide Provost Collins requested feedback.

Feedback was requested about the response from schools and colleges, from faculty and students, about Winter plans. Provost Collins inquired about how the experience can be improved for Winter term.

The recommendations from public health experts suggested that a density in the 30% or less range in the dorms is appropriate given the trajectories in the region and state. Students can apply to live in the dorm for academic need if their courses must be in person.

A member described angst experienced by juniors and senior toward freshmen and sophomores. Transmission has been largely due to social activities rather than due to in person classes. Juniors and seniors are having a reduced experience because of the behavior of mostly freshmen and sophomores.

Discussion ensued about testing for Greek life students and others who may avoid testing locally, as well as the stigma that has hindered contact tracing. Provost Collins indicated that counties work together, and that it just takes longer to get results when they are reported outside Washtenaw County.

The group discussed enforcement for students going to other places for testing. Finding appropriate ways to monitor compliance is challenging. Communications will be more explicit, and parents will be brought in if needed. It was also mentioned that some students have lost their housing contracts.

A member asked about Provost Collins' thoughts about suggestions by students and parents that there should be more flexibility with the grading scheme.

Provost Collins indicated that there are multiple options, and she requested feedback about whether people would have concerns.

A member indicated that the degree should not be denigrated by letting people slide by. He's holding people to the standard of the course.

Winter 2020 worked out ok. Students had the choice to unveil the grades – receive a grade and request a pass/fail if desired.

9:01 Provost Collins left the meeting.

The minutes for October 28 will be handled at the next meeting because the Provost review of the provost's section hasn't been completed yet.

Chair Singer thought the discussion went well.

Disappointment was expressed about the process of evaluations and why they were not taken into consideration. It was stated that 360 reviews for deans who were reappointed were completed before the Provost's time. The question came up concerning why the evaluations weren't redone. It is unclear how the evaluations were used for the reappointments. It was noted that people don't have confidence that their statements will stay anonymous. This was experienced first-hand prior to Philbert.

Chair Singer noted that the Committee on the Oversight of Administrative Action (COAA) is meeting with the chair of the Administration Evaluation Committee (AEC) on December 18. The group is invited to attend.

The group discussed the ramifications of the vote of no confidence in President Schlissel and the work needed to be done to restore confidence.

A report was referenced from a committee that evaluated how Fall term went. It was stated that the stakeholders were blamed for the ambassador program failing because they complained about it. Professor Goldman provided a link and quote.

"The Ambassador Program attempted to promote safe behavior while providing accountability for students in violation of public health guidance. Campus stakeholders did not support the program resulting in program reductions and this interfered with efforts to promote safe behavior and accountability;"

The supporting documents are listed on the U-M campus blueprint page:
<https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/winter-term-plan#engaging-with-the-community>

9:24 Matters Arising

Chair Singer requested ideas for the next meeting, including guests that may be considered.

- Who designs the 360 reviews? Maybe they can be invited.
- More guidance on what is essential in-person classroom activity. What happens to those students who opt out? Is there pressure on students? Individual faculty are left to decide this.
- Amount of work it takes to teach remotely – additional workload for faculty – is there anything in the plans that would help faculty with this workload?
- Student experiences were touched on today, but the faculty experience wasn't discussed.
- Recognizing the extra effort to teach face to face and online. A member stated that half of his class will not finish because he will not alter the standards for the course.
- Someone mentioned the one-time bonus payment. How will faculty be rewarded overall for the sacrifices they have made?
- A member stated that she is restricted to spend research funds that are funded through grants. Because of the salary freeze, increases cannot be made. One time payments/bonuses are being restricted. When can there be flexibility with funds?

If additional topics are requested, please contact Chair Singer.

9:36 Meeting Adjourned