

Committee on Oversight of Administrative Action (COAA)

Minutes

11:00a-1:00p

12/18/20

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Attending: John Pasquale (Chair), Kenneth Adams, Thomas Braun, Gabriela Hristova, Ella Kazerooni, Donald Likosky, Karen Staller, Chuanwu (Wu) Xi, Annalisa Manera (SACUA Liaison), Hani Bawardi, Carolyn Swenson

Absent: Christina Young

Guests: Professor Keith Riles, Chair of Administration Evaluation Committee (AEC); Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) members: Chitra Subramanian, Durga Singer (Chair), Rachel Goldman, Bill Schultz, Mark Rosentraub, Rebekah Modrak

11:03 Chair Pasquale called the meeting to order.

Chair Pasquale explained that members of AAAC are attending today for the AEC visit because this visit relates to the work of both committees. The conversation will be a procedural overview and what happens with the data that are collected.

Chair Pasquale welcomed Professor Riles, Chair of AEC.

Professor Riles indicated that five questions would guide the conversation.

1. What is the assessment process?
2. How is the data measured?
3. How is it compiled?
4. Where is it sent?
5. Is there any official follow-up?

There are new administrators, so to prepare for the assessment process, it is necessary to go through and confirm which administrators to include. Department and college affiliations are also addressed. There are a few hundred new people each year who do not have a well-defined department.

This information is incorporated into the server, and then Don Winsor continues the process. A message goes to administrators reminding them about the survey. They can provide statements about achievements or goals, or questions they may ask.

Then the committee meets to update the questionnaires as needed. They try to have a longitudinal history for administrators. They address suggestions received from the previous year in the online suggestion box. Sometimes they discuss policy changes.

The process starts in mid to late March. Endorsement is solicited from President Schlissel, which helps the response rate. Four weeks after the survey ends, Don Winsor does some

preliminary checks to see if there are any issues. If everything looks okay, administrators are given twenty-four hours' notice, and the confidential comments are sent to them. The files are purged so they cannot be obtained via FOIA. The administrators then can do with the data what they wish.

To assemble reports, Don Winsor does a run, followed by a run by Professor Riles. This is an iterative process to check for errors. An announcement then goes out that the results are available.

How is the data measured? The data is measured the same way as student evaluations. If there are enough responses, they can provide the breakdown, but for small units they only show the median.

What is being compiled? The data is from an Excel spreadsheet from HR – Don Winsor has scripts to prepare the data. This is modeled on a traditional secret ballot. Ballots are completely anonymous.

Is there any official follow up? There is not official follow up by AEC. AEC is trying to get questions answered, but what is done is up to other committees, individuals, and administrators. Ideally administrators will use the comments for self-improvement. Administrators can look at data for subordinate administrators.

Interventions are not shared.

Results are public, which could result in some peer pressure. You don't want to be the chair with the lowest score on inspiring confidence. Results can be used as ammunition for SACUA to highlight issues.

Monthly reports used to go the Regents – sometimes AEC results would be included in those reports.

11:18 questions

Member Likosky noted that there is a balance between concern about being FOIA'd and the ability to identify issues that should be addressed.

Professor Riles stated that confidential comments are meant for self-improvement. The appropriate way to handle an issue is to go to the administrator above. Given the past issue it is hoped that administrators will take the results more seriously. In the future there will be suggestions about where to report sexual misconduct issues. Poor performance is supposed to be brought to the attention of the administrator and to the administrator above.

Professor Riles is hesitant to have others look at the data – this would violate the tradition. What would a faculty committee do with comments? He noted that perhaps COAA could become responsible for doing something with the information.

The survey caused controversy when confidential comments were leaked at Flint.

There was an experiment a few years ago 2009 or 2010 when AAAC had separate open ended questions that asked about budget. AAAC went through the comments and curated them and posted them. It was a lot of work, and there was not enthusiasm to do this again, but it offers a

precedent. The survey could be used for COAA to ask its own questions. It would need to be clear what would happen with the responses.

Member Likosky stated that questions should not be asked that the committee is not in the position to do anything about.

People may not put things on paper if they don't think anything will be done.

Member Hristova stated that they are dealing with some issues related to administrative power and abuse of power. She questioned what the incentive is for faculty to fill out the surveys if they know there is no follow up. She asked how the process can be monitored.

Professor Riles noted that if comments are specific, you would hope this would have impact and that a dean would do some investigating. The potential is there but it relies on administrators.

SACUA liaison Manera stated that when there are egregious accusations, there needs to be an independent body who extracts the egregious comments and follows up.

Member Rosentraub was asked to share his opinion as a former dean. He is frustrated. Looking at patterns of behavior during COVID is broader than being busy. This is a more fundamental flaw. The president has access to many staff to help.

Member Rosentraub expressed surprise that people above certain individuals don't hear the comments.

Member Braun noted that the majority of the faculty don't understand – he was surprised to hear that the comments did not go to his dean about his chair.

Professor Riles noted that the survey looks at longitudinal patterns. AEC has no role in oversight but is only providing the information. If COAA wanted to submit open-ended questions, the committee could do so.

It has not been the process to share comments with deans, provosts, etc. The decision was that faculty always had the option to share comments with higher level administrators. Faculty can have a one-one dialog with an administrator. There could be a scenario where a sr. faculty member gives advice to a younger chair, but they don't want to go to the dean.

AAAC Chair Singer noted that the president's endorsement may cause people to believe that feedback is going to higher level administrators.

Member Kazerooni stated that the framework about evaluations is that over time people develop relationships with their boss which can impact how they look at something. They may not read the comments, or they may dismiss the comments due to the relationship. There may need to be another party to review this information. When annual evaluations are being done, if you don't have the reviews, you don't have all the information.

Rachel Goldman stated that 7 deans were reappointed based on 360s that were done during the midterm of their appointments, which were completed by the prior provost.

It was noted that there is a large amount of trust that has been lost. It seems like a lot of wasted time to put comments in if they are not read and if they are not acted upon. It is imperative to

state that feedback may not be read or acted upon, and have a public relations approach starting from scratch, with a process for acting on feedback. How do we move forward?

Professor Riles noted that clarification will help. He'd like to correct some misunderstandings that have arisen. That will be the first step.

Member Hristova asked why is there no time period during which comments are saved. She noted that response to feedback of evaluators is optional, but there should be a right to respond. She questioned whether this aspect be considered for accountability.

Professor Riles stated they are preventing the public airing of comments. He noted that the first year of the survey, they were FOIA'd.

AAAC member Modrak noted that evaluation of dean only goes to the dean. Professor Riles stated that this should be fixed. Member Modrak stated that the evaluations should go up the line. Gathering data is only part of the process. Follow up is also needed.

The AEC began as a grassroots effort to have faculty give direct input on performance of administrators. Available resources for this work include his time and a research scientist's time. They don't have the resources to do the level of work needed. Some colleges have their own evaluation process.

It was questioned whether beyond finances, if there a will within the university to get to the truth and act on it. Professor Riles stated that they haven't come to this decision yet. They have programming experience, so it is difficult to find people to take the project on.

A major focus has been on protecting anonymity of participants, and this can create technical problems.

It was noted that Lecturers are part of the process. Their responses are separated from Faculty Senate members, but sometimes they are aggregated.

12:11 Faculty Guest

This faculty member's grievance was ineffective.

It was noted that there are no other procedures available for resolving problems.

The faculty member noted the requirement to start with their own unit, but HR has refused to do anything to address it. The faculty member was refused the opportunity to do an exit interview, though the faculty member had specific requirements for the interview.

12:42 The guest left the meeting.

AAAC SACUA Liaison Manera noted that current procedure seems to be problematic. If there is an issue with a dean, the complaint should go to the provost. Otherwise if it goes lower in the chain there is a power imbalance. This process should be changed.

The faculty member went to the faculty ombuds first. There is no process to go straight to the provost. It was noted that it is important to create a record.

Chair Pasquale met with SACUA. He requested help in 3 areas:

Gathering information.

Member Staller suggested that COAA find the patterns and connect the dots.

What information is needed to help find the patterns? Faculty ombuds generalized information, reports from AHR? What should the committee be asking for to identify patterns?

The university needs to have resources to generate data. Is there a will to get at truth?

There was discussion about the value of the AEC survey if the data is not shared.

It was suggested that the evaluations be independently evaluated for egregious behavior.

People who come to the committee can shed light on holes that exist. This highlighted a point that should be addressed in terms of a procedural process.

It was suggested that the committee look at the AEC results for deans who have received complaints.

Sascha Matish will be joining COAA in January.

It was asked for transparency whether someone should be invited from the administration to give their story.

A responsibility to protect the university from itself was noted.

It was suggested to table conversation about having someone come.

1:02 meeting adjourned