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Teaching Policies

Faculty have commented that a different approach seems to have been used to set the Spring 2022 course schedule, and faculty are surprised by how the dates/times of their courses for the Spring 2022 semester have been disrupted. They felt they did not have input regarding the day/time when their courses would be taught. Could this be clarified, perhaps by the Provost?

In general, our approach to time and room assignments did not change for Spring 2022—the Registrar attempts to accommodate instructor time and room preferences where possible. We did make one change for Fall 2021 to our time and room scheduling process that likely impacted some instructors: because of the need to accommodate increased enrollment when setting class time and location, some Departmental classrooms were moved into the central schedule build to provide more space options. This included any room larger than 50 seats. The Registrar then assigned these rooms instead of allowing the Departments to assign the room, as they would have in the past. This change added about 100 additional sections to the central schedule build that the Registrar managed versus the Departments controlling the space.

We will closely monitor the need to continue (or not) this practice going forward. In general, with increased enrollment and need to support additional student demand, some instructor preferences have not been able to be accommodated because of the need to account for student conflicts and room optimization. That said, we will continue to accommodate instructor time and room preferences wherever possible.

Personnel actions

What is the university's plan to pay graduate students a living wage and give systematic additional yearly raises to match inflation, which is currently at a 30-year high and affects BIPOC, international, and other minoritized students disproportionately?

Graduate Students holding assistantships are included in our annual merit compensation pool and units work to provide stipends competitive with those in their discipline. That said, the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Provost, and the Graduate School launched a project in October to conduct an analysis of current graduate student compensation and develop a set of recommendations based on that analysis. The recommendations will be delivered early in the Spring 2022 semester to the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer, in order that any appropriate action could be implemented in fiscal year 2022-23.

Of the faculty/instructor hires made to handle the enrollment bump this summer, how many were of tenure-track faculty? How many were contingent faculty (visiting assistant professors, clinical faculty, lecturers, graduate students in instructor-of-record positions)? How many hires of each category are anticipated for 2022-23?

We have been making investments in instructional capacity, student support, learnings spaces, etc. as we have grown our undergraduate enrollment. Specifically, for Fall 2022, we authorized the hiring of more than 200 graduate teaching assistants, limited-term lecturers, lecturers, advisors, and student support personnel. Of this total, 97 were graduate teaching assistants. For academic year 21-22, we authorized 38 new faculty lines (above and beyond normal hiring): 31 Tenure/Tenure-Track and 7 Clinical/Professional. For academic year 22-23, we have authorized another 84 new faculty lines (again, above and beyond normal hiring): 51 Tenure/Tenure-Track and 33 Clinical/Professional. Over the past 4 years, we have authorized a total of 151 new faculty lines to support enrollment growth.

Shared Governance Task Force

It has been brought to our attention the existence of a “task force” on the Office of the Provost website, with the stated goal to replace the Senate with a University Council. We agree for an organization of any size to function smoothly and achieve its intended goals, all of its parts need to understand how to contribute to organizational goals, especially as these goals change. Unfortunately, this “task force” is far from “representative”, nonetheless, it claims to have authority to speak directly to the Board of Trustees.

We ask for clarification;

(a) The Provost’s motivation and goals in sponsoring the “task force” website.

As explained to PNW Professor David Nalbene of the Indiana AAUP in correspondence with Provost Jay Akridge this summer:

*“Professor Deb Nichols, then Chair of the University Senate, presented the idea for a task force to explore shared governance at the April 2021 Board of Trustees meeting. The Trustees heard the concerns and ideas expressed and indicated they would be open to entertaining a proposal for a more effective structure after further study by the task force. Professor Nichols approached the Provost’s office with a request to have a presence on our website. **While it is not a Provost initiative, [Provost Akridge] concluded it was a reasonable accommodation to allow the faculty to have a central repository for their information-sharing. [Provost Akridge’s] office has no other involvement with the activities of the task force.”** (emphasis added)*

In short:

“This is an initiative started by the faculty; it was organized by past Senate leadership in response to faculty concerns about the effectiveness of the University Senate.”

(b) The level of access the “task force” has to the Board of Trustees.

There have been no presentations to the Board of Trustees on this topic since Professor Nichols’ presentation in April 2021, as noted above. As a general principle, the Board may invite official communications from faculty on its own initiative at any time (Article VI, Section 4 of the Bylaws of The Trustees of Purdue University). This would certainly apply to any Immediate Past Senate Chair working with faculty and other campus stakeholder groups on an initiative launched during her tenure as chair.

(c) The means by which the Board of Trustees can move towards dissolution of the Senate.

Consistent with the Trustee’s statutory authority, the Board has acted by resolution over the years to designate the University Senate as the legislative body of the faculty. The Board always retains the power to rescind or modify its prior resolutions, including the one adopted in 1964 that laid the foundation for the current structure.

COVID

I'm wondering about the consistency of our mask wearing policy across venues, and enforcement of those policies. Masks are required in classrooms, presumably because social distancing is difficult or impossible. Mask wearing is optional in the Rec Center, presumably because social distancing is possible.

At Mackey Arena, where social distancing is not possible, masks are supposedly required. However, looking over recent online photos of the Nov. 4th exhibition game showed less than strong compliance: in fact, a photo in one section (the Black Seats) showed over 60% were not complying (either they were wearing no masks or their masks did not cover both their mouths and noses).

We have strong rules in the classroom for noncompliance; but what can we do at indoor sports venues? This is particularly concerning given COVID projections in the coming months, and the fact that those present are shouting and expelling germs far more than occurs in most classrooms.

The issue is one with which every school in the country with an indoor athletics program is faced. The majority of attendees at the basketball games are guests, not students, faculty or staff. Since we can't eject thousands of people individually from the games, our option is to cancel the basketball season, which we would be reluctant to do.