Approved 7 February 2014

**Faculty Senate Minutes**

**9:00-11:00**

**January 17, 2014**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Members Present**  | **Members Absent**  | **Guests**  |
| Doug Shumavon | Artak Hambarian | Varduhi Petrosyan |
| Aram Hajian | Arman Zrvandyan | Don Fuller |
| Melissa Brown | Vahram Ghushchyan | Student Council representative |
| Catherine Buon | Alen Amirkhanian |  |
| Arpie Balian | Alexan Simonyan |  |
| Sargis Zeytunyan  |  |  |
| Rai Farelly |  |  |
| Tsovinar Harutyunyan |  |  |
| Gohar Stepanyan |  |  |
| Sergey Tantushyan |  |  |
| Sos Bagramyan |  |  |
| Aleksandr Grigoryan |  |  |

**FACULTY SENATE AGENDA**

Agenda for FS meeting January 17, 2014

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of Minutes from December 5, 2013 Meeting
3. Committee Reports
4. Vote on Proposal for Dean’s List/President’s Honor Roll and Graduation with Honors
5. Academic Calendar 2014-2015
6. Future Meetings

**MINUTES (January 17, 2014)**

A quorum was present at 9:06.

**1 & 2. Approval of Agenda and Draft Minutes from December meeting**

Faculty Senate agenda and minutes from December 5, 2013 meeting were approved unanimously.

**3. Committee Reports**

Executive Committee – met in December to discuss the 2014/2015 academic calendar and decided to pass it to the Faculty Senate for review and discussion.

Curriculum Committee – hasn’t met since September when probation and extension requests were discussed.

Ethics & Grievance Committee – already received 2 grievance reports, the content of which wasn’t disclosed due to confidentiality concerns. For one of the reports, committee was already formed to review the case. The second report has not been completed yet.

Committee on Extension Programs – nothing to report.

Student Learning Committee – undergraduate course evaluation form was revised, based on the suggestions made in November, when the form was discussed at the Faculty Senate. Appropriate changes will be made for Spring semester.

**4. Vote on Proposal for Dean’s List/President’s Honor Roll and Graduation with Honors**

At the FS meeting in December, the majority of senators expressed preference for setting the minimum required semester GPA for Dean’s List at 3.7. Presidential Honor Roll would be awarded each semester to all students with a 4.0 GPA. The main discussion today was around whether the new policy should be implemented retroactively, given that the undergraduate program was launched in September 2013. It was mentioned that in case if the new policy comes into effect only from Spring 2014 semester, those students who qualified for the award in the first semester but might not have a similar status in subsequent semesters, will be put at a disadvantage compared to those who make it in any of the forthcoming 7 semesters. The decision to apply Dean’s List/President’s Honor Roll awards retroactively was approved with 10 “for” votes.

Regarding proposal for establishing Graduation Honors/Graduation with Distinction, the decision was to approve the titles of the awards – *Summa Cum Laude* (with highest distinction), *Magma Cum Laude* (with high distinction), and *Cum Laude* (with distinction) – and leave the decision criteria for further discussion. It was mentioned that awarding above-mentioned honors based on the distribution of grades might cause problems since the cut-off grade for the top 3%, 5% or 7% of the graduating class will change from year to year. As a result, a student in a “below average” graduating class might qualify for the “highest distinction” with, for example, only 3.4 or 3.5 cumulative GPA. The preference was given to establishing cut-off cumulative GPA levels not percentages (for example, 3.9 for *Summa Cum Laude*, 3.8 for *Magma Cum Laude,* and 3.7 for *Cum Laude*) at some point in the future.

**5. Academic Calendar for 2014-2015**

 Four options were presented for the Senate’s discussion: 1) late start of Spring 2015 semester; 2) early start of Fall 2014 semester; 3) early start of Fall 2014 semester and late start of Spring 2015 semester. Options 2 and 3 were not favored by the senators given that the start of academic year in Armenia has always been September 1st. Option 1 was favored by the majority of FS members, but raised several questions:

* There is disproportionally high concentration of state holidays in spring (the month of May, in particular), which makes spring semester shorter. This year, for example, spring semester was extended by one week to accommodate full number of hours for a sizable number of courses.
* Keeping the start of the spring semester as it is increases maintenance (heating) costs of AUA buildings. Late start for the next academic year (Monday, January 19th) was preferred.
* Several members of the Senate questioned the necessity of keeping the Spring Break. Longer Christmas/New Year holidays would give AUA faculty & students enough time for visiting friends and family abroad, while eliminating the Spring Break would allow ending the spring semester as planned, on May 18th.

The discussion resulted in the following decision: prepare a poll asking all faculty across AUA about the desirability of keeping the spring bread. Since Option 1 was favored, the results of the poll will determine whether the spring semester next year will be extended by one more week, or kept as proposed but without the spring break (that is, January 19th – May 18th, but no spring break).

**6. Future Meetings**

FS future meetings were tentatively scheduled for February 7th, March 4th and April 18th, at 9:00am. Since April 18th was Good Friday, it was suggested to move the April meeting to some other day. The Faculty Senate chair informed everyone that the General Assembly meeting was tentatively scheduled for the second week of May (12th or 13th).

**7. Other**

There was a side discussion about the policy changes proposed by the Admissions/Registrar’s Office in December and approved by the Faculty Senate at December 5th meeting. It came as a surprise to some that changes were implemented retroactively, such that students were not allowed to get “A+” grades at the end of the semester while beginning-of-semester syllabi clearly indicated the possibility of receiving such grades, if qualified. It was pointed out that WASC standards #1.7 and #1.8 were violated as a result of some policy changesIt was also mentioned also brought to the attention of the Senate that a new grade, called “Administrative Withdrawal,” was in effect this semester, when it was not indicated anywhere in the revised Grade Policy presented to FS for discussion in December.

A proposal was made with the following approach: 1) the necessity of asking the administration from now on to indicate when the proposed policies/revisions/changes are going to be implemented, whenever they pass new documents to the Senate for review; 2) issuing a statement of regret that the policy changes were approved by the Faculty Senate without knowing that they were intended to be implemented retroactively; and 3) asking someone from the administration to attend FS meeting in February with the final version of the Policy on Grades such that the Senate can revisit it one more time.

 There was a general concern with the university’s management of administrative issues. The senators were frustrated with last minute requests for policy discussions/approvals and with the lack of information flow from the administration to the representatives of AUA faculty.

 Three senators volunteered to draft a letter expressing our concerns and inviting the representative(s) of the administration to our February meeting.

Adjourned at 11:00

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gohar Stepanyan, FS Secretary (2013-14)