Academic Support & Services Committee

Dr. William Westerman, Chair

Monthly report – March 29, 2021 (for April Senate meeting)

There are 5 issues we have concerned ourselves with this month:

1. BAAFSSO meeting follow-up. We understand the SEC is continuing to work on this issue and will be making recommendations to the Senate, and we support them.

We would add that of the identified issues in our interview with BAAFSSO was the need for greater connection between NJCU and the local community. There are multiple ways to do this, but our approach as a university has not been systematic or conducive to the kind of dialogue between the university and the community that supports and diversifies our academic mission while enhancing our position as a community resource. We ask what the Senate can do to make this university-community work more intentional and part of our culture moving forward. It would be useful to have a dedicated task force, authorized by the Senate, to look into strengthening community ties. As the current committee structure now stands, community relations do not fall under the jurisdiction of any Senate committee. The Faculty Fellows Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) initiative and collaboration with NJ Campus Compact working with the Office of Student Life on building a community center is a first step in strengthening these relationships.

As Jersey City, and our neighborhood particularly, are rapidly gentrifying, this issue is pressing. We suggest that the Senate take a more proactive role in this important aspect of university functioning and academic services. Perhaps a voluntary task force to address the issue of community-university relations and a report back to the Senate next year would be a useful first step. We offer this as an amendment to the motion SEC is putting forward at the April meeting.

2. Counseling center update: According to Jodi Bailey in Student Life, the position descriptions for full-time director of the counseling center and another full-time counselor, to replace the two people who departed, are being revised and the university will be working on hiring in the next month.

3. COVID survey update: The AS&S committee is writing questions for the COVID survey, now focusing on faculty and staff needs for a safe return in the fall.

4. Minors declaration on GothicNet.

There is currently no way for students to declare their minors through GothicNet. This makes it much more difficult for students to register for minors, or even to recognize that minors, or double majors, are an option. Obviously this is even a more acute issue when we are remote. The enrollment in some of our programs that have no option to major in them, or those departments that have very few majors or that offer unique interdisciplinary minors, would be positively affected if more students knew about available minors, knew that minors don’t increase the length of time to a degree, and knew how to find them and sign up for them. For several years, various members of the faculty have spoken informally with people in Advisement about this issue, and all are in agreement this would be a benefit to the students. There is a simple fix to this by adjusting the settings on GothicNet, and while it has had the approval of all concerned, it’s never been implemented.

Our committee offers the following motion:

*Whereas* we believe our students should have every opportunity to pursue their academic interests and to have full access to our curriculum, and

*Whereas* we want to encourage students not only to fulfill their curiosity and their potential but to broaden the range of skills and methods they can learn while at NJCU, and

*Whereas* the existence and availability of minors, and information about them, should be accessible through online channels, and

*Whereas* we recognize that our faculty colleagues in all different schools offer outstanding minor options we the faculty would like to see more students avail themselves of,

*Be it resolved* that it is the offices of Advisement and IT that should update GothicNet such that students can more easily register for minors, as well as for second majors, directly through our PeopleSoft software, and

*Be it further resolved that* in the next year, the Academic Support & Services committee work together with Advisement, the Catalog team, and the Website team to increase the awareness and knowledge of the minors our University offers to our students.

5, Cross-listing of courses. This may be an item for the committee to address next year. In the meantime, we seek clarification on the existing status of a number of issues pertaining to cross-listing courses in multiple departments and occasionally schools, in order to enhance enrollment and the diversity of course offerings.

Technically, the current Infosilem registration system can handle cross-listing, and according to the Registrar, there is no impediment to cross-listing courses by mutual acknowledgment of the relevant chairs.

There are residual questions about 1) where an accurate list exists of courses in the catalog already approved for cross-listing and what can be done to promote cross-listing, 2) how existing courses can be approved for cross-listing in other departments, and 3) how cross-listing operates in the CIM and course proposal process for new courses. In addition, this also raises the possibility of offering two sections of a cross-listed course, or alternatively two paired courses, with two faculty members each receiving 3.0 credits, with each effectively sharing the teaching responsibilities in each of two sections.