Academic Chairs Council Meeting Notes for September 17, 2014

Dr. Roy St. Laurent, Executive Director of the ACC, convened the meeting at 1:01 p.m. in the Fremont Room of the Dubois Center. There were approximately 50 members present.

Guests who joined the meeting were Dr. Dan Kain, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel; Michael Star, Director of Special Projects, Office of the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs; Dr. Laura Huenneke, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Dr. Rita Cheng, President.

1. Announcements and updates, Roy St. Laurent

Dr. St. Laurent reported on key items from the two PALC (Provost’s Academic Leadership Council) meetings (August 20 and September 17) he attended since the last ACC meeting.

Updates from the August 20 PALC meeting included:

- The University is concerned about illegal use of copyrighted images on NAU website. Everyone was reminded that the cost of purchasing the rights to use an image prior to using it is a fraction of the cost of a lawsuit.
- Units are permitted to use the new Athletics logo but must NOT alter the logo in any way. Of course, units and individuals are still prohibited from altering all NAU logos in any way.
- A recent change to the faculty search process now affords the possibility of including a search closing date. The closing date can be stipulated at the onset of the search or be added to an open search after it is underway (as long as certain legal requirements for searches are fully met.)
- At the PALC meeting, the Provost highlighted the need to treat all promotion and tenure candidates fairly and equally, as well as all applicants in a search.
- A reminder was given about the growing size of the international student contingent at NAU (1100-1150 students).
- A desktop enrollment dashboard is now available for all department chairs, Dr. St. Laurent has the information if you are interested in obtaining access to this.

Updates from the September 17 PALC meeting included:

- Diana White, the new manager of the bookstore, asked that a reminder be given that Follett offers scholarships for textbook purchases. The deadline for spring 2015 books is October 15th.
- Wendy Schwartz (Compliance and Control) offered her assistance to any chairs needing assistance with forms and procedures, or other compliance issues.
- Pauline Entin (Vice Provost, Academic Affairs) has proposed a three year cycle for program reviews. Information about this proposal will be emailed to all chairs soon.
- Cyndi Banks (University College) presented information about initiatives underway to facilitate connections between companies seeking interns and interested students. More information about this will be shared with chairs via email.
- Laura Huenneke (Provost) shared information about the three-year pilot of the exemplary performer reward program. This will be the third year of this pilot, pay increases based on exemplary determination will be awarded. Some items of concern regarding this program have been identified, including some unit-level rules and restrictions that conflict with the purpose of the program. Information about this will distributed via e-mail.
2. **Electronic Submission of Course Fee Requests, Mikhael Star**
Ms. Star spoke briefly about the project underway to upload all existing course fees to the online database system. This project, which she reported as largely completed now involves departmental staff inputting their unit’s current course fees, and has a completion target date of October 15, 2014. This work includes a review of existing language about fee purpose and other descriptors as the information is being input. While most departments have a short list of fees, there are several units that have multiple hundreds of fee entries to complete. Extended Campus course fees that were created as shadow versions of in-person courses will be disabled as a group.

All new requests for course fees to be collected in in fall 2015 will be input into the online database and approved via an online process.

Several chairs asked questions and raised concerns about the short timeline for this project. Ms. Star suggested potential strategies for making the entry work more efficient and offered direct consultation upon request.

3. **COACHE Survey results, Drs. Dan Kain & Laura Sujo-Montes**
The COACHE report containing all of the results of the survey has been released to campus. Dr. Kain reminded chairs that the COACHE Survey Advisory Board is having focused discussions of specific areas of the results and will be releasing, over time their summary of those discussions. Items of concern, once identified, are shared with administration, faculty groups, and other interest groups who may be prompted to further examine the issue and be involved in formulating university responses to these areas of concern. The ACC is one such group.

The first area to be evaluated was “Nature of Work,” with three sub-areas.

1. **Nature of Work – Research**
   While most of the results in this area were positive across all faculty classifications, several concerns were raised. These include post-award support for grants, graduate research assistant support, and availability of course release for scholarship activities.

2. **Nature of Work – Service**
   Results were, again, largely positive-- with faculty generally satisfied with both the types of committees on which they serve and with the number of student advisees they serve. Concerns identified included the number of committees on which some faculty are asked to serve, the equability of assignment to committees in some units, and lack of support for committee leadership growth/professional development.

3. **Nature of Work – Teaching**
   Faculty are generally satisfied with their ability to control course content, time teaching, and quality of students. Concerns raised included number of students in some classes and teaching/research/service balance.

Feedback will be posted on the COACHE website.

4. **Discussion with President, Dr. Rita Cheng**
At President Cheng's request, all members of the ACC present briefly introduced themselves.
President Cheng spoke briefly about her overwhelming positive experience since she arrived at NAU. While she couldn't stay as long as she would like at the Chairs Council meeting due to another engagement in Phoenix with elected officials and key donors, she is eager to learn from and engage with the department chairs – who are on the front line of many issues about which she will be addressing. She noted that NAU has garnered national attention for many of its accomplishments, and it is her firm belief that the university has a strong base on which to build. She reminded the group of her public commitment to listen and learn about issues before taking actions or launching new initiatives. ABOR has given her direction, but there is no hidden agenda coming from the Board.

Dr. Cheng then invited questions and comments from the members of the ACC. While she couldn’t promise immediate resolution to issues, she stressed that she wanted to learn about areas of concern that she might not have heard about from other groups.

Areas of concern chairs identified included:

- Funding model for the Graduate College
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) funding and resources available
- Availability of tenure-track faculty lines in areas where the number of lines have eroded, given the past president’s emphasis on investing in such lines only as it related to increasing fundable research (especially since non-tenure track faculty have little time to devote to research)
- Relationship between the Mountain Campus and Extended Campuses.
- Development, sustenance, and tracking of contacts/relationships with alumni, at the university level and at the unit level
- Coordination issues between NAU and other institutions (especially community colleges) that impede the ability of students to enroll in multiple institutions (often with financial burdens imposed)
- Questions about the ongoing role and sustainability of smaller, inter-disciplinary programs.
- A final comment was offered reminding all that, despite the many ongoing issues NAU (and all institutions) must address, NAU students report strong affection for the university and think of it as home.

5. Discussion with Provost, Dr. Laura Huenneke

Dr. Huenneke reported she communicated last week with the deans to solicit tenure-track faculty hiring requests for positions to start on campus in Fall 2016. Non tenure-track hiring requests will be solicited at a later date. While there is no funded budget for hiring these new positions at this time, she is committed to preparing to submit requests to the President as soon that is a possibility.

A question was raised about the possibility of hiring non-tenure track faculty and then converting their positions to tenure-track at a later date. Dr. Huenneke responded that while discussions are underway about this possibility there is no mechanism in place now that would allow that on a wide-spread basis. She recommended to all that they be deliberate and focused in putting forward hiring requests.

Other reminders from Dr. Huenneke included the need for departments to identify exemplary performers in advance of the call for the names of such individuals.
A question was raised about implementation of changes in the part-time faculty scale. Dr. Huenneke promised to look into this issue and communicate directly with those departments experiencing issues.

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Jennifer Saunders