Faculty Senate Meeting

October 31, 2019

Quorum called at 3:10

**Present:**

1. Fanis Varvoglis
2. Donald Fuller
3. Arto Vaun
4. Lori Fredricks
5. VaheKhachadourian
6. Nshan Matevosyan
7. Hourig Attarian
8. Louisa Harutyunyan
9. Gagik Gabrielyan
10. Norayr Benohanian
11. Agassy Manoukian
12. Khalid Aboura

**Excused**

1. David Davidian(teaching)

**Absent**

1. Vahram Ghushchian
2. Arman Asatryan
3. Harutyun Alpetyan
4. Sergey Tantushyan
5. Arshak Balayan

**Guests**

1. Suzanne Daghlian
2. Viken Berberian
3. Lucyann Kerry
4. Melissa Bilal
5. Mané Beglaryan
6. Vahram Elagöz
7. Knar Khachatryan
8. Michael Kouchakdjian
9. Raffi Meneshian

**Agenda**

* FS objectives for the coming year
* Committee participation
* Current issues to be discussed
* Discussion with President Markides
* AOB

**Notes**

* Fanis introduces the agenda.

Vahe: Suggestion to alternate between morning and afternoon meetings and to obtain feedback about possible meeting times

* Senate objectives for the coming year:

Fanis: Reminder of the purpose of the President’s visit: to express our thoughts and interests. Overview of Senate goals and current issues. Review of the White Paper feedback: Summary of complaints: processes and communication with the administration, top-down management style, insufficient feedback from the administration regarding faculty concerns, inconsistent decision-making, and insufficient professional development

Vahram expressed concerns regarding the tax issue and lack of pay stubs from HR as well as the visa issue and burden of overall expenses, suggested that the university provide a specific person to offer advice to American faculty

Agassy: Suggestion: HR can assist with tax advice in mid-April

Arto: Ongoing confusion regarding punitive aspects of faculty leave for research other professional purposes (issue regarding pay) and expenses such as visa funding and the apostille process

Hourig: The university should find a more reasonable means of dealing with the Armenian legal system in terms of documenting and penalizing faculty for leave

Michael: Communication with HR regarding these ongoing issues may be a cultural problem, the Senate should communicate these concerns with President

Gagik: Issue is related to overall quality of services for faculty, faculty concerns should be proposed to administration in a unified way, focusing on key issues that are part of a larger systemic issue

Fanis: These problems should be categorized in a systematic way via email

Suzanne: The White Paper relates to these particular issues and should be discussed in relation to these HR problems.

Raffi Meneshian: The mindset regarding HR’s lack of quality service for faculty will only be changed if pressure is applied from the administration or if employees are replaced. Faculty are assessed in a quantitative manner with evaluations and continued employment is affected. HR should be viewed with the same process.

Fanis: The Senate should provide specific proposals and request reasons and explanations when changes are not implemented.

Gagik: More dialog is needed for solutions and standards and quality of service should be clearly defined.

Fanis requested a majority vote to proceed.

Approved

Minutes of prior meeting approved

Hourig raised issue of violence with three AUA students and the President’s prompt response. Concern regarding the broader social context and the need for more serious response for this crisis situation (support mechanisms, sensitivity training, teach-ins, an ombudsperson, confidential channels for students to report concerns, etc.). Dialog is needed between faculty, students, and staff.

Arto: Authoritarian style underlies several of the concerns addressed. Several students were followed and harassed by a group that tries to obtain signatures in front of the parliament building. The dean and provost have been informed of the incident.

* Review of committee members:

Budget and Planning Committee:  Arshak, Khalid

Ethics and Grievance Committee: Siranush, Sergey, Arto, Artur, Talin, Mane, Vahram Elagoz

Extension Committee: Sergey (proposed), Luisa Harutyunyan

Faculty Affairs Committee: Irshat, Hourig, Brian, Arto

Operations and Facilities Committee: Lucy Anne

* Current (additional) issues to be discussed:

Knar: Faculty lounge should be used for social activities. Options could be yoga, dancing or watching football matches. Continued input is welcomed.

* Discussion with President Markides:

President Markides discussed our overarching goal and desire to build collective contributions. She relayed her effort to regularly meet with faculty to promote dialog and networking and to promote connections across disciplines. She further stressed the need to prepare the surrounding society for working with AUA students after their university experience. President Markides discussed integrating disciplines in different countries. The Armenian context offers advantages for the university to connect to schools and the regions. This context may also allow for innovative ways to obtain more resources.

Gagik: Research activities should be designed with local issues and industries in mind. Field research of this type should be supported by the university.

President Markides: The university and Centers of Excellence should be open and facilitate these meetings.

Vahram: AUA should prepare students thorough extension programs.

Lucyann: Programs of this type should be carefully designed and based on a local needs assessment and community ties with input from the community.

President Markides: Extension is now referred to as AUA Open Education. The Armavir Region is an ideal location to start because of the number of English speakers and the proximity to AUA.

Arto expressed appreciation for the President’s vision and relayed concerns about the functionality of AUA.

President Markides requested information about the AUA code of conduct concerning how violence has been dealt with.

Melissa expressed support for the President’s vision for AUA (emphasis on values rather than ranking) and suggested clarification is needed about whether these values are agreed upon. Encouraging international students would be challenging without being able to provide a safe learning environment.

Hourig: An open dialog between students, faculty, and staff is needed.

President Markides: Open education is connected to the need to better understand the local context and social issues.

Raffi Meneshyan: as a member of a labor union, requested the President’s opinion about working with unions.

President Markides: Unions function well in Sweden and this collaboration should be encouraged but developing relationships and trust between organizations takes time.

Nshan: Consequences for harassment must be carried out to set a precedent to prevent similar issues in the future. Two committees are working on these issues: the Ethics and Grievance Committee and Student Conduct and Ethics.

Hourig: An ad hoc committee might be needed to take practical steps to move forward with these issues.

President Markides: Internationalization and mobility could be achieved through partnerships with faculty in other institutions abroad. UCLA and San Diego are target institutions and these relationships could lead to possibilities for donations.

Don: Grants are essential as well as outside lectures to better link AUA to the broader Armenian context. Teams with solid proposals should be involved in actively procuring these funds.

President Markides: Currently, grants are being procured from Sweden and could prompt further opportunities. The EU Horizon program (Mediterranean area) has expressed interest in coordinating with AUA.

Melissa shared her involvement in an MIT collaboration and noted that there is interest in a virtual classroom with MIT. Requested feedback on how to continue to initiate contact between universities.

President Markides suggested contact with the dean and dialog with the dean about these possibilities.

Hourig reiterated her support for the President.

Meeting ended 5:15

Minutes taken by Lori Fredricks