

University Governance Notes

March 2017

The following are our perceptions and interpretations only, not those of the Senates at large or their Executive Committees. We welcome addenda and corrections, which we will include in the next edition. We also welcome suggestions for improvement of content, length, or presentation.

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Respectfully,

Joe Harrington, University Senate President

Pam Keller, Faculty Senate President

Guns 'n'Surance

Much of the University Senate's time this semester has been taken up by various measures related to campus carry. One of these is the proposed addition of a tenth Article to the USRRs that would mandate that the University offer all students, staff, and faculty long-term disability, lost-wage, and life insurance to cover losses resulting from gunshot wounds. Senators didn't know how current insurance policies would cover such mishaps, so . . . they formed a committee to study the issue. In the meantime, HR Director Ola Faucher addressed the Senate at its March 9 meeting. While her remarks were helpful, they highlighted the complexity of the issue. For instance, health insurance policies must be approved at the state level; worker's comp claims are handled on a case-by-case basis; worker's comp must be exhausted before insurance kicks in; student policies differ markedly from faculty's and staff's. And so on.

Campus Carry Notification

Another thorny question was how much moral responsibility the University bears for informing prospective students, staff, and faculty that, as of July 1, there will be firearms on campus legally. The University Senate unanimously passed a resolution on March 9 that calls upon the Administration "to link its Concealed Carry web page (<https://concealedcarry.ku.edu>) to the main KU page, the Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions pages, and the Human Resources page." Moreover, the Senate would like that link to read "Concealed Firearms." As of this writing, neither Chancellor Gray-Little nor Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs Tim Caboni have indicated that there are any plans to create the links.

Faculty Senates Have Spoken

As of February 27, the Faculty Senates at all six Regents universities have passed resolutions opposing campus carry. The KU Student and Staff Senates have also issued statements against concealed carry.

. . . and the Regents, too

Zoe Newton, Chair of the Board of Regents, spoke out against a bill (HB 2220) that would prohibit the Board of Regents or their individual universities from imposing any restrictions whatsoever on the concealed carry of firearms on their campuses. The Regents have for months been silent on the issue, and the University administration has followed their lead.

Coffeehouse as Classroom?

Another proposal sought to amend the FSRRs to allow faculty to conduct classes and office hours in spaces where guns are prohibited – i.e., off-campus. This proposal, however, did not receive sufficient support from the Faculty Senate to move forward.

. . . or a Union, Perhaps?

Finally, the coming of campus carry has precipitated a resolution that “requests that the Kansas National Education Association initiate organization activities so as to form a faculty union on all campuses of The University of Kansas with the goal of reestablishing otherwise compromised workplace safety.” This measure has not been taken up by the Faculty Senate.

Costs of Consultancy

During the spring semester of 2016, then-University Senate President Mike Williams requested a cost-benefit analysis of the work of some high-profile consultants whom the University has engaged in recent years. Current President Joe Harrington reiterated this request in the fall of 2016. The Administration has now released overall spending figures. Four of these contracts – with Academic Analytics, Shorelight Education, the Advisory Board Company, and Everspring, Inc. – amount to \$5,061,295 thus far; according to knowledgeable sources, the price tag for Huron Consulting Group, which was engaged primarily to produce cost savings and efficiencies, will quadruple that amount. Now it is up to the Planning and Resources Committee to determine what benefits the University received for those monies.

Staff Senate Roundup

Staff Senate's personnel affairs committee is working with HR on a virtual handbook to help staff navigate the Policy Library. Administration had discontinued the printed handbook after creating the Policy Library, but staff have reported problems learning about and locating relevant policies, using the current system. Staff Senate has also been working with HR on a task force to draft changes to the tuition assistance fund, which is being depleted at a faster rate than it is being replenished.

Staff Senate's professional development committee is finalizing plans for the Mini Wheat State tour, which will visit Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art on June 2nd. And Staff Senate's professional development committee recently awarded eight staff members with funds from the [Jeannette Johnson Staff Professional Development Fund](#).

KBOR Students' Advisory Committee

In February, the Kansas Board of Regents Students' Advisory Committee, a committee made up of the six regents universities and chaired by KU Student Body President Stephonn Alcorn, submitted a proposal to the Kansas Board of Regents for increased student representation on Board standing committees. After working with board staff, the student body presidents will serve as liaisons to the Boards' three standing committees, providing input on student issues and bringing information back to the committees and the student bodies at each of the universities.

Student Senate Representation Reform

Historical developments have revealed the need for amendments to the Student Senate Rules and Regulations that will have immediate, measurable outcomes to ensure that the cause of inclusion and representation are institutionalized within actual governance structure. Much of the Student Senate's business (aside from funding issues) has dealt with this task.

Based on a recommendation of the Provost's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Group, the University Senate established an ad hoc Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; the charge of this Committee is to "take special action to review: the structure of student representation in University governance to ensure equitable representation. Based on this review, the committee shall consider, draft, and/or propose amendments to the relevant governance documents." In Student Senate's case, this call for structural and institutional change has prompted a number of proposed elections reforms.

This charge also has entailed sometimes difficult negotiations between the Student Senate leadership and the Multicultural Student Government (which currently has the status of a student organization); Committee Chair Ruben Flores has worked very hard as mediator and facilitator in these discussions. While the "state of play" is in flux, hopes are high that positive reforms will result by the end of this academic year. Student representation on this committee includes Student Body President Stephonn Alcorn, Student Senate Chief of Staff Danny Summers, Multicultural Student Government Chair Trinity Carpenter and Multicultural Student Government Representative Sneha Verma.

Climate Survey Unveiling

Spring may have come early in terms of climate, but the Climate survey will have to wait until the official beginning of Spring. In December of last year, the University Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Gender Equity requested preliminary data from the Administration. Outgoing Vice Provost for Diversity and Equity Nate Thomas responded: "Prior to releasing any data the steering committee has to complete three steps during spring semester: 1) We must review the report (end of January), 2) Share the information with the Chancellor, Provost, and Executive Vice Chancellor from KUMC (end of February), 3) Share the data with the campus community through town hall meetings (end of March). Once the data is shared with the campus community [we] can address data request." Thus the Committee – and everyone else – will have to wait until the official unveiling of the Climate Survey Results at "town hall" style meetings on March 29 at 12 noon and 4:00 p.m. at the Commons.

Policy Library Bookworms

Last semester, SenEx empaneled an ad hoc committee to review the Policy Library and identify any policies that might warrant scrutiny by the Senate. They have released three reports thus far. As part of these reports, they also have identified campus-wide policies that seem beneficial or unobjectionable. The Senate has adopted two of these reports, thereby effectively approving scores of policies. However, the notations within the Library may not reflect this fact. According to Policy Office Director Jenn Anderson, “[W]hen Governance is changing the USRR or any of its other policies, you would have direct input into the content of the RACH [Review, Approval, & Change History] notation.” By implication, under Policy Office policy, the Senate’s approval of policies whose “primary policy contact” is not University Governance will not be noted in the RACH section.

Research Misconduct

The Committee on Faculty Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities has developed a completely revamped version of USRR article IX, which deals with research misconduct. Currently, if a misconduct charge is brought, the accusing party is effectively placed in the position of being “prosecutor” for that allegation. Under the new plan, two committees would evaluate the evidence and present findings to the Vice Provost for Research. Should the determination result in an administrative action against a member of faculty, staff or student, that action still could be appealed to the Faculty Rights Board or to the Judicial Board, as appropriate.

Faculty Senate Elections

Ballots will go out the week after Spring Break (last week in March). In the meantime, bio’s and photos of many of the candidates are available at the [Governance Office website](#).