# ECOS Minutes, August 9, 2018 10:00 a.m. UH 221

Members present: A. Delaney, N. Hinman, A. Johnstone (via phone), M. Pershouse, M. Semanoff

Members absent: T. Manuel, G. Quintero

## Communication

* Chair Semanoffprovided an update on the various meetings he has attended. He met with the Administration, OCHE and the UFA this morning, had a meeting with Interim Provost Kirgis and attended two UPC meetings. The administration and OCHE developed a matrix of potential actions and the various levels of review associated with those actions.  Members were sent the draft with the agenda. ECOS briefly discussed the document and levels of review. Chair Semanoff will send comments to Claudine in the Provost’s Office.
* The administration seems to be engaged in a third process in terms of the data review. The last review used the Delaware Study and internal figures from 2013 as benchmarks. The new process is intended to be more systematic and objective. First step – start at levels in accordance with five year data average, after checking with V.P. Keller. Funds will then be redistributed from areas identified as overstaffed or overinvestment. The process for reinvestment is unclear. It will likely be based on the Communities of Excellence, Research, and connection to the core. The campus needs to be reassured that the subjective decisions have justification aligned with strategic directions.
* The President has asked the shared governance leaders to participate in the State of the University Address this year. Chair Semanoff asked for members to send ideas to be included in the priorities for the Faculty Senate.

## Business items

* Camie will send a message to senators asking for volunteers to serve on the search committee for the director of summer programs.
* Camie will inform Academic Chairs that the rolling review of general education is on hold.
* Chair Semanoff will draft a response to faculty that will be sent this week (appended).

### Update to Faculty

Dear Colleagues,

As the summer comes to an end, I would like to provide a brief update of what ECOS and Faculty Senate have been working on.  ECOS has been meeting periodically over the summer, and Mark Pershouse (Chair-Elect) and I have maintained our regular meetings with President Bodnar and Paul Kirgis.  Now that our new provost has come on board, we look forward to scheduling regular meetings with Jon Harbor.  Although the UPC has not met regularly, we have been actively involved in discussions regarding the next stages of this process.  The feedback that ECOS received from the listening sessions last spring as well as the comments submitted on-line (both to Faculty Senate and the President's website) were a crucial part of the process.  A summary of the comments as well as all the comments themselves will be forthcoming.  There is tremendous support for the need to move forward, along with wide-spread support for decisions to be made strategically. The clear emphasis in these comments is on the student experience at the University of Montana.  I truly appreciate the depth of analysis in many of the individual comments, the suggestions offered, and the concern that the outcomes of these difficult decisions leave the University in a stronger position.

As recently as last Wednesday (8/8/18), the precise process of review and the timeline for decisions was still under discussion.  Representatives from Faculty Senate and the UFA met with members of the Office of the Provost and OCHE to develop a clear list of the types of actions (curricular, organizational, administrative), the levels of review that those actions require, and the deadlines necessary for these actions.  We look forward to seeing a revised list that will include the specific actions to be proposed. Many faculty have expressed concerned that achieving the necessary faculty reductions will be a major task and require significant focus. Consequently, ECOS has requested an explanation from administration about the rationale behind these realignments/reorganizations. We have requested and will insist on transparency in all proposed actions.

The process for determining strategic FTE reductions also continues to develop.  Although the process and timeline is still evolving, I feel confident that our faculty feedback has been central.  The common data concerns raised (grouping tenure/tenure track FTE and total instructional FTE, problems arising from considering a single year for instructional levels, questions regarding data running only through 2017, etc.) led to a new data set.  This data set has not been released, but I have been assured that Chairs and Deans will have the opportunity to review the new numbers to determine whether they accurately reflect a department's work.

These data, however, are only one piece of the puzzle.  Numerous questions arose in the comments regarding the strategy behind many of the recommended FTE reductions.  In response, ECOS has emphasized the importance of a clear, transparent explanation for these decisions (see attached memo).  Through my conversations with Provost Harbor, I am reassured that the next phase of recommendations will explain how the proposed FTE levels are informed not only by the demand of a program but also by the UPC's work on a refreshed mission statement and a clearer articulation of our identity (whether that be in terms of research and creative scholarship, the role within the communities of excellence, or contribution to general education, student success, or the developing UM Core, etc.).

It has been gratifying to me to witness the support of faculty working to ensure the best possible outcomes of this process.  While sometimes it may sound as if we – as individual faculty –  are advocating on behalf of our own various departments and academic niches, it is always with a shared commitment to the best interests of our students' success, and the betterment of university as a whole.  I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Matthew Semanoff
Chair, Faculty Senate