

## CLA Senate March 2020 Minutes

### 1. *Approval of Agenda*

- Approved at 2:32pm

### 2. *Approval of Minutes*

- Approved: 2.33pm

### 3. *Dean's report*

The Dean starts by briefing us on the administration's COVID-19 planning. Following up on the Provost's email, which asked faculty to plan for online teaching if school closes, he admits that there will be challenges, and there are a lot of details to work out. For example, it's unclear how certain performing arts classes can be taught online, and how to manage studio projects. However, he points out that we're unlikely to be the first institution to close (either nationally or in the area), and the administration will pay close attention to other institution's practices. He has written to all CLA chairs to see how faculty plan to handle instructional continuity.

Turning to the budget, a flat budget is proposed for next year. Once again, he expresses frustration with the effects of the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) on CLA, noting that those staffing losses should not be held over us. He plans to raise these concerns, as well as concerns about travel money, at the meeting next Wednesday. He informs us that hiring is on a different schedule, and the faculty hiring budget doesn't affect us until fiscal year 2022. That discussion hasn't started yet, but he's asked CLA chairs for their wish lists.

### *Questions*

1. With regards to COVID-19 planning, a Senator informs the Dean that students are quite concerned about the virus. She asks whether and when the administration will communicate their plans with students. The Dean responds that the administration would like faculty to communicate their teaching plans with students. Although there's no plan in place to communicate the administration's contingency plan with students, the Dean admits that that may change if student anxiety increases or if miscommunication about school closing spreads.
2. Following up on this question, another Senator asks if there's a more efficient way to reach out to students. It's hard for faculty to ensure that students have received and understood the message. In response, the Dean explains that the administration have asked faculty to be the primary communicators for two

reasons: first, there's no automated system to reach all students; second, it's important students understand the specific plan for the classes they're enrolled in. The Moderator suggests a solution: design a (Blackboard) quiz on your contingency planning to ensure that your students know how you plan to provide instructional continuity should school close.

3. A Senator in Performing Arts, currently teaching a Mellon class that meets once a week and invites musicians to perform, asks the Dean what plans/advice he has for faculty in disciplines like hers or teaching classes like hers. The Dean confesses that the administration are waiting to see what faculty come up with as they are likely best placed to devise workable solutions. He also notes that we'll likely learn from colleges at neighboring institutions.
4. Changing tack, a Senator asks whether opportunity hire funds are still available. The Dean notes that although one offer has not been made yet, that ship has likely sailed for this year. She asks the Dean whether receiving an opportunity hire might hurt a department's chances of hiring in an area of need. For example, suppose that a department needs to hire in area X, but the opportunity hire specializes in area Y, would that department have an equally good claim to receiving a line for area X if they accepted the opportunity hire? The Dean acknowledges that while it should not make a difference, it likely would in reality.
5. Back to COVID-19, another Senator points out that many academic conferences are being cancelled, but faculty may well have incurred travel and accommodation expenses. She asks whether and how we can claim these funds back. The Dean thinks that attempts to get reimbursed are reasonable, but that we should be contacting the FSU and Marlene Kim about this since many of us are currently using union travel funds.
6. Finally, a Senator follows up on last month's meeting, and asks whether they'll be money for computer replacements. The Dean says that there's no word yet, but Louise is skeptical. Another Senator points out that the university does not support MAC maintenance. The Dean suggests that faculty with MAC computers bring that issue to the union.

The Dean's report ends at 2:55pm

#### ***4. Moderator's report***

The Moderator informs us that if school closes, we'll meet via Zoom for our CLA Senate meetings. She also gives us a heads up that Senate materials for next month's meeting will be uploaded on Wednesday, April 8. The slight delay is due to her academic travel. Finally, she reminds us that last year the Registrar's Office came to talk about double

counting for major/minors. That meeting resolved with Senators asking if they could return to their departments to discuss the current policy and the proposed changes. The issue has come back around, and so we'll revisit it during our April meeting. In the meantime, the Moderator asks Senators to talk to their colleagues about how a change in policy would impact departments.

### ***5. Proposals from MHSP***

- i. History: Proposal for History MA certificate
  - The Senator from History explains that this certificate allows the department to serve student interest without requiring that they take an MA in History.
  - Unanimously approved 3:03pm
- ii. Economics: Program change to MA admissions
  - The Senator from Economics explains that the GRE has low predictive power for success. It's also biased in favor of high-income students.
  - The Moderator asks whether removing the GRE is something regulated by the university. It's not. Individual departments can decide whether to require it for their graduate programs.
  - Unanimously approved 3:04pm

### ***6. Proposals from AAC***

- New courses
  - i. AFRSTY 200: Living While Black
  - ii. ENGL 453: Writing War and Peace
  - iii. MLLC 340L: Moving Across Borders
    - A Senator points out resolvable issues with the MLLC one form.
    - Unanimously approved as a block 3:05pm

### ***7. New Business***

There are three items in new business:

#### ***1. COVID-19 concerns and planning***

The Moderator invites a conversation about COVID-19.

A Senator expresses concern about whether we should be exposing students to risk by remaining open. Harvard has cancelled meetings over 100, but we continue with large

lectures. There's also concern raised about students, staff, and faculty in high risk groups.

Following up on the conversation we had with the Dean, a Senator explains that the administration should contact the students because many seem convinced that school is closing. Also following up on the conversation with the Dean, another Senator expresses anxiety about how she is supposed to convert her performing arts class to an online class. There's little to no guidance.

Another Senator notes that moving online will not be seamless: many students do not have reliable access to WIFI off campus, many do not have laptops, many need to rely on their cell phones. Faculty ought to be accommodating. Following up on this concern about students, another Senator expresses concern about students who depend on university services, such as food banks, housing services, health services. There's also been no word about students in the dorms. Relatedly, another Senator asks about the status of international students if we move online. The Moderator reassures him that if they're enrolled in classes, their status will not be adversely impacted by school closing. Finally, in addition to concerns about students, the Senators express general concern for faculty. Many have other intersecting burdens—e.g. they'll be expected to teach at home while looking after children. All in all, the Senators agree that the administration should be required to come back to us with a clearer contingency plan.

The Moderator agrees that she'll communicate these concerns to the Dean.

## *2. Course cancellations*

A Senator had asked the Moderator to include a conversation about last minute course cancellations. However, due to the Senator's absence from this meeting, the Moderator decides to table the discussion until April's meeting, and asked Senators to talk to their departments about last minute cancellations and whether these are causing internal difficulties.

## *3. Alternative Scheduling Report*

The Moderator informs us that the purpose of this discussion is to decide what, if anything, we should do in response to the Taskforce's report. She starts by filling us in on a meeting with the Dean. He's broadly supportive of the proposal, and confirms that most Deans are, but resistance is most likely to come from CSM. He pointed out that CLA cannot adopt it unilaterally. If the faculty want it, then we could join the Faculty Council in issue a statement in support of it.

A Senator expresses concern about alternative scheduling: how do we ensure that in person meetings with students are prioritized when teaching two days a week given all of our other responsibilities? The Moderator responds by explaining the Dean's stance on this issue—an issue, incidentally, raised by the administration. The Dean pointed out that we'll all need to come in three days a week in order to complete our various jobs (teaching and service), but the alternative schedule is just about teaching being scheduled on those days. The Senator worries that that response overlook students' availability. Another Senator suggest that we prioritize office hours and student meetings on these days. Another points out that she's already flexible, and when students can't meet in person, she Skypes with them.

In response to the Moderator's original call, a Senator asks who we would be writing a letter or statement to, if we were to craft a statement of support. The Moderator envisions a general statement of support.

Another Senator raises the worry that this report will be used to achieve something the administration wants: increased class sizes. We need to make sure that this is not used as a bargaining chip in this way. One proposal is to endorse the taskforce's report on the proviso that it's not used to increase class sizes. There's some disagreement among the Senators about this proposal. In response, another Senator notes that on her understanding, moving to an alternative schedule would free up class space (thereby allowing for more sections). The Moderator points out that this aspect of the report is contested. Another Senator points out that many holidays fall on Mondays, and asks whether and how that's been taken into consideration. A Senator responds that other universities within our system deal with this by moving the canceled class to another day.

As the conversation draws to a close, a Senator makes a motion that we vote in support of the Taskforce's report. There's then some discussion about whether (i) there should be caveats attached to this motion (e.g. not a bargaining chip to increase course caps or a statement that teaching days should be used to prioritize in-person student meetings); and (ii) whether this should just be a vote in support of the report or a vote in addition to a written statement by CLA Senate. After some discussion, the Senators decide against adding caveats or writing an additional statement of support, but rather support a motion to vote in favor of the Taskforce's report. That motion passes: 15 vote in favor; 3 abstain.

#### *8. Adjourn*

Meeting ends at 3.55pm

