

## ACF Report – Faculty Senate – Nov. 21, 2024

The Advisory Council of Faculty (ACF) met in person on Friday, Nov. 8 and Saturday, Nov. 9 at Stonewall Resort. The following are important highlights from the two meetings:

**I-** On Friday, the meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. We started with an introduction of new and returning members and highlighted continuing faculty concerns, which included inadequate compensation, PEIA cost increases, faculty evaluation procedures, lack of shared governance, library services, use of generative AI, student recruitment and retention, faculty retention, tenure at CTCs, campus carry implementation, family/disability leave for faculty, faculty credentials for teaching, dual enrollment costs, course sharing costs and ownership

**II-** Matt Tuner joined our Friday meeting virtually and provided updates from the HEPC as well as the upcoming legislative session. Mr. Turner reported that Republicans will have an even larger super-majority in both the state house and senate. Leadership is yet to be determined, but many of the key committee chairs (education, finance) will likely remain the same. It is unclear what goals legislators will have for higher education, but ACF plans to reach out to legislators to provide advice and help craft bills.

**III-** We were then joined by Sean Bulger from the WVU online education program. Mr. Bulger described the impact of generative AI on issues such as privacy, security, and student cheating. He also discussed AI policies, and how faculty should adapt teaching to a world where AI usage is increasingly common. His presentation included several useful links for students and faculty.

**IV-** We started the Saturday meeting with a discussion of faculty salaries. Two ACF members are set to form a committee to gather more data and recommendations on faculty salaries. We were then joined virtually by Luke Sweat, president of the Advisory Council of Students (ACS), who spoke about the Higher Education Health and Aid Act. He wrote this and introduced it to the legislature. He's hopeful that it will pass. As he described it, the Hunger Free Campus Act failed because it was poorly worded and contained critical errors.

**V-** The ACF Chair then led a session where members looked at each other's evaluation procedures from the respective institutions and discussed similarities, strengths, weaknesses, and concerns. Several reps mentioned that their schools recently revised, are currently revising, or are looking into revising their faculty evaluation procedures.

**VI-** We were then joined in person by Dr. Corley Dennison, who provided an update on the state of HEPC and likely political issues which will move through the pipeline in 2025. Dr. Dennison reported that in the wake of the recent elections, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding what will happen in higher education. President-elect Trump has stated that he considers dismantling the department of education but has offered no explanation what this entails. Governor-elect Patrick Morrisey has stated several intentions for K-12, including expanding school choice, and the HOPE options but mentioned very little about higher education. Currently, the HEPC is not tracking any pending or anticipated bills but should have a better idea about what to expect by December or January. The state is anticipating a budget deficit, which could be as much as \$30-40 million. This could mean cuts to higher education and PEIA.

In terms of libraries, faculty have complained that certain journals are not available. Journal publishers won't let libraries come together to bargain for more journals or lower prices. To address these issues, a library consortium, West Virginia Educational Resources (WVER), has been created. WVER has managed to negotiate better pricing with EBSCO. Dr. Dennison also mentioned that we are working closely with PALCi, the Pennsylvania Library Consortium, and that if we really want to improve the situation, we should create a statewide library system, which would require an act of legislature.

Dr. Dennison also expressed concern about West Virginia's low transfer rate. Statewide, fewer than 1,000 students transferred from a 2-year college to a 4-year college. In discussion, it was mentioned that the funding formula incentivizes 2-year college to graduate students, and that students may be earning associates degrees prior to starting at 4-year colleges. There was discussion of removing barriers to transfer, including a unified curriculum, common course numbering, and a transfer plan.

Discussion then ensued regarding micro-credentials as an opportunity for higher education. For-profit corporations are creating their own educational programs for employees, which should push higher education institutions to work with industry to offer the type of workforce training these industries desire.

In terms of enrollment trends, in the early 2000s, the college going rate was around 54%, with around 12,000 high school graduates. Both are steadily declining. Currently, we're looking at a 47% college going rate and 8,000 high school graduates. Birth data shows that high school graduates will not recover to previous levels, for at least the next couple decades. In discussion, it was mentioned that some schools have had success drawing students from neighboring states, but this alone is not expected to compensate for declining West Virginia population.

In terms of three-year degrees, American Public University piloted a 90-hour bachelor's degree in cybersecurity. This was approved but has since come under HLC scrutiny. This type of accelerated degree may not be applicable to most programs and colleges because Title 4 eligibility requires 120 hours, which makes it hard for students to access financial aid.

Dr. Dennison then discussed funding formula and mentioned that the funding formula needs to be revised to reflect micro-credentials and alternative degrees. In discussion, it was mentioned that some micro-credentials are already only two classes, so it seems we should just move to a model where funding is given by credit hour. Corley said this seems possible and will be a continued conversation within the HEPC.

In terms of dual enrollment, the dual enrollment pilot program was more popular than expected. Legislature expanded funding from \$4M to \$6M. 19 institutions are currently participating. Dual credit requires that credit is granted for both high school and college. To be eligible for funding, these courses must follow a career pathway. Last year, students earned 40,000 credit hours toward college degrees.

Dr. Dennison concluded his report by discussing open educational resources. To date, adoption of OER has saved students an estimated \$7.5M, which appears to be a great investment. Another round of OER grants is anticipated. There is work on an OER sharing repository, which is also a reason for joining PALCi.

In terms of course sharing, the HEPC is running a pilot for course sharing through WVRocks. Currently, there are two course offerings through the course sharing consortium. In discussion, it was mentioned that students are currently free to take courses at other institutions, as transients, but the consortium increases awareness of these shared course offerings.

**VII-** We closed our ACF retreat with a business meeting. We approved the 2024 meeting minutes, and the Chair provided a summary of recent past, and upcoming ACF events.

We then discussed 9-month faculty leave for medical emergency. Most institutions only allow five days of absence before cutting salary or implementing disability insurance. In discussion, it was mentioned that this is rooted in state code, and that faculty cannot continue to receive salary while colleagues cover their classes. Some colleges are also including language in their faculty contracts that specifies times during which faculty must be physically present on campus. In some cases, faculty are expected to be present on days that are not considered holidays.

The dual enrollment pilot program pays \$75 per credit hour for students. At this rate, some institutions may be losing money, but for most, they are probably about even. Prior to the pilot program, many schools were charging the minimum \$25 per credit hour. At that rate, most schools would have been losing money.

Currently, only one ACF rep regularly reports to their BOG. In discussion, it was mentioned that schools should at least follow state code. It was discussed what should be done when schools do not follow code, even after they have been made aware. It was agreed that notifying the HEPC of the infractions should be the first recourse.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. Upcoming ACF meetings are January 24, February 21, and April 18.

Respectfully delivered,

*Amine Oudghiri-Otmani*

ACF Representative