Summary of the UA Faculty Senate meeting on Monday, January 25, 2016
Approved Minutes of previous meetings, plus agenda, reports from Faculty Officers, ASUA, GPSC, APAC and the Provost and President are available at: http://facultygovernance.arizona.edu

REPORT BY PROVOST COMRIE
- Paulo Goes appointed as new dean for the Eller College of Management effective March 2016
- Honors College Re-visioning task force has been launched
- Tuition discussions continue with students
- Accreditation process underway for the new Veterinary Medicine program

REPORT FROM PRESIDENT HART
- Increases to size of UA’s endowment are being planned with the UA Foundation.
- UA, along with NAU and ASU, are promoting with ABOR a partnership with the legislature to fund in-state per-student tuition costs moving over time to 50% of the cost of tuition

ACTION ITEM: Approval of a new Undergraduate syllabus policy. Approved.
http://policy.arizona.edu/faculty-affairs-and-academics/course-syllabus-policy-undergraduate-template

ACTION ITEM: Approval of a new Graduate syllabus policy. Approved as amended (to include language about DRC and other institutional resources)
http://policy.arizona.edu/faculty-affairs-and-academics/course-syllabus-policy-graduate

OPEN SESSION: Senator Witte recommends that the Vice President for Research and Discovery become an ex officio member of Senate, regularly attending Faculty Senate meetings and generating a monthly report for question and answer interactions, as do the Provost and President.

A STRUCTURED DISCUSSION AMONG SENATORS ON CAMPUS CLIMATE (continued from December meeting)

Lynn Nadel reported briefly on the listening tours conducted by faculty at the end of Fall semester. The continued discussion at this meeting focused on what faculty can do in their classrooms and departments to create inclusive learning environments. To begin, two faculty members spoke: Faculty Fellow and Director of the Graduate Center, Meg Lota Brown, reported on her strategies to prevent negative interactions from happening. Brown commits to communicate more directly on the first day of class her expectations for inclusiveness of the ethics that are foregrounded. Brown also asks students for their preferred use of pronouns relating to personal gender, and provides links to resources to support services on her syllabi. Because Brown believes that a safe zone is not necessarily a comfort zone, intellectual diversity and dissent is not shut down in the classroom.

Senator Paiewonsky (Fred Fox School of Music) reported that he makes a point of stressing the online links for resources, accommodations, and support mechanisms that are in place for students and makes sure they are in print in the syllabus. He also makes sure to talk with guest lecturers prior to their visits regarding his expectations for effective and inclusive communication with students.

After the faculty spoke, two students were invited to share their thoughts. Mary Knudson, an undergraduate student in the Anthropology Department, said that establishing expectations on the first day of class is essential. Asking students their preferred gender identity, including gender-neutral or non-binary, is also an important aspect of making students feel comfortable. Knudson suggests that professors educate themselves on different gender issues so they are more aware of what obstacles students face. Including LGBQT identified scholars in the course curriculum can also help students feel more comfortable and welcome.
Nicollette Buckle, a graduate student in Geosciences noted that the state’s retention rate is low for African-American students, with only one in four students remaining enrolled at the UA past the first year. Faculty openness and awareness of racial issues can help minority students want to stay in Arizona. She shared that her personal property had been defaced with racial slurs, and at the time, the only person she knew was her advisor. The advisor handled the issue in such a way that Buckle decided to stay at the UA.

After the speakers, faculty were asked to engage in table conversations on what faculty can do to create inclusive learning environments for students in the classroom and beyond. Ideas based on the minutes were:

Learning from each other:
- Instituting an orientation session for faculty featuring a bottom up approach and grassroots discussion with departmental staff and faculty.
- Faculty from less diverse departments can visit other classrooms known for diverse subject matter and see how different courses are taught. Everyone can do a better job of appreciating and valuing linguistic diversity--a wealth of students are multi-lingual and multi-dialectal and are often faced with statements or approaches that indicate that because of their first language being something other than English they are “non-standard.”

Institutional Resources and Institutional Culture:
- Training for faculty/teaching assistants and expanding the social contract for interactions with follow-ups on the contract during the course of the semester.
- Conversations around diversity and inclusivity should be held in departmental meetings regularly.
- Increasing the comfort level around the entire campus by embracing difference, increasing conversation, and being aware of unconscious bias.

Classroom Preparation:
- Providing prior warning that the subject matter may be sensitive when presenting videos or slideshows in class,
- In smaller classes, have students speak to one another, and shake hands with people surrounding them to personalize the experience in class. Use D2L to give students a vehicle to communicate with faculty on an ongoing basis.
- The instructor’s message on the first day of class is one of the most important determinant factors with student trust and openness.
- Smiling more, more time off the podium before class offering help, establish on the first day that everyone is co-responsible for improving the learning environment of everyone around us.

Melissa Vito (Senior Vice President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Senior Vice Provost, Academic Initiatives - Student Success), Kendal Washington-White (Assistant Vice President / Dean of Students) and Mary Beth Tucker (Assistant Vice President, Equity Compliance, OIE) were invited to attend and respond. Because of the lack of time, responses were postponed until a future meeting.