Newark Faculty Council minutes

March 20, 2023

Present: Nermin Allam, Robert Apel, Ed Bonder, Sherri-Ann Butterfield, Nany Cantor, Peter Englot, John Gunkel, Lynette Gachoki, Galathara Kahanda, Barry Komisaruk, John Kettle, Amber Randolph, Anna Rivas, Jeffrey Robinson, Pallavi Shukla, Elizabeth Surles, Erich Toncre, Tracy Tran, Miklos Vasarhelyi

* Chancellor Cantor update
  + The Rutgers-Newark Chancellor’s report for the upcoming University Senate meeting will be online for review shortly.
  + The State of New Jersey was in the process of developing its budget, with unclear prospects for increased funding for Rutgers. The governor’s proposal did not include an increase, but legislative action could come with an increase through the budget approval process.
  + RU-N was hopeful for increases in the baseline budget and for funding for two centers at Rutgers-Newark that were not included as line items in the governor’s proposed budget.
* Peter Englot (slides will be shared) reported on the Rutgers-Newark website redesign in 2022, including how it was:
  + Developed based on RU-N’s strategic plan, using web and communications metrics and input from stakeholders, through an outside firm that has worked on other Rutgers websites.
  + Designed with six primary goals:
    - Emphasize RU-N’s distinctive areas of excellence.
    - Focus on high-level information for prospective students and their parents
    - Prioritize engaging stories and visuals to grab interest of web visitors
      * NFC could be helpful as vehicle to provide input on compelling student and faculty stories to feature
    - Leverage other Rutgers and RU-N departmental/division websites to limit duplication of information.
    - Ensure that all pages on new site have an “owner” responsible for ensuring website content management and updates
    - Fix the search function.
  + Factors in building awareness about Rutgers-Newark as part of the overall communications strategy and through leveraging social media campaigns to highlight website content.

Englot also reported on the connection between the website and positive increase in communications metrics through social media campaigns, media mentions, and press release open rates through 2022.

Discussion ensued about overall higher education and Rutgers enrollment declines, ease of application to RU-N through the website and the future adoption of the common application and potentially the direct application, and how the NFC could help the communications team by providing examples and suggestions for how the new site could more easily direct potential students to application information, based on student feedback that this could be improved. NFC members were also encouraged to attend and encourage colleagues to attend Admitted Student Day on April 15th as a way to support student retention, and to join admissions at area college fairs to help increase enrollment.

* The approval of the February minutes was tabled until the April NFC meeting.
* Subcommittees
  + Budget and planning: Amber Randolph provided an update on EV charging stations. An ongoing study was being completed to plan an RFI for EV vendors to cover all Rutgers campuses, which was scheduled to be distributed in the fall. RU-N was also represented on the RU Climate Action Group, and more information about the Group’s progress would be shared at a future NFC meeting. Henry Velez chairs the Group.
  + External affairs: The NFC member page would be updated with links to each respective NFC member’s faculty page. Previously the idea was to include short bios on the NFC page, but linking instead will streamline future updates.
  + Faculty affairs: Eric Toncre would work on a small pilot to host town halls, starting with the Graduate School, to give RU-N faculty a forum in which to provide feedback. Future steps would include NFC members asking colleagues who teach for the Graduate School to confirm their interest in meeting and then, if affirmative, working with the Dean to make meeting arrangements.
  + Bylaws and Governance: Tabled until the next NFC meeting.
  + New Business:

Elizabeth Surles provided a report on the National Employee Appreciation Day luncheon at Stonesby Commons starting on March 3rd. 287 people attended, including 29 faculty members. The logistics at the event, including the raffle and giveaway items, were primarily handled by the RU-N Staff Council. Surles suggested the NFC continue to participate, as the event was a good way to show appreciation to all RU-N employees through collaboration with the RU-N Staff Council, Office of the Chancellor, and RU-N Human Resources.

NFC representatives to the University Senate needed to be elected/confirmed by April 1, including two faculty at large positions and one from RU-N institutes/centers. NFC members would vote by email on Senate representatives before the deadline.

Discussion at the end of the meeting focused on how NFC could serve as a positive change agent at RU-N in the face of dramatic shifts in higher ed., following Miklos Vasarhelyi’s presentation on current issues related to budget, resources, flexibility, relevance, instruction, curriculum, and technology.

The motion to adjourn the meeting passed (Ed Bonder moved, Elizabeth Surles seconded).

Submitted by Elizabeth Surles, NFC Secretary