

Political Science Department meeting 3/2/18: Minutes

"The good Lord willing and if the creek don't rise." Anonymous (possibly from the heart of the heartland – somewhere around Lapel, IN).

1: An offer has been made to our top choice in the Indigenous Politics faculty search. Things seem to be proceeding smoothly on that front but we cannot say anything more about that at this time.

2: Efforts are underway to create post-doctoral fellowships for scholars in the fields of Indigenous and/or Native Hawaiian politics as this is deemed a priority area in all University boilerplate – but is desperately understaffed. Our efforts in this regard may succeed. Or not.

3: The pros and cons of awarding Dissertation Completion fellowships to our graduate students who are on the brink of finishing and could really use some financial help to push them over the finish line was discussed at length. At the end of the discussions, two decisions were made:

- (a) By a 20-1 margin, it was agreed that if we have any money in the spring semester in the travel budget, we should spend it on awarding Dissertation Fellowships to deserving students.
- (b) By a 20 - 0 - 1 (abstention) margin, it was further agreed that rather than blow the pile of (possibly imaginary) discretionary funds we do have on a single Dissertation Completion fellowship, we should divide it up into smaller amounts (\$2500) and give it to a larger number of students on the brink of completing their dissertations.

4: Curriculum matters: The problem: we are offering almost enough on-line courses that an undergraduate can fulfill all requirements for a major just by doing on-line courses. That may sound okay but if a department is not officially credentialed to offer an on-line major, it cannot do so.

We need to choose between (a) scaling back our on-line course offerings to less than 50% so that undergraduates cannot sneakily graduate with a Polisci major within four years and without ever coming face-to-face with any of us, or (b) going through the paper-work and approval process so that we can officially offer either a fully on-line Polisci major option or a hybrid Polisci major option (with a demarked percentage of on-line and in-class course requirements). Opinions varied on how onerous the approval process for either the hybrid or fully on-line options would be.

Much animated discussion about on-line teaching followed. Faculty that have actually taught on-line classes spoke very positively about their experience while others expressed skepticism about the same.

While this is obviously an issue that merits further discussion, it seemed that moving towards a hybrid model (perhaps requiring that 390 and a couple of other 300-level courses be in-class while the rest can be on-line) would be a good idea.

5: The Dean has circulated a proposed workload policy. To cut a long story short, the proposed policy (a) vastly underestimates the role of faculty research in assessing workload, (b) seems designed to increase their teaching load, and (c) most importantly, greatly centralizes and concentrates the power over evaluating and possibly reassigning the workload of faculty in the hands of the Dean and at the expense of Chairpersons.

Much animated discussion followed this, but the nub was that this draft policy of the Dean is in complete violation of the Faculty Contract signed between the Union (UHPA) and the Board of Regents that is still in force and will be in force for at least another two years. It was argued that responding to this draft workload policy in terms of its details, instead of rejecting it IN TOTO as a violation of the contract, would be both unwise and politically obtuse. A terse and unequivocal rejection of the very locus standi of the document by grieving it with the Union was the recommended course of action.