Faculty Association Zoom Meeting: March 25, 2020

Rather than college representative reports given, multiple conversations were held on the following topics:

1. Some faculty are concerned about too many incoherent and inconsistency messages from various district officers posted about the college closures and the transition process from face-to-face to the online instruction. Those incoherent and inconsistent messages is causing confusion amongst faculty.

2. The Faculty Association is also concerned about some messages posted by some district and college officers with contradictory messages to the exact agreements the Association has negotiated with the District or in the process of negotiating them. Therefore, at times the Association has been forced to post additional messages clarifying its agreements with the district. The Association genuinely wishes to avoid further confusion among our colleagues and urges the District and College officials to be more mindful of the accuracy of their messages and work more closely with the Senates and the Association in posting critical information to avoid confusion and excessive messaging.

3. The Faculty Association has been bombarded by many legitimate questions and inquiries by concerned faculty members regarding a number of issues during the transition of face-to-face instruction to the online format and other issues related to the campuses closure. Some of those questions and inquiries are not working conditions issues and fall under the purview of the Academic Senates.

4. Unfortunately, some administrators, especially at RCC have used the Faculty Association as a scapegoat for their own shortcomings and lack of leadership during these most critical times in our district modern history.

5. For example, the colleges’ scientists with labs are complaining about the Labster software that it is not for teaching lab classes and would not allow the students to meet the student learning outcomes (SLOs) or be transferable. The union cannot dictate or get involved with virtual labs. Apparently, the software was chosen by the state chancellor’s office, but the faculty are welcome to come up with their own labs. The union cannot dictate what kind of a pedagogy format to teach the students. Those types of discussions have to be channeled through and by the Academic Senates and not the Faculty Association.

6. The Administration has the right of assignment. The union negotiates with administration about process and work conditions. The Association strongly recommends the faculty and disciplines work with the Academic Senates to address their concerns on curriculum and pedagogy.

7. The district might want to offer more courses in the summer to offset the loss of FTES this spring. The pedagogy for the courses is up to the senate and the discipline experts. The
state chancellor’s office approved an emergency petition to teach online this spring 2020. There is no official word that the summer courses, including labs, will be taught online.

8. Faculty are asking about holding virtual office hours. Of course, during all online instructions, the expectations is that all of our contractual office hours are to be held online.

9. On Monday, many Zoom meetings were bumped offline, but since Monday we haven’t seen an issue.

10. Faculty have inquired about being paid to help other faculty move courses online. Is there a form? We haven’t seen a form put together or a time sheet. Some forms are on the intranet, but most faculty do not have access to the intranet at home. Dariush will submit an official request to the District on behalf of the Faculty Association for the District to provide a form for reimbursement to those individuals who have assisted others in their preparations for transitioning their face to face courses to the online format.

11. Information has been sent out that students want faculty (or faculty want students) to reply to emails within minutes. While there is no standard policy on the timeline of responding to e-mails, some Association members suggested the best practice is to allow emails to be returned within a day. One of the hardships of teaching online is that communication is ongoing and happening 24/7. Faculty are encouraged to tell students their expectations regarding answering and sending emails.

12. Information came out that students can Emergency Withdraw (EW) and request a full refund due to the covid-19 virus. An EW will not affect the students’ opportunity for repeatability. We aren’t sure how long into the semester the students have to request the EW. The district will probably be coming out with more information.

13. As more and more classes are going online statewide, some districts are considering extending the limit for faculty to teach more online courses. If online instruction is done correctly, it’s as much work or more work than face-to-face courses, so extending the limit beyond .67 or 1.67 does not make sense for faculty workload issues.

14. Our signed MOU will protect the faculty for this spring semester. We know that this crisis is going to end but we don’t know when. According to all public health indicators, the coronavirus pandemic is expected to get worse during the next few weeks. Some leaders are quite skeptical that we are going to return this spring however that is hard to contemplate. We need to be prepared for longer college closures than April 30th.

15. But at the end of the day like all other districts we must adhere to the guidelines and directives issued by the Federal, State and County officials. The Faculty Association is truly impressed with the tireless efforts of our Chancellor, Dr. Isaac, and his team as well as the support and genuine concerns of our trustees for the well-being of our stakeholders and members of our community.
16. Chancellor Isaac has maintained a very open channel of communication with the representatives of all stakeholders in general and the Faculty Association in particular about every plan of action the district has devised during these challenging times. The Association could not be more pleased with the willingness of the Chancellor in working with the Faculty Association facilitating crucial supports for the faculty and making sure the emergency transition from face-to-face to online format becomes as successful as possible under the most challenging circumstances.

17. The Association also could not be prouder of our colleagues, administrators and staff members working together for the best interests of our students and navigating through these unchartered waters with great success.

18. The District has submitted an official request to the Faculty Association for an emergency calendar negotiation. The District wishes to incorporate the Spring Break into the Spring semester to make up for the week of instruction that we lost during the campus shut down. According to the Administration, by rolling the Spring Break into the Spring semester, the District will not be forced to extend the Spring semester into the summer. This way our students will be able to graduate on time without any delay.

19. We don’t know the details of the District’s proposal at this time. We must carefully study this matter and engage in negotiations with the District by carefully reviewing their rationale so a wrong precedent will not be set up.

20. Motion (Haghighat/Rhyne): To have the calendar committee contact Susan Mills to get an idea of what the district is proposing. For now, we have a missing week of instruction that we need to rectify.

21. Regarding the officer election, we will need to vote electronically this spring term. We have to get that started. There are some online election companies that could assist us. As always, we are concerned with confidentiality. Providing an accurate spreadsheet for faculty that are teaching this term will be quite the undertaking.

22. Motion (Schultz/Gutierrez): To conduct a vote electronically to vote electronically. Approved unanimously.

23. Improvement of Instruction (IOI) and hiring committees are being discussed. IOIs will be postponed unless there is a tenure review committee that has to meet. We don’t want to delay tenure for faculty.

24. The Hiring committees should proceed via Zoom meetings so there will not be any interruption in the hiring processes for next year.