Library Senate Executive Board

Meeting Minutes
2005-08-31

Present:
LSEB: Barnard, Cartwright, Christensen (chair), Flynn, Horie, Minatodani, Peacock, Sack (recorder), Schultz, and Stone

Excused:
Kwok, Rutter

Convened:
The meeting began at 10:30 am in Hamilton Library Addition, Yap Conference Room A153.

1. Special meeting with Karen Cross and Kem Lowry of the UH Program on Conflict Resolution (PCR)

After introductions, Cross explained that the goal of today's meeting is to get faculty perspective on the problems in the library that led to the vote of no confidence. In answer to a question from LSEB, Lowry explained that interventions on campus are initiated in a number of different ways. He clarified that their goal is to review library faculty's concerns and make a recommendation as to whether or not the PCR can be helpful in an informal conflict resolution process.

LSEB reviewed the history of the vote of no confidence.

PCR guests asked how widespread the dissatisfaction is within the library. LSEB members expressed the feeling that the vote result speaks for itself, emphasizing that voting was conducted in strict confidentiality with measures taken to ensure that each faculty member could cast only one ballot.

PCR guests asked how the UL responded to the statement of concerns. LSEB members said that she had combined many of the concerns into a problem of communication and management style. PCR guests asked if the UL had rejected any of the concerns or claimed that she has no power to change them. LSEB members answered that the UL had said that she inherited the library's hierarchical structure.

PCR guests asked if the concerns contained sufficient detail about the UL's management style that she could recognize and understand them. LSEB answered that when it first solicited concerns, it promised the faculty confidentiality. At the UL's request, the LSEB recently issued a second call for examples, which will be shared with her after it is compiled.

PCR guests asked, "What if the vice-chancellor requests the UL's resignation—is the problem solved? Would the rest of the administrative team go too?" LSEB members answered that they would probably stay and that some problems would continue.

LSEB members described UH librarians collectively as cautious, careful decision-makers, and emphasized that the decision to hold a vote of no confidence was made only after an enormous effort and a considerable amount of time had been invested.
LSEB members added that the resulting statement of concerns reflects much more than dissatisfaction with the UL's communication and management style.

PCR guests asked if there was any discussion of benchmarks for improving communication. LSEB members said that improving communication and management style is difficult to pin down. PCR guests asked if the UL could claim that there were no suggestions for remedial behavior on her part. LSEB members replied that over the years solutions had been suggested and the UL had acknowledged them but had not acted on them.

PCR guests asked how the UL's behavior affected support staff. LSEB members answered that like the faculty, they are affected by all administrative decisions.

LSEB members pointed out that the initial statement of concerns came with a cover letter, which PCR guests hadn't seen, inviting the UL to work with the senate to resolve problems. Since then, the LSEB and the senate have done their best to work in a spirit of cooperation. LSEB members said it is difficult to understand how someone could get such a statement of concerns and not respond, even in the absence of concrete examples.

PCR guests asked what the UL's response was to the vote of no confidence results. LSEB members answered that the UL had invited the LSEB chair to attend the administrative group's meetings. LSEB members explained that the senate had viewed that invitation as inappropriate, citing existing structures that provide sufficient channels for communication. As far as anyone knew, the UL's only acknowledgement of the vote result was made at an LDC meeting at which the UL thanked the 11 faculty members who had supported her.

PCR guests asked about the concern that the UL was unresponsive to communication from library faculty. LSEB responded that numerous memos and e-mail messages, primarily about operational issues, have gone unanswered.

PCR guests asked if there are informal expectations regarding, for example, fiscal management and transparency of administrative decision-making. LSEB members answered that as early as the UL's interview she was briefed on the history of the library—both the good and the bad. The UL seemed to listen and the faculty librarians were hopeful that, upon her appointment, the UL would follow through.

At its meeting with Vice-Chancellor Smatresk, the LSEB explained that reducing the library faculty's concerns to a communication problem was oversimplifying. There are times that it seems that the UL doesn't understand the organization, faculty status for librarians, or shared governance. The issues go to competencies as well as communication and management style.

LSEB members asked the PCR guests about the next step. PCR guests responded that they will meet with the UL on September 9 and asked if there are others with whom they should meet. LSEB members suggested the HGEA stewards as one group but said that organizational structures do not exist for other groupings within the library.

LSEB members asked if the PCR is seeking a resolution. PCR guests said that their natural tendency is to look for higher ground but they realize it's sometimes impossible. They said the senate should see their involvement as "trying to exhaust all possibilities." PCR guests requested that they be allowed to meet with the UL before the senate takes the next step. LSEB members said that the senate is awaiting a
response from the VCAA about implementing a review of deans and directors but that the senate does plan to go ahead with its own review of the UL.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10.

Submitted by Nancy Sack, Secretary