

Senate Executive Committee Meeting (3/15/2022)

Attendees: Dinesh Pinisetty (Chair), Bets McNie (Vice Chair), Matthew Fairbanks (Secretary), Christine Isakson, Leah Wyzykowski (Student Rep), Frank Yip, Keir Moorhead, Wil Tsai, and Provost Lori Schroeder.

Guest: VP of Cadet Affairs, Kathleen McMahon

- Minutes
 - *3/10 minutes approved by unanimous consent.* Isakson motioned for approval, McNie seconded.
- VP Kathleen McMahon on the Commandant's Office
 - McMahon had heard there are some concerns about the Commandant's Office, and she wanted to engage in a dialogue about what the Office is doing and what they've been trying to do. McMahon verbally presented the following information:
 - Goal: the Commandant's Office is meant to be more of a life coaching and case manager role. Supporting students, getting them help, etc.
 - McMahon mentioned that not everyone has initially been comfortable with the case manager role, but they're moving forward with that vision.
 - She described a couple distinct examples of Commandants acting as case managers for very tricky, acute issues – mental health, Title IX, etc.
 - She noted that they also were the point of contact for students with COVID, which was particularly intense in January.
 - She also acknowledges that the leadership programs and assessment have been languishing the face of all the crises that have been facing campus during COVID, etc.
 - McMahon noted that there have been some gaps in communication (particularly in reference to cruise), and Commandants are often the ones bringing attention to the fact that the information isn't making it to students.
 - The approach of Commandants is developmental and not punitive. Uniform infraction stuff is done in formation after students are notified. It is also progressive: warnings before actual demerits are assigned.
 - McMahon said that the Cadet Affairs divisions (including Commandant's Office) will also be writing self-assessments that will have information on their service to the campus, how many students met and helped, how their work has addressed important issues like DEI, etc.
 - McMahon concluded and asked if there were questions.
 - Wyzykowski: some of these issues they're dealing with require a lot of expertise, how are the Commandants trained or are they trained? McMahon noted a week-long intensive program that Commandants have participated in for their training.
 - Wyzykowski: the perception is that student mental health cases are meant to work with Commandants first, which is tense since they're also doing things like uniform infractions. McMahon noted that Commandants are often approached with these issues, but aren't meant to be the first point of contact. Students can go directly to CAPS.

- Isakson asked a related question: why are Commandants called instead of CAPS to handle these mental health cases when they're occurring? McMahon said that generally people need to be brought to CAPS, CAPS generally doesn't come to the students. It was handled by Dean of Students and staff at all her previous institutions.
- Question: What are the Commandant's responsibilities on cruise? McMahon didn't have the document in front of her, but is happy to share.
- Yip has concerns with the MPM Company in the Corps. MPM as an entity hasn't existed for some time. Students in OCN, IBL, GSMA feel 'othered' by the name since it's not descriptive of them (or anyone). He asked what Cadet Affairs' plan is to address this problem.
- McMahon said she couldn't agree more. It's been the subject of conversation in strategic planning. It's important to make the watch relevant and elevate the shoreside majors. She stated that Cadet Affairs alone doesn't have the authority to make this change, but they're looking forward to getting information from the Art&Sci consultants among others so that info can shape these decisions.
- Tsai noted that the Commandant role has changed and expanded somewhat and that they seem to be a combination of the MARAD-required structure and a role that is more related to residential life/student life. He wonders whether decoupling those roles would be helpful.
- McMahon said that there is a role for the Commandants in student life, and that there aren't staff in the purely student life roles. That would require a request for a new, separate position.
- Moorhead – along the same lines as Tsai: He noted that Commandants are a relatively new thing. It was a different position when he and Isakson were here: different title, different focus. It seems to be that we'd be better served by people in that specialty. They [the Commandants] seem to be called upon to put out a lot of fires, e.g. their directing traffic role during COVID testing. Moorhead also noted that the Commandant job candidates did not appear to have much student affairs experience.
- McMahon responded that this hiring problem (in student life) is endemic. Not a lot of people but a lot of demand in these roles. She's hearing this from other institutions as well. She did say that the company structure for case managing is actually good – by college in other places. She said that they're looking for people who perhaps have characteristics that would allow them to receive training and succeed in these roles.
- Isakson asked if the Commandant's Office was in some way subsidized (by reserve military positions or the like) and thus there was an incentive to make their role larger. She also asked about the residential life staff that we let go early in the pandemic.
- McMahon: no, they're not subsidized. She couldn't speak to the issue of staff we let go prior to her arrival, but Cadet Affairs is currently hiring reslife staff. Only one position is still open, so there's been some success there.
- Tsai: this conversation is important. It probably should happen as a campus. If you ask 10 different people across campus, you get very different answers as to what Commandants actually do.

- There was some discussion along these lines. Some of the articulated points were the need for clear role for the Commandants and that the Commandant's Office has some PR issues on campus.
 - McMahon closed by saying she looks forward to continuing the dialogue. Wishes that this communication had begun in her first year, but she's committed to continuing dialogue, communication, and consultation.
- Open Floor
 - Pinisetty: Athletics has followed up on their request for Senate meeting time, and they will present on a proposed athletics student fee.
 - Pinisetty: regarding the email about 'done deal' regarding the interim Captain position. President Cropper was not pleased to hear of it. Captain Pecota has been removed from the search process. Deans Maier and Neto will lead the search. Faculty will have representation. The position will be advertised. There will be 3 faculty representatives: Christine Isakson, Scott Green, and Steve Browne. Ship's crew will be involved too.
 - Some discussion of this: Questions on the make-up of the hiring committee. Moorhead commented that the trend seems to be to shovel things on to the Deans' plates. Cruise problems -> Deans. Captain hiring problems -> Deans. Also, the ghosts of L RPGs past understandably haunt Moorhead.
 - McNie: There's been lots of small changes over the last three weeks. The President has clearly now taken a firm position on the issue. I trust our faculty reps to do the work well, and perhaps we should view this as a success. She noted there were also concerns with Michael Martin leading the search committee, and that's changed as well.
 - Pinisetty: the message is that academics are the lead, marine programs support that, but acknowledges there is the concern of burn-out regarding the Deans.
 - Tsai: I would vouch for Lina Neto [Dean of Engineering] for leading hiring committees. Does it by the book and is very organized. The downside to this is that if the academic-led hiring process fails, marine programs can assert that academics aren't capable of handling marine program hires, etc. We want to be very careful to keep to timelines and processes so that the committees work is viewed well and is successful. We don't want the committee to be blamed for something (the short timeline) that wasn't under their control.
 - There's a Chancellor's Office (CO) team on campus regarding the IT issues and A/V issues we have. They're interviewing a bunch of people. The deputy CIO from CO interviewed Pinisetty. Pinisetty gave them a ton of information: Wi-fi issues, cruise IT problems, A/V equipment and maintenance, etc, etc. He hopes for good results after the team concludes its work.
 - Pinisetty gave some info on the laptop refresh program. There was a transition from Dell to Apple/Mac with no faculty consultation. The MacBook Airs that were supplied to faculty are already outdated and completely locked down.
 - Some discussion of Frank's draft resolution on interim hires. Tsai was acknowledged for his work in assembling the supporting documentation, in particular the policy for interim hires courtesy of Cal Poly Pomona's Academic Senate.

- Meeting Adjourned