

AUC Policy Committee Meeting

4-11-23

Notes taken by Christa Marr

Attendance:

1. Soumitra Basu
2. Robert Carr
3. Irene Martyniuk
4. Jessica Oehrlein
5. Robert Carr
6. Pamela McCafferty
7. Patricia Arend
8. Andrew Klein
9. Sherry Packard
10. Erin Rehrig
11. Karina Bautista
12. Laurie Link
13. Jiang Yu
14. Christa Marr
15. Mary Beth McKenzie
16. Nadimpalli Mahadev

Motion Approve Minutes from 3-21-23: Pam McCafferty

Second: Karina Bautista

Vote 15-0-1

Motion to untable for AUC 11

Motion: Pam McCaferty

Second: Andrew Klein

Student Affairs and AUC Policy Joint Meeting

AUC 11: *Student Leave of Absence*

Sponsor: Barbara Cormier

Currently the process forces the student to withdraw. This implies that they have to reapply when they want to reregister for courses. With this process, students will elect to take a leave of absence and will continue to be notified when it is time to register for courses.

Financial aid would be in the form workflow and the Financial aid office is federally required to reach out to the student to provide them financial advising based on the current status.

Irene: Would this have tax implications?

Karina: Are we going to be tracking which population of students will be using this option? Are we keeping records so that we can understand later? Do not want students to overuse this

Barbara: This likely does not make it easier for them to leave but, instead, easier for them to come back. Their leave of absence coding will be on their record along with their reported return date.

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Vote 16-0-0

AUC 67:

Sponsor: Rala Diakite, Laura Baker, JJ Sylvia

Rala Diakite: This proposal will provide a remote participation option for university events that celebrate student and faculty achievements, support faculty professional development, enact shared governance, and foster university-wide communication between faculty and administration.

This comes from concern about attendance at university wide meetings and governance meetings. This proposal was crafted with these things in mind. The technological advances that we have developed have brought us many benefits in the ways we communicate and it is up to us to retain those benefits. This proposal brings this to a public space to express that to management.

Notes

1. Matter of morale: There is a moral issue on our campus where faculty feel exhausted, demoralized and deal with different struggles. This proposal creates a way for us to care for one another and consider those who are more vulnerable, caregivers, etc.
2. Efficiency: We are all overloaded. Does it make sense for a faculty member to travel to attend a meeting on a non-teaching day?
3. This modality is the type of environment that our students will encounter in the workplace

Laura Baker: Meetings of any size in any spaces on campus are inaccessible due to hearing impairment. The disabled community has longtime been asking for these types of technologies to achieve similar accessibility to those who do not. Consistent with principles of universal design. Creates access to a wide range of students need, including but not limited to those under the Disabilities Act. Helps to bring classroom community and take the burden off of the student to ask for special accommodation. This proposal models for our students what we want for our university.

JJ Sylvia: "Today, I come before you to advocate for a policy proposal that promotes two essential values that we, as an academic community, hold dear: accessibility and inclusivity. As members of this university, we are committed to upholding these values, ensuring that our faculty and staff have equal opportunities to participate in university events and governance meetings. This Resolution aims to achieve this by providing remote options for university events.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light significant disparities in accessibility, particularly for our faculty members with disabilities and medical vulnerabilities. The sudden shift to remote meetings during this crisis has demonstrated the feasibility and advantages of providing greater access to our colleagues who may be unable to attend events in person for a variety of reasons. Video meeting software, chat, and live transcription options have offered increased accessibility, enabling a more inclusive environment.

We must build upon this foundation and ensure that the rights of all faculty members are protected and that they have equal opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes of our university. Although the current status quo allows each committee to make decisions about their modality, this puts the burden on the most marginalized community members to have to continually and repeatedly argue for options that are safe or accessible for them. No faculty member should have to argue for their safety

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and accessibility at university gatherings or committees, as it places an undue burden on them and reinforces systemic barriers to participation.

To address these concerns, we propose the implementation of hybrid meetings, which offer both in-person and virtual attendance options. The goal of offering remote options is not to discourage in-person attendance but to provide flexibility and accommodate the needs of those who may be unable to attend events in person. Faculty members who can and prefer to attend in person will continue to do so, allowing for the continuation of face-to-face interactions. Hybrid meetings can maximize accessibility, inclusivity, and safety for all faculty members, regardless of their individual circumstances. This proposal requests that the university provide streaming remote access for significant university events, including graduation and convocation, as well as interactive remote access for development days, open forums, and other deliberative assemblies involving faculty and administration.

I know that technology has sometimes presented a frustrating challenge in implementing these options in many committees on campus. For this reason, we request that several rooms on campus be updated with appropriate technology, including audiovisual equipment and software. Prioritizing these upgrades to only a few rooms will require an overall small financial commitment and will ensure a seamless transition to a more inclusive meeting environment. Additionally, we call upon the university administration to collaborate with the faculty union to identify suitable rooms for these upgrades and to provide training and support for faculty members to effectively participate in hybrid meetings.

While some of you may already know this, my immediate family has been personally impacted by long-term illness related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the emergency status of this pandemic is winding down, the risk for vulnerable community members like those in my family remains. If we maintain the status quo, which allows individual committees to make their own differing modality decisions, I'm all but forced to repeatedly share my personal concerns and risks with every committee on which I serve in order to advocate for a safe and inclusive meeting environment. But I ask you today to also consider how many faculty members may not speak up for a variety of personal and professional reasons, and who either do their best to persist in a tough situation or have their voices go unheard because they opt out of important committee work.

If these sorts of risks and tradeoffs are not something you have to consider on a daily basis, I hope you are able to acknowledge the privilege you have in that position. Approving this proposal would go a very long way toward significantly improving the lives of many of your colleagues on this campus.

Implementing this policy will not only enhance accessibility and inclusivity but also contribute to a more vibrant, collaborative, and innovative academic environment. By ensuring that all voices are heard and

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valued, we foster a culture of respect and understanding that strengthens our university community. This resolution is a crucial step toward realizing this vision.

In conclusion, I urge you to support this policy proposal and join us in our commitment to upholding the values of accessibility and inclusivity at our university. By embracing the remote option for university events and governance meetings, we empower all faculty members to participate actively in the life of our academic community and contribute to its continued success. Let us stand united in our pursuit of a more accessible and inclusive environment for everyone, ensuring that no one is left behind.”

Irene: Are we stepping back when other people are stepping forward including those in corporate America? There can be inefficiencies in technology and the meetings tend not to be as productive in the hybrid fashion. Let's just make sure we are looking through all of the nuances.

Laura: Hybrid is the new direction for worker productivity. This is a way forward that has common ground between the two different ways for coming together to work and learn.

JJ: I have been on departmental committees that use software/hardware that have been effective. We have an impetus to be leaders in this area of accessibility and inclusivity. We do not necessarily have to follow workplace culture.

Rala: We have never had such attendance at the MSCA meetings. I see an immediate benefit.

Pam: I have my pragmatic hat on and, very practically, I think this is a bargaining issue. We had an agreement during COVID and we may be treading into water that are not the purview of AUC Policies. I do not intend to diminish the intent in what you are trying to accomplish. This may reside more with collective bargaining and not with AUC.

Rala: Our current policies on campus are not related to the contract. It is possible that certain elements of online accessibility may overlap with pieces of the contract. Hard to understand that providing more spaces with remote access is a violation of the contract. Have ability for governance committees to determine their own modalities. This should not stop us from making a request.

Robert: Communication practices and technology are changing. Easy to see in model of gains and losses. Could we model this gain of strengthening connection in new ways? Thinking of our campus community in new ways? Technologies are going to get better. Can be a progressive model and think of it as a dynamic model. Leap of faith into the evolution of technology. There is a connection right now that did not exist two years ago.

Erin: I wholeheartedly support the existence of online meetings. University events prioritizing graduation and convocation. I understand faculty morale is down and I understand that we could institute this policy and no one would take advantage of it. I do question what would happen to our student morale if our attendance is remote. This is a wonderful idea for meetings but might not be the fit for large gatherings.

Mahadev: This works for meetings, but I do see that there are situations where remote works and where it does not. I do see a difference when I have returned to face to face teaching. It is better. It does not work for large gatherings such as faculty development and commencement.

Laura: If there is already a policy in place. Graduation is a good example. Not all of our students cross the stage. Some students choose not to participate in graduation but others never cross the stage or get their

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degree because there have been some barriers along the way. If we convene as a community and do not explore who is not there and why then it is to the detriment of our community.

JJ: We have spent 1-2 years advocating for other safe ways to set up large events. There has been no other movement on any kinds of accommodations. This was not our first choice for making events safe. We have received no to all of types of asks.

Rala: We are emphasizing the hybrid feature. I agree that a community has compassion. However, people are currently being excluded from these major events if something comes up such as illness, childcare complications, etc.

Jacalyn: My first reaction to this proposal was surprise that this goes through AUC and not a campus conversation among faculty, staff, students. I wonder what our students would think that the faculty would have access to graduation in a remote setting.

Irene (via chat): I very much understand the emotions and logic behind the proposal, but Erin is making a terrific point about commencement. It would look sad to our students if most of their professors and instructors were not there in person. It is not for us, as Erin rightly noted.

Robert (via chat): I suspect there is an underlying concern about our becoming a remote university, and that this is a close sibling to being a commuter school. I'm not so sure that the broader discussion on campus has been as rich and nuanced as our conversation today.

Drew: Agree with what Pam said. Is this going to unintentional create an undo burden? There are no provisions for the time it takes to retrofit all of the room. What happens if a room is not available for a meeting? We do not know what the cost will be and what sacrifices would have to be made elsewhere. There are a lot of details that could have some pretty big stumbling blocks for us. Hope there is a lot more discussion on this.

Robert (via chat): It's paradoxical that the fear is about separation and loss of connection, while the embrace is about inclusion and enhanced human connection...

Irene Martyniuk (via chat): I'm heading in May to my nephew's graduation--I'm flying and driving to Dayton. I would be pretty disappointed if there were a significant number of his instructors were not present. Of course, there are legitimate reasons for some people to not be present. But sadly, a Saturday in May with good weather might be a tempting remote option. But as a student or a parent, I would be sad and perhaps even angry.

Erin Rehrig (via chat): it sounds like one of the major flawed policies is within HR. Why is this so difficult? (Referring to why getting an accommodation through HR is difficult).

Pat: Does this just need to be done because people need access to these meetings, events, etc? Is this an ADA issue?

Laura: The ADA puts the burden on the person to seek accommodations. Are goal here is community building. We are all hungry for authentic community so I am struck by the focus on "what if people don't come?" I had a student who was a commuter who came to campus and left immediately because there

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was not a bathroom to use because all bathrooms are gender-specific. It was not a solution that bathrooms could not be identified by gender but there are options that there were not gender-specific.

Rala: Every year we are updating our podium, classroom technology. I would think we would want to update this as well. There is a blatant demand even when considering the Presidential Address and the technology necessitated for that type of presentation. We are proposing what we think would be advantageous to the university.

Irene: The ADA was meant to be a conversation between employer and employee and the Supreme Court has made it challenging. I asked HR for an accommodation for a chair at graduation. Was not an option but Jessica did a lot of work to try to find accommodations. I would support the notion that some of these major student events are not hybrid.

Robert (via chat): What is the best way to inspire a positive and productive cultural shift in this matter?

Pat: I was just wondering why we are having a conversation about whether people should get access? When I have asked for anything from the university that would be meant to make me a better employee, I am always confronted with ideas that I am not doing my job or trying to get out of doing my job. We do not always need a stick. We are going to do our jobs and don't need a stick or a carrot.

Robert: This conversation has grown my support for this proposal. We should think through this with great care together. Fascinated by the power of what we are talking about and we need to work it out. I support this proposal but I am also concerned about what would happen that we have not thought through.

Rala: To get people to campus, make campus inviting. What is the campus offering to faculty? I had asked for three dining hall meals per semester? The university offered us a discount on meals at the dining hall.

Irene (via chat): So is the issue about inclusivity along with not liking being on campus?

Laura: I am hearing the concerns of this proposal as

1. Is governance the right place for this issue?
2. Including events that are ceremonial in nature with students

I am hearing that the committees decide to table this. This means you would go back to departments and offices and go further with this discussion and then we could consider the proposal at a subsequent meeting of AUC Policies and AUC Student Affairs.

Erin: Possibly or we could make an amendment about graduation and convocation. There are still other voices that need to be heard. I raised a concern but I am not ready to make a friendly amendment.

Soumi (via chat): Table please..need more discussion on a broader forum if possible. Maybe do a survey?

Irene: My friendly amendment would be to be without any large student events. We need more conversation.

Rala: Would like to try to make through AUC Policies which gives us time to get to AUC

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Hank: This is faculty driven and for the faculty. I do not see myself in this proposal. I work with students everyday. They know when we are there and they appreciate when we are here. It means the world to them when we are there.

Robert: I am in advocacy mode to support this proposal. I want to feel responsive to faculty and the study body. We are here representing broader opinions and thoughts. We have to resolve this yet you have tapped into a massive issue that we have to work out.

Vote 10-4- Passed AUC 67 with friendly amendment to eliminate language regarding graduation and convocation from the proposal. While the Undergraduate conference is not mentioned in the proposal *per se*, Laura Baker noted that the friendly amendment will include language to also exclude this student-centered event (which is listed under university events on page 3 of the faculty handbook).

JJ: If we bring this back this semester then I would like people to think through the different aspects of this proposal.

Laura (via chat): More generally, foster an institutional culture that encourages the adoption of remote participation options for meetings and other events.

Karin Bautista motion to vote with a friendly amendment of removing the component of the proposal that impacts students such as graduation and convocation

Jiang Yu seconds motion to vote

Rala asks whether the friendly amendment means to slash graduation and convocation from the proposal stating "1) Provide a streaming remote access option for university events identified in the faculty handbook (p. 3), prioritizing graduation and convocation"

Laura confirmed this is the section and reads the verbiage from the faculty handbook to specifically cite the elimination of graduation, convocation, and the Undergraduate Research Conference from the proposal while keeping the other university events.

Motion to adjourn Pam McCafferty

Second Robert Carr