

## Academic Freedom Committee of the BMCC Academic Senate 2018/2019 Report

### September 2018

The Committee unanimously agreed on the following resolution.

**Whereas** the central document on shared governance of the AAUP states that “The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty.”

**Whereas** the CUNY by-laws state “Each college shall have a faculty or academic council, which shall be the primary body responsible for formulating policy on academic matters”;

**Whereas** the BMCC Governance Plan states “The major duties of the faculty are to assume responsibility, subject to the by-laws of the Board of Trustees, for the formulation of policy relating to the curriculum, the granting of degrees, student affairs, student discipline and student admission”;

**Whereas** the AAUP has stated that best practices for shared governance include the Academic Senate vote on who shall represent the faculty on committees which address one of the primary responsibilities of the faculty;

**Whereas** the BMCC Design Team of the Guided Pathways initiative addresses curricula and academic progress of the students;

**Whereas** the BMCC Design Team was formed without consultation with the Academic Senate and consists of seven faculty and 16 administrators;

**Therefore**, the Academic Freedom Committee recommends that all actions of the BMCC Design Team be brought to the Curriculum Committee for final approval.

### October 2019

Attending: Hollis Glaser, Monica Faust, Rebecca Smart, Melissa Butler-Haughton, Peter Bratis

The meeting commenced at 2:10

- I. The committee called to order
- II. President Search Committee
- III. Populated Committees for the Pathways
- IV. New topics

#### **President Search Committee**

The Committee decided that the President’s search team should be open to all Faculty. The decision was made that all faculty who wanted to participate should write at least a one paragraph bio about themselves. An email was sent during meeting to the President of senate for her approval and also that the email of faculty participation could be disseminated to all Faculty in a timely manner for the next senate meeting.

### **Populated Committees for the Pathways**

Participants in the Pathway committee were identified. It was noted that few teaching faculty were present on the some of the committees. The committee will address these findings at next senate meeting and query the initial population of the committees.

#### New Topics

Research information relative to pathways and its effects on pedagogy.

#### November 2018

Attending: Hollis Glaser, Monica Faust, Rebecca Smart, Melissa Butler-Haughton,  
Peter Bratsis

The meeting commenced at 2:10

- I. The committee called to order
- II. Review the article Digital, Redlining , Access, Privacy
- III. Discuss the effect of the Designing Pathways on Pedagogy
- IV. New topics

#### **Digital, Redlining, Access, Privacy**

The Committee discussed the article and queried the implications or if this was a prominent issue on the BMCC campus.

Questions to be asked: What is the acceptable use policy? Who has the power to block sites? Is there a difference between searches? Is there a difference between colleges?

The committee decided to share the article with the Liberian and Joe Spiderman of IT and also invite one them to one of our meeting to inform us of the policies.

#### **Designing Pathways on Pedagogy**

The committee queried the transparency of the Guided Pathways design, the online documents are not radially available.

Also queried, what are the communities, how will they limit our students. Is the college a place of higher learning or job training?

The committee wanted to see the original grant proposal and to query how the money is being spent.

The committee requested a copy of the grant. Acting present Wilks responded and sent the copy of the grant.

Committee will further discuss at next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 3:15pm

#### December 2018

Meeting commenced at 2:05

Attending: Peter Bratsis, Monica Foust, Hollis Glaser (chair), Rebecca Smart. Melissa Butler was excused.

The committee looked at the proposal the administration submitted to the American Association of Community Colleges for the Designing for Success program which is called the Pathways Project in the proposal. We constructed a number of questions for the administration based on the application. We will submit the questions to the administration after we have adequately talked to Academic Senate members about question #5. We also think question #2 may not be necessary.

The Academic Freedom committee is concerned about the Pathways Project because it has curricular implications. Not only might what is taught and how it is taught be affected by the implementation of the program, but it potentially reduces the mission of the college to vocational training and diminishes its role as an institution of higher learning.

#### Questions

1. When was this application submitted?
2. How did the Executive Committee endorse this on May 17, 2017 (as indicated in the application)?
3. What is the advantage of being part of the Pathways Project? What do we gain? (Is there money associated with this?)
4. Why was the union not consulted for the application?
  - a. Who was consulted?. The application indicates that union members were on the leadership team but what members were represented? Why was there not an effort to have a clear point person from the union?
5. How and when did the Academic Senate commit to this program?
6. What kind of resources might be reallocated at a substantial scale (as indicated in the application)?
7. What kind of initiatives and programs might be shut down (as intimated in the application)?
8. Who created the eight career communities, and when?

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55.

#### February 2019.

Meeting commenced at 2:05

Attending: Hollis Glaser (chair), Monica Foust, Rebecca Smart, Melissa Butler-Haughton

The committee reviewed the Academic Senate minutes to decipher exactly when the Designing for Success (DFS) initiative started.

## **Review of the TimeLine**

Mentioned in October 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Chairs report action V11

May 2017 Application for the program

May 2017 Executive Committee Chairs endorse Guided Pathways with Faculty participation

September 2017 New Business under Chairs report Guided Pathways Maps to Success

February 2018 Acting President Karrin Wilks who was Provost at the time discussed Guided Pathways at Senate.

March 2018 Meeting with Coach Gretchen Schmidt Q&A session

March 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 Additional Q&A Session

October 2018 Topic revisited in the Chairs report.

Based on the review it is difficult to decipher when DFS began or if DFS and Guided Pathways are the same initiative. Main concern is the program was up and running with minimum faculty participation. As stated, before the Academic Freedom committee is concerned about DFS because it has possible pedagogical implications.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00

### March 2019

Meeting commenced at 2:05

Attending: Hollis Glaser (chair), Monica Foust, Rebecca Smart, Melissa Butler-Haughton

The committee reviewed and finalized the report the will be presented to Academic Senate at next meeting

### Academic Freedom Committee Report on Designing for Success Initiative

- I. In the fall of 2018 the Academic Freedom Committee decided to look into the process of the development and implementation of Designing for Success (DfS). The Academic Freedom Committee decided to look into the DfS initiative when it became clear in the October Academic Senate (AS) meeting that the initiative was well under way, with five large committees being populated, including several whose work impact pedagogy and learning. It is our charge to ensure that there is shared governance and that faculty are the primary decision-makers regarding curriculum and teaching. This investigation is not looking at the content of the DfS initiative directly and we recognize that many people are working hard and coming up with good ideas.
- II. Findings:
  1. The minutes from the Executive Committee (EC) and the AS indicate that Interim President Wilks talked to those bodies about Guided Pathways. The Interim President has hosted two forums on DfS and is visiting departments to speak about the initiative. There was a brief report from the AS chair in the October 2018 meeting, but there is no record of what was communicated specifically about the initiative, and there remains confusion

regarding the relationship between DfS and Guided Pathways. According to the BMCC Website, Guided Pathways was Phase I of DfS.

2. Faculty not directly involved with DfS in its early stages did not recognize the magnitude of the initiative and did not follow through with queries.
3. Conceptualization of DfS involved a relatively small number of the faculty, mostly department chairs.
4. There are still many faculty members who are completely unaware of DfS. In addition to this confusion, there are some strong critiques of DfS, partially based on lack of information, but also based on a larger critique of the spread of Neo-liberalism into higher education, of which DfS is perceived to be a part.

III. In the spirit of preserving shared governance and creating better collaboration among faculty and administration, the AF Committee respectfully offers the following recommendations.

1. The chairs committee should elect a chair of the committee who sits on AS EC and reports about committee activity that month. We can vote to do this immediately and instantiate the practice when we re-write the governance plan.

*Rationale:* Much of the conceptual and early administrative work of DfS was done with the department chairs and not more widely shared. Faculty need to know what the chairs are discussing as it is almost always about pedagogy and curriculum.

2. The faculty chair of the DfS committees related to pedagogy should directly report to the AS.

*Rationale:* Faculty should hear from faculty about pedagogical and curricular issues, not just from the administration. Those closest to the decisions and deliberations (in other words, those sitting on the committees) should be speaking directly to the Academic Senate.

3. The position of AS chair should be the primary service obligation of the individual who serves in that position.

*Rationale:* a. The office of the chair of Academic Senate is an important one and requires significant attention from the individual who holds the position. The position should not be diluted by other significant service work. The AS is best served and is strongest when there is one person as chair whose only responsibility is to manage the governance body.

b. BMCC has a long tradition of having department chairs serve as the AS chair. However, the role of department chair is distinct from the role of AS chair; when the same person serves in both positions, there is the potential for role conflict.

4. The AS should decide and vote on what external committees the AS chair serves on.

*Rationale:* As above, the AS chair should only serve as the AS chair and not serve on any other committee unless the AS body believes governance would be stronger to have the AS chair on a particular committee. BMCC administration has a history of asking the AS chair to serve on various committees, thereby believing the faculty is represented on that committee. However, faculty representation occurs when the AS body votes on how to populate a committee, not simply by having the AS chair serve on a committee at the administration's request. Again, there is too much opportunity for role conflict when this happens and not enough oversight of governance issues.

5. The college needs to engage in a discussion that questions the fundamental assumptions of DfS.

*Rationale:* There is a robust critique of the Designing for Success movement as well as other pedagogical and economic practices within higher education. It does not appear that the administration is aware of these critiques. If the conceptualization of DfS had included those perspectives, we would have seen a number of benefits. First, more people would have known about it. Second, there would have been a richer discussion and opportunities for questions and alternative proposals that may have strengthened or broadened the initiative. Third, there would have been less suspicion about the initiative. As is, the suspicion and critiques of DfS are relegated to the sidelines, when many of the assumptions and structures of the initiative are already in place. We hope that this discussion will take place so that the DfS initiative may still benefit from alternative perspectives and a more holistic approach.

6. Faculty in departments directly affected by pedagogical changes because of DfS should be actively discussing and deciding on how to teach their effected courses.

- A. Faculty on the DfS Committees should be reporting back to their departments regarding the initiative and anything that might affect the departments. Those same faculty should also relate their departments' concerns back to the DfS committees.

*Rationale:* This will help ensure full communication with the faculty. Furthermore, the DfS committees are very large and necessarily hold meetings that not all of its members can get to. Having another communication process in place will increase the chances that diverse voices are heard.

- B. Faculty in departments where there is significant differences in opinion regarding the implications of DfS, specifically as it influences the developmental skills courses and co-curricular courses, should be having rigorous discussions with the intention of coming to consensus.

*Rationale:* The Interim President says she is committed to making sure the faculty control the courses and pedagogy of this college. The faculty and chairs of those affected departments should ensure that they are exercising their responsibility to control how they teach our students. The co-curricular courses are central to the DfS initiative. It is optimal that the faculty come to agreement about how to best serve our students in the developmental courses.

These recommendations are offered for consideration and discussion by the full Academic Senate.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50

#### April 2019

(Melissa Butler was absent.) The Committee unanimously approved the following resolution.

**Whereas** the administration is committed to informing as many faculty as possible about Designing for Success;

**Whereas** there is a digital place on the BMCC website for the five committees of DfS to post documents related to their work;

**Whereas** it appears that there are currently no documents posted within the committees' online space;

**Therefore**, be it resolved that each of the DfS five committees immediately post any documents they are working on, including but not limited to their agendas and minutes.

Be it further resolved that each committee post their agenda and minutes every time they meet in order to fully inform the wider BMCC community about their decisions and activities.

Be it further resolved that the BMCC administration ensure that these documents are immediately accessible through the BMCC website.

#### May 2019

Participants: everyone except Peter Bratsis (who is a voluntary member).

As the Academic Freedom Committee has been getting some queries, we are clarifying what Academic Freedom does NOT include. So this is a note of clarification:

Department procedures or rules decided upon by the faculty do not constitute academic freedom violations. For example, department faculty may vote to have a textbook committee decide on

acceptable textbooks, or the department faculty may decide on who will evaluate programs or other faculty. These do not constitute violations of academic freedom; these are examples of the faculty properly exercising their responsibilities. Rather, Academic Freedom violations are more typically about administrative and/or governmental over-reach, not disagreements among faculty.