

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
2030 Think Tank
Meeting Minutes

March 24, 2020, 3:30-5 p.m.

Teams Meeting:

Present: Jennifer Doering, Kathy Dolan, Jackie Fredrick, Scott Gronert, Alejandra Lopez, Margaret Noodin, Kris O'Connor, Wilkistar Otieno, Paul Roebber, Chia Vang, Leigh Wallace

Absent: Laretta Henderson, Connor Mathias, James Peoples, Stan Yasaitis

Guest: Mark Harris

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m.

1. Approval of the agenda
The agenda was approved.
2. Approval of 3-17-20 minutes
The minutes were approved.
3. Announcements
The co-chairs will meet with Chancellor Mone on Monday, March 30 and will address the committee's proposal to present a streamlined report in April and a more detailed report in fall.
4. Old Business – None
5. New Business – None
6. Research Discussion with Mark Harris (Vice Provost for Research)
Harris' introductory comments: Achieving R-1 status was a well-deserved surprise. However, at that time, the university had 875 faculty. Currently, there are now approximately 650. Does the Office of Research need to reevaluate what they're doing given the changes the university has experienced? They made progress with the 2017 plan, but the question is whether that's sufficient to sustain the high level of research that's been developed over the years. Issues the Office of Research has started to explore in more depth include evolving workforce, evolving modes of research, making choices with 25% fewer faculty, and shifting research to be less bound by traditional disciplines.

Committee discussion began with a focus on roles of faculty and academic staff. Committee members discussed culture at UWM and how the treatment of academic staff differs from unit to unit. It was noted that some departments are very collegial and academic staff are treated equally and respectfully. It was suggested that the university could benefit from a culture shift. We need to have a multi-faceted way to look at how faculty and staff are serving the students and the academic community, and meeting the university's research mission.

The university requires three factors when considering promotion and tenure – teaching, research, and service. We've always operated this way. There was discussion of the potential for differentiated tenure & promotion criteria. There was general consensus that faculty are reluctant to engage in this discussion. There is a risk of having a "second tier" of faculty. There was agreement that we need to value all contributions because they're all essential for the university to succeed. We need to think about what we ask people to do. How can we best utilize people's time to balance out all the factors?

Not all departments have the ability to implement sweeping culture change. This would have to be a collective effort that will require buy-in across campus. One way to change culture is to change the reward system. A non-monetary reward would be changes to tenure/promotion to allow more emphasis on teaching and service, acknowledging that the tenure/promotion process doesn't recognize the different priorities in various fields.

One committee member asked, "How do we squeeze water out of a rock?" Workload, tenure/promotion – we need to change the culture. Another noted that it seems that lack of collaborative culture is our biggest problem. How can this group facilitate the change? How can we change the culture? Hiring is a good way to do that, but we do not have the time to wait for that.

The conversation shifted to discussion of UWM's R-1 Status and how research expenditure data are determined. Mark Harris noted that everyone gets their expenditure data from NSF. Research expenditure is divided into different categories based on fields of study. There are pools of money in different disciplines that are added together, so we end up with a couple of composite numbers. The STEM field is much larger than others. A committee member asked if we have enough faculty time to hit the R-1 benchmarks. Harris noted that the way we are currently set up, probably not. Private schools don't have the same obligations that we have. We have a different mission than many other R-1 institutions.

He also noted that it is also a matter of resources. We need to both prioritize our limited resources and find ways to maximize impact through collaborations. If we look at the last couple years, we see successful collaboration with community partners. We may be able to do this with our health partners. Can we organize ourselves differently to find focal points for collaboration? In terms of funded research, it's just a handful of individuals who are floating the whole boat (Astrophysics, biomed, etc). With one departure, we could lose a lot of external funding. Collaborative work is how we succeed.

The committee questioned whether additional funding might be a way to grow collaboration within UWM. Mark Harris described the current UWM program that encourages collaborative work. Over the next few years, if leadership sees collaborations develop, they may put more money into that fund. About 25-30% of faculty have engaged in collaborative workshops. It has taken some time to develop, but we've been moving into it for the past three years.

The committee agreed to include preliminary language regarding a reexamination of workforce deployment, more flexible tenure/promotion, and optimizing collaboration. The committee is not ready to make concrete recommendations on workforce and T&P issues. There was

discussion of the differentiation between faculty and academic staff, especially in light of a potentially more flexible faculty T&P criteria. There could be equity issues to have faculty and academic staff with the similar workloads but different titles.

The committee discussed how hiring could lead to more collaboration, but hiring is done almost completely in our silos. There needs to be greater coordination.

One overall conclusion from the discussion was that a lot of the issues regarding implementation of any suggested changes come down to EC culture.

One more radical idea at the end of the meeting was to rethink our governance structure. For example, perhaps there could be one senate (faculty, academic staff, university staff)? May be discussed at a future meeting.

7. Future Scheduling

The committee's next scheduled meeting is April 14, when the report was supposed to be finalized. In the interim, the co-chairs will work on the draft and will insert language about workload, culture, and governance.

Does the committee need another meeting? The co-chairs will reach out after their meeting with Chancellor Mone.

The meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.