**Minutes of the Fall General Faculty Meeting**

September 30, 2014

Mineral Industries Building 222

Chair Rod Rice called the meeting to order shortly after 4 pm. There were 24 members of the faculty present.

**General discussion of issues**

Dr. Richard Sinden discussed his background, outlined his vision and goals as Interim Provost, and the proposed course scheduling changes for 2015.

1. *Background*

Dr. Sinden has worked at several Universities--Cincinnati, Texas A&M, and others—and has significant experience with graduate programs in biology and medicine.

1. *Vision and Issues Facing Provost*

According to Dr. Sinden, some of the key issues include finding a new provost, funding, and increasing enrollments. Dr. Sinden will be chairing the search committee to find a permanent Provost. Concerning budgets and funding, SDSM&T is still working its way out of previous budget deficit issues. The process will likely take 2-3 years, so funds may be in short supply over that time period. For example, Department ESF funds, which were thought to be protected, may have been used to fund some graduate programs. Dr. Sinden thought such practices were a bad idea and that graduate programs should be funded through overhead/indirect costs. As for enrollments, undergraduate numbers are up again this year. Generally, the increase is good for the budget but creates more sections, particularly for MATH, HUM, and CABS, and leads to some staffing challenges.

1. *Course Scheduling for 2014-2015 and beyond*

A change for scheduling courses on Tuesday and Thursday was proposed earlier this year. Under the new proposal, Tuesday and Thursday classes would be scheduled in 90 minute blocks rather than 60 minute blocks. The reasons given for this proposal were: a) improve classroom use and scheduling to provide stronger justification for new space requests from the Board of Regents; b) improve teaching laboratory use; and c) address general shortage of usable campus space.

Problems outlined by Dr. Sinden that necessitated the change included using the campus scheduler to determine space utilization rather than having departments negotiate space requirements. In addition, some 3-credit courses were exceeding contact hour policy for classroom use (using three 75-minute periods, the equivalent of a 4-credit course). One course occupied a classroom for two scheduling blocks, a practice which made the room unused and unavailable for 45 minutes. Another similar incident involved a 1-credit non-laboratory course that met for 3 hours.

*Faculty Response:* The faculty who spoke at the meeting pointed out that the proposed changes were likely to create as many, if not more, problems than would be solved. In particular, Math and Computer Science would have a great deal of trouble scheduling Calculus I, Calculus II and Calculus III. As well, representatives from other departments indicated that scheduling certain laboratory classes would become difficult.

The upshot of the discussion among faculty and Dr. Sinden resulted in a proposal for moving to a flexible scheduling system in which most of the current course schedules would not be disrupted and under which the scheduler could pair courses needing a longer scheduled time (e. g. two 3-credit courses currently using two 75-minute blocks and meeting twice weekly could convert to three 60-minute blocks). This flexible schedule would provide better classroom utilization with minimal disruption. Both Dr. Sinden and the faculty agreed that this seemed a constructive way to proceed and Dr. Sinden agreed to take this modified proposal to the administration for further review.

1. *General Faculty Issues*

Dr. Rice mentioned several issues that are currently before the Faculty Senate, including updates to the Senate website and the school’s Emeritus Faculty policy. In addition to several Emeritus recommendations, the Senate recommended Alton Romig, Jr. as the Fall Commencement speaker. Among other issues on the horizon, the Senate will also continue ongoing discussions concerning the possibility of implementing an honor code as well as address inconsistencies in policies concerning travel eligibility for students engaged in athletic and non-athletic teams, clubs, and professional organizations.

Dr. Rice adjourned the meeting at ~5 pm.