Minutes of May 3 were approved with the addition of Don Reitzes and Debbie Rupp as attendees and the correction from Staff Advisory Council to Staff Council.

President’s remarks

Dr. Patton reported on developments at the Board of Regents regarding the process for establishing the University System capital projects list. He noted the $37.5M allocation from the state for the Science Teaching Laboratories (STL) Building and the recent commitment of $3.9M from the GSU Foundation for same. He emphasized the need to secure a naming gift for the Humanities Building in order to give impetus to the Board of Regents, the Governor, and the legislature to recommend and fund that project.

Dr. Patton welcomed Ms. Collier to the Administrative Council as the new President of the Student Government Association (SGA). Dr. Patton also recognized Dr. Scott on the occasion of her last meeting on the Administrative Council.

Staff grievance procedures

Ms. Giles presented the staff grievance procedures document as revised following the May meeting of the Administrative Council.

Dr. Adamson asked for clarification of the term “preponderance of evidence” as used in Section IV.D.4.c. Drs. Marshall, Heyward, and Emanuel responded that as in civil cases, “preponderance” meant more than half (rather than beyond reasonable doubt as in criminal cases).

Dr. Huss asked for clarification of whether grievants could present additional evidence to those reviewing their cases at higher levels in the process and suggested Section IV.D.3 could be moved to precede Section IV.C, which concerns reviews by deans or vice presidents. Ms. Giles responded that the objective was to provide a fair process for the grievant, which would allow the grievant to bring forward whatever evidence was available. Dr. Patton suggested stating the grievant must present all evidence up front, and thereby avoid the situation of the Perry Mason-style surprise witness at the last moment. He added that it would clearly be in the interest of grievants to expedite the process, if they had evidence in hand to support their case. Dr. Heyward suggested a statement could be added regarding new evidence that came to light after the review by the dean or vice president. Dr. Huss reiterated his point regarding the fairness of all reviewers judging on the same set of facts. Dr. Marshall spoke for allowing some flexibility in order to grant grievants fair opportunity.

Dr. Adamson noted the lack of time limits for presentations by witnesses and the potential for hearings being very long. Dr. Heyward replied that training for hearing committee members would be helpful in this regard.

Dr. Bahl commented on the desirability of remanding cases to deans or vice presidents in the event of new information even though the timing of the overall process could be stretched out. Ms. Giles cautioned against allowing appeals to cycle round after round. She stated the appeal should be complete at the university level after review by the grievance panel, the Provost and the President. Dr. Torbert noted that in the case of student appeals, when significant new information is provided at the Provost level of the appeal, the cases are remanded to the deans or the deans are given the option of reconsidering the cases prior to a decision by the Provost.

Dr. Rackliffe made a motion to adopt the revised procedures with the addition of a statement about new evidence. Dr. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion passed.
Stipend Request Form (SRF)

Ms. Jones distributed copies of a proposed Stipend Request Form (SRF) for review prior to the next meeting of the Administrative Council. She pointed out that stipends total approximately $2 million across the university annually, and that the SRF would facilitate observance of policy guidelines regarding fixed terms for stipends.

Disclosure Statement for Educational Institutions (DS-2)

Dr. Morris presented the documents distributed prior to the meeting on disclosure statements (DS-2) required by the federal government and pertaining to accounting procedures for grants and contracts. He explained the documents were prepared by a team of college and administrative business officers and accountants, who put in writing current procedures and incorporated the applicable federal regulations. He pointed out that the Senate Research Committee and the Deans Group had reviewed the documents as well. He summarized that while there were some internal issues which required adjustments to meet federal regulations completely, the university as well on the road to compliance.

Dr. Patton commented that the procedures were substantially different from what many PIs were used to and would require re-training. Dr. Morris responded that training sessions for budget officers and PIs would be offered. He noted differences among the colleges as to how such matters were handled, which would necessitate customized orientations for PIs.

Dr. Adamson cautioned that some PIs might panic upon seeing the new requirements and realizing they had not been in compliance. Dr. Morris responded that the emphasis was on raising awareness and not making the same mistakes as in the past. Dr. Adamson asked about cost sharing reporting in particular. Dr. Morris responded that cost sharing accounting had been done correctly for several years, and would not be a problem area.

Dr. Bahl acknowledged that compliance was necessary, but warned PIs would be impatient with the additional workload and the kind of work, and might be asking for additional funding to cover administrative costs. Dr. Morris responded that the indirect cost recovery rates already accounted for these costs since these were procedures the university was supposed to have in place.

Dr. Reitzes reiterated the point that current PIs would be the group most at risk of non-compliance. He cited as an example the accounting of course releases. Dr. Morris responded that the new system would facilitate tracking of time spent on grants and would educate PIs to think in ways toward compliance.

Dr. Bahl commented that the goal of becoming a first-rate research university could be set back if attention of PIs shifted too much from the research itself to compliance. Dr. Morris acknowledged understaffing in some cases to provide assistance to PIs with compliance matters. He noted a narrow line to walk between what is required and the administrative structures in place. He indicated there would be some add-ons to current jobs in order to reduce the additional load on PIs. Dr. Henry added that some reallocation of indirect cost recovery dollars might be necessary in order to cover administrative support of PIs.

Dr. Adamson noted the difficulty of defining percentage of time in terms of actual hours for faculty for research, teaching, etc. Dr. Reitzes added that PIs spend effort on grant administrative duties as well as research. Dr. Bahl cautioned again about making compliance the end product. Dr. Morris noted cases of reporting 100% time on research while teaching a course at the same time. Dr. Bahl responded that such course releases were taken later. Dr. Morris pointed to the importance of consistent documentation, whether accounting semester by semester or an annual basis.

Dr. Henry commented that compliance was also essential because of the potential for fines. Dr. Morris added that Florida Atlantic University was fined $11M for non-compliance.

Dr. Morris made a motion to adopt the DS-2 procedures as presented. Dr. Reitzes seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Customer service

Dr. Patton called for discussion of ways to improve customer service for all categories of constituents of the university.
He noted an increase in complaints across the board. He also noted the Chancellor had heard complaints about customer service from students during his campus visit, which had also been the case at other University System campuses. Dr. Patton observed that customer service was a major factor in student retention. He urged timely steps by the university to improve customer service rather than waiting for University System directives. He stated customer service would be an institutional focus for the coming year in an attempt to “move the needle”. He pointed out that averting even half of the attrition in recent years would have made a significant difference to the university budget. Dr. Rackliffe confirmed the losses had amounted to several million dollars.

Dr. Marshall cited the case of the daughter of a member of the GSU Foundation board, who received erroneous information in the Office of Registrar, received no apology for the mistake, and then could not get an appointment with an advisor in time to register. Dr. Marshall spoke in favor of engaging faculty in the advisement process in order to establish closer ties between students and faculty, which he deemed crucial to their affinity with the university before and after graduation.

Dr. Huss recommended review by Human Resources of the pay plan figures for staff in advisement offices in order to attract better qualified people to these positions, who would give good customer service. He mentioned that an increase in pay grades might entail consolidating some positions in order to attract the kind of professionals needed. Dr. Henry stated that the One Stop Shop had hired at higher salaries in order to attract better staff.

Dr. Patton commented that the University of Georgia and Georgia Tech were in better financial positions to address customer service because the University of Georgia had twice the state budget for not many more students and Georgia Tech approximately the same state budget for half as many students.

Ms. Collier presented her views on customer service as a student at Georgia State. She cited five occasions when her forms were lost by the Office of Student Financial Aid and her frustration as a senior at having to wait four weeks to get an appointment with an academic advisor. She stated that she was in a better position than most students to know how to navigate the system because of working in the Office of the Associate Vice President for Student Services/Dean of Students. She also expressed her opinion that the Office of Student Financial Aid unnecessarily required students to go through the One Stop Shop before addressing their questions.

Dr. Adamson reported on conversations with Honors Program students about such issues. She noted particular concern about the policy of dropping students from classes because of account balances due and financial aid issues. She also noted the students were concerned about their connections to the university, which relate to retention, progression and graduation. She indicated that the students were very interested in becoming involved in peer advisement, mentoring, etc. programs.

Dr. Patton pointed out that budgets in service areas had been cut to the bone. He added that these areas needed more and better people. He concurred with the observation that students want contact with faculty. Dr. Adamson responded that the problems mentioned needed to be separated in conceptualizing solutions, because faculty members were not for example able to help students with financial aid matters.

Dr. Emanuel commented on the experience in the College of Law with faculty advising. She indicated that each faculty member had 5-6 student advisees, but that the faculty members were not the only advisors, just someone on the faculty whom students could contact. She added that only about half of the students took advantage of the program, but it was important to them that there was such a program. She also noted complaints about financial aid, but conceded the Office of Student Financial Aid was overburdened. Dr. Patton cited the volume problem of dealing with 40,000 degree seekers at any given time, and pointed to technical solutions as a partial answer.

Dr. Henry pointed to communication as a major part of the problem. He suggested students needed to receive an e-mail at least once each semester indicating where they stood, but also needed better face-to-face contacts. He added that improvements were occurring, but in some cases staff were not of high quality or were not friendly.

Dr. Patton cited the case of a mother lamenting that her daughter did not know to participate in INCEPT or the Freshman Learning Communities. He suggested a “booster shot” for INCEPT later in the first year.

Ms. Collier recommended mandatory advisement for freshmen and sophomores because of the cap on the number of withdrawals and the importance of sequencing courses.
Dr. Patton suggested browsing the university web sites to spot communication issues. He noted broken links as a particular problem to be addressed.

Dr. Morris asked about the requirement for participation in INCEPT. Dr. Henry replied that first-time freshmen were required to attend INCEPT, but that transfers were not. Ms. Collier added that freshmen who miss INCEPT are shunted into GSU1010.

Dr. Patton stated that discussion of customer service would continue at future meetings.

Announcements

Dr. Adamson announced administrative changes in the College of Arts and Sciences, including Dr. Winkler as Associate Dean for Humanities, Mr. Gilbert as Associate Dean for Fine Arts, Dr. Cheshier as Chair of Department of Communication, Ms. Goldsleger as Director of the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design, and Dr. Washburn as Chair of the Department of Psychology.