**Faculty Senate Resolutions calling for changes to notification processes for student complaints.**

Background:

Student complaints against faculty members have been brought to HR through several channels, some of which enable the student to remain anonymous when making their complaint. In order for disciplinary action to occur, university policy and the CBA require that a student complaint be signed. Whether signed or anonymous, unless a student complaint warrants further investigation involving the interview of the faculty member whose behavior is the focus of the complaint, no formal notification is provided to faculty members. The proposed resolutions aim to redress the lack of communication that happens when a student complaint does not rise to the level of faculty discipline, as governed by the CBA, or otherwise involve notification to the faculty member (such as in an investigatory interview). The first resolution addresses the importance of an HR response to non-anonymous student complainants with information about the university’s actions. The second resolution addresses the importance of faculty notification and opportunity for coaching, regardless of the merit of the complaint.

Resolutions:

1) Students filing complaints (that are not anonymous) should receive written notification of the university’s actions following investigation to the student’s WOU email address within two weeks of the conclusion of the term in which the alleged action occurred (e.g. “appropriate disciplinary action was taken” or “the university did not find sufficient evidence to proceed with disciplinary action but the faculty member was notified of the nature of the complaint after their final grades were submitted and has been given the opportunity for further coaching”). If passed, this resolution will be forwarded to ASWOU and HR for further consideration and action.

2) Faculty members who have been identified in student complaints that do not result in an investigatory interview or disciplinary action will be notified of the nature of the complaint within two weeks of the conclusion of the term in which the incident is alleged to have occurred or the complaint is filed, whichever is later. If passed, this resolution will be forwarded to HR and President Fuller for adoption as university policy.

Discussion & Implementation:

The first item addresses a common concern expressed by students, that their complaints go nowhere and they never know what happens as a result of their report. By forwarding the resolution to ASWOU and HR, the faculty senate conveys support for a policy that may need to be further refined or adjusted to meet student needs. The timing entailed in the second resolution protects both the student(s) and faculty member from the discomfort of returning to classes with the complaint hanging in the air (even if the alleged offense still does) and it protects faculty from any potential perception of retaliation against the student(s). Most importantly, it gives the faculty member a reasonable opportunity to reflect upon the alleged behavior before they are very far into the next term and provides a reasonable opportunity to address or adjust their actions, if appropriate.

To this end, the Office of Human Resources should assign an appropriately trained “coach” (neither a person charged with investigating complaints nor a participant in faculty performance review processes) to notify faculty members and provide support for those who wish to further discuss complaints and receive advice regarding any corrective action that they may wish to pursue. In some cases, Division Chairs, Deans, and Directors may already be providing such coaching but that has been more a matter of individual practice than policy. By putting the onus on HR to provide such coaching resources and removing it from the chain of command related to tenure, promotion, and continuation, WOU ensures the integrity of the complaint and investigatory process while also furthering a culture of continuous improvement. These resolutions support a healthy workplace and will hopefully reassure students that the administration and faculty take their complaints seriously.