

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee (FRRC)

Annual Report 2021-2022

Respectfully submitted by Alireza Ebrahimi, Chair

Members:

FRRC consists of seven members with three continuing members: Jillian Nissen, Alireza Ebrahimi, and Deepa Jani, and four new members: Curtis Holland, Blidi Stemn, Seojung Jung, and Sara Williamson

MEETINGS (2020-2021)

The first meeting of FRRC was held on **September 9, 2021:**

- The meeting opened with an introduction of committee members, followed by an explanation of the role of the FRRC, discussion of the Annual Report 2020-2021, and identification of work to be completed and presented to the faculty senate.
- The committee elected Alireza Ebrahimi as the chair and Jillian Nissen as the secretary.
- Alireza Ebrahimi was selected to present the FRRC to the Full Faculty meeting on September 25th.
- The role of the FRRC in the student and faculty grievance process was discussed.
- A workshop topic was proposed to focus on quality of life issues, to be held in the Spring 2022 semester.
- Procedures to handle grade changes in academic grievances when the ruling was in the student's favor as well as protocols for faculty who were dissatisfied with the decision of the hearing board were discussed.

The next meeting was held on **November 23rd, 2021:**

- Preparations of the 2020-2021 Annual Report were discussed.
- The October FRRC meeting was postponed to this date due to several AGC and Bylaws committee meetings throughout October.
- Seojung Jung, Curtis Holland, Blidi Stemn, Lisa Whitten, and Lan Zhao were thanked for their service on the AGC.
- Seojung Jung, Curtis Holland, Blidi Stemn, Maureen Dolan, Runi Mukherji, Jennie D'Ambroise, Lorenz Neuwirth, and Kasia Platt were thanked for their service on the Bylaws Committee.
- Changes to the FRRC Bylaws were evaluated and discussed. Observations of the changes in the bylaws over time to provide a historical perspective on bylaws changes were discussed with the intent of continual improvement. In addition issue on campus facilities discussed and there were concerns about excess heat and mold.
- In the Fall 2021 semester, there were three cases seen by the AGC which dealt with novel issues that require further discussion in order to shape future FRRC policies.
- The topic of the Spring FRRC workshop was chosen to focus on quality of life issues. Areas of concern included work-life balance, workload creep, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on

ARPT procedures and enhanced instructional support. Discussions on outside individuals who could present on best practices at different institutions was discussed.

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The next meeting was held on **March 2, 2022:**

- Topics for the FRRC workshop at the upcoming Full Faculty meeting on April 4th were discussed.
- An academic grievance from a student was raised, and policies and procedures surrounding this process were discussed. This student had grievances regarding OSSD accommodations, and discussion of supportive services through TRIO were a focus of this topic. This case involved extensive meetings, so the FRRC extended its thanks to Alireza Ebrahimi, Curtis Holland, and Seojung Jung for their efforts.
- The FRRC finalized the draft revisions to its bylaws as the Bylaws Committee met on 3/3/22. Any proposed revisions will be discussed in the next FRRC meeting.

The next meeting was held on **April 4, 2022:**

- This meeting primarily focused on revision of the FRRC and AGC Bylaws after the March 3rd Bylaws Committee meeting.
- In brief, the changes for the FRRC were as follows:
 - Change all instances of “his/her” to “their;” this change was suggested for the entirety of the bylaws as well
 - Changed the description of the FRRC workshop
 - Changed the working regarding arbitrary faculty reassignment from “Faculty have the right to be free from arbitrary reassignment with respect to their academic assignments and tasks, as long as there remains a demand” to “Faculty have the right to be free from arbitrary reassignment with respect to their academic assignments and tasks.”
- In brief, the changes for the AGC were as follows:
 - Removed mention of the required number of meetings for the AGC
 - Further requirements for documentation during grievance procedures were added or clarified

The final meeting was held on **April 19, 2022:**

- The final meeting of the FRRC focused on preparation for the FRRC workshop at the Full Faculty meeting on 4/22/22.
- The results of the previous FRRC questionnaire were summarized, and quality of life was the predominant topic selected.
- Ongoing initiatives of the FRRC including the faculty lounge and faculty center were discussed.
- A new questionnaire focusing specifically on quality of life issues was developed by the committee during this meeting.
- A mechanism for anonymous submission of audience comments during the Full Faculty meeting was developed.

WORKSHOP

- The FRRC workshop was held in the Full Faculty meeting on April 22, 2022
- This workshop focused on a discussion of quality of life issues among the faculty.
The responses to the questionnaire from last year were reviewed and what will improve the quality of life at OW were discussed. 65 responses were concerned with quality of life issues than covid-19 or budgetary concern. There were other concerns such of inter department communication, contracts, air quality, and racial disparity in digital access.
The future workshop should look into more of quality such as faculty dining, faculty housing, faculty wellness, parking, a center and other ways for faculty social interactions including events (cultural) food and fun and establishment of a community calendar. There were questions and answers including a question from president Sams, on involvement of adjunct in the survey.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE

- The Academic Grievance Committee reviewed the case of a student and met on Nov. 16th, 2021. The AGC found no basis for the grade change and made the decision to uphold the instructor's grade decision.

In the submitted document, the student stated the struggle with the courses and the expectation from Old Westbury. The committee further recommended that the student seek the option of Bachelor Degree in Professional Studies at Old Westbury and the email of the director was provided.

- The Academic Grievance Committee (AGC) was formed, and then met on November 22nd, November 30th, December 7th, and finalizing on December 14th, 2021, for a grievance case of student requesting change of grade to CR instead of a passing grade of C. The student requested, the presence OSSD director due to the familiarity of the case. After several hearings with student, instructor, support team, and recognition that final decision of CR/NC change is upon the faculty, the AGC upholds the decision by the instructor. In response to the student's rebuttal, the case was referred to Academic Affair on January 11th, 2022 for other issues. The AGC Committee was informed that TRIO resources are now available for OSSD students. The committee appreciates participation and assistance of the individuals.
- The committee received the grievance from the student on March 9th 2022 and formed AGC, and reviewed the file, including the corresponding emails between student, instructor, and department's chair. The student received a letter grade of A+ by the instructor for the 5 out 11 reports and then numeric scores for the remaining of the reports. On the request from the instructor the numeric score for the first half was 90 and above and the second half was between range of (87-89) which was B+.

There was lack of feedbacks on the second set of the reports. The AGC, including faculty member of department under grievance compared both sets of the works and finding was that the second set of the works were consistent in quality to the first set of the submission. The AGC recommended that the student's grade to be changed to an A.

- A grievance reached the department in early June and reached Academic Grievance Committee on August 18th. The AGC was formed, and then Committee met on September 7, 2022. The Committee reviewed the file submitted by the student. The Committee discussed the policy of the department and instructor's syllabus in regard to the exceeding number of absences by the student and failure in the course. In addition, the graded course materials were examined by a professor of the department who is a member of AGC. The Committee noted that there was a makeup day listed on the course syllabus that may have been a source of the confusion by student. The Committee also reached out to the instructor for clarification in regard to students' number of absences and grading materials. The required grade for this major course by the department is C. The recommendation of the AGC based on the findings is to uphold the decision made by the instructor and the chair of the department.

FACULTY GRIEVANCE

- There were informal grievances of two faculty in regard to treatment of their own departments. There were two other faculty concerns about the extra service payment (not received yet) and payroll clarity (check and balance) in the system.
- Three adjuncts concerned with department changing of sudden mode of instructions and losing their job

FUTURE PLANNING

- Examine Quality of Life issues on campus.
- Determine Faculty needs regarding instructional and institutional support.
- Discuss final grade submission deadline, currently 48 hours after giving the final exam—automated system.
- Bylaws Revisions.