**SBA Meeting 1/19/21**

Attendance:

Faculty Attendance: Dean Boynton, Amber Dannis, Sarah Sweetman

Sarah Sweetman – Director of Registrar’s Office

* Acknowledged significant challenges during exams and grading for fall semester
* Registrar’s Office is experiencing short staffing issues
* In the fall semester, they had an unusual number of students with issues, not reading Registrar’s communications, difficulty accessing exams, not knowing what to do, etc.
  + They received a lot of student contact, but found most students had not read the emails or done the practice exams
  + Volume of student issues was very concerning
* Generally, Registrar is willing to send more emails, but students aren’t reading them
  + 3,440 exam emails sent out last semester, each individually sent by Sarah, and a large percentage weren’t read
  + The emails are VERY important and we need to encourage students to read them
* Leo
  + Open to ways SBA can help encourage students to read emails
  + Why is deadline for faculty grades so close to release of dates?
    - Sarah Sweetman
      * Historically, grades were posted/processed throughout holidays, which caused a lot of student anxiety over break. The school then looked at other law schools and determined a specific grade release date is more appropriate. The grade is so close because the school wants to get us the grades as soon as possible. If they extended that window, they’d have to push grades back even further.
* Registrar Process
  + Registrar receives grades from faculty (or sometimes faculty support office) in a wide range of formats (some handwritten, others in excel, etc.)
  + Often faculty submit exam grades along with other course grades (participation, etc.) and registrar will help faculty support office compile these into final grades/match up student IDs/etc.
  + Registrar staff compiles/processes all grades/checks for errors
  + Registrar staff then re-send grades back to faculty for confirmation
  + Following faculty reply, Registrar can post grades to PioneerWeb
* Edward
  + Concerned that faculty send grades in so many different formats. Can SBA help get professors to a more uniform process?
    - Sarah Sweetman
      * It is difficult to force professors into a more uniform process because (1) faculty have a great deal of academic freedom in how they conduct their classes and exams and there is not a lot that the Registrar can do to require their conformance, and (2) some classes have exams, others have papers, all grades need to be anonymized before processing, registrar must combine exam scores with other class grades (participation, etc.), etc.
    - Perhaps SBA can follow-up with Dean Wiersema on how to improve the different formatted grades, but a lot is left up to faculty
* Sarah Elena
  + Thanked Sarah for all the Registrar office’s work
  + Recommended the Registrar create “how grades work” or a “registrar how to” Canvas page with recorded videos about the grading process. If it were up on Canvas like other student trainings, students could easily access it throughout the year and better manage expectations
  + Sarah Sweetman
    - Registrar is happy to do that, but concerned most students won’t watch
    - She fully agrees the #1 thing her office can do better in future semesters is better manage expectations of when students should expect to receive grades, stress how grades may be delayed, etc.
    - Dean Boynton and Sarah will talk through the best way to do this (perhaps an orientation video too)
* Gabby Gile
  + Thanks Sarah for all the Registrar’s work
  + Would like SBA to help build stronger relationship between students and Registrar’s office
  + Possible ideas:
    - Video shown in class (especially for 1Ls)
      * Concerned that there is misinformation coming from professors who direct students to talk to Registrar, who then direct students to talk to professors
    - Additional training for professors
      * Sarah Sweetman indicated that all faculty get training emails on the exam and grading processes
      * Also stress to faculty that students need the grades for OCI, Pledge to Diversity, and other application deadlines. The delayed grades may have real life effects in the competitiveness of students for job applications.
    - For grade releases
      * In the grade release date email, better communicate that the date is when “grades will start to be released” and emphasize that some grades may be delayed beyond that
    - Exams
      * Gabby had technological issues with Exam 4 software and did the practice tests, but it still didn’t fix the issue she experienced on exam day. She would have welcomed additional tutorial videos that were easy to access so that she would not have lost as much time during the exam
    - Sarah Sweetman;
      * Registrar will emphasize these points in future faculty training (especially for adjuncts who are less familiar)
      * Registrar already invites faculty to come to the office and Sarah personally trains them in the exam and grading processes
      * Registrar’s office is open to making additional tutorial videos
      * In terms of release date, she changed how it is posted on academic calendar to be more clear that the initial date is not the date ALL grades will guaranteed be released
      * Emphasized that the Registrar staff are working 8am-9pm Mon-Sun across 3 employees and everyone shares the goal of posting grades as soon as possible
      * OCI/Deadlines –
        + After faculty miss deadlines, the very next day after the deadline the Registrar pulls a report (the earliest they can) and immediately start contacting faculty about the missed deadline and asking for status updates. In these contacts they stress the need for grades for ranking, graduation, and job applications
        + The Registrar also works closely with CDO regarding OCI deadlines to make sure the deadline between grade release and uploading transcripts/OCI applications is not too close (but those dates are often determined partly by the law firms and not controlled by the university)
* Sarah used to meet with SBA monthly and is happy to do that again, so that we can preemptive conversations instead of reactive
* Alexz Thompson
  + Concerned with the miscommunication between Registrar/faculty, where faculty do not clearly know where students should go with particular questions
  + Sarah Sweetman:
    - It frequently happens that faculty believe they sent Registrar grades, but they actually only sent them to the faculty support office, who must work on them before sending to Registrar (very common point of confusion)
    - Also, sometimes faculty do send grades, but Registrar couldn’t post them because they did not conform to curve or other reasons and need additional clean-up before being posted
      * Neither faculty nor Registrar was lying/misleading students, but sometimes there is miscommunication about the semantics
    - Registrar goes through apx 4000 exams and clears all meta data (so faculty can’t see that information) and then for anonymity, they held back exams into the holidays.
      * If exams are taken out of sequence, they aren’t released to faculty until all are completed so it doesn’t hurt anonymity. And because of curve they can’t grade until they have them all. SO, there were some faculty who didn’t actually receive exams to grade until 1/1
* Solita Day
  + Concerned about the need to hire more Registrar staff
  + Would love SBA to help advocate for Registrar staff/budget to the administration if that would help
  + Sarah Sweetman
    - She is currently writing proposals to hire more employees and will be presenting that to the administration soon
    - As Registrar, she also wants to focus on other tasks/improvements, but too much of her time is spent in the weeds of grading– concern about hiring more people
* Leo Urrutia
  + What can SBA do to help the Registrar?
  + Sarah Sweetman
    - Emails from students are very accusatory/rude/upset
      * She wants us all to know that they choose to work in higher ed because they care very deeply about us and that’s where she wants to be
      * Help spread the word that the Registrar is on our side and is not the enemy
    - Encourage classmates to read emails
      * She’ll try to do some videos, other info sessions, etc. but there is already info sent via email and on the website that is not read (including FAQ for faculty and FAQ for students)
      * They spend a ton of time making sure emails are accurate/complete/clear – so students NEED TO READ
    - Sarah has missed having this opportunity to talk with us, so she is excited to build a stronger relationship with SBA to inform students on how this all works, and the things they’re thinking about on our behalf
* Alexz Thompson
  + Proposed making registrar/exam training mandatory for all students so there is proof that everyone has read the materials
  + Sarah Sweetman:
    - She’ll think about this. Generally, her office tries to “do more with carrots than sticks.” She is concerned that if students won’t read a 20 second email that they won’t click links and do a 5 minute training either.
    - Make sure SBA as leaders are advocating for students to read emails and support the Registrar

Registrar Debrief

* Leo thanked everyone for their respectful comments and support of the Registrar and proposed hosting an SBA/Registrar event in the future so that students can come learn more about the process and expectations. Perhaps by offering some kind of reward/prize SBA could incentivize students to read more exam emails.
* Amber proposed SBA do something nice for Registrar staff before exams (flowers/food/etc. similar to the gifts SBA gives janitorial staff each winter)

SBA Meeting Rescheduling

* Leo will send out a survey regarding possibly changing the meeting time. She checked the class schedule and the 4:30pm-5:30pm time slot seems to work well on other days, and will focus on new day rather than new time

Amber Updates

* Nuggets Game – she had to manually transfer 380 tickets to students, but is glad the event went well
* Grad & Bar Week – Student Affairs has planned a lineup of presentations, student photographs in February, and other details. Graduates will be getting a long detailed email from her soon
* Class Recording Petitions – Still a manual process approved by Dean Boynton/Amber. They are inundated with requests at the moment and have also lost multiple ed tech employees (including John DeSousa), but are working through the backlog as fast as possible.

Votes

* Last week’s minutes approved unanimously
* Gabby Motion to Adjourn (seconded by Luke)