Minutes of the Faculty Senate Special Meeting, 22 April 2019

Presiding Officer: Thomas Luckett
Secretary: Richard Beyler

Senators Present:

Alternates Present:
Ben Anderson-Nathe for May.

Senators Absent:

Ex-officio Members Present:
Beyler, Clark, Hines, Jaén Portillo, Jeffords, Percy, Popp, Shoureshi, Zonoozy.

A. ROLL CALL. The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m.

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Announcements from Secretary

BEYLER called attention to the Faculty Committee Preference Survey, currently open. Barring unforeseen events, the ballot for Faculty elections will be circulated in about a week. At the May meeting, nominations will be opened for Presiding Officer Elect.

We are missing a couple of clickers, so if you have one please return it to BEYLER’s History Department mailbox.


LUCKETT contextualized the discussion: we’ve been considering over the course of the academic year campus policing at PSU, including an open discussion at a special session of Senate in October. Today is intended to be a somewhat more structured discussion, with several guiding questions. He also called for discussion questions from the floor.

In fall, LUCKETT continued, the University commissioned two reviews by outside firms. One a top-to-bottom review of all aspects of policing since 2014, the year the decision was made to go to a sworn and armed police force campus. This was done by the Margolis Healy, and in October representatives came to campus and met with many of us. Their report was filed in mid-February. Since then there has been a Board of Trustees meeting with open comment. The other report was commissioned from OIR: a report specifically on the June shooting incident; unfortunately, the report has still not arrived. LUCKETT expressed disappointment that it had not yet been received: we ought to see it.
LUCKETT reported that the President’s Office, at the request of the Board of Trustees, convened an ad-hoc committee, the Review and Response Committee, to examine the Margolis Healy report, and make recommendations about its recommendations. It’s meeting once a week; faculty members include LUCKETT, JAEN PORTILLO, and Yves LABISSIERE; three members of the Board of Trustees; several staff members and students; and a member of the campus police force, Greg MARKS.

There is also a standing committee, the University Public Safety Oversight Committee (UPSOC)—it had existed before, but this is a new name. This committee has been meeting about once a month. The Margolis Healy report contains a number of recommendations about this committee itself.

LUCKETT noted that since we’ve been discussing this issue for some time, some members of the campus community might be experiencing listening fatigue. His own view is that the University is now ready to act, if it can figure out how to act. The Board of Trustees is very interested in the advice of the Faculty. He believed this was a situation in which our voice will be listened to. There will be two upcoming Board meetings, on May 13th and on June 20th—these will not be devoted exclusively to campus policing.

Although this is special meeting, LUCKETT stated, it can do any of the things Senate meetings do. A member could, for example, offer a resolution of the topic (Steering has not done so), or resolve into a committee of the whole. Steering Committee had developed several discussion questions, and also had in mind several straw polls (not official votes).

LUCKETT wished to begin with a question that has preoccupied him over the year. Is there a way to bring (much of) the campus together around some kind of consensus or compromise, rather than leave this a binary issued.

ZONOOZY had submitted a proposal to gradually phase out armed officers and incorporate the participation of the community. Why should PSU be increasingly responsible, and foot the bill for the public safety for everybody in the neighborhood? LUCKETT: what would community policing look like? ZONOOZY: the community takes on the responsibility for the safety of themselves.

O’BANION believed that a compromise would be the hybrid model presented in the report: increase the proportion of unarmed public safety officers; not completely eliminate armed officers, but address the balance; include consideration of mental health issues; encourage engagement of CPSO [Campus Public Safety Office] the community.

CUNNINGHAM observed that over five years, faculty opinion has been given multiple times, mostly skepticism about armed officers. It had also previously been advocated to leverage faculty expertise more.

C. MEYER hoped to see a culture that we are all responsible for creating a safe environment on campus. Campus security could be part of that culture. She had gone to a de-escalation training; from her perspective she did not learn much about de-escalation. There was a large attendance, hence interest in creating a safer campus. Several students had requested safety training because of incidents in her building.

GRECO also, a couple of years ago, had along with some colleagues had a disappointing experience at a de-escalation training. If this could be done effectively, it would go a long way. She read in the report several ways in which the University could be liable if there
were no armed officers. She had initially been in favor of disarming the police on campus; however, she didn’t want to exploit the personal tragedy as a “told you so” moment. Regarding the hybrid model, she still believed that fifty-fifty was too high a proportion of guns, but wondered about situations in which only a sworn officer could intervene in a situation, conduct investigations, etc.

WATANABE observed that “community” is a diffuse concept. We need to be informed about various perspectives within this community. Many faculty are only present on campus for a few hours per day. She is not so worried about safety during the day, but begins to feel unsafe after about 8:00. What then about students who live on campus? We should be proactively learn what happens on campus. LUCKETT: crime statistics are available.

JAEN PORTILLO thought that models might look good on paper, but we have to make sure that we can actually implement them, particularly in the current budget situation. It seems that investment called for [in 2014] was not really made; we don’t want to make the same mistake twice. She did not want another tragedy a few years from now because we didn’t make the investment in training, etc.

LUCKETT wondered whether reducing the role of sworn officers and advocating community policing presents a conflict, because the latter entails more contact with officers.

JAMES: it’s complicated. Employees cannot carry firearms, but there are concealed carry laws in the state. We are intermixed with the city of Portland. There are liability issues. Some students and faculty say that the presence of armed officers decreases rather than increases safety. The report seems to reify the divide we are talking about, rather than seeking a different paradigm. This body ought to look at prioritization among the many recommendations in the report and take a phased approach: things that everyone can agree upon; then things that cannot be decided right away. There are other vested interests. De-escalation training might be a place to start. LUCKETT: Steering Committee had also asked what are our priorities among the many recommendations, particularly in regard to funding.

SORENSEN liked the idea of prioritization. She was, however, disheartened by resource issues. Oregon State University’s campus safety is handled by the Oregon State Police; no one seems to be interested in helping us. It is a heavy lift given the systemic problems that the state faces around diversity, etc. Why can’t we get more attention for the work we’re trying to do? What can we do in the way of lobbying efforts?

LUCKETT recognized Ben BERRY, member of the Board of Trustees: he asked about the numbers of police officers with firearms and of security officers without firearms. LUCKETT, based on a presentation to UPSOC, said that there are eight armed and sworn officers. This is roughly only half of the number that is budgeted. There are about six unarmed security officers–again, only about half of the number budgeted for. Adding more money to the budget for officers will not change things if we can’t recruit people to those positions. Greg MARKS (CPSO) was recognized. He said we have four public safety officers on the street, five road patrol officers, two sergeants, and the chief. Our detective left. LUCKETT suggested that we could increase the number of officers without increasing the budget, if we could find people to take those positions. One issue is salary; some officers seemingly view this as a kind of starter position. We need to think about how to make these positions more attractive. BERRY, following-up: are they working 24/7, in shifts?
LUCKETT believed there was considerable overtime. BERRY one issue to be that response time from Portland city police was often very long.

O’BANION observed that once had a sexual assault/violence detective on the force, who is no longer with us.

PALMITER wished to revisit the reasons the University decided to arm officers. A seemingly compelling argument at the time was that doing this was necessary in order to recruit officers. Are those reasons still relevant? She was unsure whether the end point of this meeting would be a specific proposal to vote on.

KARAVANIC wished to take into account practical aspects of policing. Is it safe for officers? Dividing up the duties seems to require being able to tell up front how dangerous a given situation is. Who would take the job under the conditions? Other practical issues include liability to the University and jurisdiction between PSU and city police. Perhaps a survey could reveal what are the barriers to hiring. PALMITER would like to hear from the current chief and officers.

REESE pointed out another reason for the decision was that sworn officers could make arrests. If we can’t attract people, but Portland police can, is it possible to partner with them in some way? LUCKETT: they [Portland police] have consistently refused.

HENDERSON understood this to be a larger issue, not unique to PSU. She agreed that these issues related to hiring need consideration. LUCKETT: it’s not just the number of applications, but also their qualifications.

CUNNINGHAM remembered from 2014 that hiring considerations were part of the push for having armed officers. She disagreed with the statement that there is no coordination with the city. It is mentioned in the report: there is a fair amount of coordination, because we don’t have resources on campus. LUCKETT: for example, the “holding cell” at PSU is only for very temporary use.

CLARK observed that today’s discussion is after the horse has left the barn; we are talking in different terms than five years ago. The city is awash in handguns. It is very easy to get a carry permit in Oregon and other states in the West. What would we do [consequently] to make this campus maximally safe—what price would we pay, both in terms of financial and personal costs? For example, would we be willing to devote a class session to de-escalation techniques? A further point: in his experience the presence of officers walking around, regardless of whether armed or unarmed, creates a sense of order.

B. ANDERSON-NATHE said that we have been speaking in a set of codes that have been used to marginalize certain voices. We talk about campus community as though there are clear good guys and bad guys—people to belong here and people who don’t. In the very next breath we say that the Park Blocks are city property, not PSU property. Therefore, a conservation about who gets to belong in public space is one that we don’t have. The report uses words such as houseless, unhoused, or homeless around a hundred times, nearly always in problematic senses, without ever opening up a conversation about how many our students—supposedly the good guys—are experiencing or have experienced homelessness. When we talk about public safety: for whom? He doesn’t disagree that for some people seeing a uniformed officer brings about a sense of order, but for other people it brings about a sense of active, real danger. When talking about public safety, we need to be clear about who is the
public and who is safe. Coordination of policing is already taking place: both PSU and Portland police arrived at the scene where Jason Washington was killed. In various areas, we are engaging in incomplete narratives. We need to entertain discussion in a meaningful, not in a trite, one-off way. Whose safety are we really concerned about? We should not limit the discussion to guns; the report lists a host of infrastructure problems at campus that contribute much more to students’ safety [or lack thereof] than the presence or absence of guns on campus. We haven’t done anything meaningful for five years; if we don’t start something at some point, we will keep ourselves in this place. He is tired not of discussion, but tired of [stasis]. LUCKETT: a question asked in Steering Committee was, what are the various meanings of “safety”? Does it mean different things to different people?

HINES: the report covers history on pp. 17-20 with some accuracy. Regarding REESE’s comments, she recalled that in 2014-15 we were frequently told that you can’t have sworn officers without arming them, but the report makes clear (p. 27) that it is possible to have sworn officers who are unarmed.

DOLIDON wished for clarity in terms. For example, she is not an American and this leads her to wonder if terms like “community” in “community policing” mean something different to foreign students. We all have a different understanding. Also, we just created two centers, one on homelessness and one on smart cities: couldn’t they come up with some creative and useful solutions? Since we agreed to create them, they might as well go to work.

GRECO: the report tells us much about lighting, cameras, etc. If we have budgeted positions going unfilled, it seems that the [unspent] money could go towards safety devices. It is desirable to distinguish between things that make people [merely] feel safe vs. those that actually do make them safer. Moving forward and healing some of the rift, an honest reckoning with the bill of goods we were sold [in 2014-15] is necessary—for example, the assertion that we cannot have sworn officers that are not armed. We were told that we had to deputize everyone. As Presiding Officer at the time, she had one-on-one conversations with President Wim WIEWEL and Vice-President Kevin REYNOLDS. She asked whether we could not have just a few sworn officers who could carry out investigations, etc., and keep the people walking around campus unarmed; this question was dismissed. We need to have a reckoning with such misinformation, which cannot be buried. LUCKETT: is going back to 2014 just of historical value? GRECO believed that reaching peace about decisions requires such a reckoning.

SHOURESHI commented that besides the Review and Response Committee, people from the finance and risk management offices are assessing the [report’s] recommendations as to cost and the risks associated with not doing them. At the May 3rd meeting of the Board’s finance committee, we will look at putting adding some money to the [public safety] budget on a recurring basis; but there are some items (lighting, etc.) are one-time investments. It is essential to ask, what do we mean, collectively, by a safe campus?

LUCKETT proposed taking a straw poll about three basic options presented by the report: the current system (as it currently exists, not necessarily as intended by the Board), entirely eliminating armed officers on campus (which would be complicated by a bill that is likely to pass the state legislature which will restrict the authority of unarmed officers throughout the state), and the hybrid model. We will look at these on a five-point range: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree.
QUESTION ONE. Do you favor the hybrid model, retaining some armed officers with a greater reliance on unarmed security officers?

As BEYLER dealt with some technical difficulties, discussion continued:

It was asked, what are the proportions? LUCKETT: the hybrid leaves some armed officers, but puts a greater reliance on unarmed security officers, particulary to do routine patrolling–more than currently, but the exact number is still up in the air.)

(LUCKETT also read a question submitted from the floor: if the recommendations are not fully implemented, what would you be most concerned about losing. O’BANION: the sexual assault detective. LUCKETT: we’ve currently lost it. O’BANION: the person holding the position for many years has left, but the position still exists. LUCKETT: this is an actual detective who can make arrests, etc.; it can’t be assigned to a security officer. A senator remarked that if we give up sworn officers, the police who would show up to make any arrests would not have specialized knowledge of or training related to our campus. GRECO: we should make a distinction between sworn and armed: they are not necessarily the same. LUCKETT said this is legally correct, but he was not sure whether it’s practically possible to recruit officers on this basis.

RESULTS [hybrid model]:
Strongly Agree, 18%; Agree, 39%; Unsure, 14%; Disagree, 14%; Strongly Disagree, 14%.

QUESTION TWO: Do you favor the current de facto system?

RESULTS:
Strongly Agree, 14%; Agree, 14%; Unsure, 7%; Disagree, 4%; Strongly Disagree, 61%.

QUESTION THREE: Do you favor an entirely disarmed security force?

RESULTS:
Strongly Agree, 29%; Agree, 15%; Unsure, 12%; Disagree, 15%; Strongly Disagree, 29%.

PALMITER pointed about that we had not defined what we mean by “weapon”: did it necessarily mean a lethal weapon, or could it be a pellet gun or similar?

PALMITER recognized Alex READ, member of ASPSU Student Senate and the Student Union. READ: the community has been left out of the decision-making process. Why are the Board of Trustees the ones who make the decision, when they are not necessarily on campus very often? As is recognized in the report, most people in the campus community do not favor armed security. While the presence guns means safety for some, for others and in particular marginalized folks, it means a dangerous and unsafe situation. CPSO is not well integrated into the community, either. We need to push for a decision: how many times have we met about this, how many committees and discussions?

READ presented a statement from the Student Union: Their proposal is that PSU entirely get rid of armed campus police. CPSO should revert back to unarmed security officers. They ask that PSU not contract with Portland police or any outside security company. They also ask that CPSO not be armed with non-lethal weapons. They favor investment in community-based alternatives and ask that PSU divert funds from campus police to community-based, non-police alternatives. They recommend consideration of student-led initiatives such as
performative justice efforts. They ask PSU for more investment in the care-taking needs of
the community, and for more student oversight of policy directions. Campus public safety
should be led by PSU students and faculty.

LUCKETT asked, if CPSO are not well integrated into the campus community, what better
integration would look like. READ said that since he does not favor CPSO, he doesn’t favor
integration. [The officers] don’t live on campus; they come from all over Portland. The
incentives for them are not very high and sometimes perceive the job as a jumping-off point.
The incentive to work with students is lacking.

LUCKETT noted that one point had to do with a question also raised in Steering Committee,
which also appeared in the Margolis Healy report: to give UPSOC much greater authority,
training, and ability to do actual oversight. Till now the committee has really not an
oversight committee at all, but rather advisory. What would [more oversight] entail?

CUNNINGHAM thought this session would focus on the report itself. A concern for her is
that many of its recommendations actually come from UPSOC or from the 2015
implementation report. LUCKETT: some of those recommendation were enacted, some
were not. CUNNINGHAM: many were not; however, her concern is that the Margolis
Healy report presents them as their recommendations, whereas many come from previous
faculty work. Maybe their task was to compile or echo previous statements, but the report
drew from uncompensated faculty efforts. LUCKETT: perhaps it’s just a convergence. But
several people have indeed asked, if we knew about these recommendations in 2014-15 and
didn’t act on them then, what is the hope that we will act on them now? CUNNINGHAM:
yes, and what did we pay for?

FAALEAVA connected the question about oversight to community policing. Oversight
means that we have responsibilities for safety, whether or not officers are armed.

LUCKETT pointed out that CPSO offers tours, ride-alongs, etc., for those who want to learn
more.

DOLIDON reverted to the question whether not arming police officers would mean not being
able to recruit them. Is what we are told [about this] accurate? The comment about not
wanting police, and police never being part of our community, seemed to her too strong.
One thing the report definitely revealed was a failure in the transition; we made a decision,
but it was very badly implemented. To correct this, training is essential; investment should
be made there. She is not against the police and in fact wants to see them around campus
more. She does not like the guns as part of their equipment, but she does not mind seeing
them, personally. A practical thing to work on right away could be de-escalation training. It
ought to be worked out how to make it better. The role of the oversight committee should be
to see that such changes are made.

LUCKETT recognized Officer Greg MARKS. Could we have unarmed police? Yes;
however, the state of Oregon is down 500 officers. It is hard for us to recruit now; it would
be impossible to recruit then. Pay, while low, is not unbearably low: about $8/hour
difference relative to the rest of the area. He has been here for twenty years; most of his staff
are PSU graduates. They are invested in this institution. He loves this place. He wishes
[students and faculty] could see more of them, but there are long work stints already. He
would welcome ride-alongs or conversations about why he is here.
YEIGH stated that they have a hard time recruiting students of color in the College of Education. Exit surveys consistently talk about feeling safe or unsafe. When they are in K-12 schools, presence of officers can make them feel very unsafe. As PSU has more and more diverse students, we need to look at what makes people feel safe or unsafe, and what people’s previous experiences have been.

LUCKETT asked for senators’ specific impressions of the report itself.

JAEN PORTILLO saw the report as dealing primarily with opinion. She expected and hoped for more facts, such as comparisons with other similar institutions are doing.

C. MEYER had a similar reaction. One thing she learned from the report was how many structural changes, neutral in nature, could dramatically improve safety on campus: lighting, keycard access—things that require some resources, but less than armed bodies. Faculty Senate could promote those kinds of changes, while other issues are still being discussed.

LUCKETT: such as [changing] doors that require stepping outside to lock them with a key.

GRECO: the report gave a scathing account of implementation. Many facts pointed to mistakes or malpractice on the part of the University’s administration in implementing the transition. That is not the fault of the officers, but of the institution. Before we consider which direction to go in, we need to see how to fix the malpractice revealed by the report.

LUCKETT noted the passages about community engagement (for example starting p. 52); some of this relates to resources, but there is also a lack of planning for fixing relationships with the campus community. The report observes that relationships with many groups on campus were strained already before the shooting of Jason Washington. It notes what while there are ample incidental opportunities for individual officers to establish relationships, there are not sufficient resources or plans for outreach efforts. Regarding JAEN’s desire for comparative data, he thought that this would be the hardest part of the study to do. We maybe can’t expect this from CPSO or from Margolis Healy. It requires people who are highly trained in sociology and criminology—happily, we have such people on our campus. We have local talent, but need to compensate them.

JAEN PORTILLO pointed to a lack of diversity among the preparers of the report. Their focus was on climate and opinion. The relevant expertise was not built into the report.

LUPRO noted that they had never before been asked about disarming police. They all had law enforcement backgrounds, not broader research backgrounds. It’s like asking water whether it should be wet. We have the period between the decision to arm officers and now. Were the predictions borne out? We know that the fears came to pass; did we get any gains in security? It seems that the recruitment was not solved. There has been a preponderance from student groups, faculty, etc., showing that arming officers is not helping. We are not making progress. LUCKETT: how do we know? LUPRO: he would like to know whether, from then to now, the things that were sold to us as alleged goods of arming officers have come to pass. To his knowledge, they haven’t. Safety is not better; he doubts the jurisdictional problem is improved. We know that the worst-case scenario did come to pass. The benefits of arming are still speculative. LUCKETT said it’s hard to come up with evidence. That’s why we need to compare with other institutions. LUPRO: what has happened with the crime rate? What has happened with jurisdictional conflicts? LUCKETT:
we need a time series. LUPRO: we’ve had an experimental period; he wants to see comparisons across this period.

JAEN PORTILLO has heard from faculty a need for information, for an account of what happened between then and now. We need to understand the specific differences between sworn and unsworn officers. There were many good ideas about safety that went beyond having armed bodies, as a colleague had said: lights, cameras, locks, etc. We need more information and discussion of what “safety” is. It would be useful to have priorities, a step-by-step process given the budget. The solution will not be in just a couple of months.

A senator suggested a straw poll about needing information. LUCKETT: we could do a poll, but he thought the outcome would be obvious. It seemed that one recommendation would be for more comparative information, both with other institutions and across time.

HINES recognized Jake JOHNSON, executive editor of the Pacific Sentinel [student newspaper]. JOHNSON agreed it was important to be very clear about what armed vs. disarmed means. The conversation often takes this to be all-or-nothing, but that may not be the case. Faculty should be recognized for their efforts five years ago, some of which were repeated in the report. He believed it was essential to recognize that background; the report was taking ideas and credibility from faculty work. Stealing people’s ideas is a way of making them feel unheard. He believed UPSOC should take on a real oversight role and be able to enact changes.

D, E, F, G. – none

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.