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## Faculty Senate Minutes - September 5, 2014

USM Faculty Senate

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**The University of Southern Mississippi**  
**Faculty Senate Meeting**  
**Cook Library 123/Fleming Education Center 307**  
**September 5, 2014**

**Members Present and Represented (by proxy):** Members Present and Represented (by proxy): M. Alford, J. Anderson, T. Barry, A. Beck, D. Booth, R. Buchanan, S. Cloud, K. Davis, D. Fletcher, R. Griffitt, S. Hart (L. Story), O. Harvey, B. Hayden, F. Heitmuller, D. Holt, S. Hrostowski (S. Cloud), L. Iglesias (B. Hayden), J. Lambers, M. Leonard, M. Lux, H. Lyn, C. Maugh, C. Meyers, C. Miller, E. Molaison, L. Neelis, L. Nored (C. Tardy), W. Odom, J. Olmi, R. Press, P. Price, L. Rackoff, S. Reischman-Fletcher (D. Fletcher), S. Rouse, K. Shelley, C. Sirola, L. Story, C. Tardy, M. Van Norden, T. Welsh, J. White (D. Fletcher), K. Zantow.

**Members Absent:** K. Goodwin, D. Griffin, A. Haley (M. Grivno) T. Roberson

**Guests:** K. Reidenbach, S. Rawls

**Business Meeting – 2:00 PM**

**1.0 Call to order 2:02 PM**

**2.0 Approval of agenda**

The agenda for the September 2014 meeting was approved unanimously on motion made by Sen. Rouse and a second by Sen. Fletcher.

**3.0 Approval of April-May minutes**

The April-May minutes, representing the May and June 2014 meetings, were unanimously approved on a motion by Sen. Fletcher and a second by Sen. Alford

**4.0 Officer Reports**

**4.1. President**

Pres. Press reported the Following:

- Enrollment is a top priority. Enrollment numbers are down but average ACT score of incoming freshman is up by ½ % and there are fewer ‘at risk’ students. There is an urgent need for a coordinated plan for recruitment.
- Student success initiatives to help retain students without lowering standards have been adopted.
- Positive developments reported by the Provost in an August 29 letter to faculty include:
  - Honors College enrolled its largest new class with over 85% having an average ACT of 30 or higher

- Faculty are researching to find cures for the West Nile virus and developing new ways to deliver life-saving cancer medicine. One of our graduates is leading research to help find a cure for Ebola.
- Through strategic corporate and research partnerships, as well as the Center for Undergraduate Research, our graduate and undergraduate students have research opportunities that are impacting economic development on the Gulf Coast and throughout the region.
- Our performing and visual arts programs continue to attract world-renowned performers and scholars; we are increasing our services to veterans; offering more academic programs on the coast; expanding and making available our digital collections to scholars all over the world; boasting 100% passing rates on national certification exams in several programs; breaking ground on new buildings and finishing projects already underway; and exploring developing living and learning communities.

#### **4.2. President-Elect**

Pres.-Elect Story explained that the faculty senate budget had come back from the Provost in August with a request to reduce the budget as much as possible. The executive committee reduced printing and facility rentals. The Provost approved the revised budget on September 5, 2014.

#### **4.3. Secretary**

Sec. Anderson reminded senators to sign-in and also thanked Karen Reidenbach and iTech for assisting the faculty senate in accommodating coast senators when the Gulf Park campus unexpectedly closed.

#### **4.4. Secretary-Elect No Report**

### **5.0 Remarks from Administration**

#### **5.1. President Rodney Bennett**

Pres. Bennett took questions, as he had given a comprehensive report at the August Faculty Senate Retreat.

Sen. Davis questioned why the class roster, which is accurate, is not reflected in the grade roster. Sen. Rackoff reported experiencing the same problem and Sen. Fletcher asked why we need two rosters.

Prov. Wiesenburg recognized that there is a need for clean-up of the rosters before the 10<sup>th</sup> day of class because students who register but do not show up for class need to be identified as not attending so as not to affect future graduation rates.

According to Assoc. Prov. Powell, as of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, there were 1068 rosters that had not been reviewed, but that the new process has allowed to better capture which students are attending and which are not. Removing non-attending students resulted in a 2% improvement in graduation rate the previous year.

Sen. Fletcher stated that the purpose in the Grade Roster and the Class Roster is confusing.

Sen. Holt submitted the non-attending students in all classes but some classes still showed status as not reported and Assoc. Prov. Powell responded that they were still working the bugs out.

Sens. Davis and Holt stated the problems in SOAR result in false reporting.

Sen. Odom expressed concern for moving up the Withdrawal Date. He asked if we have seen the outcome of that. Sen. Fletcher responded that they get a W now but will need instructor permission to drop with a W after October 31.

Pres. Bennett stated that the university gets penalized at the accounting office for reporting withdrawals later. Other universities in the state had already moved up their dates and were not being penalized. We are now in alignment with their dates. This will put us in sync with other universities in the state and will help in overall number of student credit hours.

Assoc. Prov. Powell stated that this was a recommendation from the Student Success Committee that was originally intended to engage the students in the coursework earlier, but these other outcomes are an added benefit.

Sen. Zantow noted that students have less time to change their mind about classes and asked if students will be held financially responsible for classes in which they register.

Provost Wiesenburg confirmed that they are. He added that students are forced to commit to a schedule earlier and this reduces the number of students who sign up for many classes with the intent on dropping some of them later in the semester.

Sen. Alford noted that it was his department's policy to only give a W in extraordinary circumstances; now, students can withdraw with W themselves until October 31 but will need instructor's permission for a W after that date. This allows faculty time to help students determine if problems can be overcome.

Sen. Fletcher requested thoughts from the administration regarding the hiring "freeze" and the decrease in projected numbers of enrolled students and also the athletic budget.

Pres. Bennett stated that the university needs to ensure that both are successful. It is a difficult task to eliminate athletics in a university. A case can also be made to eliminate

programs with low student credit hour production. Balance is needed and will come through discussion and dialogue. There will be a budget shortfall this year and difficult decisions will have to be made in order to move forward. These decisions will be made in conjunction with the colleges and departments and will not be handed down from the administration.

Pres. Press asked about the timeframe for hiring limits, and Dr. Bennett responded that we need to take a broad perspective and keep an open mind, zero in on the problems, and put everything on the table.

Sen. Rackoff stated that reinvestment of resources is needed to rebuild. It is another angle on the same issue and frames the context in a positive way.

Pres. Bennett stated that the best approach has not been determined. He affirmed that he is not committed to program closure, hiring freezes or the elimination of athletics at this point. He wants discussion and dialogue before any decisions are made. He also stated that while the university did not meet enrollment targets, there are five to six items that are incredible including having higher quality students. Good students will breed other good students, and we are on the road to do that. The university needs to get over the effects of some things that were done in the past such as allowing a large number of students with low ACT scores to register late. While this increased short-term enrollment numbers, it resulted in lower retention numbers and graduation rates. We cannot build a future with the old model but must work to attract quality students and help them succeed.

## **5.2. Provost Denis Wiesenburg**

Prov. Wiesenburg reported:

- Approval of the budget for Faculty Senate and noted that faculty need to copy emails to the Provost to Linda Dorsey.
- There were 88 new hires: 50 of those tenure-track faculty (the remainder are visiting and/or other positions); received positive feedback on new faculty orientation extended to begin on Friday with reception on Saturday and finish on Monday.
- About 70% of new faculty report they came here because of the hospitality of the campus interview and search process.
- Teaching forums are off to a great start and are well-attended. Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for this.
- New Ombudsman will be appointed after nominations are received from the Deans and Prov. Wiesenburg will work with Faculty Senate Executive Committee on this.
- Final student enrollment numbers will be announced by IHL on September 10<sup>th</sup>. There will be an all-faculty meeting in Bennett Auditorium on September 11<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 – 1:00 PM for a presentation of enrollment numbers and why and how it will impact the university. Quick-look assessment teams are working to assess the numbers and determine what is working and what is not.

Sen. Zantow noted that enrollments in upper division courses are slightly up but are down for lower division courses are down. He asked if there is any relationship between the community college numbers (higher Associates Degree completion numbers) and our numbers.

Prov. Wiesenburg stated that he cannot speak to that but the assessment team is working on it.

Sen. Heitmuller asked regarding the proposed strategic plan, what composition would the committee be?

Prov. Wiesenburg stated that reconstituting the strategic enrollment planning council (formed in 2008, reported in 2009) is under consideration.

Assoc. Prov. Powell stated that that council was broad-based and addressed only undergraduate students. In the future, a council would not be as broad-based and would also address graduate and international students.

Pres. Press reported that there have been complaints have been made about the office hours policy and asked how office hours are determined.

Dr. Wiesenburg responded that it was up to department chairs but his view is that the university should be a community of scholars who are available for students. There is an effort by deans to be sure there are faculty available to interact with students; The Office of the Provost does not drive this effort but supports it.

Sen. Lambers expressed a concern that students believe that office hours are a waste of time and that such policy creates a counterproductive obligation. He supports policy that requires faculty to be on campus, but believes that there should be more discussion.

Prov. Wiesenburg agreed and added that those discussions should take place within the departments.

Sen. Holt asked how to hold faculty accountable who do not put in office hours, are sketchy teachers, or do not follow academic calendar schedule for final exams.

Dr. Wiesenburg answered that those things need to be brought to the attention of department chairs and that we need to hold colleagues accountable. Annual evaluations are the only tool we have to motivate faculty to improve performance.

Pres. Press inquired why ten hours are the standard to which the Provost responded that 10 hours is the national norm.

Sen. Zantow and Sen. Rackoff commented that it was important for faculty to have a commitment for being on campus. Sen. Zantow asked if a “living distance” could be enforced.

Prov. Wiesenburg responded that the university cannot tell people where to live but can create policies that require people to be on campus.

Sen. Van Norden asked the Provost about better training for chairs.

Dr. Wiesenburg added that there was minimal training for chairs but opportunities provided for further training to deal with operational issues such as budgets. The recommendation that chairs be able to view student comments in course evaluations in addition to ratings has gone to the Faculty Handbook Committee. The Provost is an advocate of teaching portfolios for faculty as a second SACS teaching assessment.

## **6.0 Introduction of Guest Speakers**

Student Panel from Student Services, Hattiesburg Campus:

Mike Goff, Mike Valentine, Conner Miller, Chris Swann, Natasha Rivera, Gavin Snyder

Why did you come to Southern Miss?

- Invited to Honors College event then campus preview and fell in love with the campus
- Came because of the sports and coaching programs
- Transferred here because of availability of scholarships
- Great academic classes, majors, campus life, study-abroad, Greek life.

What keeps you at Southern Miss?

- Never had a bad teacher; course help achieve goals
- Faculty available to talk to students, interact
- Great intramural sports, always something happening on campus
- Campus life and relationships with faculty, staff
- Internships that puts learning into practice.

What could Southern Miss do differently to attract students or help them stay?

- Some departments do not allow students to change majors if they have a low GPA so more flexibility on that would help.
- Some students do not adjust well to college life
- Faculty and staff could help by interacting with students, encouraging them to excel.
- Faculty should be passionate and available to students; should promote, model good scholarship and behavior, be involved with students and campus life.

Sen. Rackoff asked whether the strongest possible recruitment is a faculty member interfacing a student in the high school classroom or to invite students to campus?

Ms. Rivera thinks that interaction with faculty in the high school is a good idea but that it takes the right faculty member.

K. Reidenbach, of Staff Council, serves on a subcommittee charged with internal elements, reported that a survey was sent to first-time students this fall. The raw data are still being compiled but the number one recruitment draw to Southern Miss was campus atmosphere.

Pres.-elect Story added that both students and faculty are expressing similar reasons for coming to Southern Miss – campus visit.

Sen. Zantow asked the student panel if they have a sense of why students leave the university.

The student panel cited low GPAs, inability to change majors, and under-preparedness for college as reasons student leave the university.

## **7.0 Committee Reports/Discussion**

### **7.1. Senate Committees**

#### **7.1.1. Academic and Governance**

Sen. Heitmuller was elected chair. The committee is working on pay differential by gender, assessment overload, recruitment and retention initiatives. The committee is still waiting on the requested organizational chart and position descriptions for the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses. A copy of the Barnes & Noble contract has been received. The committee met with Kristi Motter, along with Sec. Anderson and Sec.-elect Welsh to discuss enrollment and is putting forth a resolution

#### **7.1.2. Awards**

Sen. Barry, Chair, presented the report:

- More committee members were added for greater university-wide representation:
  - Tammy Barry, Chair, CoEP
  - Stacy Reischman-Fletcher, CoAL
  - Julie White, CoAL
  - Kimberly Goodwin, CoB
  - Mary Lux, CoH
  - Susan, Hart, CoN
  - Franklin Heitmuller, CoST
  - Heidi Lyn, Gulf Coast
  - Peggy Price, University Libraries



- The Faculty Senate Awards Committee will select recipients of HEADWAE (due Oct. 13), Faculty Excellence Awards (Nov. 10), and Junior Faculty Awards (Jan. 26). Sen. Barry will serve on the Nina Suggs Endowed Professorship Selection Committee.
- Faculty Senators are requested to distribute award information to their colleges and departments.
- Provost approved recommendation for two instead of five Faculty Senators on the Grand Marshall Selection Committee and asked the Faculty Senate Awards Committee serve as the selection committee for this award starting in 2015-16.
- Information about college-level awards will be compiled and may be tied in to an awards gala/social gathering event that is under consideration by the Provost.
- Awards Committee is gathering information about foundation funding for new awards.
- There has been some discussion about turning the awards ceremony into a gala-style event. Suggestions should originate from the Provost's office. There is a foundation account with \$10-15,000 (unclear at the time), but the account, when fully funded could be used to support such an endeavor.

### **7.1.3. Communication**

Sen. Tardy, Chair, stated two initiatives of the committee:

- Created a template for senate representatives from each college to send an initial message reminding faculty of their Faculty Senate college reps and informing them of the meeting schedule
- Will be sending another message to all colleges or departments to notify when approved minutes are available online.

Sen. Barry recommended sending the link to Chairs as well and request that they forward it to their faculty.

Sen. Lux stated that years back that we received brief minutes and asked if we can continue the practice. Sec. Anderson agreed to begin distribution of Brief Minutes each month.

### **7.1.4. Handbook**

Sen. Davis, Chair of the Faculty Senate Handbook committee reported that the UFHC met July 1 and gave a report of the actions. Most were for clarity or to correct typos. The actions have been submitted to the President and the Provost. A copy has been sent to Sec. Anderson and is available upon request.

### **7.1.5. Finance**

Sen. Zantow, chair of the Finance committee, reported that the issue of rollover funds is on the agenda for the committee. A discussion with CFO Vinzant revealed that there is no official university policy for dealing with rollover funds.

Sen. Holt stated that the rollover of funds being “swept” leaves an impression of mistrust.

Sen. Lux agreed that it appears “shady,” and that some faculty are saving for higher dollar items that the only way to purchase these items is to save from roll over funds.

Pres.-elect Story suggested that funding items should be prioritized, but Sen. Zantow expressed a concern that many university priorities are non-academic and are taking precedence over academics.

## **7.2. University Standing Committees with Senator Representation**

### **7.2.1. Signage Committee**

Sen. Sirola, Faculty Senate representative, reported that the new sign designs have been approved and will be sent to the contractor for production. Signs should appear soon on all university buildings, both on and off campus. The new signs will improve the appearance of the university and make the campus more visitor-friendly and accessible.

### **7.2.2. Strategic Planning Committee**

Sen. Fletcher, Faculty Senate representative, reported there are 30 members on this committee, half faculty and half administration.

There are two sub-committees:

External environmental factors: opportunities/challenges

Internal environmental factors: strengths/weaknesses

The committee has engaged all colleges (except CoST) to set up task forces that are info gathering. The plan is to have mission/values, external forces, and internal forces compiled and organized by December.

### **7.2.3. SACS QEP Committee Report**

Sen. Barry, Chair, attended the SACSCOC Summer Institute on Quality Enhancement in July as faculty rep, along with Dr. Howdeshell (Director of QEP), Dr. Powell (Associate Provost) and Kathryn Lowery (Director of Institutional Effectiveness).

The QEP Topic Selection Task Force presented QEP topics for consideration:

*Golden Opportunity through Active Learning (GOAL)* paired with one of the following:

- Academic advising and career development
- Critical thinking (as articulated in *Curiosity Unfolding*)
- Student success (as articulated in *Eagles Engaged*).

Winners of the topic proposals were presented monetary awards by the Provost on May 23. The proposed topics and assessment data will go to the Executive Cabinet for consideration and the new QEP topic should be announced soon, after which the University SACS QEP Committee will enter the research and design phase.

## **8.0 Old Business** None

## **9.0 New Business**

### **9.1. Resolution on the Coordination of Recruitment and Planning at USM**

Sen. Holt, Academics and Governance Committee Chair, proposed a resolution in support of revising and initiating the Strategic Enrollment Plan.

- Recruitment and retention includes recruitment, retention, persistence, progression, and graduation in traditional formats and online formats.
- Undergraduate success includes new freshman, new transfers, student continuation, international students, and student readmissions.
- Graduate success includes new masters (supported and paying), new doctoral students (supported and paying), new specialists, certificate programs, international students, continuing graduates and readmitted graduates.
- One university model includes site-based situational needs at Hattiesburg, Gulf Park, Stennis, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, and others.
- Faculty Senate supports the creation or revision of a Strategic Enrollment Plan to provide a coordinated plan for recruitment and retention and encourages transparency in the creation and function of the plan.
- Faculty Senate encourages faculty and staff to participate and support the efforts of the Strategic Enrollment Plan and Student Success Initiatives where and when possible.
- Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Gulf Coast Faculty Council, the Provost, and Vice President of the Gulf Coast, and the President.

Sen. Fletcher moved to suspend the rules and vote on the resolution today. Sen. Sirola seconded this.

Sen. Rackoff requested clarification for the phrase, “New Master’s.” Assoc. Prov. Powell confirmed that the phrase includes MFA but that there are also a few Specialist degrees also.

Pres. Press did not request a motion or second to approve the resolution but asked for a vote. The Faculty Senate approved the resolution unanimously.

## **9.2. Resolution on Research Support for Assistant Professors**

Sen. Harvey proposed a resolution to recommend the establishment of a university-wide initiative to support faculty scholarship by the creation of weekly writing sessions to be designated at specific times at the Think Center on the Hattiesburg campus and on the Gulf Park campus. The resolution is tabled for further discussion.

## **10.0 Adjournment**

The September 2014 meeting of the Faculty Senate was adjourned at 5:23 PM upon a motion and second made by Sen. Rackoff and Sen. Sirola, respectively.