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Faculty Senate Minutes - October 2, 2015

USM Faculty Senate

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**The University of Southern Mississippi
Meeting of the Faculty Senate
Cook Library 123 – IVN Hardy Hall 219
October 2, 2015**

Members Present and Represented (by proxy): M. Alford, J. Anderson, D. Booth, J. Brown (D. Hold), D. Capper, K. Cochran, M. Coyne, K. Davis, B. Green, K. Greene, M. Grivno, C. Handley (M. Lux), B. Harbaugh (B. Tinnon), B. Hayden, F. Heitmuller, L. Hill, D. Holt, S. Hrostowski, J. Lambers, P. Linden, H. Lyn, C. McCormick, M. McLelland, C. Miller (M. McLelland), S. Milroy, E. Molaison, L. Neelis (S. Hrostowski), W. Odom, J. Olmi, L. Rackoff, T. Rehner, S. Reischman-Fletcher, S. Rouse, K. Shelley, C. Sirola, C. Tardy, A. Thompson (K. Greene), B. Tinnon, M. Van Norden, T. Welsh, J. White, K. Zantow

Members Absent: R. Griffitt, K. Rhinehart

Guests: Bill Powell, Karen Reidenback, Tamara Hurst, Amy Miller, Tom Rishel

1.0 The meeting was called to order by Pres. Anderson at 2:02pm

2.0 The agenda was revised to include the Grade Review Committee in New Business and the revised agenda was adopted by Pres. Anderson with no objection.

3.0 The September Minutes with revisions were approved by Pres. Anderson with no objection

4.0 Remarks from Administration

4.1 President Rodney Bennett

Pres. Bennett reflected on as we approach mid-term, how much progress the University has made since the start of the fall semester and how much promise our future holds:

To kick off the semester, we observed 10 years of recovery since Hurricane Katrina, commemorated 50 years of integration and progress at the University, and dedicated Scianna Hall, which will help move our College of Business into the future. Each of these milestones provide context for how far the University has come in recent history, and he expressed excitement about what they mean for our future.

Pres. Bennett hoped faculty have kept up with email updates regarding the search for the University's next Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; over the next three weeks, we will welcome three candidates to both the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses for interviews and open forums. Details about each candidate and their open forum schedules are available online at usm.edu/provostsearch. He encouraged faculty to participate as their schedule allows – although each forum is designated primarily for either faculty, staff, or students, any member of the University community is welcome to attend any of the open forums.

As you know, IHL recently approved the mission statement proposed as part of the University's Strategic Plan, and he is eager to develop an active planning process at all levels of the institution. At the Faculty Senate retreat in August, he distributed handouts of the approved mission, vision, values, and goals and had hoped to talk through the material, but we ran out of time. As follow-up, he originally planned to discuss the process further at today's Senate meeting, but then learned that this group has already been briefed several times on the development and creation of

the current Strategic Plan. So, to move forward with the planning process, Pres. Bennett will appoint a smaller working group from the members of the Strategic Planning Council, and those individuals will propose and guide action steps for each academic and non-academic unit to begin operationalizing the Strategic Plan's framework. However, it will be critically important to involve our new Provost in this process, along with other key members of the University's executive leadership team so those conversations will not occur until after the Provost search concludes. Pres. Bennett noted that he would work with Dr. Anderson and others on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to ensure that this group is updated once next steps are developed.

As another follow-up item from your retreat in August, he noted that our conference league office is still negotiating with multiple television networks to secure the best media package for the conference. It appears as though sports programming opportunities peaked sometime in the last decade, and television packages are not as lucrative as they were 8-10 years ago due to the costs associated with producing live sporting events. This will continue to be an interesting conversation to follow as the conference advances negotiations.

Bob Pierce has transitioned out of his role as Vice President for Advancement and begun work at the University of Alabama and Pres. Bennett took this opportunity to downsize the University's administrative structure and reassign the management responsibilities of the Southern Miss Alumni Association and the USM Foundation to Chad Driskell, current Vice President for External Affairs. He officially assumed these additional duties on September 21. Having spent 20 years building relationships across government, business, community groups, and institutions of higher education, Chad has more than a decade of executive association management experience and a demonstrated fundraising record, to include involvement in each major building project at the University since 2007. Pres. Bennett expressed confidence that his leadership will help us grow into our promising future.

The University enrolled our most academically talented freshman class on record for the second year in a row, and our overall new student enrollment increased 2.7% from last fall. This fall's freshman class has an average GPA of 3.27 and an average ACT score of 22.7. The record-breaking class comes at a time in which national ACT scores are not increasing. In 2015, ACT scores across the country were flat—the composite average of 21.0 was the same as in 2014. So, as you can see, we are ahead of the national average. In the Honors College, the incoming freshman class has an average GPA of 3.81 and a record-setting average ACT score of 29.8. This move toward better quality of our student body only bolsters our opportunities for future success as we work to increase quality across the board.

We are also seeing positive impacts in overall persistence, thanks largely to the oversight of Dr. Amy Miller and the contributions each faculty made this fall with specific outreach to students who were eligible to return but had not yet registered for classes. This fall, our overall student persistence rates improved, and approximately 81.5% of all prior students who were eligible to re-enroll for the fall semester have done so.

Another marker for success in this area is our rising graduation rate. When Dr. Bennett arrived in Hattiesburg in 2013, our six-year graduation rate was 45.1%. Our increased focus on recruitment, retention, progression, and graduation has helped that rate rise for two consecutive years to 49.8%. While we still have a lot of work to do in this area, we are making progress, and our students are better for it.

A key component in increasing the quality of the student body is increasing the depth and breadth of programs and services available to students in order to attract the best and brightest. One

example of meaningful enrichment programming is our University Forum. Under Dr. Andrew Haley's leadership, the Forum is off to a great start, having had excellent attendance at Pulitzer Prize-winning author Rick Bragg's opening presentation on September 22. The University's additional investment in re-energizing the Forum series is paying off, and we look forward to hearing the remaining five speakers in the coming months.

Our office of Admissions is planning more recruitment visits than ever before. This year, their goal is to visit **all** high schools and community colleges in the state of Mississippi. In addition, targeted recruitment strategies for freshman and transfer students will be implemented in the following out-of- state markets:

1. Northern and Southern Alabama
2. Northern to Central Florida, encompassing the panhandle
3. All but the rural central corridor of Louisiana
4. Dallas and Houston, Texas, as well as the Fort Hood area and select locations in Northeast Texas
5. And parts of Tennessee, to include the Southern border and the Nashville area.

Our recruitment strategy is certainly more aggressive than ever before, and as we continue to increase quality in our student body while we expand our recruitment target areas, we will soon see quality growth in overall enrollment.

Pres. Bennett's vision is for us to be an institution of 20 to 21,000 students, with approximately 16,000 here in Hattiesburg and another 4 to 5,000 on the Coast. We won't get there overnight – but if we take it day-by-day, standing firm in our commitment to quality, we will get there.

Pres. Bennett noted how hard each faculty has worked to focus on research in the past year, and he wanted faculty to know he appreciates your work. As a direct result of increased scholarly activity, our overall research funding increased from just under 59 million dollars last year to more than 72 million dollars this year.

We have also made significant strides in increasing our presence in mass media and through the University's primary social media accounts. From the 2013-2014 academic year to the 2014-2015 academic year, our number of positive media mentions related to academics, student life, research, and associated categories increased from just over 4,000 to just over 7,500. During the same time period:

1. The reach of our Facebook posts increased from 15.8 million users to 27 million users;
2. The reach of our Tweets increased from 15 million users to 29 million users; and
3. Our LinkedIn connections increased from approximately 42,000 to approximately 52,000.

For each of the past three months, we have compared the number of our positive media mentions related to academic affairs, research, student life, alumni, and other non-athletic topics, to the other two schools up north – and for June, July, and August, we have remained ahead of the competition.

Moving forward, Dr. Bennett is optimistic about further improving the University's finances through two important initiatives: developing another competitive bonding plan and once again requesting additional funding from the state legislature for a salary program this year. With regard to a 4-Year state Bonding Plan for fiscal years 2017-2020, we hope to continue the success of our former three-year bonding plan that concludes this year. The IHL Board reviewed and approved capital requests from all eight institutions at the August Board Meeting. For USM,

adoption of this plan would enable the University to continue making substantial improvements in the facilities at all USM campuses. The number and amounts available from the bonding plan are yet to be determined, but Dr. Bennett will continue to provide updates as they become available.

With regard to a salary program for fiscal year 2017, the Presidents and Commissioner recommended that the IHL Board request state support for a second consecutive salary program to build upon what we received in FY 2016. The Board agreed and approved submitting a funding request for a salary increase program for all faculty and staff in FY 2017. In addition, the Board approved the inclusion of entities that last year did not receive state support for a salary increase. At USM, those entities include GCRL, our Center for Higher Learning at Stennis, and the Mississippi Polymer Institute.

This request was submitted to the legislature and to the Governor as part of the FY 2017 budget process. Of course, it will ultimately be in the hands of the legislature to appropriate the funds, and their actions will largely be influenced by other key factors that will impact the spring's legislative budget session. Pres. Bennett will be working closely with Chad Driskell and the legislative delegation to make the case for the proposed salary increase, and again, he will keep you updated as appropriate as we work through the legislative process.

Pres. Bennett noted that he was excited about the progress we have made this year in enhancing quality across the board, and he thanked each faculty for their hard work and dedication to this institution. He appreciates faculty's contributions to teaching, research, service, and overall scholarship, and is grateful for faculty's help in ensuring student success. Clearly we are at a time when our University has great momentum – and expressed hope that we can continue to harness that momentum and carry it forward. If we continue to work together and work as hard as we can every day to enhance progress across the institution, we will achieve my vision of becoming the model for public higher education across the country as we strive for excellence in six key areas:

1. Ensuring Student Success
2. Expanding Enrollment Strategies
3. Enhancing Academic Instruction
4. Fostering Greater Focus on Research
5. Bolstering Economic and Community Partnerships
6. Maximizing Human Potential.

Our institution's history is filled with the stories of ordinary individuals who have done extraordinary things to advance south Mississippi, our state, and our region. Our time is now to continue writing that story and to make our predecessors proud – and Dr. Bennett looks forward to continue working with faculty to transform the landscape of higher education.

On a question from a senator about the shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, Pres. Bennett stated that it has implications in regards to the importance of campus safety, as well as emergency response training and readiness on the USM campuses. Pres. Bennett noted that the constitutional rights of our faculty, students, and staff are not surrendered at the campus gates, and he specifically asked that Faculty Senate review our policies relevant to campus safety/preparedness in that context.

4.2 Interim Provost Steve Moser

Dr. Moser asked if Faculty Senate had questions for him to address.

One Senator asked about faculty/staff tuition waivers and Dr. Moser replied that USM policy is that faculty/staff tuition waivers cover tuition but not course fees.

Another Senator noted that the Registrar's Office was not flexible about allowing students to walk in May graduation when the classwork extended into the summer. Dr. Moser replied that they were looking into summer graduation and options such as graduation on Saturday, and multiple graduations on the Coast.

A problem that was noted by one Senator was that transfer credit did not appear in SOAR for months or sometimes years. Dr. Moser stated that now that is done by hand but this should be resolved and more efficient when the new CRM software is installed (Constituent Relationship Manager). There are now four different CRMs but USM will transition to one, which will save money and increase efficiency.

5.0 A framed resolution honoring Dr. Denis Wiesenburg was presented to him and read by Pres. Anderson. Dr. Wiesenburg thanked Faculty Senate and they responded with a standing ovation.

6.0 Senate Officer Reports

6.1 Pres. Anderson reported on the status of several University Committees:

AOD Committee - Tom Burke is in the process of establishing a committee to address issues of alcohol and other drugs. The committee will have representatives from:

1. University Police
2. Dean of Students Office
3. Greek Life (separate for DOS)
4. Student Health Services (Health Promotion)
5. Student Counseling Services
6. Residence Life
7. Faculty Representative (Recommended by Faculty Senate)
8. Staff Council Representative (Recommended by Staff Council)
9. Office of Compliance
10. Gulf Park Student Affairs representative (Steve Miller is coordinating that)
11. Gulf Park Faculty representative
12. Gulf Park Staff representative
13. Intercollegiate Athletics
14. Human Resources

He has asked Jodi Ryder in Student Health Services to coordinate the Biennial Alcohol Review that is required under the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act. Also, Mike Madson from the Department of Psychology will join this committee. Pres. Anderson must submit the name by October 9 so please contact her directly if you are interested in serving.

Other Committee Needs

The Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching – Sen. Hill volunteered to serve University Assessment Committee (October meeting) – Sen. Welsh volunteered.

State Flag Update

Max Grivno is the chair of the State Flag Committee and will report briefly. However, on Wednesday, Rene Trigg and Jeffrey George reported that this does not seem to be much of an issue for staff or students. The president stated that he plans to make no further public comment unless warranted. He understands that the faculty position is different and does wish to continue

conversations with us regarding the faculty position. Pres. Anderson placed this on the agenda for our executive committee meeting with him next week.

University Calendar Issues (Provost reported this)

The president has asked that we consider holding graduation on this campus on Saturdays in order to allow families to have more flexibility in traveling to campus. He asked for a faculty response to this. If you have thoughts or comments about this, please send them to me.

Also, the Calendar Committee has set the 2016-17 calendar. The Fourth of July Holiday falls on a Monday in 2016. So, there will be a day of classes added on Friday July 29.

Enrollment

While enrollment, is flat, the actual census number is slightly down from last year. We have the opportunity to mitigate for this with spring enrollments to avoid budget “take-backs.” Dr. Moser has people recruiting heavily from the community colleges right now.

This dip is small and would have been larger if it had not been for the hard work that was done in the last half of the summer in enrollment management. Doug Vinzant firmly believes that this is a one-time scenario and not an issue of enrollment trends.

6.2 President-Elect – No report.

6.3 Secretary – No report.

6.4 Secretary-Elect – No report.

7.0 Request for Senate Consent for Senate Appointments

Pres. Anderson asked if there were any objections to the appointment of Tom Rishel to fill a resigned senators’ seat. Since there were no objections, Pres. Anderson welcomed Sen. Rishel to Faculty Senate.

8.0 Committee Reports

8.1 Senate Committees

8.1.1 Academics - Sen. Heitmuller reported that while there is general agreement with the teaching recommendations for a path for professional advancement for non-tenure track faculty there are some concerns:

- Titles and parallel alignment with tenure-track
- Discomfort with titles given to those without terminal degree
- No designated process of review and approval
- 25% cap does not work for all departments nor does use of CUPA averages
- Dissatisfaction with wordage “if funds are available” for non-tenure track promotions.

The Faculty Handbook Committee is working on definitions of titles.

8.1.2 Governance - Sen. Rehner expressed concern about an increase in enrollment of students without an increase in resources for faculty and academic programs. In some departments, there is uncompensated teaching overload. Faculty teaching loads vary widely across the University and so teaching overload varies as does the compensation – for some, an overload class is \$2500; for others, \$3,000; and for some, it depends on the number of

students. The Council of Chairs would like to partner with Faculty Senate to investigate course load averages and overload definitions.

- 8.1.3 Finance - Sen. Zantow reported the Finance Committee met with Dr. Vinzant in September and would meet with him each month.
- 8.1.4 Bylaws – Sen. Odom reported the committee’s decision not to recommend a bylaw change for removal of an officer.
- 8.1.5 Handbook - Sen. Alford reported the committee is working on a progressive dismissal policy and definitions for the corps of instruction.
- 8.1.6 Welfare and Environmental Concerns - Sen. Hrostowski presented a resolution expressing sympathy to Delta State University on the death of Dr. Ethan Schmidt. Sen. Alford moved to suspend the bylaws to allow a vote on the resolution and the motion was seconded by Sen. Greene and approved unanimously by voice vote. Sen. Hrostowski moved to adopt the resolution and it was approved unanimously by voice vote of the Senate.

Sen. Hrostowski reminded Senators that Southern Miss Community E-Waste Event was scheduled for Saturday, October 10th, from 9am to 1pm at the Payne Center parking lot.

- 8.1.7 Administrative Evaluations – No report.
- 8.1.8 Awards – No report.
- 8.1.9 Elections – No report.
- 8.1.10 Flag Ad Hoc Committee - Sen. Grivno reported that the survey had 223 responses so far and that after it closed a final report would be presented to Faculty Senate. Preliminary reports indicate a wide variety of opinions.

8.2 Gulf Coast Faculty Council - Pres-elect Holt reported they were working toward formal recognition of GCFC and on identifying the position responsibilities of the Associate Provost position. In addition:

- IVN system is good on the Coast but there are not enough sites in Hattiesburg
- There’s a lack of coordination between campus police in Hattiesburg and the Coast; the Coast needs local contacts and backup
- Faculty are invited to a welcome new faculty and staff event on the Coast on Oct. 10th.

9.0 Old Business

9.1 Teaching Track Committee – the report was submitted to Dr. Moser who sent it to USM Legal Department for review. Feedback will be sent to the Handbook Committee and Faculty Senator are asked to send their comments and suggestions to Sen Davis: Kimberley.Davis@usm.edu

10.0 New Business

10.1 Grade Review Committee

Sen. Greene expressed concern about the number of grades overturned in the Grade Review Committee and requested a report on the number of cases upholding grades and the number of overturned grades to see if there has been an increase over time.

Sen. Grivno reported that since spring 2013, there have been 72 appeals heard by the committee and 48 of those were resolved before being heard by the Committee and 9 chose not to be heard; 5 were rejected, 2 of which appealed unsuccessfully to the Provost, and 10 were granted the appeal, so 10 grades over two years were successfully appealed (there are about 25,000 grades posted per semester) so a very small number are successful in appealing a grade.

11.0 Adjournment – meeting was adjourned at 4:35pm by Pres. Anderson with no objection.

Respectfully submitted by
Teresa S. Welsh, Ph.D.
Faculty Senate Secretary