Faculty Senate Minutes - February 7, 2020

USM Faculty Senate

Follow this and additional works at: https://aquila.usm.edu/faculty_senate_minutes
The University of Southern Mississippi  
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes  
Friday, February 7, 2020, 2:00p.m.  
Scianna Hall 1043 (Hattiesburg)  
IVN to North Academic Building 125 (Gulf Park) and  
Stennis Building 1020, Room 118


Absent: Joe Olmi

1.0 Organizational Items

1.1 Call to Order The meeting was called to order by Susan Hrostowski at 2:06.

1.2 Roll Call

1.3 Recognition of Quorum (22)

1.4 Recognition of ⅔ membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions (29)

2.0 Adoption of Agenda

• Approved unanimously by voice vote.

3.0 Program

3.1 Krystyna Varnado, Associate Vice President for Human Resources

• Attended the meeting to discuss the new Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
• It applies to all fulltime benefit-eligible employees, anyone in their households, and dependent children away at college.
• Primary reason we wanted the program is the mental health option. There are two ways to take advantage of the services:
  o Telephonic (24-hour access to mental health counselors)
  o Face-to-face visits
    ▪ Includes 3 visits per person, per issue, per year
• In addition to the mental health benefit, there is a legal benefit, financial benefit, and a work/life balance benefit.
You have access to legal and financial experts who can offer advice and referrals to you.
  - You also have a free 30-minute legal consultation and 25% discount for legal services if you go through them.
- Work/life balance benefits include providing referrals for child, elder, and pet care, home repairs, etc.
  - The University is paying by employee, so we need to use these services to justify keeping the program.
- Contact information:
  - Call: 800.272.7255; TTY: 800.697.0353; Website: guidanceresources.com;
  - App: GuidanceNow; Web ID: COM589

4.0 Approval of November December Minutes
- Approved unanimously by voice vote.

5.0 Officer Reports
5.1 President

Since our last meeting, I have spent a good deal of time in conversations with the Provost, the chair of the Council of Directors, the chair of the Senate’s Faculty Handbook Committee, and other interested parties concerning the changes to the schedule of faculty evaluations. As promised, I asked Provost Moser and Dr. Sims to join us today to discuss the Senate’s concerns. Dr. Moser is away at a conference but said that he supports the new evaluation schedule as it ties annual goal setting to the academic calendar. He stated, “It is my understanding that the bulk of the work will occur during the contract period, and now with Digital Measures, the process is much more efficient and could make that effort very doable. Still, the implementation lies with the school directors in consultation with their faculty.” He recommends that faculty who are concerned about having to perform this service discuss the situation with their school directors. Likewise, Dr. Sims is confident that the evaluation processes will be greatly facilitated by Digital Measures and does not foresee the need for work outside of one’s contract.

I invited Allison Gillespie to join us today, but she asked to delay until our March meeting. She sent the following message: “I would rather come to the March meeting so we have more information and something to show. I am meeting with the Council of Directors to do a tweak and review of the process. We did a pilot of this process last year with Kinesiology and Nutrition (Committee Option) and Library Science (Director Only). We will also meet with a cross-section of faculty (some that will be on the Faculty Evaluation Committees so they can see both the faculty input and preparation process as well as the committee access and review process). The short version: we’ve taken the paper-based template word document that everyone used for the narrative and then had to copy and paste from their CV, etc., and placed it into Workflow. So, rather than having to do multiple things, faculty can simply enter the narrative information
on the screen. And, the Annual Evaluation report will have all of the publications and other information usually requested (along with a link to any files/artifacts stored in Digital Measures) that can be accessed by the reviewers.”

On the issue of the contractual obligation (aka attendance policy), the Provost has stated publicly several times in various meetings that the roll-out of the policy was poorly executed. The policy, which is part of the Employee Handbook and not the Faculty Handbook is a done deal, but the Provost would entertain proposals for amendments. My concern is the possibility of arbitrary and capricious implementation of the policy, since it is relatively vague and different directors will enforce it differently. The Governance Committee may wish to address this.

Finally, I have been in communication with Dr. Marek Steedman and Dr. Mike Forster (Chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee) regarding communication between the Handbook Committee and Faculty Senate. As we all know the FHC has been working through volumes of changes and updates to the handbook in light of the reorganization. While Dr. Jeremy Scott has done a great job soliciting our input on key issues, there is a need to create a more formal method of keeping senators apprised of the issues the FHC is considering. We will discuss this in depth when Dr. Scott makes his report.

5.2 President-Elect: No report
5.3 Secretary: No report
5.4 Secretary-Elect: No report

6.0 Decision / Action Items
7.0 Standing Committee Reports
   7.1 Bylaws: No report
   7.2 Elections: No report
   7.4 Faculty Handbook

The chair of the committee discussed the following with the senate:

- the process by which a proposal becomes part of the faculty handbook
- the Academic Freedom and Shared Governance statement that is now in the new handbook
- the upcoming proposal to add a Director's Periodic Review process in the handbook
- an option to extend the deadline for evaluations by one month to allow for evaluations to be done during contractual periods - This is to assuage faculty concerns about work outside of contract.
7.5 Academics
Committee plans to invite Cengage to provide an informational session to the senate.

7.6 Administrative Evaluations
Polled the senate to determine if the evaluation period should be changed to reflect the new faculty evaluation period. The senate voted to leave it as is.

7.7 Awards
The committee is reviewing award applications now.

7.8 Finance: No report

7.9 Governance
The Faculty Senate Governance Committee met by conference call on Wednesday, January 29. Jeremy Scott, Jennifer Courts, and Donald Redalje (chair) were in attendance. The committee considered the following items:

1. Review of modifications approve in a prior Senate Term on the Academic Freedom and Shared Governance statement in the “old” Faculty Handbook and the Chairs/Directors Periodic Review.

2. Section 3.11 of the Employee Handbook (Faculty Contractual Obligations)
   1. Jeremy Scott, member of this committee and Chair of the Faculty Senate Handbook Committee/member of the University Faculty Handbook Committee, relayed to the committee that the statement on Academic Freedom and Shared Governance that had been part of the “old” Faculty Handbook had been approved by the University Faculty Handbook Committee to be included in the “new” Faculty Handbook replacing the statement that had been in the “new” Handbook that had been inserted to address Academic Freedom and Shared Governance. None of the suggested wording changes and additions that had been approved by the Faculty Senate for the “old” Handbook were included in the newly approved replacement section such that the “new” Handbook will have the same text as was part of the “old” Handbook.

   The section that had been approved by the Faculty Senate in a prior term on Chairs/Directors Periodic Review is being reworded and reformatted to be consistent with the “new” Faculty Handbook with the section number appropriate for the “new” Handbook. This is being done by the Senate Faculty Handbook Committee and will be presented to the Senate when complete for consideration and approval.

   The committee discussed the option of proposing the wording changes to the Academic Freedom and Shared Governance section that had been approved by the Senate in a prior term for consideration by the University Faculty Handbook Committee. We agreed that although the words do strengthen the statements, it might be best to reconsider this in a future Senate term after more pressing revisions to the “new” Handbook are completed.
2. The committee discussed how we wanted to respond to section 3.11 of the Employee Handbook that was approved without any faculty review or input. The “new Faculty Handbook states clearly that any statement in the Faculty Handbook supersedes any similar statement in the Employee Handbook and takes precedence. Thus, we decided to develop our own Faculty Contractual Obligations section to submit to the Faculty Senate for review and consideration with the intent that if approved it would be forwarded through the Senate Handbook Committee to the University Faculty Handbook Committee. If approved there, it would take precedence over the section in the Employee Handbook. We are currently developing a draft of the new Faculty Contractual Obligation statement. When complete, we will present it to the Senate.

We also discussed issues with iTech and the new MFA requirement plus the older computer and the requirement that computers no longer use Windows 7 and remain part of the USM domain. This represents a major cost for programs with computer labs and requirements for computers and research instrumentation. Often the operating systems of the instruments are not compatible with Windows 10. Updating the operating systems can cost many thousands of dollars. Who will pay for this iTech demand?

- The senate discussed the fact that the move away from Windows 7 was necessary because it is no longer supported by Microsoft.

7.10 Gulf Coast: No report
7.11 University Relations and Communication: No report
7.12 Welfare and Environment: No report

8.0 Outside Committee Reports
- Anna Barrett announced that Mary Alexander, Operations Manager for Athletics, was elected President-Elect of Staff Council.

9.0 Reports from Other University Advisory Bodies

10.0 Consent Items

11.0 Unfinished Business

12.0 New Business

13.0 Good of the Order
- Kudos to former USM football player who had an interception during the Super Bowl

14.0 Announcements
- 14.1 Next Senate Meeting March 6, 2020 in the Gulf Park North Academic Bldg., rm 101

15.0 Adjourn