

The University of Southern Mississippi
The Aquila Digital Community

Faculty Senate Minutes

Faculty Senate Archive

2-4-2022

Faculty Senate Minutes--February 4, 2022

Faculty Senate

Follow this and additional works at: https://aquila.usm.edu/faculty_senate_minutes

Recommended Citation

Faculty Senate, "Faculty Senate Minutes--February 4, 2022" (2022). *Faculty Senate Minutes*. 230.
https://aquila.usm.edu/faculty_senate_minutes/230

This 2021/22 Minutes is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Senate Archive at The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Senate Minutes by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact aquilastaff@usm.edu.



Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 4, 2022, 2:00p.m.
Via Zoom

Call to Order

President Brian LaPierre called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Roll Call

Members present:

Adkins, Nell
Agler, Lin
Anderson, Patsy
Bomhold, Catharine
Bradley, Gregory
Brannock, Jennifer (position currently held by Michele Frasier-Robinson)
Burnett, Joanne
Cewe-Malloy, Leffi
Conlin-Maxwell, Lindsey
Davis, Micheal
Donahue, Paul "Tyler"
Franke, Damon
Funk, Mary
Greer, Tammy
Harbaugh, Bonnie
Hill, Lilian
Hurst, Tamara
Jeanfreau, Michelle
Johnson, Wes
Kanuri, Srinidhi
Karim, Shahid
Lamey, Kalyn
LaPierre, Brian
Leaf, Robert
Lowrey, Alisa
Martin, Whitney
Mayfield-Johnson, Susan
McCardle, Emileigh
Mezzadri, Danilo
Nazarenko, Sergei
Press, Bob
Rackoff, Louis
Rishel, Tom
Rouse, Sharon
Salyers, Candice
Scott, Jeremy
Shin, Jae-Hwa
Stanback, Emily
Tesh, Timothy
Wang, Wei

Ward, Kimberly
Wiesenburg, Denis

Members who were not in attendance:

Green, Lisa
Olmi, Joe

Quorum: A quorum (22) was established and recognized. (42 members present).

Voting Membership Present: $\frac{2}{3}$ membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions (29) was established. (42 members present).

Adoption of Agenda

A motion to accept the agenda was made. The motion was seconded. The motion to accept the agenda was approved by the majority of the members.

Approval of the Minutes (December 2021)

A motion to accept the minutes was made. The motion was seconded. The motion to accept the December meeting minutes was approved by the majority of the members.

Program

None

Officer Reports

President: Comments held until the conversation on Faculty Senate Resolution No. 2.

President-Elect: No report

Secretary: No report

Secretary-Elect: No report

Decision and Action Items

Faculty Senate Resolution No. 2 2021-2022: “A Faculty Senate Resolution Defending Academic Freedom”

- Remarks from President LaPierre:

Since our last meeting in early December, I have watched events in our state legislature and in similar bodies throughout this country with unease. Let me state from the outset that I am not politician and have no desire to be one. I am an educator, an academic, and a researcher. Today, I address a body of my peers. As a community of educators and academics, the value and practice of academic freedom is central to our identity and our mission. It is central to this institution’s raison d’etre, to the education we provide, and to our ability to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty, staff, and students. When a principle as central and vital as this is threatened, we are compelled to act. To be silent. To wait. These are not acceptable options. Silence can be misconstrued as consent. Waiting until March or April to act may mean waiting until it is too late.

Before we turn to the resolution on our agenda, let me give you an update on the situation—based on information from the meeting of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee with Chad Driskell and President Bennett on Jan. 31st—and dispel some misconceptions. When this year’s legislative session began, there were many bills that targeted CRT, divisive concepts, tenure, and affirmative action. As of today, many of these bills have died in committee. However, SB2113—which is labelled in the media as anti-CRT bill—is very much alive. Moreover, planks from the dead bills may be resurrected and attached to SB2113 by the House over the coming weeks. In short, the situation is still fluid and evolving and today’s resolution is still relevant and needed. Another bill that is still alive is SB2165. This measure would prohibit state-funded travel to states, counties, and cities that have enacted an employee travel ban against Mississippi. Such a measure may impact our ability to travel to conferences in places such as California, New York,

Chicago, Boston, and other places.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me address some misconceptions. I have heard some colleagues argue that the bills in Jackson only affect public K-12 institutions and do not apply to institutions of higher learning. If you look at the language of these bills, however, it is clear that some of them do apply to colleges and universities that accept state funds. SB2113, for example, does apply to institutions of higher education such as USM.

Some colleagues have argued that language of bills such as SB2113 is innocuous and sounds reasonable. Let me remind you, however, that the language of that bill is not fixed. It may evolve and expand over the coming weeks as the House considers it. Let me also remind you that the ambiguities and confusions inherent in the unclear language of that bill make it liable to potential abuse and misapplication as courts struggle to apply it to real life cases and circumstances. What seems innocuous and reasonable on paper may become overly restrictive and censorious in practice. Lastly, SB2113 sets an unwelcome precedent. It allows politicians to intervene in curriculum and dictate what can and cannot be taught to students. That is wrong in principle. Once it becomes a precedent. Where will it lead? Where will it end? Today it may apply to race. Tomorrow it could apply to climate change or feminism.

Another thing I want to say is that the resolution before you is not a referendum on any particular legislative bill such as SB2113. It is bigger than that. It is defense of the core value of academic freedom. In fact, SB2113 is not mentioned in the language of this resolution.

The Faculty Senates Association of Mississippi has met on these issues several times in the last month. All the Faculty Senate Presidents in that group are deeply concerned over the threat to academic freedom. Each of the Faculty Senate presidents in that body have agreed to push for a resolution defending academic freedom in their respective senates. Jackson State University has passed a resolution on academic freedom last week. Ole Miss and UMMC will begin pushing for their resolutions later this month. I propose that we make our voice heard today by passing the resolution on our agenda.

The recent bomb scares at Jackson State, Alcorn State, and HBCUs across this country should remind us that honest discussions of race, tolerance, and inclusivity need to be protected and encouraged rather than stifled and swept under the table. Let us stand in solidarity with our colleagues at Jackson State. Let us pass this resolution and go on the record defending academic freedom and the values that bind us together as educators, academics, researchers, and concerned citizens.

- A motion was made and seconded to suspend the bylaws, which was passed by a 36-1-0 (yay-nay-abstain) vote.
- A motion was made and seconded to suspend the second reading of this resolutions, which was passed unanimously.
- A motion was made and seconded to vote to adopt the resolution, and was passed by a vote of 39-2-0 (yay-nay-abstain).
- The bylaws were then restored by a unanimous vote.

Vote on Draft “Faculty Success (Formerly Digital Measures) Statement on Fair Use and Oversight”

- A motion was made and seconded to approve this statement. It was approved by a majority oral vote.

Committee Reports

Academics: (1) There are concerns about students being dropped the day before the semester began due to non-payment of tuition and the added stressors this puts on faculty and students. (2) This committee was also considering the question of who within the university can access a faculty member’s Canvas course shell. (3) There is concern about the affiliate status situation of the faculty within the School of Coastal Resilience. This committee will draft a formal statement on this issue to be considered in March.

Administrative Evaluation: No report

Awards: No report

Bylaws: No report

Elections: Data was provided from IR that was used to determine any changes to representation apportionments. A spreadsheet will be provided to all senators in an act of transparency.

Faculty Handbook Advisory: No report

Finance: No report

Governance: No report

Gulf Coast: The Gulf Coast would like a voice on any committee formed to find the next president and provost of the University.

University Relations and Communications: No report

Welfare and Environment:

- Mental Health. Last term, Joe Olmi and Wes Johnson identified apparently uncoordinated USM initiatives on mental health services for students and faculty and began mapping out better coordination. Since then, there has been some improvements. Both will be following up to make sure we are doing all we can to help our USM community on this issue.
- Inequities. Tammy completed a preliminary report, and it was released with a second document this week to the Senate for comments. She will be following up to develop an implementation plan.
- Sexual Assault of students. Candice will continue working with students on this issue and providing Senate support.
- Environment. The continuing pandemic requires continuing efforts on our part to focus on related environmental issues.
- Student attrition. As Dr. Amy Miller told the Senate recently, more than half of our students never graduate, for a variety of issue including finances. But she argued that lack of mentorship is a key issue for all of us. She urged us all to be mentors; and many faculty informally are. The University also has a mentorship program matching faculty and staff with mentees (new or transfer students). But at the first meeting of the term, yesterday, only five faculty showed up. I signed up for the first time and have two mentees: we will meet four times.
- Our committee could explore ways to increase faculty participation. It's in our interest as well as the students. If anyone is interested in helping on this, please let us know.

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports None

Consent Items None

Unfinished Business None

New Business

Statement of Concern Regarding Proposed Academic Program Definition

- A motion was made and seconded to approve this statement, which passed with a vote of 36-1-2 (yay-nay-abstain).

Good of the Order

An update on the job search for Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management was given.

Center for Faculty Development's Faculty First Fridays, Patio 44, February 4th from 4-6PM
EAP Orientation Meeting and Reminder from Human Resources

Announcements

Next Faculty Senate Meeting on March 4, 2022 via Zoom

Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made. The motion was seconded. The motion passed by a majority of the Faculty Senate.