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Faculty Senate Minutes--March 4, 2022

Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 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 (holds proxy for Bonnie Harbaugh)
Bomhold, Catharine
Bradley, Gregory (holds proxy for Wei Wang & Mary Funk)
Brannock, Jennifer (position currently held by Michele Frasier-Robinson)
Burnett, Joanne
Cewe-Malloy, Leffi
Conlin-Maxwell, Lindsey
Donahue, Paul "Tyler"
Franke, Damon
Greer, Tammy
Hill, Lilian
Hurst, Tamara
Jeanfreau, Michelle
Kanuri, Srinidhi
Karim, Shahid (holds proxy for Micheal Davis)
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
Ward, Kimberly
Wiesenburg, Denis

Members who were not in attendance:

Green, Lisa
Johnson, Wes
Olmi, Joe

Quorum: A quorum (22) was established and recognized. (37 members present).

Voting Membership Present: $\frac{2}{3}$ membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions (29) was established. (37 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 (February 2022)

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:

I want to give you an update on some of the issues that we have been discussing and pursuing. There are some positive and some troubling developments. On the plus side, there has been some motion on the issue of approving the letter of agreement template that would formally grant affiliate status to some of our colleagues at the Gulf Park campus. As you may remember, there was concern expressed at the delay in approving that document and the subsequent stalling of efforts to extend to our Gulf Park colleagues the affiliate status that they have long been promised. In its last two meetings with the President and the Provost, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee raised this issue and urged that that document be released in a timely manner. We also recommended that that document give affiliated faculty the opportunity to participate in committees in their affiliated programs and to be able to have a say on curricular and programmatic issues. Two days ago, I received news that the letter of agreement template has been approved. Thus, the formal process of granting affiliate status should be able to move forward quickly and expeditiously. I have seen the approved letter of agreement and it grants affiliate faculty the ability to participate—at the invitation of directors in the affiliated programs—in committees in their affiliated programs, to vote in those bodies, and to have an opportunity to contribute to debates on programmatic and curricular issues. This is a positive development and I applaud those who have worked for so long to advance this important issue.

At our last meeting, the Faculty Senate approved a resolution defending academic freedom. This resolution was motivated by legislative proposals in Jackson that would have an impact on our teaching, our classrooms, our curricular independence, and the bedrock value of academic freedom. On this front, the news is less encouraging. After being referred to and passed by the House Committee on Universities and Colleges (which should remind us that this bill is directed as much at higher education as it is at K-12 institutions) the anti-CRT measure SB 2113 was approved by the State House yesterday. I was able to speak to the President's Office about this and to receive the latest news from Chad Driskell, our legislative liaison. Although a motion to reconsider has been entered, Chad does not believe that that will upend or derail SB2113. It will, however, create some procedural hurdles for the State House before the bill is sent to the governor. When the governor receives the bill from the House, he will have five days to act on it. Chad expects that the governor will sign this bill into law. Once that happens, we will have to see how the ambiguous and opaque language of that law is interpreted at a legal level and applied on a practical level at colleges and universities across our state. Perhaps, that last phase will give the

IHL the ability to weigh in and shape the implementation of this measure.

Obviously, we must decide on what our next steps will be on this rapidly developing situation. The Association of Faculty Senate Presidents of Mississippi will be holding a meeting next week on this issue. I would also like to convene a meeting our Executive Committee during the same period to consider our responses. As I stated at our last session, I see this as a critical issue. SB 2113's passage into law would create troubling precedents and uproot long established principles governing academic freedom at USM and around the IHL system. In the meantime, it is important to remember that SB2113 is still in the State House and under a formal motion of reconsideration. For those who are willing, I would urge you—as electors and constituents—to reach out to your state representatives on an individual basis and ask that they support the motion to reconsider the motion under which SB2113 was passed.

In my conversation with the President's Office, we also discussed the latest revision to our COVID-19 protocol and mask requirement. The revised guidelines retain the requirement to wear masks in classroom settings. The decision to retain masks in classrooms was taken for a number of reasons. When this decision was taken, the CDC's revised metrics had Jackson County—which is the site of our GCRL—as an area of high transmission. To keep our guidance consistent across campuses and to take this into account, masking in classrooms was deemed prudent and necessary. In addition, the decision to retain masking in classrooms was informed by the upcoming holiday calendar. As you know, Mardi Gras just finished, and Spring Break is on the horizon. There is legitimate concern that widespread travel and socializing during this period may cause a spike in transmission on our campus when we return to classes later this month. The President's Office also considered the past recommendations of Faculty Senate and other stakeholders on this issue. The President's Office also indicated that after Spring Break these mask requirements may be revisited as we see where our COVID rates are trending on campus and in our local communities.

President-Elect: No report

Secretary: No report

Secretary-Elect: No report

Committee Reports

A motion was made and seconded to move the Faculty Handbook Advisory Committee report to the beginning of the list. The motion carried unanimously.

Faculty Handbook Advisory: Proposed additions to Faculty Handbook Sections 5.2, 5.3.2.1, 5.3.2.2, 5.3.2.3, 5.4.1 were presented to Senate. A motion was made and seconded to table this until the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Academics: Concerns were expressed again about the letter of affiliation between faculty members housed in the School of Coastal Resilience and their legacy schools.

Administrative Evaluation: No report

Awards: First round of awards is being judged currently.

Bylaws: No report

Elections: Elections are underway for 2022-2023 academic year.

Finance: No report

Governance: No report

Gulf Coast: On Monday, February 28, 2022, Dr. Bo Li and Dr. Tom Rishel had a Teams meeting with Dr. Sarah Lee, the Director of the School of Computing Sciences and Computer Engineering. She began the meeting by informing them that the Applied Computer Science degree that has been located on the Gulf Park campus will be moved to a fully online format. Effective immediately students will no longer be admitted to the face-to-face (F2F) program. Courses will continue to be offered F2F to “teach out” the students who are currently enrolled in the program. There are a number of questions and issues that, as far as is known, have not yet been resolved.

University Relations and Communications: No Report

Welfare and Environment:

Bob reported that he has forwarded the report that Tammy and other committee members have

been working on regarding pay disparities to Dr. LaPierre.

Candice reported on her work with the Committee for Services and Resources for Women on campus to distribute free feminine hygiene products across campus. She discussed her plans to seek financial support from departments and/or grants to sustain this service.

Wes reported on his meeting with Krystyna Varnado and Joe Olmi last month. They discussed the recreating of the campus wide Mental Health Task Force and efforts by Ms. Varnado to expand mental health services at USM. He indicated the need to follow up with Ms. Varnado regarding the hiring of the newly created Mental Health Outreach Coordinator. He also discussed the importance having the Outreach Coordinator meet with the Faculty Senate as soon as possible. Wes and Joe will be meeting with Ms. Angel Walker and other members of the SGA on Friday, March 4, to continue their dialog regarding disseminating information on campus regarding mental health services, lobbying for expanded mental health services and the need to develop protocols for students and faculty to follow when there is a crisis event on campus.

Tammy discussed the need to continue her committee's focus on diversity, job satisfaction and retention of faculty and staff. Tammy indicated she would be exploring the possibility of developing and disseminating a survey analyzing past and present faculty/employees' job satisfaction, and their attitudes toward their work environment. Bob suggested that Tammy follow needed IRB protocols in process of conducting this research.

Bob expressed concern that many of the student who are dropping out for non-financial reasons may need a mentor. The University has a variety of academic tutoring and other mentor programs, but it may be worthwhile to see if there are additional ways to reach those not signing up for such help.

Bob reminded the committee of the Faculty Senate meeting March 4 at 2:00 p.m. Wes responded that he would not be in attendance due to previous existing obligations.

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports None

Consent Items None

Unfinished Business None

New Business None

Good of the Order Center for Faculty Development's Faculty First Fridays, El Rayo, March 4th from 4-6PM

Announcements

Next Faculty Senate Meeting on April 1, 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.