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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Friday, May 6, 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
Bradley, Gregory
Brannock, Jennifer (position currently held by Michele Frasier-Robinson)
Burnett, Joanne
Cewe-Malloy, Leffi
Conlin-Maxwell, Lindsey
Davis, Micheal
Donahue, Paul “Tyler”
Funk, Mary
Greer, Tammy
Harbaugh, Bonnie
Hill, Lilian
Hurst, Tamara
Johnson, Wes
Karim, Shahid
Lamey, Kalyn
LaPierre, Brian
Leaf, Robert
Lowrey, Alisa
Martin, Whitney
Mayfield-Johnson, Susan
McCardle, Emileigh (holds proxy for Damon Franke)
Mezzadri, Danilo
Nazarenko, Sergei
Olmi, Joe
Press, Bob
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:

Bomhold, Catharine
Jeanfreau, Michelle
Kanuri, Srinidhi
Rackoff, Louis

Quorum: A quorum (22) was established and recognized. (36 members present).

Voting Membership Present: $\frac{2}{3}$ membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions (29) was established. (36 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 (April 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.

PhD student Nicole Caulfield presented her research on sexual assault and suicide at USM

Program

Kathleen Masters presented the findings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Review of Corps of Instruction.

Officer Reports

President:

Last week, the IHL board unveiled a series of changes to its policies on a number of issues: promotion in rank, minimal standards for tenured employment, post-tenure review, and the search process for institutional executive officers (IEOs). I urge you to read the changes that have been made and to share this information with your constituents.

During our monthly meeting with President Bennett, which was held on April 25th, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee expressed its dismay and concern at many of these changes. These changes will have a fundamental impact not only on critical issues such as tenure, promotion, and evaluation. They will also affect—among other things—faculty speech, academic freedom, shared governance, and our ability to participate meaningfully in the selection of our next university president.

The Executive Committee and I have both process and content-related concerns over these new IHL policies. On a process or procedural level, these new policies were approved seemingly without any input or involvement of the faculty or the Institutional Executive Officers (IEOs). Such oversight runs roughshod over the principle of shared governance. In addition, the IHL discussed and approved these policies in an environment of what a colleague of mine termed “near total secrecy” and in a process that preempted normal discussion and evaded standard operating procedures.

On a content-related level, the new IHL policies raise many areas of concern. They are filled with ambiguous terms and phrases (such as “collegiality,” “inefficiency,” “contumacious conduct,” and “accuracy, effectiveness, and integrity of communications”) that are liable to broad interpretation and potential abuse and misuse. The AAUP, for example, has warned of the use of “collegiality” as a standalone criterion of evaluation and cautioned of its misuse to promote groupthink, stifle dissent, and stigmatize faculty who do not conform to narrow parameters of identity, expression, and behavior—especially women and

minorities. Nonetheless, the new policies are filled with the language of “collegiality” and other undefined and vague formulations. Without a rationale given by the IHL for these changes, faculty are left on their own to make sense of these changes and their larger significance. I believe that, when put in the context of the anti-CRT law and the escalating assault on tenure, these policies pose a clear and present danger to faculty speech, free inquiry, and to the bedrock value of academic freedom—an ideal that our university is pledged to protect and for which it is evaluated by our accrediting body, SACSCOC. The changes to the search process for IEOs (i.e., university presidents) are equally troubling and equally difficult to explain and accept. This is especially true for us, the faculty of USM. The search process for our next President will begin in the near future and, unfortunately, will be conducted under these new policies. Like the policies on tenure, promotion, and annual review, the new IHL policies on the IEO search process were also conducted with unacceptable levels of secrecy and non-participation. Among other things, President-Elect: United Campus Workers of Mississippi held a demonstration yesterday, advocating for a \$15/hour minimum wage for USM staff. They have a petition with over 300 signatures.

Secretary: No report

Secretary-Elect: No report

Committee Reports

Academics: A letter of affiliation new draft was created by the faculty of School of Coastal Resilience. That new draft must now be sent through the process once again.

Administrative Evaluation: As of now, there have been 262 responses to the administrative evaluation.

Awards: Awards were presented today.

Bylaws: No report

Elections: Elections of next year’s senators is nearly complete.

Faculty Handbook Advisory: No report

Finance: No report

Governance: No report

Gulf Coast: Gulf Coast Faculty council

University Relations and Communications: No report

Welfare and Environment:

New Committee member starting in the fall: newly elected Senator Fan Zhang.

The Committee requests interested current or incoming Senators who want to be on the Committee to contact Bob Press, Chair

Inequities subcommittee: Tammy Greer

I am in a conversation with Dr. Oglesby in the School of Health about how we as the faculty welfare committee can assess job satisfaction and burnout among our faculty. We have twice the turnover rate compared to the national average and an even greater turnover rate among Black faculty. We spoke, as well, about some best practices for intervening in these high turnover rates that we can use to make recommendations to the admin concerning this issue. The survey for burnout. We are currently looking for free measures of those constructs and/or monies to fund those surveys.

Mental Health: Joe Olmi and Wes Johnson (both retiring)

As reported previously, they have worked this semester to help coordinate the previously scattered mental health services on campus. They discovered an inactive campus committee on this and located a grant USM had related to mental health services. They also contacted an expert at another University and arrange for training on this campus. The result at this stage is promising with various offices on campus communicating and working together to help respond to mental health issues, primarily of students, but also staff and faculty.

It should be noted that several national reports have highlighted the mental health challenges college students are facing across the nation.

The Committee applauds the efforts by Drs. Olmi and Johnson which will benefit many.

Mentoring – Bob Press

There is a lack of effective non-class scheduling mentoring at USM.

I met with Christy Oberst recently, Director of the University Advisement Center. After relaying comments from two Senators last month that they would rather do freshman advising in their units (a request which should be directed to her), we discussed mentoring as opposed to class scheduling. She agreed that more mentoring on career options and other academic issues would be helpful; and she said the UAC does some of this. We agreed that more would be helpful but that currently there is no budgeting or time allotted for that. She mentioned the Student Success Center, a small unit currently interviewing for Director, for students identified with major academic challenges. I was not clear how faculty notify the Center about a student needing such help.

At this time, with less than half our students graduating in Six years (financial constraints are the main problem, according to Dean Winstead), I recommend the Faculty Senate study the issue closer in the fall to seek additional options, such as part of University 101 for incoming first-year and transfer students; or more encouragement for mentors assigned by UAC to actually mentor on these issues.

Subcommittee on Sexual Assault: Candice Salyers, Chair

(May) Because I had not yet received an update from students about changes to the sexual assault policy, I contacted the Title IX office to see if there are any updates that they can share with us. They will be meeting with students from SAPA next week (week of 5/9/2022) to work on amendments to the policy and said they would update me after that.

Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Welfare & Environment Committee, and student leaders meet to discuss issues related to university sexual assault policy and the possibility of conducting a survey to gain further insight and data about student experiences. (Oct. 15)

Subcommittee on Sexual Assault is formed as part of Welfare & Environment Committee (Oct. 24)

Bella Brocato presents proposal for changes to sexual assault policy to SGA (Nov. 4).

Faculty Senate issues the following statement of concern (Nov. 5):

The Faculty Senate supports the initiative of USM students to call attention to sexual violence on campus and urges the administration to support student efforts to work towards a safer campus.

Dr. Stanback, Dr. Greer, and Dr. Salyers meet with Bella Brocato to discuss survey ideas and support (Nov. 29).

Moving forward into the Spring, Dr. Greer, Dr. Stanback, and Dr. Salyers will support Bella Brocato and other students with editing the survey, mentoring the IRB process, and facilitating distribution. President Brian LaPierre describes that, “Christa McLeod has informed that the President will be responding to our statement of concern. Christa told me about the upcoming response to this on November 16th. I have been told by Bella that the student leaders will be meeting with President Bennett on December 13th or 14th. Bella also informed that legislation is being introduced in the SGA on this matter shortly or in the beginning of Spring.”

I connected with Nicole Caulfield (Graduate Student in Psychology) about her work exploring the intersection between sexual assault on college campuses and suicide risk. Although some of her data reflects nation-wide trends, some is specific to USM (and both are relevant for our university). Because she has not yet officially published the results, I asked if there is a form in which she would be willing to share her research and data with Faculty Senate. She provided a draft of her paper, and she has been invited to present the data specific to USM in the May 6 Faculty Senate meeting.

I met with Wes Johnson to coordinate with him and Joe Olmi about this work at the intersection of our two subcommittees. He recommended contacting Krystyna Varnado to find out more information about the upcoming hire for a campus mental health coordinator.

When I contacted Ms. Varnado, she expressed gratitude for our work on these issues and is very happy to work with us. She believes a mental health coordinator will be hired by July 1. She recommended that I talk with Serena Cantrell to receive confirmation about this hire. I have contacted Dean Cantrell,

and she confirmed that they hope to have someone in that position by July 1 (the job was posted this week), and that we can reach out to her in July to begin coordinating with that person.

Menstrual Products: Candice also headed USM's Committee on Services and Resources for women (CSRW) which began providing baskets of free menstrual hygiene products in restrooms across campus, while SGA simultaneously began their own initiative to request that these products be offered free for students. Although it may seem that lack of access to menstrual products only affects the educations of women in developing countries, it is actually a significant issue in the United States as well. In Mississippi, "1 in 4 women between the ages of 12 and 44 lives below the Federal Poverty Line."¹ Lack of access to these products affects people's sense of dignity, impacts their attendance and participation in classes, and poses serious risks to their physical and mental health.

SGA at The University of Southern Mississippi has passed legislation in support of providing free menstrual products, and SGA and CSRW now are working together as well as collaborating with another student organization (Generation Action) to make these products available across campus (currently CSRW is servicing 39 campuses).

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports None

Consent Items None

Unfinished Business

Mike Davis updated senate on the progress of hiring a Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management.

New Business

Nominations for president-elect included Jennifer Courts (accepted), Kimberly Ward (declined), and Tom Rishel (declined). Courts was elected by a secret ballot vote of 32-0-1 (yea-nay-abstain).

Nominations for secretary elect included Candice Salyers (accepted). Salyers was elected by a secret ballot vote of 34-0-1 (yea-nay-abstain).

Good of the Order

USM Student Counseling Services and Center for Faculty Development, "Mental Health First Aid Training"

Announcements

Faculty member Ramakalavathi Marapareddy from the School of Computing Sciences has passed away.

Motion to Adjourn

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