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11-4-2022

## Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes--November 4, 2022

Faculty Senate

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**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, November 4, 2:00 p.m.  
Via Zoom

**Call to Order**

President Denis Wiesenberg called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Roll Call**

Members present:

Adkins, Nell	Kanuri, Srindidhi
Arnau, Randolph	Kilgore, Jonathan
Bai, Fengwei	LeBert, Amy
Beedle, Jon	McCardle, Emileigh
Bernstein, Joshua	Mezzadri, Danilo
Bomhold, Catharine	Morgan, Hani
Bradley, Greg (proxy for Wei Wang)	Nazarenko, Sergei
Burnett, Joanne	Press, Bob
Ciraldo, Nick	Puckett, Mark
Courts, Jennifer	Salyers, Candice
Cullum, Terry	Scott, Jeremy
Darnell, Zack	Shaw, Joyce
Donahue, Paul "Tyler"	Shin, Jae-Hwa
Franke, Damon	Smith, Kim
Funchess, Tanya	Spuhler, Bryan
Funk, Mary	Stanback, Emily
Greer, Tammy	Troughton, Lennie
Grivno, Max	Wallace, Maria
Gulledge, Laura	Wiesenburg, Denis
Hrostowski, Susan	

Members who were not in attendance:

Anderson, Patsy  
Mclain, Nina  
Mistretta, Vincenzo  
Wang, Wei  
Zhang, Fan

Quorum: A quorum (22) was established and recognized. (38 members present).

Voting Membership Present:  $\frac{2}{3}$  membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions (29) was established. (38 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 (PREVIOUS MONTH)**

A motion to accept the October, 2022 minutes was made. The motion was seconded. The motion to accept the April meeting minutes was approved by the majority of the members.

## **Program**

Prior to the program members of the media identified themselves: Molly Minta (Mississippi Today), Anthony Olivieri (ESPN), and representatives from USM media

## **Officer Reports**

### **President:**

Much has happened since our October 7 meeting. The big news was that IHL selected Dr. Joe Paul as the 13<sup>th</sup> President of USM and awarded him a four-year contract. Many of us know Dr. Paul personally. He has been a fixture at USM for over 40 years. Marshall Ramsey captured the feeling of many alumni in his cartoon showing him as A Rock compared to The Rock. President Paul reaches out to me often to keep me informed, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has had a good working relationship with him. I believe all faculty have appreciated his stated commitment to shared governance.

As most of you know, I delivered remarks on behalf of the faculty at the IHL Search Committee Listening Session in Hattiesburg. The statement was published in Student Printz. It described the characteristics we needed in a new President including a commitment to academic freedom and shared governance. Maybe they listened.

Emily Stanback and I from the Executive Committee met with President Joe Paul and Interim Provost Gordon Cannon on October 26. We invited President Paul to address us today, but he had made a previous commitment to a Graduate School event. We hope he can join us next month. We asked about the plan for the search for a new Provost. President Paul advised us that the University will contract with Academic Search as search consultants and that faculty will be involved in the search. President Paul told us he seeks a Provost skilled in managing budgets as well as academic programs. He told me later that he plans to have a meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the Council Directors to plan the search process and recommend members for the search committee. This is good news.

The Executive Committee has made a formal request to the Interim Provost that a new university policy be created that requires all faculty-only policies be placed in the USM Faculty Handbook following the standard procedures outlined in the Handbook. This request was pursuant to the policy on Faculty Contract Obligations that was placed in the USM Employee Handbook in July 2019 without any faculty input. The draft policy I provided is now under review and I anticipate that it will work its way through the approval process this semester.

We also received an update on the Faculty Affiliate letters for Gulf Coast faculty. Provost Cannon provided us a message from Director Lee Follett to Gulf Coast faculty with a form letter to be used to request affiliate status with programs in Hattiesburg. We were told by Provost Cannon that there were “no takers.” When I reported this to some Gulf Coast faculty, I received a reply in all caps that “That is ABSOLUTELY NOT an accurate representation of the current situation.” After following up on this with Provost Cannon, we received notice from Dean Winstead that, upon request from the Provost, he has scheduled a meeting with the school directors to review the affiliate template and suggest changes. We will address this issue again with the President and Provost at our next meeting.

I want to thank the members of the Welfare and Environment Committee, the Governance Committee, and others for drafting our Sense of the Senate statement on the USM Wellness Center, aka the Volleyball Arena. The Executive Committee presented the draft statement to President Paul and requested that the University follow our guidance by issuing a statement about how to make this right. On Wednesday morning, I received a call from President Paul who told me that he had listened to the Senate and that a statement would be issued on Thursday. That statement and our next steps will be our first discussion item today.

#### President-Elect:

##### IHL

- Approved a contract amendment that will extend the term of its existing bookstore services agreement with Barnes & Noble College Booksellers, LLC, (Barnes & Noble) to continue bookstore services on USM’s campuses This amendment is a result of mutual agreement by USM and Barnes & Noble to extend the contract an additional five years,
- funds to conduct a statewide strategic plan centered around innovation and how to position Mississippi in becoming a leading location for innovative companies looking to locate with The University of Southern Mississippi as the lead institution
  - o funded by U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Authority American Rescue Plan Funding subaward from the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA)
  - o partner with JSU, MSU, and Ole Miss
- Project Request: The University of Southern Mississippi is requesting approval to increase the budget from a pre-plan budget of \$500,000 to \$11,350,000 for an increase in the amount of \$10,850,000 for renovation of Hickman Hall
- Project Request: The University of Southern Mississippi requests approval to purchase property located at 209 N. 36th Avenue in Hattiesburg from Billie Billingsley Swinney, Individually, and Billie Billingsley Swinney, Trustee of the Billie Billingsley Swinney Revocable Trust, for a sale price of \$355,000.
  - o purchase this property which is adjacent to the campus in order to protect the natural growth path for the institution. This will allow for future development and ensure the property is available at the time of future needs.
- Proposed Program Title: USM – Master of Science in Medicine (MSM) in Physician Assistant Studies (Gulf Coast)

Secretary: Website will be updated soon, as will the Faculty Senate Teams, per recent requests

Secretary-Elect: No report.

## **6.0 Discussion/Decision/Action Items**

### **6.1 USM “Wellness Center” (aka Volleyball Arena) Statement**

The Faculty Senate had a robust conversation about the status of the Wellness Center scandal. The matter has been reported on extensively in several news venues, ranging from *The Guardian* to *Mississippi Today* to *ESPN*, which has led to new revelations. On October 26, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee delivered a draft Sense of the Senate statement to President Paul that was authored by Max Grivno and the Welfare and Environment Committee. The Faculty Senate had originally planned to vote on this document in this meeting (November 4), but after discussion felt that the document was no longer current, given USM’s November 3 release of a formal statement about the matter.

Faculty Senators were generally disappointed by the statement released by the University. Senators expressed that more transparency is necessary, and that the solution proposed in USM’s November 3 statement, “seeking ways for campus facilities to be utilized for the benefit of Mississippi families and individuals in the spirit of the original agreement,” is inadequate to the gravity and scope of the events. Some solutions were considered, including partnering with the Center for Community Engagement and local leaders to identify possible future collaborations. Senators also expressed continued bafflement about how a breakdown of this nature could have happened in the first place, as well as a strong desire to ensure that this kind of breakdown never happens again.

Emily Stanback will work on drafting a new Sense of the Senate document that incorporates parts of our October document but takes into account new developments; she welcomes suggestions via email. Candice Salyers will collect names of Senators interested in joining an ad hoc committee to brainstorm possible solutions to the matter.

### **6.2 Faculty Handbook Tenure/Promotion Remand Modification**

The Interim Provost, Gordon Cannon, contacted Jeremy Scott regarding the procedure for when the Provost remands tenure/promotion applications, and requested that the Faculty Handbook Committee review the process.

Jeremy Scott explained the process to Senators. At present, when the Provost remands a tenure/promotion application—a rare occurrence—it returns to the College Committee. The proposal is that it go back to the school-level committee instead. Senators voted on a recommendation to remand to the school-level committee rather than the college-level committee. The vote was 34 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain.

### **6.3 Provost Search Discussion**

There was a discussion of what we know of the planned search for a new USM Provost. The process will be typical, and will include faculty. Interested faculty should contact Denis Wiesenber.

## **6.4 Gulf Coast Faculty Affiliate Letters**

There has been confusion about affiliate letters long promised to faculty in the School of Coastal Resilience who are no longer attached to legacy schools after the reorganization of USM's Gulf Park Campus. A faculty workgroup had been put together to discuss and respond to the original affiliate letter, and to request edits. One major concern about the initial letter related to job security. As a result, the workgroup suggested additions to the letter that would include context and history related to the reorganization, as well as language ensuring that efforts will be made to provide job stability and relocate faculty to Hattiesburg if necessary. President Paul, Provost Cannon, and Dean Winstead are now aware that this issue is unresolved and that faculty are still awaiting final affiliate letters.

## **Committee Reports**

### Academics:

Emileigh McCardle updated the Senate that Academics has no new information other than what's happening with Governance, which will be raised in their report.

### Administrative Evaluation:

Amy LeBert provided an update that she has now received information from the prior committee chair, and that this year's committee has met and delegated all tasks. They will analyze data from the 2021 - 2022 evaluation, intend to complete the analysis by November 15, and intend to begin distributing results by November 21 for completion by Thanksgiving. In the December meeting they will report on Spring tasks, which will be related to the next cycle of administrative evaluations.

### Awards:

The awards committee asked Senators to encourage fellow faculty to apply for awards due November 18.

### Bylaws:

The committee met to clarify goals. They are ready and waiting if Senators have any questions.

### Elections:

The committee has met to confirm their plan: to review all senators who need to be replaced, communicate with school directors, communicate with HR to confirm eligibility, prepare ballots for early spring voting, and pull together a committee manual.

### Faculty Handbook Advisory:

The committee offered an update on votes in process, followed by an update related to the Council of Directors: the handbook language will be changed to clarify the director role in approving prior years of service / credit towards tenure. This credit is actually granted at the dean level during contract negotiations. There was also a discussion of the revisions required by the recent tenure, promotion, and evaluation guideline changes at the IHL level. The University general counsel has suggested language, a meeting has been scheduled, and the goal is to discuss how to best create updated language. If we don't create language related to these changes, it will be created for us.

Hani Morgan asked a question about the review of school-level documents; Jeremy Scott proposed that possibly the general Faculty Handbook could include guidance that schools need to regularly review documents.

#### Finance:

Finance committee met with Allyson Easterwood in September. There was no October meeting, but the committee plans to meet again before the end of term. Please forward any issues. Nell Adkins indicated that in September there was no anticipation of painful belt tightening, although enrollment is down and budgets will be constrained.

#### Governance:

There are three issues that the Governance Committee is working on. The first relates to the possible addition of language to the Faculty Handbook about off-contract work and possibly the revision of the annual review process. There are two possibilities: revert to the old annual review system (reviews conducted by calendar rather than academic year) or extend deadlines so that all work related to annual reviews (by faculty under review and also faculty on annual review committees) takes place when faculty are on contract. Second, Jennifer Courts and Joshua Bernstein are working on an ombudsman proposal. They are being intentionally thorough in preparing to draft this proposal—by researching budgets, for example, and seeking advice from Ole Miss. Third, the Governance Committee is working on a survey about the reorganization to be distributed to all faculty. Results will demonstrate the impact of the reorganization, as well as current faculty sentiment on the matter. Finally, Joshua Bernstein noted that Bryan Myers is giving talk on campus of relevance to Faculty Senate work.

#### Gulf Coast:

Damon Franke raised the issue of confusion about mentorship on the Gulf Coast. Many Coast students don't have an assigned advisor on their campus. Research has shown the critical importance of mentorship to student retention. This is an equity issue within the Coast campus (some students have mentors on campus, while others don't), but it is also an equity issue between campuses. There has been a faculty vote on the issue, but no action as of yet.

The matter of affiliate status was also discussed. Additionally, faculty in Coastal Resilience have had to face several logistical difficulties this semester—for example, moving offices in the middle of the semester. The issue of having a permanent Coast Design and Space Committee would help with this. In a recent article the Mayor of Long Beach expressed concerns about closing programs on the Gulf Coast campus. More broadly, there is no feedback loop for Gulf Coast faculty to ask questions of the administration or make suggestions.

#### University Relations and Communications:

Jae-Hwa Shin reported that the committee sent questions to the Office of the Vice President for External Affairs. Once responses are received, a meeting will be set up. Hopefully the VP can also be invited to a future Faculty Senate meeting.

#### Welfare and Environment:

The committee spent significant time over the past month working on the statement regarding TANF funds and the Wellness Center. Moving forward, the committee will shift focus to other items on agenda: 1) gender and racial equity in hiring and salary issues and 2) faculty mental health and addiction leave policies. As to the latter agenda item, Max Grivno reported that there is a new University-wide committee on faculty mental health; his goal is to link the committee with the Faculty Senate.

There was a question, and then a discussion, related to letters generated by the Office of Student Affairs. Such letters are generated in a wide variety of circumstances and allow for instructor discretion in addressing the situation detailed in the letter.

### **Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports**

No Outside Committee Reports

### **Consent Items**

No Consent Items

### **Unfinished Business**

No unfinished business

### **New Business**

No new business

### **Good of the Order**

AAUP will meet on November 21 on Zoom. Contact Jeremy Scott or Jen Courts.

The Art & Design Fall Iron Pour is next Saturday, 11/12. \$20 gets you a scratch block to make your own art and be a part of the molten experience.

### **Announcements**

No announcements.

### **Motion to Adjourn**

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