

10-7-2022

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes--October 7, 2022

Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 7, 2022, 2:00p.m.

Via Zoom

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Members present:

Mark Puckett, Fengwei Bai, Terry Cullum, Laura Gullede, Damon Franke, Vincenzo Mistretta, Jae-Hwa Shin, Joshua Bernstein, Max Grivno, Mary Funk, Emaleigh McCardle, Jeremy Scott, Jonathan Kilgore, Sergei Nazarenko, Jen Courts, Fan Zhang, Candice Salyers, Joanne Burnett, Bob Press, Srindidhi Kanuri, Greg Bradley, Wei Wang, Bryan Spuhler, Hani Morgan, Lennie Troughton, Paul Donohue, Catharine Bomhold, Tammy Greer, Randolph Arnau, Susan Hrostowski, Tanya Funchess, Nina Mclain, Kim Smith, Amy LeBert, Zack Darnell, Denis Weisenberg, Joyce Shaw, Patsy Anderson

Members who were not in attendance:

Maria Wallace, Jon Beedle, Nell Adkins, Nick Ciraldo, Danilo Mezzadri, Emily Stanback

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 (PREVIOUS MONTH)

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

Program

Randall Langston (Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management)

Randall Langston introduced himself and his history of experience in higher education at both public and private institutions. During his presentation, he proposed that recruitment efforts need to include transfer students, graduate students, international students, and other non-traditional university students. He is aware of the downturn in enrollment at USM as well as the projected “enrollment cliff” nationwide. His work has focused on how we are communicating and

marketing to students, including a customer relationship model called “Slate” that he reports is the best CRM available. He will be using predictive modeling which will be ready by January, engaging in storytelling and personalizing for prospective students, meeting with deans and directors, and building a postcard series of communications for each college that include the dean, a faculty member, a student, and an alum. He is also working with a company to create videos, texting, and social media to facilitate different ways of connecting with students and is excited to have faculty participate in recruitment events, college fairs, and school visits. Dr. Chasteen is compiling a list of faculty who are willing to give guest lectures at community colleges. Dr. Paul has been very active doing events at community colleges and high schools, and faculty at those schools are requesting that USM faculty come to visit the schools as well. Dr. Chasteen will be reaching out to Directors to facilitate this effort. He is willing to come back again to the FS to talk more as the processes are enacted.

Officer Reports

President:

The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate met with President Joe Paul and Interim Provost Gordon Cannon on September 29.

The USM “Wellness Center” (aka the Volleyball Arena) was at the top of our list for discussion. We again expressed our concern for how the University is being perceived nationally and internationally. In the past month news of the Mississippi welfare fraud scandal has been reported by NBC News, The New York Times, the Washington Post, ESPN and even mentioned in Stephen Colbert’s monologue. Based on concerns from several Senators, we suggested that the University issue a statement about the Volleyball Arena. President Paul was not receptive to this suggestion and it has been reported in the *Student Printz* that “At present, USM does not plan to publicly discuss the matter in detail.”

The Executive Committee expressed concerns raised by the faculty concerning the late notice that classes would be cancelled on Thursday, October 27, to accommodate Eagle Club parking for the evening football game on campus. We were advised that some exceptions would be allowed and that more information was forthcoming. This late notice has been challenging for faculty who had special events planned and for all faculty generally as the notice came months after our syllabi were developed. President Paul apologized for the late notification.

We notified President Paul that the Executive Committee would be making remarks at the IHL Board Search Committee Listening Session on Monday, October 3. I delivered the remarks on behalf of Faculty Senate and the *Student Printz* published our statement in their October 5, 2022, issue.

After our meeting last month, it was confirmed by the President's office that Faculty Senate will appoint a representative to the Employee Handbook Advisory Group. Jennifer Courts has been appointed and has agreed to serve this year. The Employee Handbook Advisory Group that advises the HR Director on policies that pertain to both faculty and staff. Pursuant to our discussions from the previous meeting with President Paul and Provost Cannon, we formally requested that USM establish a policy that "Policies that pertain only to faculty must be developed and implemented only through the University Faculty Handbook Committee process." We will submit this request in writing next week and discuss it again with President Paul at our next meeting.

Many faculty have expressed concern that no members of Faculty Senate and no staff members were selected to serve on the Presidential Search Advisory Constituency. Only one faculty member without significant administrative responsibilities was selected for the constituency. I was quoted in *Mississippi Today* that the faculty are the backbone of the university and having no real representation "To me, that just kind of shows the regard, or lack thereof, that the board has for the faculty."

President-Elect:

Following the lead of Staff Council, I will be reporting on the IHL Board of Trustees meetings.

Board Retreat

September 15, 2022

1. Reed Green Coliseum – Total Roof Replacement (\$3.5million)
2. Kinesiology Building Renovation budget increase from \$7,788,125 to \$9,350,000
 - a. This project will provide the School of Criminal Justice and Forensic Science with functional space, carefully designed labs, increased faculty office space, a self-contained building identity, and a location convenient to adjacent programs with which the unit interfaces.
3. Barnes & Noble
 - a. Board recommended approving an amendment that will extend the term of USM's existing bookstore services agreement for an additional 5 years
4. Approval of Conveyance of Property Deed, Granting of Utility Easement, and Granting of Drainage Easement to City of Hattiesburg for the Purpose of Constructing a Multi-Use Pathway Along Classic Drive at the University's Accelerator Property
5. Approved the request to enter a service contract for Elevator/Escalator Maintenance (Vertical Transportation) with Kone, Inc. for all its campuses for maintenance and repairs (\$2,178,324)

6. Approved the purchase of an Ocean-Met High-Resolution Measurement Buoy from MTE Instruments (\$375k)

Special Meeting

September 29, 2022

- Unanimously approved changes to policy that the names of SAC committee members cannot be released. Now they can be shared.

Secretary:

No Report.

Secretary-Elect:

As discussed in the September meeting, the Aquila archive of Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes is now complete from 2019-2022.

6.0 Discussion/Decision/Action Items

6.1 Presidential Search Discussion

Susannah Ural was invited to discuss her role on the search advisory committee. In response to senators' questions, she described that SAC members do not get to know the names of candidates, but they will provide input to Dr. Lemon about what they feel are important considerations for the process of selecting USM's next president. Senators expressed concern about the lack of transparency in how members of the SAC were selected as well as the fact that no faculty representatives other than Dr. Ural were invited to be part of this advisory body.

6.2 USM "Wellness Center" Considerations

During a discussion about how to address the situation involving the grant money from TANF that was used to build the volleyball facility, both student and faculty views were presented. Students have asked that USM give the money back, while some faculty propose that we should create a trust that can benefit the community and/or use an equal amount of money as a fund to augment the education of Pell grant students. Many senators express a desire for Faculty Senate to draft a statement since USM administration has not offered one, and the Welfare and Environment Committee is tasked with drafting this statement.

6.3 Survey of Faculty Concerning Re-establishment of Academic Departments

A number of faculty believe that the reorganization of departments into schools has not been more effective or efficient and that the College of Arts and Sciences is too large. There is interest from faculty in returning to departmental structure, as the current structure creates issues with recruitment (as prospective students have difficulty finding programs within schools) and distances Directors from faculty roles. Senators discussed the potential to present a survey to

faculty about these issues (including a review of the reorganization and its successes and failures) and subsequently provide survey results to the new president. Chairs of Academics and Governance Committees are tasked with deciding which of their committees would like to create the survey and then report back at the November FS meeting.

Committee Reports

Academics:

Topics currently under discussion for this committee include:

- a. GroupMe & its inappropriate use by students (EM met with Hugh Broome, and we are protected in terms of Academic Integrity because Academic Integrity Policy mentions group messaging. EM talked with Thomas Deus about what can be done about this in terms of code of conduct.)
- b. Proctoring cost & impact on students (Examity cost has gone up and service has not gotten better. There is a listening session through CFD on proctoring coming up.)
- c. Students being dropped at beginning of semester because of non-payment and how that impacts enrollment.
- d. Can we add an “add” to roster in SOAR because sometimes students get added without our permission (the “dropping” is visible, but “add” is not currently visible)

Administrative Evaluation:

The committee is awaiting some data from former members on committee from 2020-2022, but they define their tasks as:

- a. Review, analyse, and disseminate that data
- b. Review instrument being used and suggest edits
- c. Set timeline for evaluations.

Awards:

The committee has met with Allison Gillespie, and their goals include to solicit more applications and create judgment rubric for applications. The committee invites faculty to consider applying and encouraging colleagues to apply for the University awards: Excellence in University Service Award, Excellence in University Teaching Award, Faculty Senate Junior Faculty Awards. See <https://www.usm.edu/provost/internalportal/awards-endowments.php>

Bylaws:

The committee has reviewed copies of Bylaws and reached out to Sharon Rouse. She recommended that FS have access to 2020 Roberts Rules, so the committee is submitting request to libraries to order e-book copy of updated book which also includes procedures for online meetings.

Elections:

No report.

Faculty Handbook Advisory:

The Handbook Advisory Committee met and discussed the memo from the Provost, directing changes in the handbook to reflect the IHL bylaw changes. He also wished that the process for remanded promotion and tenure involved the school level. Now it goes back to the college level and doesn't include the schools. The University Handbook Committee has been working on proposals leftover from last year and hasn't begun adopting new language to reflect the changes advised by the Provost.

Finance:

The Faculty Senate Finance subcommittee (Srinidhi Kanuri, Fan Zhang, and Nell Adkins) met with Allyson Easterwood, Vice President for Finance and Administration, on the afternoon of 9/27/22.

The meeting began with a discussion of Faculty Senate President Dennis Wiesenburg's question re the IHL request using faculty salaries as a basis for requesting additional funds, and the status of any implementation of those requested funds. Ms. Easterwood confirmed that the Board office, with USM input, has used that strategy/basis for requesting funds, beginning two years ago. Compared with contiguous states, USM is on the low end for faculty pay, based upon most commonly accepted metrics used for comparison. The issue was framed around a six-year phase-in, given the understanding that the legislature would not provide funding to raise salaries adequately in a single year. USM just received the additional funding for the 2nd year, FY 2023, of about \$11 million. Barring any unforeseen change in circumstances, Ms. Easterwood anticipates that we will continue to use this strategy as a basis for requesting additional funds—which has been somewhat successful, in that the legislature has increased our state appropriations, though not to the level of funding requested by USM.

There was no mandate that the additional funds be used to address salaries. The additional appropriation in FY22 was partially used to address salaries for both faculty and staff. Funds also were used for staff to raise their salaries to (at least) the minimum for their position and pay grade. Also addressed were the most egregious/severe instances of faculty salary inversion/compression. At least half of the additional FY 23 funds were used to 1) provide a base raise, 2) address more instances of faculty salary inversion/compression, and 3) to bring staff who are now at the minimum pay level within their range closer to university norms for their positions – i.e., establish salary consistency/equity across similar staff positions.

Ms. Easterwood provided a fiscal “state of the union” for the university. FY 22 was a successful year, which the IHL measures using financial ratio benchmarks. There were slight declines in a couple of the ratios, although benchmark levels were exceeded. USM is a little below the debt service coverage benchmark requirement. There was a small enrollment decline in FY 22, after an increase in FY 21 (due primarily to graduate students). Most of the tuition revenue loss was mitigated by COVID lost revenue funds. In projections for FY 2023, tuition revenue is expected to decline about \$ 5 million due to the fall 22 enrollment decline. At this point in the year, this revenue shortfall is anticipated to be addressed by remaining COVID revenue loss funds, the

contingency funds built into the budget in the budgeting process, and careful consideration of expenditures.

There is some capital project work, not deemed essential/critical, that has been delayed. Capital expense funds received from the legislature are largely being used to address mechanical/electrical issues in various (older) buildings. Some COVID related grant money—that must be used according to specific grant criteria—is expected to be received and used for some water and sewer infrastructure projects on campus. Major renovations (\$10 million) on the old Hyper building (previously kinesiology, future criminal justice) will commence shortly, funded out of our legislative bond funds. Demolition of Roberts Hall, also funded by legislative bond funds, cost approximately \$600,000.

Additionally, higher level administration hirings have been put on hold, based upon the IHL Commissioner's request, until the transition in leadership at the President level occurs and the new President can have input into his/her leadership team. We do have a new senior AVP for enrollment management, Dr. Randall Langston, who has been onboard for about 3 months. He is contributing to development of a strategic enrollment plan, new recruitment and financial aid optimization strategies, among other efforts. Dr. Joe Paul has been very active on the recruiting front, visiting high schools, community colleges, alumni gatherings, and relationship building.

Lastly, Ms. Easterwood reported on the Eagle Direct program. Approximately \$2.6 million was saved by students who used the program in its first year. A Barnes and Noble survey revealed that 91% of students participating in the survey indicated that the program had a positive impact on their academic success, and 72% of the surveyed students believed that Eagle Direct helped them achieve better grades. Fall 21 semester 19% of students opted out of the program, spring 22 semester, 20% opted out, and in fall 22 preliminary numbers indicate that 13% opted out. By all measures, the program appears to be a popular one that is saving students money and is positively perceived by students.

Governance:

The committee's goals include addressing the following issues:

- a. Ombudsperson: Josh Bernstein spoke with the ombudspersons at Ole Miss and Mississippi State and has a statement issued by Ole Miss when they requested their ombudsperson to use as a template. Jen Courts and Josh Bernstein are drafting a request to present to the Faculty Senate and then to administration with FS approval.
- b. IHL changes to tenure: defer to FS efforts across state; United Campus workers is creating petition and possibly teach-ins about what is at stake in matters of shared governance.
- c. Off-contract work expectations: requesting delay in annual evaluation
- d. Handbook committees: work to have faculty representation on employee handbook advisory committee and faculty handbook committee
- e. Organizational Survey: Work on survey about re-establishing departments

Gulf Coast:

The committee's considerations include:

- a. Developing an AAUP on the Coast (Joyce Shaw is looking into this, but Jen Courts mentions: USM-AAUP meets virtually and is open to all the USM community. She imagines they can gladly incorporate a Gulf Coast committee and the support of the entire AAUP.)
- b. School of Coastal Resilience is in limbo as they are moved to different buildings on campus; issues of space/design and who makes those decisions (Hattiesburg campus has a space and design committee that includes staff, faculty, students, but Coast campus does not have such a committee).
- c. Faculty Affiliate Status (GCFC met, Faculty Affiliate status was supposed to guarantee faculty job security in legacy programs in Hattiesburg if programs on Coast get discontinued or don't meet enrollment numbers within a few years. Faculty Senate President intends to ask Provost Cannon for update on these letters.)
- d. What programs exist on and can be brought back on the Coast campus (This consideration also includes issues of how advising has reduced in certain programs on the Coast, and this situation has disrupted faculty mentorship of students.)

University Relations and Communications:

The committee's goals include:

- a. Develop good working relationship with VP of External Relations
- b. Committee has compiled and sent questions to VP of External Relations & will be inviting him to upcoming committee meeting

Welfare and Environment:

The committee's goals include:

- a. Addressing university policies related to mental health and addiction issues. Dr. Chasteen has created committee to look at faculty mental health, and Max Grivno is serving on this. Max is concerned that committee will be talking to faculty rather than listening. It is unclear which institutions they are looking at as examples. The University will be rolling out new app for increasing resiliency. Max has completed training for the app. The university is doing work on this issue, but main goal is to see policy put in place.
- b. Addressing gender equity in hiring and salaries
- c. Drafting statement concerning volleyball scandal

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports

None

Consent Items

None

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

None

Good of the Order

JCourts: <https://www.usm.edu/news/2022/release/ceramics-national-exhibition.php>

TG-pow-wow at Spirit Park on Saturday at 11

Announcements

Next FS meeting is Nov. 4 at 2pm 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.