

Fall 9-2023

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes September 2023

Faculty Senate



Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 1, 2023

2:00p.m. Via Zoom

Call to Order

President Jennifer Courts called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Roll Call

Members present:

Jennifer Courts, Josh Bernstein, Candice Salyers, Tanya Funchess, Mark Puckett, Fengwei Bai, Terry Cullum, Damon Franke, Vincenzo Mistretta, Jae-Hwa Shin, Charles Sumner, Max Grivno, John T. Lambert, Jr., Emileigh McCardle, Jeremy Scott, Danilo Mezzadri, Nick Ciraldo, Jonathan Kilgore, Jeff Wiggins, Fan Zhang, Joanne Burnette, Bob Press, Marv Bouillon, Srinidhi Kanuri, Curtis Matherne, Wei Wang, Bryan Spuhler, Hani Morgan, Lennie Troughton, Paul Donahue, Jeff Hirschy, Tammy Greer, Randy Arnau, Susan Hrostowski, Nina McLain, Kim Smith, Amy LeBert, Laura Gullede, Zack Darnell, Joyce Shaw, Maria Wallace, Allan Eickelmann, Kemla Cambazoglu

Members who were not in attendance:

Chris Hayes, Jonathan Beedle

Quorum: A quorum was established and recognized. (43 members present).

Voting Membership Present: $\frac{2}{3}$ membership for voting on Bylaws and Resolutions was established. (43 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 members.

Approval of the Minutes (PREVIOUS MONTH)

The May 2023 meeting minutes have not yet been provided by the previous secretary who is on sabbatical. These will be provided as soon as possible.

Program

Michael Madson & Eric Powell, co-chairs of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee

An email was sent Tuesday afternoon sharing the composition and charge of the steering committee. Associated with that was a call for nominations to serve on subcommittees. Dr. Madson clarifies that this process is not a reorganization, but that strategic planning focuses on a growth mindset and setting out a broad roadmap for our goals and aspirations as a university. The steering committee met for the first time this week and will meet in a few weeks for a retreat to map out their approach. Part of steering committee's role is to engage with all stakeholders at the university to collect information and put together actionable goals. There are multiple approaches to strategic planning, and President Paul wants to have an involved group of university stakeholders including faculty, staff, students, and community members. He wants this to be an ongoing, transparent process. Please consider nominating people to serve on subcommittees, passing the information to your colleagues, and participating in the information-gathering phases of this process. The plan will only be as good as the information that they can gather. Eric Powell is willing to share the documents they have been given about strategic planning.

Senators expressed concerns about:

- size of the committee and its efficiency
- similarity to reorganization
[Dr. Powell states that he has not sensed any indication from the President or the committee in favor of reorganization. A strategic plan is an overarching vision of the university and what it should be in the next 5-10 years. Reorg was focused on Academic Affairs. Strategic Planning is university focused and very macro level—strategic priorities and goals for the university. The fact that this strategic plan will be used to identify our next QEP is a major difference as well.]
- selection of the subcommittee members (will this be done by the steering committee or the President's Office?)
- At the end of the process, there will be recommendations or a call to action. Has the university indicated if they will have the resources to address those recommendations?
[In response to the above question, Dr. Madson acknowledges that is a valid consideration but a bit beyond the scope of this committee. It is an important context to consider since we are underresourced—what will be realistic for us to do? The steering committee's mission is to come up with the goals and objectives rather than exactly who will do what, but it is important to make those goals realistic.]
- What are thoughts about how the Psychology programs will be structured and moved forward on both campuses?
[This is outside the context of the steering committee, but Dr. Madson is happy to have a conversation with concerned senators outside of the meeting.]
- In discussion of our goals and aspirations, a senator expresses concern that the Gulf Coast campus is not represented. How can we ensure more representation from the Coast Campus? Is it possible to add another subcommittee that focuses on the Gulf Coast? [Although it is unlikely, the retreat agenda will include discussion of this possibility. Dr. Madson encourages interested faculty and staff on the coast to nominate themselves and colleagues as well as to participate in the requests for information. A senator expresses concern that there has been a history of oversight of the coast campus stakeholders.]
- Can they provide an example of an outcome and how this is distinct from the reorg?

The co-chairs and chairs of subcommittees acknowledge that they already have discussed the majority of points raised by the senate which will also be addressed in the retreat. The President has been specific that he wants an actionable strategic plan, not another reorganization.

Introductions from SGA:

Alyson Gonzales, Senior VP of SGA

Senators have questions for her about Gulf Park representation on Hattiesburg SGA. GP has a separate SGA to address issues specific to Gulf Coast. Hattiesburg SGA and GP SGA are having a joint retreat. Senator addresses concern that some of the elections are not sufficient, and some of the officers are also appointed rather than elected. Hattiesburg SGA is trying to work with GP SGA to bring some elements from student life in Hattiesburg to enhance student life and activity on GP campus.

Officer Reports

President:

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met with President Paul and Provost Nail on Thursday, August 31 to discuss our goals for the 23-24 academic year, including faculty pay and parental leave, and to keep relevant faculty-related proposals, such as the 360 review of the corps of instruction, the governance committee survey on reorg, and the ombuds proposal, on their radar. President-Elect Joshua Bernstein led the discussion on faculty pay and will include it in his report. In a surprising turn, Provost Nail stated that he has spoken with General Counsel about moving forward with the ombuds proposal and anticipates the establishment of an independent Office of the Ombuds at USM perhaps as early as the 24-25 academic year.

The University Calendar Committee met on August 10 to discuss the 2024-2025 academic calendar. For Spring 2025, spring break falls the week after Mardi Gras, and the committee will be meeting again on September 8 to review and vote on proposals to manage this situation.

The UFSAM will meet for the first time in the 23-24 academic year next week.

I want to thank all of the senators for your service and dedication. Our standing committees have certainly hit the ground running. I want you to remember that the work we do in Senate to make our institution stronger and more sustainable is a large part of what makes Southern Miss an “R1 with heart.” Our work as faculty senate is just beginning, and I appreciate your commitment to creating actionable propositions with reasoned solutions that can help us make our “audacious” goals for Southern Miss a reality.

President-Elect:

The FS Exec committee stressed that our priority for this year is faculty salaries. The report on faculty salaries has been sent to senators (please see below), and Dr. Bernstein requests that senators share this document with constituents. The President and Provost agree that this is a problem and are willing to work with faculty on addressing this issue. In this discussion, President Paul proposed 2 approaches to raising salaries—increased enrollment and exploring efficiencies at the university. Dr. Bernstein proposes that the majority of this money could/should come from state allocations.

In discussion of the ombuds position, Provost Nail proposed 2 possibilities: 1) a full-time staff position (in alignment with what FS had proposed last year) or 2) a faculty member. Dr. Bernstein and Dr. Spuhler have spoken to outline criteria for ensuring that an ombuds position filled by a faculty member is truly independent, has adequate training, and represents the concerns of faculty.

FSEC discussed enhancing parental leave with President and Provost who were receptive to the need for an enhanced policy—70% of R1 universities offer at least 6 weeks of paid parental leave.

In 2022, new language was inserted into contracts that provisions in the faculty handbook are not necessarily part of the employee contract agreement. Dr. Bernstein has spoken with a lawyer at Ole Miss who shares concern about this and if it indicates that IHL is trying to limit the pertinence of the faculty handbook to faculty contracts which could present problems in relation to academic freedom or guidelines for tenure. They plan to raise the issue at the state level with IHL.

Questions & Concerns raised by senators:

- USM, Ole Miss, and MS State are all under operational loss currently. Do we know how this gap has been created between USM and these other universities?
- Senator observes that although our salaries are very low, our tuition is within a few hundred dollars of tuition of those other two universities.
- Senator expresses concern that our R1 status is bought with self-exploitation—there is a problem with faculty overworking themselves.
- Senator proposes working to increase university endowment
- Senator asks what the other R1 universities in MS are doing about annual raises. IHL has bylaw prohibiting cost-of-living adjustments.
- Senator expresses need for further breakdown in the salary data to reflect teaching track and lecturer positions.

USM and Peer Institution Salary Comparison

Peer Institution ^{^1}	Category	Average Prof. Salary ^{^2}	Average Assoc. Prof. Salary ^{^2}	Average Asst. Prof. Salary ^{^2}	Average Inst./Lect./No Rank Salary ^{^2}	Average Faculty Salary ^{^2}	Average Faculty Salary in Hattiesburg dollars ^{^3}
Old Dominion*	R1	128.5	93.3	83.5	61	89.7	79.2
SUNY at Albany	R1	137.6	102.8	89.4	61.6	102.4	86.2
Montana	R1	98	80.6	66.7	46.2	84.2	74.7
UAB*	R1	139.4	94.5	82.8	67.4	101.8	97.8
UH Mānoa	R1	144.9	107.6	95.8	72.4	114.9	55.7
Lafayette*	R1	109.2	80.4	69.1	53.7	76.2	76.8
Memphis*	R1	113.5	85.1	77.8	53.7	83.9	84.7
UW-Milwaukee	R1	113.3	84.9	82.5	50.4	83.3	73.7
Peer Average		123.05	91.2	81	58.3	92.1	78.6
<i>Southern Miss*</i>	<i>R1</i>	<i>91.1</i>	<i>72.2</i>	<i>66.1</i>	<i>55.5</i>	<i>71.1</i>	<i>71.1</i>
Ole Miss	R1	113.5	87.8	76.2	50.7	82.3	
Mississippi State	R1	112.5	86.1	82.1	44	78.8	

Key Takeaways: The average faculty salary at Southern Miss is about \$21,000 less than the average faculty salaries of the R1-universities it designates as peers, or about \$7,500 less in cost-of-living-adjusted terms; and about \$11,200 less than the average faculty salary at Ole Miss and about \$7,700 less than the average faculty salary at Mississippi State.

^{^1} These universities, excluding Ole Miss and MSU, are those designated by USM as its peer institutions in Fall 2019 and currently classified as R1's. Sources: <https://www.usm.edu/institutional-research/resources.php>; https://web.archive.org/web/20211216205056/https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/lookup/srp.php?clq=%7B%22basic2005_ids%22:%2215%22%7D

^{^2} Salary data is from *NEA Higher Education Faculty Salary Analysis 2023*. Source: <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/higher-education-faculty-salary-analysis-2023.pdf>

^{^3} The faculty salary averages have been adjusted using the *Forbes* COLA Calculator. Figures are approximate and reflect the cost of living in each institution's city or metro area as compared to that of Hattiesburg on Aug. 28, 2023. Source: <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/mortgages/real-estate/cost-of-living-calculator/>

^{^*} Also designated as SERB Four-Year I university. Source: https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/2019factbook_web.pdf?1650899629

Secretary:

After the FS Executive Committee meeting with the President and Provost, Dr. Salyers contacted Provost Nail to schedule follow-up meetings between him and FSEC to collaborate on a plan for faculty salaries. Thank you to all senators for the seamless shift from our old listserv to our new Outlook Group. The university will no longer be using the previous listserv system because it is too old to receive security updates.

Secretary-Elect:

No report.

Discussion, Decision, Action Items:

6.1 22-23 Academic Committee Resolution on Academic Calendar

WHEREAS the academic calendar for each semester is published prior to the beginning of every semester;

WHEREAS faculty make use of the published calendar in developing syllabi, lectures, and assignments as well as setting up Canvas modules before the semester begins;

WHEREAS the dates of spring break were altered several weeks into the Spring 2023 semester without notification of the faculty;

WHEREAS some faculty were told administration would be notified for making assignments due during the rescheduled spring break (about which faculty were unaware);

WHEREAS faculty were instructed to change their assignment due dates the week before spring break;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate calls upon the Provost's Office to publish an immutable calendar at least two weeks prior to each semester;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if in the event the calendar must be changed for emergency circumstances, all faculty, staff, students and all impacted parties will be notified of said changes as soon as administration is aware of the affected dates.

A vote is called and seconded

34 in favor, none opposed

Committee Reports

Academics:

A request is made for someone to step up to Chair this committee.

Administrative Evaluation:

The Chair of this committee welcomes additional senators to join them. They are planning their first meeting for next week. They already have the data to move forward in their efforts this semester.

Awards:

No report.

Bylaws:

Joyce Shaw is chair of this committee. The members of the committee, including Dr. Shaw, Nina McLain, and Jeffery Hirschy introduced themselves via email. The chair alerted the members to the work this year for the Bylaws Committee which includes:

- Working with the Elections Committee and Senate Officer to create a workable election procedure.
- Updating the standing committee list in the bylaws.

Elections:

The Elections Committee has reviewed the discussion from the March 2023 Faculty Senate meeting in which we addressed the history and complexity of our elections process. This discussion included ways of verifying faculty eligibility to serve through IR and HR as well as some senators expressing concern about School Directors running elections and possible amendments to our Bylaws. We will use that conversation as a starting point and will be working with the Bylaws Committee as we develop a proposal for a revised elections process. If you have any other questions or concerns that you would like for the Elections Committee to consider, please contact Candice Salyers.

Faculty Handbook Advisory:

No report

Faculty Welfare & Success:

Planning a committee meeting for the coming week.

Finance:

Committee members: Srinidhi Kanuri, Bob Press, Fan Zhang (Chair)

The committee met in Bobby Chain Technology Building TEC 250 on August 31, 2023 to discuss issues related to university finances and budgeting, and the focus of this committee for this academic year. Here is a list of items mentioned in the meeting.

Faculty salary

Our salary is below sister institutions. If we can compare our salary with salaries at Ole Miss and MSU, we may be able to lobby IHL to bridge that gap.

Find data to demonstrate how many faculty have left USM because of the low pay.

Enrollment drop impacts university finances.

Summer course payment (The summer course payment was determined to be \$3000 at some point and has been changed for a long time.)

Custodial worker's salary

Details can be found in the Warfare and Environment Committee report.

Bob called Ken Zantow over the phone to get his input, and Ken kindly shared his experience when he chaired the Finance Committee. He mentioned that he met with the university CFO monthly to get updates on budgeting decisions. He is happy to help if the Finance Committee needs any assistance.

Action items before the next senate meeting:

The committee will try to set up a face-to-face meeting with Vice President for Finance and Administration Allyson Easterwood. The committee requests questions and concerns regarding university finance and budgeting from the whole senate. The committee will follow up with Ken to learn more from his experience.

Governance:

Emileigh McCardle is Chair. They are scheduling a meeting and will be dealing with some of the issues from last year as well.

Gulf Coast:

Committee has not yet met. Dr. Franke expresses concern that there were only 4 votes for 5 SGA positions on the Coast as well as concern over representation from Coast faculty on strategic planning committee and possible connection between strategic planning and reorganization. Dr. Franke discusses concerns about the Psychology program on the Coast. He raises his motion that he sent to senators before the meeting. Dr. Darnell suggests an alternative perspective that having a separate coastal committee does not serve to integrate the coastal faculty into the important discussions. Having a separate committee might further isolate coastal faculty. Dr. Eickelmann expresses that the coast operations are different from other operations in Hattiesburg, but that they are significant programs.

Dr. Franke suggests that the Gulf Coast Faculty Council could work with the resolution he proposes. Dr. Courts recommends that Dr. Franke prepare a proposal to send to the senate so that we have something to vote on. Dr. Mistretta recommends that the Gulf Coast Faculty Council could be a resource for representatives to the strategic planning subcommittees. Dr. Cambazoglu raises concern about what happens after the priorities are identified by the strategic planning committee. Dr. Eickelmann suggests that each subcommittee could be given a mandate to include GC operations in every aspect of the plan and have GC representation on each subcommittee. Dr. Courts requests that Dr. Bernstein & Dr. McInain bring forward these concerns to the rest of the steering committee.

University Relations and Communications:

No report, except that they are in need of additional members.

Welfare and Environment:

The Committee met August 25, organized subcommittees, and goals as shown:

(If anyone has suggestions for issues or wishes to participate, please let us know.)

Subcommittee on International Students

Fan Zhang

Fan.Zhang@usm.edu

Bob Press

bob.press@usm.edu

Examining challenge international students face, especially the first few weeks after arrival. Bob and Fan met Leah McSorley (Director of International Students and Scholars Service) and Petra Marlin (Director of International Admission) in Bobby Chain Technology Building TEC 250 on August 31, 2023, to discuss international student issues. Here is a list of items mentioned in the meeting.

Understaffing:

- The international office is severely understaffed. Five years ago, we had 200+ international students and now the number is 600+, with undergraduate students slighter more than graduate students. However, we didn't increase the number of staff in their office.
- The director works until 11pm everyday at the beginning of the semester to catch up with the reporting responsibilities to USCIS regarding student's visa and OPT.
- They have student workers and one GA, but they can't not work on any of the legal documents. This part of the work has to be done by a staff member who is US citizen.
- The director would like to spend more time and effort on supporting international students but her time is tied to advising and document processing.
- The international admission couldn't handle more applications with current staff and they cannot cope with any growth in international enrollment.
- They are currently requesting more staff from the provost and hopefully they can hire more people.

International student money problem

- Some international students have a very difficult time to exchange their native currency to US dollars due to the limitations imposed by their own country (for example, Nigeria).
- The international office proposed a solution to Business Service to use a service that allowing students to pay in their native currency and the service agency pay in US dollar for tuitions and fees. It has not been adopted by Business Service yet.

Transportation

- International freshman are required to live on campus for their first year now. The bus service in Hattiesburg doesn't cover weekends. Students have problem of getting around town.
- The public transportation to the airport is non-existent. Students need help to go to and get back from airports. International student office offer a one-day pick up for 1st year student and they filled two buses this year on that one day pickup.

Service to faculty with international background

- The office's official name is International Students and Scholars Service, but with limited resources, they are not serving faculty with international background at all.

Student opinions

- Leah will hold a meeting with international student board and she will get their opinions on the challenges they are facing and proposed solutions.

Action items before the next senate meeting:

- Leah will provide a detailed report regarding where they need help.
 - Fan will follow up with Leah regarding students' opinions.
 - Fan will contact Jenna Dittman, a student intern in the International Student Office to get her opinion
- *Petra Marlin pointed out that right now is a great time to recruit international students.

Subcommittee on Liasion with SGA, GSC and Staff Council

Terry Cullum Terry.Cullum@usm.edu

Coordinating invitations to SGA, Staff Council and Graduate student Council to attend meetings of Faculty Senate. All groups were contacted and invited to today's meeting with the idea that they be recognized and given time to raise any issues they may have currently.

Other issues:**Crisis among USM custodial service staff**

(Unofficial figures). According to one of the custodians, more than half the custodial staff has resigned, apparently mostly due to the low pay (\$13,000 range). The remaining staff are being transported from building to building to try to provide some level of service. It is tiring work. Our committee will try to gather more specific information; but it seems clear that very low pay is at the heart of the crisis.

Subcommittee on Sanitation (anti-covid) (see their report below)

Fengwei Bai, Chair fengwei.bai@usm.edu

John Lambert member John.Lambert@usm.edu

The Committee recommends to the Faculty Senate calling on the Administration to estimate and provide necessary funding to improve air quality and other noted items as quickly as possible, given some continuing cases of Covid.

Report on Sanitation plans:**Chair Dr. Fengwei Bai and Committee member Dr. John Lambert**

Our thanks to former Faculty Senator Mac Alford for his suggestions and for re-raising this issue. Most of these ideas were part of the earlier anti-covid preparations; this suggests the need to update the facilities and supplies/equipment as needed considering some continuing cases of Covid on campus and the potential for supply chain interruptions. (This subcommittee recommends the university having a stockpile of resources now.)

1. Provide disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer in the classrooms.
2. Provide no fewer than two Lysol disinfectant aerosols in each bathroom.
3. Install automatic paper towel and soap dispensers in bathrooms to avoid direct hand touch.
4. Install foot hooks (or elbow hook) to bathroom doors to provide an alternative way to open the door without using handles.
5. Install automatic doors in heavy-traffic buildings, such as the library, Student Union, the gym etc.
6. Install HEPA filters in buildings to filter out air-borne pathogens and allergens.

[Note, when this Committee last visited this issue in 2020, some buildings had inadequate air filters, according to a committee report at the time. We have no record what the Administration did or did not do at that time; and the committee member on this ended their Senate term.]

Dr. Courts will reach out to offices on campus to share this information to try to make progress on this as well. Dr. Bernstein recommends consulting with an epidemiologist as well.

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports

None.

Consent Items

None.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Good of the Order

Dr. Press thanks everyone for their work thus far. Dr. Shaw invites faculty to consider joining AAUP.

Announcements

Our next FS meeting is October 6, 2023.

Motion to Adjourn

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