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Fall 10-2023

## **Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes October 2023**

Faculty Senate

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## **Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

Friday, October 6, 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:

Allan Eickelmann, Max Grivno, Mark Puckett, Joanne Burnett, Candice Salyers, Jennifer Courts, Josh Bernstein, Tanya Funchess, Tammy Greer, Bob Press, Lennie Troughton, Jeremy Scott, Danilo Mezzadri, Marv Bouillon, Jeff Hirschy, Jon Beedle, Terry Cullum, Nina McClain, Srindi Kanuri, Joyce Shaw, Paul Donahue, Fengwei Bai, Bryan Spuhler, Kemal Cambazoglu, Charles Sumner, Laura Gullledge, Emileigh McCardle, Kim Smith, Susan Hrostowski, Vincenzo Mistretta, Curtis Matherne, Wei Wang, Fan Zhang, John Lambert, Damon Franke, Randy Arnau, Jae-Hwa Shin, Maria Wallace, Jonathan Kilgore, Nick Ciraldo, Hani Morgan

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

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

### **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**

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.

### **Officer Reports**

#### **President**

In response to the report from the University Welfare & Environment Committee on disease prevention on campus in our September meeting, I reached out to Brian Hauff the Associate VP for Facilities Planning and Management on September 18. I asked for an update on the current state of cleaning and disinfection across campus and if the protocols listed on the Physical Plant website from Feb. 2022 were still active. Further, I asked for a list of the facilities that underwent HVAC system upgrades and if any further were planned. This interchange was intended to open conversation so that I could present the recommendations from the UW&E Committee. All subsequent communication has been forwarded to UW&E and will be covered in their report.

The Senior Leadership Team met on September 19. Krystyna Varnado, Senior Associate Vice President for Human Resources, presented on Affirmative Action and their most recent data on Faculty representation. Their review indicated a need to increase Black and Hispanic Faculty representation on the Hattiesburg campus and Women on the Gulf Coast campuses. The 2024-25 academic calendar was discussed, and as a direct result of our Resolution passed last month, a decision was made for Spring Break to run officially from Sunday to Sunday with no changes. It was revealed that student complaints were the source of why the Spring Break calendar was changed after the start of the semester in Spring 2023.

On September 26, the FSEC with Provost Lance Nail largely to discuss strategies for increasing faculty salary. Of note, Deans now have the option to reallocate funds from vacant lines to existing faculty. Additionally, Provost Nail met with Allyson Easterwood, VP for Financial Affairs and Administration, to review efficiencies in the budget which involves a review of campuses, modalities, and faculty workload policy. They plan to use external data to prepare a comparison of USM faculty salaries with peer institutions using HELIO and requested FSEC input on preparing a list of peer institutions.

On September 28, the FSEC met with Dr. Paul and Dr. Nail. In discussion regarding the state auditor's office, Dr. Paul stated that he doesn't perceive it as a legitimate threat and said that he "can put on the gloves as necessary" in the future. Concerns regarding international students raised by the UW&C in the September Senate meeting were discussed. The provost made it known that he has already approved 1.5 new positions in the ISS to help meet the need. He reinforced that international students are vital to our enrollment and retention growth, noting that international students have the highest retention rate. The low voter turnout for the Gulf Coast SGA election raised by the Gulf Coast Committee was brought to the attention of the president and provost. On the issue of faculty salaries, the EC continues discussion of how this topic can be addressed through a combination of enrollment, efficiency, and allocation.

The United Faculty Senate Association of Mississippi met on October 3. The UFSAM represents the Faculty Senate presidents/chairs of all eight IHL institutions. The mission is to work collectively to advocate to the IHL on behalf of all institutions. Currently, agenda items include a statewide family leave policy for faculty, a resolution regarding adhering to national norms in presidential searches, and a potential joint statement regarding the State Auditors' recent announcement.

- I also wanted to let you all know that I discussed the auditor with our Provost. He said, as of right now, legislators are not paying any attention to the auditor's proposals. Evidently, the auditor is not well respected in the political establishment. However, we all know that can change.

Q: Senator asks, "When do Deans have the authority to repurpose funds from a new faculty line to existing faculty?" A: With a retirement, not necessarily when a line is not approved.

## **President-Elect**

1) Faculty Salaries Update. The FS EC reported to the Provost and President last month the previously-shared data on faculty salaries, including the 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. We discussed possible solutions, and FS stressed that increased appropriations are likely the only substantive measure to redress salaries, since there has already

been much belt-tightening at USM. We also stressed need to reduce administrative bloat, echoing the campus AAUP position. That said, one local method is to boost retention, since USM apparently loses about thirty percent of first-time freshmen, and ideally that rate should be closer to twenty percent, as at some peer institutions. We agreed with the Provost and President that the faculty and administration will work together on the goal of retaining between 200 and 300 students each year. Concomitantly, we have requested \$12m in additional recurring funds for salaries to ensure that faculty are paid fairly and on par with faculty at our peer institutions. In our view, this is the minimum that's required to ensure parity and to retain our status as an R1. We're hopeful we can work with the University leadership, IHL, and legislature in securing these funds.

2) Strategic Plan. Things are progressing well. Subcommittees have not been formed yet. Gulf Coast faculty will be adequately represented. The only issue to report is that there was a minor disagreement over whether to require faculty participation on each subcommittee. I explained that there needs to be a rank-and-file faculty member on each committee to uphold the requirement of shared governance, and I stressed that Faculty Senate needs to see that shared governance demonstrated to support the strategic plan.

3) Faculty Senate Statewide (UFSAM) is forming a task force to advocate for parental leave. Brianna Jahn Malinowski has offered to be our USM rep on this committee. They will make a recommendation to the UFSAM for recommendation to the IHL. The UFSAM is also discussing the state auditor report, and we have a proposed resolution drafted if needed.

Senators thanked Dr. Bernstein for taking a firm stand on salaries and for insisting on faculty representation on all strategic planning subcommittees. Senators ask how we can intervene on financial issues when we are often the last to find out about these matters. Dr. Bernstein requested that senators who have tenure take part in rallies (he is coordinating with AAUP for potential rally in November) because staff and junior faculty fear retaliation if they participate..

## **Secretary**

There has been some difficulty getting web page updates accomplished since last year, but Faculty Senate is now receiving support from both iTech and University Communications to resolve these issues. The first priority is updating the anonymous comment form on the website (a multi-step process), which is underway. The assistant to the university webmaster is also making revisions to officer information.

Senator asks who receives comment forms when they are filled out online. Dr. Salyers replies that it comes to the FS Secretary (Candice Salyers this year).

## **Secretary-Elect**

No report.

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

### **6.1 Governance, Recommendation #1: Ombuds**

The Faculty Senate welcomes the support of President Paul and Provost Nail for the creation of a faculty-serving ombud office at USM staffed by an existing USM faculty member. In the selection of a faculty member for the position of Ombud, and in keeping with the best practices and guidelines detailed in the International Ombuds Association

(IOA) reference, Nuts and Bolts: Establishing and Operating a College or University Ombuds Office, the Faculty Senate recommends:

- 1) that the Ombudsman be independent (meaning they will recuse themselves as needed and perhaps draw on other state ombuds in those cases) and be chosen by an impartial committee composed of stakeholders from across USM.
- 2) that they be fully trained upon starting.
- 3) that they have at least a four-year term with no other teaching or research obligations in that time.
- 4) that they be tenured and, if not already a full professor, get written assurances that their service as the ombud will be factored in appropriately for their promotion and evaluations.
- 5) that they “report to the highest possible level of the organization” (the USM President) and “operate independently of ordinary line and staff structures,” per the IOA guidelines.
- 6) that they be given adequate resources and financial support with which to complete their duties and maintain professionalization.

Please note that these recommendations are made on the basis of conversations and consultations in the spring and fall of 2023 with current ombuds at the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State, and the University of Memphis, among other colleges; with current Faculty Senator Bryan Spuhler, who has previously served as an ombud; with the budget office at the University of Mississippi; and with Ellen M. Miller, the Executive Director of the International Ombuds Association. Details of these communications are available upon request.

Senators ask, “How is the ombudsperson going to be evaluated at end of 4 year term? How many terms could the ombudsperson serve?” A: At other institutions, a charter is established which then informs the way in which they are evaluated for their job. Ideally, we would have ombuds for faculty, staff, and students. Right now, we will likely only be able to get one for faculty (one that is accessible for both campuses). It might be possible that when we get one, its effectiveness can reveal the need for additional ombuds people. Senators express concerns about not having ombudsperson on both campuses. Senators ask who will train the ombudsperson. A: There are professional organizations with formal trainings for ombuds. We would ask that the new ombuds be sent to one of those trainings.

Recommendation passes with voice vote. No opposition expressed.

## 6.2 Governance, Recommendation #2: Assistant/Associate Directors

### FACULTY SENATE RECOMMENDATION #1 2023-2024

Authored by: Faculty Senate Governance Committee

A FACULTY SENATE Recommendation to the University President and Provost

WHEREAS there are no currently defined roles of Assistant Director and Associate Director in the Faculty Handbook (FH 1.7.2 - School Administration); and

WHEREAS the only mention of Associate Director is in the Faculty Evaluation Process and Administrative Workload, and there is no mention of Assistant Director anywhere in the Faculty Handbook; and

WHEREAS many faculty voiced a desire to be able to evaluate the Assistant Director and/or Associate Director positions in the last two years of Administrative Evaluation Faculty Surveys; and

WHEREAS the Administrative Evaluation Faculty Survey cannot include roles that are not defined in the Faculty Handbook;

BE IT THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that the positions of Assistant Director and Associate Director be generally defined in the Faculty Handbook in order for faculty to evaluate these administrative positions.

Passes with voice vote. No oppositions.

## 6.3 Executive, Recommendation #3: Physical Barriers in Garage

A FACULTY SENATE Recommendation to Dr. Joseph S. Paul, University President

WHEREAS a student at The University of Southern Mississippi tragically died by suicide at the parking garage on West 4th Street; and

WHEREAS this is the second student lost in this same manner and location in the last two years; and

WHEREAS publicly accessible areas of significant height pose a risk for suicide attempts; and

WHEREAS physical barriers are the most effective means of preventing suicides on high structures (American Federation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org/bridge-barriers/>);

BE IT THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that the University of Southern Mississippi install physical barriers on all levels of the West 4th Street Parking garage to guard against future loss to our community.

Discussions:

<https://eu.hattiesburgamerican.com/story/news/local/2023/10/03/usm-student-death-prompts-need-for-safety-at-parking-garage/71025939007/>

Passes with a voice vote. No opposition.

## 7.0 Standing Committee Reports

### 7.1 Academics

The committee met and discussed goals for this year including faculty workload and how to quantify it, as well as annual evaluations and meetings with School Directors. School Directors are supposed to be going into Faculty Success and quantifying workload. With the change to 3 categories instead of 5 in Annual Evaluations, more faculty are in “meets” and “exceeds” which makes merit pay difficult. The committee also intends to meet with Provost Nail to discuss GEC’s at Gulf Park and to meet with Doug Masterson about considerations of emphasis areas. You can no longer establish an emphasis area, and many senators describe how emphasis areas are a useful recruiting mechanisms in their programs.

### 7.2 Administrative Evaluation

Having spoken with members of the FS executive committee and having talked it over as an admin eval committee, we would like to present the full faculty senate with a proposal to alter our timeline for administrative evaluations.

Background:

Traditionally, we collect the data for the admin evals in late April, and then analyze and report it in mid-November. That timeline was largely based on the idea that faculty wanted their evaluation meetings with their directors done before the directors could see how their faculty and staff rated them. With the shift of the annual evaluation schedule to January as it now is, that rationale no longer makes sense. Consequently, we feel there is a good argument to be made for sending the director evaluations much earlier to distance them from the faculty evaluation meetings that will be in the early spring.

## Proposal:

In discussion with the admin eval committee and members of the FS executive committee, they all agreed that the best course of action might be to do the following:

1. Move up the date of the data analysis from November 15th and get the reports out as soon as possible. We have already completed the evaluations and could send them as early as Monday, October 9th.
2. Move up the spring survey to early-April, or even late-March next year to give us time to conduct the analyses in the spring and send out the results before our contracts end in May.
3. Some aspects of the evaluation process would not change. We would still send out the director evaluation reports to their supervising deans one week after they are distributed to the directors. All other admin positions would receive their own evaluation results at the same time as the directors.

## Rationale:

This way, directors get their feedback far closer to when it is given, and in future years, they have the summer and fall to make improvements in their processes and try to address issues before they begin annual evaluations for their faculty in January. It would also provide the maximum amount of time between directors receiving their feedback and conducting the evaluations on their faculty which will hopefully minimize any possibility of retaliation.

This would mean that the current admin eval committee would have to take on the analyses in both fall and spring this year as we adjust the schedule, but we are willing to do so if it would create a better process moving forward.

We would love to hear feedback on the possible schedule change, including any unforeseen consequences or issues. We have looked through policies and bylaws and can't find anything that codifies the current schedule, so it looks like it is within the rights of FS to change it.

A motion to vote on this proposal was made and seconded.

Approved through voice vote. No opposition.

## 7.3 Awards

The committee met to discuss what they can achieve this year. The Awards Committee unanimously agreed to continue efforts to increase the application pool this year, building on their previous achievements in recruiting a substantial number of applications last year. The committee has questions they would like to explore.

Q1. How can the Faculty Senate Awards Committee participate in the research awards selection process?

Q2. In what capacity can the Faculty Awards Committee become involved in the awards selection process at the College level?

Q3. Is it feasible to establish a mechanism for distinguishing and acknowledging basic research as opposed to grant-funded research, both at the College and University levels?



Senators express concern about the research award being linked to external funding when that does not necessarily coincide with productivity in different discipline areas. Dr. Courts requests that Dr. Morgan talk with the Executive Committee to help find a resolution.

#### 7.4 Bylaws

Bylaws met with the Elections Committee to support aligning elections process with bylaws.

#### 7.5 Elections

The committee met on 9/20/23 and included Joyce Shaw (Bylaws) and Nick Ciraldo (past Elections chair).

The current state of the senate operating outside of its bylaws in its election process was discussed. A decision was made to no longer rely on school directors to run senate elections and to return to following the method prescribed by the bylaws for elections. Further, a decision was made to determine a target for a percentage of gulf coast members based on total percentage of Gulf Coast faculty.

Since the meeting, USM Institutional Research (IR) was contacted and provided the number of all fulltime faculty member in each school so that we could ensure proper representation for each school. This data revealed the following issues as indicated on the attached representation review spreadsheet created using metrics in the senate bylaws:

School of Biological, Environmental, and Earth Sciences (Currently has 2 reps, needs 3)

School of Education (Currently has 2 reps, needs 3)

School of Leadership and Advanced Nurse Practice (Currently has 2 reps, needs 1)

School of Professional Nursing Practice (Currently has 1 rep, needs 2)

A request was made to IR to determine the percentage of USM faculty located on the Gulf Coast and that response is still pending. A review of current senate representation reveals that faculty on the Gulf Coast make up 20% of all senate members.

#### 7.6 Faculty Handbook Advisory

The committee has received and reviewed comments from senate that they will bring to the UFHC meeting including problematic insertion of “collegiality” and the separate evaluation from administration for determination of emeritus faculty. The UFHC committee will discuss changes to the following items in their upcoming meeting.

Alan Thompson and David Beckett move that the following section:

#### 2.6. Emeritus Faculty

The emeritus designation may be awarded to retired faculty members who have served the University with distinction for a minimum of ten years. Emeritus faculty are honored, non-voting members of the units to which they belonged before retirement. Units, schools, and colleges are encouraged to invite emeritus faculty to serve as lecturers, substitute instructors, and consultants.

Although no longer employees, emeritus faculty retain many faculty privileges. Retirement benefits are fully outlined in the Employee Handbook.

Retired or retiring faculty members may be nominated or apply on their own for emeritus status. All applications for emeritus status must be submitted within five years of the candidate's retirement. The maximum number of applications allowed per individual for emeritus status is two. For more information about the process, see the Provost's website.

Have its language changed to:

## 2.6. Emeritus Faculty

The emeritus designation is awarded to faculty members who have served The University of Southern Mississippi with distinction for an extended time. The status recognizes faculty who have excelled throughout their careers at the University. Two types of emeritus status are recognized by the University: Emeritus associate professor/professor and emeritus lecturer/senior lecturer.

Members of the faculty meeting the following criteria are eligible to be considered for emeritus status:

a) a minimum of ten years of honorable and distinguished service at the University. In exceptional cases, a faculty member who has served the University for fewer years may receive emeritus status; b) retirement (in process or already completed) of the faculty member; c) rank as an associate/full professor (either tenure- or teaching-track) or lecturer/senior lecturer at The University of Southern Mississippi; d) a distinguished record in at least two of the four areas of teaching, research, librarianship, or service; e) maintenance of collegial relationships with school colleagues.

The following procedure applies to the nomination and evaluation of retiring/retired faculty for emeritus status: a) A faculty member who is retiring or already retired may apply for emeritus status by peer- or self-nomination. All applications for emeritus status must be submitted within five years of the candidate's retirement date. The maximum number of applications allowed per individual for emeritus status is two. Initially the eligible faculty member should complete the Emeritus Status Application form available from the Office of the Provost. The faculty member then submits the completed Application Form, together with a curriculum vitae, to the school director; b) The school director will forward the faculty member's emeritus status application form and curriculum vitae to the school promotion and tenure committee (SPTC) for review and evaluation. The school director will conduct a separate evaluation of the application materials. The SPTC and the school director will submit their separate evaluations to the college dean within one month after the faculty member has submitted the application materials. The SPTC and school director will also forward copies of their evaluations to the nominee; c) The dean will review the faculty member's application, and the evaluations of the SPTC and the school director. The dean will then submit his/her evaluation, along with the evaluations of the SPTC and the school director, to the Provost within three months after the faculty member's submission of the application materials. The dean will also forward a copy of his/her evaluation to the nominee; d) The Provost will review the faculty member's application materials and the evaluations of the SPTC, the school director, and the dean, and will submit his/her evaluation, along with all other previous evaluations, to the President. The Provost may consult and seek advice from the appropriate college promotion and tenure committee and/or the university promotion and tenure committee. The provost will also forward a copy of his/her evaluation to the nominee; e) The Provost will notify the faculty member in writing of the President's decision and forward copies to the dean and school director. If the President does not approve the application, the faculty

member may submit a letter of appeal to the President through the Provost. The next decision of the President regarding the faculty member's application is final.

An emeritus faculty member is an honored, non-voting member of the school to which they belonged before retirement. Schools and colleges are encouraged to invite emeritus faculty to serve as lecturers, substitute instructors, and consultants. Although no longer tenured or eligible for employment benefits, emeritus faculty members are entitled to the following privileges: a) to be listed separately in the general catalog and university directory following the listing of the regular faculty; b) to represent the

University at ceremonies of other universities and organizations when so appointed by the President; c) to serve on committees, including theses and dissertations (upon approval by the Graduate School), and other faculty committees (excluding personnel decisions); d) to enjoy the same library and computer privileges as active members of the faculty, including retaining their university email accounts; e) to receive faculty prices for access to the Payne Center and University-sponsored events.

Rationale: This modification adds detail regarding the procedure by which emeritus status is requested and conferred, as well as the privileges associated with such status.

Dr. Sam Bruton moves that the following section:

#### 3.3.4. Scholarly Misconduct

All members of the faculty and others with responsibilities for research/creative activities are expected to adhere to the University's policy regarding scholarly misconduct. As USM defines scholarly misconduct, it includes (but is not limited to): (1) research misconduct as defined by federal policy: "fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or reporting research results;" (2) abuse of confidentiality, including improper use of information gained by privileged access, such as information obtained through service on peer review panels and editorial boards; (3) violations of University policies concerning the use of human subjects, animal subjects, and laboratory safety; and (4) misappropriation of funds or resources, such as the misuse of research funds for personal gain. Misconduct does not include honest errors or mere difference in judgment. Individuals with concerns or questions about possible violations of the University's Scholarly Misconduct Policy are encouraged to consult with the University's Research Integrity Officer (RIO), the Director of the Office of Research Integrity.

Have its language changed to:

#### 3.3.4. Scholarly Misconduct

All members of the faculty and others with responsibilities for research/creative activities are expected to adhere to the University's policy regarding scholarly misconduct. As USM defines scholarly misconduct, it includes (but is not limited to): (1) research misconduct as defined by federal policy: "fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or reporting research results;" (2) abuse of confidentiality, including improper use of information gained by privileged access, such as information obtained through service on peer review panels and editorial boards; (3) violations of University policies concerning the use of human subjects, animal subjects, biosafety (biosafety level 2 or above) or materials transfer; and (4) misappropriation of funds or resources, such as the misuse of research funds for personal gain.

Misconduct does not include honest errors or mere difference in judgment. Individuals with concerns or questions about possible violations of the University's Scholarly Misconduct Policy are encouraged to consult with the University's Research Integrity Officer (RIO), the Director of the Office of Research Integrity.

Rationale: These changes are a mere matter of housecleaning. The slight tweak to the definition of misconduct is already official policy.

Dr. Sam Bruton moves that the following section:

### 3.3.3. Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure

All faculty members must complete the University's financial conflict of interest disclosure annually. The form can be found at the University's Office of Research Integrity website, and it provides definitions for which kinds of financial interests must be disclosed under the policy.

Have its language changed to:

### 3.3.3. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

All faculty members must complete the University's conflict of interest disclosure annually between September 1 and September 30. The form can be found on the University's Office of Research Integrity website, and it provides definitions for which kinds of interests must be disclosed under the policy.

Rationale: These changes are a mere matter of housecleaning

## 7.7 Faculty Welfare and Success

The committee met and set their goals for the new year including to guarantee that faculty have access to the same resources that students have access to when struggling with mental health and addiction. They recommend that faculty welfare, wellness, and success become an integral part of governance documents. They discussed the difference between chronic and acute care for faculty wellness. They suggest that is difficult to have a healthy student population without a healthy faculty population. The committee discussed Thrive—a committee at the university that includes faculty, staff, and students who share goals of promoting mental health and wellness. It links constituents from Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and Office of Dean of Students, Student Counselling Center, etc. This committee proposes that the Faculty Welfare and Success committee could have permanent seats on Thrive committee to provide broader, more diverse group of faculty representation with consistency and building of institutional memory. They would like for the institution to undertake a meaningful study of faculty and staff mental health so that there is data to support interventions and policy changes.

## 7.8 Finance

The committee met with USM Vice President for Finance and Administration (VPFA) Ms. Allyson Easterwood in her office from 2 pm to 3 pm on September 21, 2023. Allyson briefly shared her experience at USM, followed by self-introductions from FS Finance Committee members. We set a plan to meet every other month for this academic year and the FS executive committee is welcome to join the meetings if they are available. Here is a list of issues discussed in the meeting.

### Decision-making process regarding budget

Allyson is not the sole decision-maker regarding the budget. The decisions are made at the cabinet level with USM senior officers.

On the academic affairs side, budget requests follow the chain of command from school director to dean to provost. For the past few years, the provost has hosted budget hearings for deans to propose their budget requests.

On the administration division, it is less structured.

President Joe Paul has asked Allyson to work with Provost Lance Nail to come up with a comprehensive budget strategy.

### Salary

IHL is well aware that we are lower than Ole Miss or MSU. Also together with Ole Miss and MSU, we are much lower than sister institutions from other SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) states. IHL has lobbied with the state legislation regarding faculty salary, unsuccessful so far.

USM receives 22% of all IHL funding to 7 state universities. This is a predetermined percentage not related to enrollment. If the funding allocation is based on enrollment, we will receive much less.

Ole Miss and MSU have been growing in enrollment which makes them able to pay higher salaries than us. We depend more on tuition income than funding from the state. If we want to have an increase in salary, we need to have enrollment growth first.

The \$3,000 summer course salary was determined at one point and has been the payment for a while. We don't have funding to increase that payment. If we do, we need to decrease funds from other parts. The money has to come from somewhere.

State funding has been decreasing, and our enrollment has been dropping. Our spending has been increasing, for example, utility fees and insurance. We pay 5 million per year for facility insurance. Half of that money is for the Gulf Coast campus because of the high premium for wind and flood coverage.

### Enrollment

Our number of freshmen and transfers increases but the overall enrollment has dropped. We have a big problem with retention. Retention needs everyone on board to help. Bob mentioned that having faculty mentors to make students feel connected is a proven strategy.

Dr. Kristi Motter was hired as the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. She has a proven record of increasing enrollment.

We decreased the tuition for out-of-state students but we didn't gain in the numbers of out-of-state students.

### Subsidizing Athletics

The university subsidizes athletic affairs, and part of the money comes from student fees.

Athletics activities are important to keep alumni connected and in many other aspects, can't be simply judged by economic aspect.

### USM financial health

Four financial parameters are used to evaluate university financial health: debt service coverage, days of cash on hand, adequate reserves, age of plant. Allyson shared the data for the four parameters for the past 4 years, and we are in good shape for now.

### 7.9 Governance

In addition to recommendations from earlier, they are still working on the survey that was sent out in the Spring and plan to make more information available in the near future.

### 7.10 Gulf Coast

The Committee met and also talked with Gulf Park SGA President. Dr. Franke encouraged him to inform faculty about the nominating and voting process and to ask faculty to announce these processes during classes. When he graduates in December, he does not intend to have an election for the new SGA Coast President for the Spring.

Dr. Franke expressed concerns about Coast representation on Strategic Planning subcommittees, and quoted information from the various links in circulation regarding Strategic Planning and his questions in relation to this information:

"The goal is to implement an inclusive process for the University to produce a specific, measurable Strategic Plan, actionable over a 3- to 5-year period"

"Strategic planning is a deliberate, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that **shape and guide what an institution is, what it does, and why it does it.**

The college or **university strategic plan provides guidance for institutional decisions, both long-term and day-to-day, and makes sure that decisions and operations:** 1) Carry out the institution's mission, vision, and values. 2) Comply with mandates and regulations of government, accrediting bodies, etc. 3) Keep the institution operationally and fiscally healthy, now and in the future. It **gives an institution an opportunity to reflect on its performance. Is the institution achieving its vision? Living by its mission? Serving students in the ways they need? What should we start doing? Keep doing? Change? Stop doing?"**

Dr. Franke also provided the following synopsis which comes from discussions with the Gulf Coast Committee of Faculty Senate, Gulf Coast Faculty Council, AND one on one conversations with individual faculty members:

So how does USM Gulf Coast fit into such a discussion regarding USM's new Strategic Planning? How does Vision 2020 and the Three Pillars associated with it fit into our role in discussing and planning for an inclusive process for USM? While you may want to call Vision 2020 a "reorganization" and not a strategic plan, Vision 2020 for all intents and purposes **IS** decidedly a strategic plan?

Now since that Vision was implemented and various programs on the Coast were told that they were going away, many programs have now been given the go-ahead to return to the Coast, in an ad hoc and arbitrary fashion. Such revisions to Vision 2020 include plans for programs in Nursing, Social Work, and Psychology to return to USM Gulf Park after being told they must leave. Such revisions have also created a problematic organizational structure that now finds these programs in to be without a Director on site on the Coast, which is a fundamental principle of Vision 2020, which is a principle that has been ignored or compromised. These programs also have not been developing new student degree programs with the Three Pillars in mind, which was also a fundamental principle of Vision 2020, which is also being ignored or compromised. Meanwhile multiple programs in the newly formed School of Coastal Resilience exist in a limbo state, with the threatening potential for teachout orders for extant legacy programs, and the mandate to create new programs in line with the Three Pillars, that may replace their legacy programs. These now arbitrary mandates are directing faculty lives solely in the School of Coastal Resilience.

Hence Vision 2020 in many crucial facets has been compromised, redacted, and arbitrarily instituted, which not only has created undue faculty stress but also their realization of the potential for future litigious action. So in these lights and if this strategic plan is supposed to reflect on a university's performance and plan for an inclusive process, how can Vision 2020 and the Three Pillars not be an explicit part of this new Strategic Plan launched in 2023? What better recourse to address these problems then to make it an explicit part of the plan and to institute a specific committee to address these concerns? How can these concerns over the Three Pillars at least then not be an explicitly stated concern and agenda item of EACH established committee of the new Strategic Plan if a new committee that solely addresses the Coast and the Three Pillars is not formed? Will the Hattiesburg campus have its own Three Pillars established as part of the new Strategic Plan, and if not, then how can an inclusive process for all campuses in the new Strategic Planning be achieved without such equitable and analogous structure?

#### 7.11 University Relations and Communications

The committee met to discuss a survey for faculty about their experiences with communication at the university. They are reviewing the survey and plan to present it at the November FS meeting.

#### 7.12 University Welfare and Environment

The Welfare and Environment Committee at the University of Southern Mississippi convened on September 29, 2023, to address critical issues related to the welfare of students, faculty, and staff, as well as initiatives to promote a sustainable campus environment.

Key Areas of Focus:

- Custodial Staff Shortage

The committee discussed the ongoing shortage of custodial staff and its effects on the campus environment and preparedness for a new surge of Covid-19.

- Physical Plant (please see detailed report below)

The committee discussed the structural integrity of buildings on campus, specifically the Walker Science Building and black areas tentatively identified as black mold in campus buildings.

- International Students

The committee discussed a request for a playground for international students and their families, Muslim Student Association's request for Halal options in cafeteria, dedicated space for Muslim times of prayer, students' ability to transfer funds in home countries currency and transportation issues of students on Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses.

Jenna Joselle Dittman attended the FS meeting representing International Student organizations and as a GA for ISSS. The International Student Advisory Board brought concern to her about lack of city transportation and propose increased public transportation and university-sponsored routes to the Coast and back at least twice per month. In addition, many international students are Muslim, and they have created a halal petition requesting 2 halal options in the Fresh multiple times per week. Lack of these options is negatively affecting their mental and physical health. Another request is a prayer room and ability for students to pray during school hours. There are 2 meditation rooms for students on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Union, but they would like to reserve a room in the International Center for a prayer room. They also request scholarships to support international students (particularly for undergraduates) as well as another proposal for an Eagle Fever campaign to help provide necessities that students cannot afford when moving to Hattiesburg.

The Senate takes a "sense of the Senate" voice vote in favor of offering support of these requests from international students.

A recommendation is made that perhaps transportation for students could be combined with mail and library shuttles.

Dr. Cambazoglu requests that the multiple locations on the Coast be included in these transportation initiatives since the Coast facilities are spread amongst multiple locations.

- Suicide Prevention

a. The committee discussed measures to enhance suicide prevention and mental health resources and support services for faculty and students. This includes exploring partnerships with counseling services and raising awareness about available resources.

Recommendations:

Based on our discussions, the Welfare and Environment Committee recommends the following actions:

- The committee expresses concern that the issues with custodial staff may be worse than reported and further investigations through the proper channels are merited.



- The committee strongly recommends that a team of certified structural engineers inspect the building and report on its condition and short and long-term stability. (Please see detailed report below)
- The committee endorses proposals by Dr. Leah McSorley to implement PayMyTuition, which can accept tuition payments in a variety of world currencies.
- The committee recommends addressing the relevant needs of international students suggested by Jenna Ditman (ISSS Graduate Assistant) per approval of Dr. Leah McSorley, Director of International Student and Scholar Services.
- The committee recommends that all faculty, not just supervisors, take the most intensive suicide intervention training possible. This should be face to face, with real people who have contemplated suicide.

#### Next Steps:

The committee recommends that these findings and recommendations be presented to the university administration for further consideration. Additionally, we propose ongoing collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of these initiatives.

For action at a level above the Committee, we draw your attention to the recommendations in the report:

1. That the FS Executive Officers recommend to the Administration and Human Resources that employees of the physical plant, especially custodians, be made aware of their right to communicate privately to HR about concerns of safety, stress, and fear of speaking out regarding working conditions. We also note the very low pay rate of custodial staff upon whom we all so depend.
2. We endorse, as noted, the plans for the Office of International Students to improve the services to students. We note that in communications Oct. 5, that they will likely make formal recommendations for expanded service to students.
3. We will continue to look at building safety and environment (see report below)
4. We urge the FS officers to push for purchase and installation of the physical equipment for better anti-covid preparation mentioned in our first report.

Full report on the physical plant. [Worth noting that CAS Dean Winstead told CAS Faculty Senators in a meeting 10/4/2023 that planning is underway for a new Science Center.]

#### Report on Meeting with Brian Hauff, Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management, and Others about Issues with Walker Science Building

Mark Puckett met with Brian Hauff, Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management, on Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023, for about an hour to discuss the conditions of buildings on campus, and in particular Walker Science Building. Mr. Hauff has extensive experience in facility management and was very open to conversation. This meeting was requested due to chronic problems with WSB, including cracks in the building (especially around the room that houses radioactive materials) that appear to be due to differential subsidence, sewage system malfunctions, water backing up into sinks in labs, electrical breakers blowing, and other issues.

Dr. Puckett showed him the cracks in the basement and main hallway of WSB. He said that each building on campus is scheduled to be checked for the condition of HVAC, electrical, plumbing, envelope, and structure. Thirty buildings will be inspected this year by Roth IAMS, which is an independent asset management contractor, and the balance of the buildings will be inspected the following year. He said he was aware of the issues with WSB but was not sure if it is to be inspected this year or next. Dr. Puckett asked about having a structural engineer inspect the building and he said to place a work order for that, which he has done. In response to Dr. Puckett's work order regarding the cracks in the building, John Jones, Superintendent of Building Trades at the Physical Plant, said that inspecting the entire building would cost thousands of dollars and asked if Dr. Puckett could narrow the parameters. Dr. Puckett will meet him in the morning (Friday) to show him where the cracks occur.

One of the issues with updating facilities is a Mississippi law that says if a building is more than 50 years old, there are barriers to what upgrades can be applied. He also mentioned that his office is understaffed and there are far more upgrades that need to be made than can be paid for.

Dr. Puckett contacted Gabe Goldstein, faculty member in the School of Construction, regarding the structural integrity of the building and met with him for about an hour Thursday morning (Oct. 5). His preliminary suggestion for the issues with the cracks in WSB is to get a team of licensed structural engineers to make a thorough inspection and to go through the Physical Plant, which Dr. Puckett has done. He asked to be discreet with having his name appear on any recommendations, as he is not a certified structural engineer. He said the cracks in the walls do not appear to be on load-bearing structures, but in the walls that separate rooms. The cracks in the floor need closer inspection to make sure the rebar has not degraded to make it unsafe.

Dr. Puckett contacted Neil Bohn, Physical Plant Director, this week regarding any potential issues of mold and air quality around campus. He said that he is unaware of any black mold problems on campus. He also said that the air filters are replaced every 2-3 months, which is done mostly by outside contractors. Dr. Puckett suspects that black mold is not an issue in WSB, as the HVAC system was completely redone just a few years ago and there is good air circulation in the building now and no indication of excessive humidity.

Dr. Puckett also inquired to Mr. Hauff about efforts in sustainability on campus, including reduction in energy flow across campus (which could save the university money) and the generation of power using renewable sources. He said that they are gradually changing all lights to LEDs and upgrading temperature control systems, both of which will save money. Currently, USM spends about \$8 million per year on utilities. He said that the generation of renewable energy on campus would probably not make a lot of difference in energy flow.

Dr. Bernstein proposes that more information is needed before assuming that renewable energy sources would not save the university money. Dr. Scott proposes a Gulf Coast sustainability committee.

## 8.0 Outside Committee Reports

## 9.0 Reports from Other University Advisory Bodies

## 10.0 Consent Items

## 11.0 Unfinished Business

## 12.0 New Business

### 13.0 Good of the Order

AAUP voted on a statement concerning the report from the State Auditor's office. Look for continued resistance to the State Auditor's office to come from AAUP.

Dr. Press reminds the senate that Dean Winstead encouraged us to send thank you emails to students because those messages can help students persist.

### 14.0 Announcements

#### 14.1 Next Faculty Senate Meeting November 3, 2023

### 15.0 Adjourn

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