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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes December 2023

Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 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

Quorum: A quorum was established and recognized.

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

Approval of the Minutes (PREVIOUS MONTH)

The November 2023 meeting minutes were approved.

Program

AVP Student Affairs, Sirena Cantrell, Posthumous Degree Policy

Dean Cantrell proposes developing a posthumous degree policy for USM. She has been able to award 2 students this type of degree without a policy in place, but it is difficult without guidelines. To develop the draft that she is sharing with Faculty Senate, she has completed research into policies at other institutions, received feedback from USM's Office of the Registrar, received a review from Dr. Chasteen, and had a discussion with Provost Nail. She is seeking senators' feedback on the current draft. Senators will review the draft and continue this discussion with Dean Cantrell in the Spring semester. *(please see attachment)*

AVP Teaching & Learning, Kelly Lester, Seymour's GEC

SGA requested a syllabus bank for GEC courses to help students assess workload, assignments, and grading in courses before registering. SGA representatives met with Dr. Lester to discuss this idea, and she encouraged them to consider different structures than a syllabus bank including more comprehensive course descriptions. As an advisory board, SGA developed legislation ("Seymour's GECs") that was voted on and now has come to the Provost's Office as a recommendation. Dr. Lester met with the GEC committee of Undergraduate Council about this recommendation, and that committee discussed creating a website connected to the UAC that

would provide a more comprehensive description of courses in student-friendly language while also stating that some course content may vary due to individual instructor. The Undergraduate Council committee recommended including information about student learning outcomes established for GECs. To compile this website, faculty would be able to complete a form with course descriptions that could be updated easily when changes are made to the course. Dr. Lester requests feedback from senators. Senators express concerns about academic freedom if any information beyond course descriptions are offered, and a proposal is offered to use Canvas or an intraportal site that requires a USM login to provide a more secure platform. Senators suggest looking at similar programs that have been implemented at other institutions, and Dr. Lester will follow up with further research. Senators propose a joint meeting of faculty and student representatives to find a compromise to the list of questions that will determine the information offered on this site. *(please see attachment)*

Officer Reports

President:

The Faculty Senate endorsement of PayMyTuition was forwarded to Dr. Paul on November 6, and we received the following response from the President: “I am happy to report that Business Services is moving forward toward an agreement with PayMyTuition, as they concur that this provides better options for our International students from Nigeria and other countries where we are experiencing growth.”

The Executive Committee met with Dr. Paul and Dr. Nail twice since our last Senate meeting, first on Tuesday, November 7 and again on Thursday, November 30. I was unable to attend the meeting on the 7th and either Dr. Salyers or Dr. Bernstein may discuss that in their report. On November 30, the Provost discussed the need for a number of operational efficiency changes toward the end of a goal of saving the university \$1m in the short term. These involve enforcing the minimum enrollment guidelines and eliminating redundancies such as in academic advising. The Executive Committee shared feedback from faculty members on the Gulf Coast regarding the drop in coastal enrollment. Both the President and Provost were sensitive to the lack of understanding of what programs and options are available on the coast and expressed a genuine interest to address this. My thanks to Vincenzo Mistretta for assisting in collecting responses from the Gulf Coast Faculty Council. Also shared was information regarding the need for housing and transportation on the coast provided by the SOSE via the UW&E Committee. The President indicated that he is working on solutions for these issues, and I will forward any information I receive from his office regarding coastal housing and transportation. Thank you to Fan Zhang for your work with groups across the university to provide this information to share with the administration. Both the President and Provost reinforced their support of adjusting salaries at USM, and both will be guests at our Spring Retreat at GCRL on January 12.

Senators express concern about the lack of representation on the university's website for Gulf Coast academic programs. Dr. Courts suggests that the Senate as a whole (in support of the GC committee) prioritize and continue to push for more clarity on the website for the Gulf Coast programs in conversation with the president and provost.

President-Elect:

1) Faculty Salaries Update. The FEC met twice in Nov. with Prov. Nail and Pres. Paul, and I can confirm that they both share our goal of achieving fair pay for faculty and agree it is our major priority at the moment. This fall, five major obstacles to achieving fair pay were cited to us: 1) The Gulf Coast incurred \$3.25m in total losses in AY23, according to the Provost's Office; 2) Appropriations are allocated to the IHL, not USM, and USM already enjoys a disproportionate share (over 20%) of funding from the IHL; 3) Retention remains a major problem for us, with the current retention levels roughly on pace with last year's, according to the Provost's Office; 4) Total enrollment at USM is down about 10% since AY2020, while it's climbed at Ole Miss and MSU; 5) USM has increased its number of faculty since AY2020, according to the Provost's Office. I have stressed to our leadership that fair pay cannot depend on things like enrollment and allocations; fair pay is simply the cost of doing business as a university. We've also pointed out that the peer universities (ones agreed upon for comparison) have faced similar enrollment issues, with an average decline of about 6% since AY2020, yet still pay their faculty on average about \$10,800 more than we do; see the attached table for specifics. (I'm still looking for data on comparative faculty hiring figures). Yet the \$12m we estimate we need to achieve fair pay needs to come from somewhere, and we're already plugging gaps. My belief remains that while retention and cost-cutting are needed, allocations are the only realistic solution, and we need to make ourselves heard on this. The state is talking about eliminating the income tax, and the coffers are full. Now is the time to advocate. Please see attached comparison chart.

2) Strategic Plan. We're still in the discovery phase, meaning groups are determining what questions need to be asked and what tools can be used to gain the needed information. The QEC is a separate task, and a separate committee is being formed for that. The QEC will be informed by the strategic plan but is separate.

3) FS Statewide (UFSAM). Parental leave task force is finalizing its recommendation, which hopefully will be brought to each FS in the spring for a vote. Separately, the UFSAM has gained membership from each IHL university and is currently seeking recognition from the IHL. The USFSM also hopes to renew shared governance and FS participation in IHL meetings. One issue that's been discussed at UFSAM is the executive selection process and issues of shared governance and non-transparency that have arisen recently, including at Delta State, Jackson State, Ole Miss, and USM.

4) Staff council. One concern has been that staff have sometimes feared retaliation for questioning their workplace treatment or participating in the recent AAUP rally. Two have come to me directly with these concerns. We have relayed these concerns to the Provost and President, who are equally concerned, and we have stressed the need for all employees to feel comfortable in their workplace environments and to eliminate any "culture of fear."

Secretary:

Although USM's Zoom contract was due to end in November, it has been extended through May 2024. Following the presentation of resolutions in this meeting, we will discuss the Provost's suggestion for a program with a comparable budget to Zoom that could be cut in order to allow for a renewal of the Zoom contract.

Secretary-Elect:

No report.

Discussion, Decision, Action Items:

6.1 Academic Committee Resolution Re: Workload Policy

A FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION ON: WORKLOAD AGREEMENTS

WHEREAS faculty have reported they were not certain of their current workload percentages;

WHEREAS workload percentages are use for annual evaluations of faculty;

WHEREAS the Faculty Handbook Annual Evaluation of Faculty Performance, Section 4.3 states, “Workload should be clearly defined to promote transparency in allocation decision and expectations for performance.”;

WHEREAS additionally, the Faculty Handbook (4.3) outlines the procedure for documenting workload stating, “Workloads must be documented and signed by both parties to acknowledge completion of the process and receipt of the assignment and approved by the dean.”;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate calls upon the Provost to charge Directors with the duty of fulfilling the procedures outline in the Faculty Handbook for annual evaluations including a written workload document signed by both parties. If future resources allow virtual completion, then at such time these documents can move to a virtual format but should still be completed as part of the annual evaluation process.

Dr. Masterson confirms that this workload document is already available in Watermark Faculty Success. Currently, the online form allows for directors to input the workload, and the faculty member is able to download the report, sign, and upload it back to Faculty Success. He will be speaking to the next Dean’s Council meeting to encourage use of this workload documentation in an online format. Dr. Courts recommends changing the wording of the resolution to acknowledge that the process can already be done through Faculty Success as part of annual evaluations. The amended language reads:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate calls upon the Provost to charge Directors with the duty of fulfilling the procedures outline in the Faculty Handbook for annual evaluations including a written workload document agreed upon by both parties.

In response to senators’ questions, Dr. Masterson shares his screen in Faculty Success to demonstrate the location for “Workload Information” under the “General Information” menu, in which directors input percentages and narrative justifications for teaching, research, and service as appropriate. For faculty, this information is “read only.” Senators ask questions about how the semester layout of the form in Faculty Success can respond to needed workload changes for school documents that outline distribution of workload over an academic year. Dr. Masterson confirms that the form functions with maximum flexibility as it allows for changes each semester while also allowing a report to reflect a full academic year. Dr. Masterson describes that two technical parts of Faculty Success operate differently (“CV” input interface and the Workflow),

so currently it is not possible for faculty and director to simultaneously contribute to the report. Senators advocate for faculty to be given the ability to input the information about their own workload and then allow the director to review and sign. Dr. Masterson states that the system can be changed to accommodate this request, and he will discuss this change of access roles with the Deans.

A motion is made to vote.

28 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstaining

6.2 Governance Committee Resolution Re: Administrative Pay

A FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION ON: ADMINISTRATORS RETURNING TO FACULTY STATUS

WHEREAS some faculty may move into administrative roles with a salary increase for that particular administrative position;

WHEREAS these administrative faculty members may return to faculty status during their tenure at the University;

WHEREAS there is no current University of Southern Mississippi policy addressing the salary of these former administrators who return to faculty roles; WHEREAS there is an IHL policy (<http://www.mississippi.edu/board/downloads/policiesandbylaws.pdf>) stating “The additional salary or method of salary computation, if any, for the administrative position shall be stated in the employment contract and shall not be paid to the faculty member when he or she ceases to hold the administrative position.”;

WHEREAS some former administrators have kept all or some of their administrative pay increases when returning to faculty roles;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate calls upon the Provost to implement a policy to address salaries of administrators who return to faculty status;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate proposes that the salary of administrators returning to faculty status shall be within the salary range of faculty of the same rank in the administrator’s department/school and shall typically be no higher than the highest faculty salary in that department/school.

Senators ask if there is a grandfathering clause for those whose contracts have already allowed the higher salary to remain when they returned to teaching, and Dr. Courts confirms that no salary will be changed retroactively.

Suggestions are made to amend the language in the resolution. The revised statement reads:

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate proposes that moving forward new administrative contracts should stipulate that their salary when returning to faculty status should be within the salary range of faculty of the same rank in the administrator’s department/school and shall typically be no higher than the highest faculty salary in that department/school.

Senators express concern about unintended consequences of this policy including dissuading candidates from applying for administrative positions, a lack of hiring external administrators therefore limiting the diversity of thought, the shifting of the budgetary burden to the department when an administrator returns to faculty with a higher salary, and the potential that limiting salary may encourage faculty to seek a position at another university. Senators ask how USM has been able to violate IHL policy, what concrete data has been discovered, challenges of determining where each part of the salary (base salary and administrative stipend) comes from, what components can be limited, and whether or not these contracts are actually violating IHL policy. Emileigh McCardle proposes that the Governance Committee can explore the numbers of faculty/administrators and salary data.

Dr. Courts recommends obtaining some further data and tabling the vote on this resolution until the next meeting. Please send feedback to the Governance Committee.

6.3 UR&C Survey

Dr. Shin introduces the survey which has three parts to reflect on communication at school, college, and university levels. A motion and second are made, and during the discussion, a senator requests that consideration be added to assess the use of personal devices to conduct university business. In order to give senators more time to reflect on the survey, the motion is tabled and will be returned to in January. Please see attached survey questions and review before the next FS meeting.

6.4 Zoom and ACUE

The cost of the Zoom contract is not available in the current budget as it originally was paid for with a grant. Provost Nail mentioned that ACUE is a comparable budget that could be cut in order to keep Zoom. Senators express concerns about cutting ACUE as the good teaching that results from this training helps to retain students. Other senators express that colleagues in their schools feel very strongly about the need to keep Zoom. Senators raise questions about if there is something else that could be considered in this budget decision since these two programs are very different and both valuable to faculty. Senators raise questions about saturation of total faculty who have received ACUE training and if it would be possible to develop training programs through USM's Center for Faculty Development.

Committee Reports

Academics:

In reviewing school documents about workload policies, only 10 of 29 schools mentioned workload in their documents. The workload for faculty members varied widely even for those of similar rank but in different schools. Future efforts will be made to encourage all schools to include workload policies in their school documents. However, the primary focus this month for this committee was to examine the policy in the faculty handbook. Many faculty have reported that the policy mentioned in the faculty handbook requiring written documentation of workload that is then signed by both the faculty and the director of the school each year as part of the annual evaluation process of has not been implemented. The Academic Committee's Workload Policy Proposal voted on earlier in this meeting seeks to address this issue.

The committee also agreed that faculty salary should not be contingent on student enrollment. Investigations into financial data from IHL show that USM had a financial surplus last year. The Governance Committee asks the Finance Committee to inquire about the need for college budget cuts last year and the university's long-term goal for surplus funds in the future. Are we building savings, for what purpose, and when is the goal reached? The committee feels that if faculty had a better understanding of the university's financial planning and goals, we could be more supportive and understanding of the efforts and timeline needed.

In terms of student recruitment, some faculty have reported that requiring students to stay on campus (Hattiesburg) has limited the ability to recruit students, and scholarship funds are often insufficient to cover student costs. The committee would like to explore data on whether this decision has been beneficial to recruiting and retention, particularly with our student demographic.

Administrative Evaluation:

No report.

Awards:

The committee has extended the deadline for excellence award for librarianship to Jan. 3. Please encourage your colleagues to apply. If there are not enough candidates, the committee may revisit whether or not to have that award category next year.

Bylaws:

No report.

Elections:

No report.

Faculty Handbook Advisory:

From the Faculty Handbook Committee

Proposal 3.3.3. Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure has passed a second vote at the Faculty Handbook Committee and there were no comments from the Faculty Senate.

Proposal 3.3.4. Scholarly Misconduct has passed a second vote at the Faculty Handbook Committee and there were no comments from the Faculty Senate.

There were no changes in the language of these proposals.

Proposal 2.6. Emeritus Faculty has been tabled, and it has not been discussed.

From the Faculty Senate Handbook Committee

Our Senate committee met a couple of times prior to the Faculty Handbook Committee November meeting. We were working on a positive argument to avoid another item requiring collegiality in our Faculty Handbook. It is important to notice that the word “collegiality” already appears 12 times in our Faculty Handbook. We also noticed that since a definition of “collegiality” needs to be created by each academic unit, this term is currently unenforceable.

Our committee understands that this issue will continue to surface. Regardless of the solid opinion presented by our AAUP colleagues, it seems to me that the Faculty Handbook Committee already has a solid majority opinion in this matter. We suggest that an overall approach to replace all the instances where the word collegiality appears in our Faculty Handbook should be taken into consideration. We are aware that this is a major task that won't be easily achieved. In my personal opinion, a substitute language that helps to positively evaluate faculty participation, without infringing on academic freedom, needs to be researched from scratch. Our committee came up with a few starting words that could be helpful to a future working group.

Changes in the Faculty Senate Handbook Committee membership:

During the upcoming Spring semester, Danilo Mezzadri is taking a sabbatical for a research project. The committee has elected Jeremy Scott as a new chair and representative at the Faculty Handbook Committee. This change is effective starting on the Spring 2024.

Faculty Welfare & Success:

Senators have been provided with survey results from University of Mississippi Medical Center concerning the wellbeing of faculty and staff. This was not the survey designed, administered, or requested by this committee. The committee had identified a survey administered by the University of Michigan which has been tested at other institutions and refined. The committee requested the funding to conduct this survey from the Provost's Office, but USM has said that it will not provide \$5000-\$6000 needed to conduct a survey of faculty and staff mental health. The UMMC data is what the committee will need to work with. The participant sample is very small, but it does suggest the following (please see pp. 6-7):

- Mental health and money appear as major concerns at USM but not at other institutions

- 22% of USM's population considers themselves to be consistently thriving compared to 8.7% at peer institutions; 23.4% of USM respondents acknowledged they are consistently struggling, compared to 10.6% at other institutions
- Wellbeing barriers at USM are energy, time, and money, which is different from other institutions

Dr. Grivno encourages the FSEC to bring this matter to the president and provost as the wellbeing of faculty and staff also impacts the wellbeing of students.

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 November 10, 2023. Faculty Senate President-Elect Josh Bernstein joined this meeting. The main focus of the meeting was the salary increase and the upcoming rally.

Allyson mentioned that USM has been given funding to increase salary. Everyone got a salary increase in Fall 2022. The 2023-2024 funding was used to increase GA's salary, increase minimal wage, and pay for the increased utility and insurance fees. Insurance has gone up considerably because of the Gulf Park campus. This year's estimated insurance cost was \$5 Million. Josh stated his argument for the salary issue and invited Allyson to attend the rally. Allyson mentioned that Fringe Benefits are about 40% of an employee's salary at USM. Therefore, a \$1 increase in salary leads to a \$0.40 increase in fringe benefits. There is a proposal to increase Fringe Benefits by another 2% this year, for the employer retirement contribution and this will result in 2 million more costs from USM and Allyson didn't know how we can cover that cost.

The conversation shifted to enrollment, recruitment, and retention. Allyson mentioned that USM only collects \$4 million in Non-resident fees from out-of-state students because of our fee structure. The same figures for Ole Miss and Miss State are \$130 Million and \$134 Million. President Paul had been visiting high schools and community colleges to establish relationships and help increase our enrollment. Allyson also stressed the importance of freshman retention. This is critical for the budget. Allyson shared the latest enrollment numbers in Mississippi higher education and the file is attached to this report. USM enrollment numbers had been going down consistently to 13,110 this Fall.

Governance:

Vision 2020 survey information was sent to President Paul and Provost Nail. The committee does intend to do an additional faculty survey that will address additional ideas from faculty about strategies to address issues raised, and the results of that survey will be presented to the faculty. The committee is also working to ensure that shared governance processes are included in school documents and the faculty handbook. On first review, most school documents do not mention

shared governance, but Emileigh McCardle is reviewing school documents further to see if any policies imply shared governance. The committee will report on those findings in the future.

Gulf Coast:

The committee has been discussing the website questions and faculty affiliate category. Based on meetings with Shannon Campbell and Jacob Breland at Gulf Coast Faculty Council, financial issues for the university and considerations of redundancies in administrative and advising positions may lead to cuts. The committee is focusing on what programs are getting promoted and which are not, particularly through the university's website and recruitment events. The committee has concerns about programs that are offered but not within schools on the coast—e.g. Social Work, Psychology, Elementary Education, and Nursing do not have Directors on the Coast. The committee received confirmation from the university's Chief Communication Officer that various colleges and schools are in charge of making their own website changes. In addition, some faculty hires have not been approved for the coast (specifically Film and Environmental Literature) although support to develop those programs had been promised. No conclusive response has been received about the issue of charges for event parking. Dr. Courts will follow up with the Parking Committee. Dr. Courts also recommends connecting with Ivonne Prado in the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office for support with website issues for the School of Coastal Resilience.

University Relations and Communications:

The committee requests that senators review the survey questionnaire and provide feedback to the committee.

Welfare and Environment:

The Welfare and Environment Committee at the University of Southern Mississippi convened on November 17, 2023, to address critical issues related to the welfare of students, faculty, and staff, as well as initiatives to promote a sustainable campus environment.

Areas of Focus:

- Campus Sanitation

- a) There is no additional information currently.

- Custodial Staff Shortage

- a) There is no additional information currently.

Ongoing Focus Area:

- International Students

a) The Faculty Senate Executive Committee sent the endorsement to Dr. Paul and Dr. Nail, and Dr. Paul checked on this issue. His reply stated, “Business Services is moving forward toward an agreement with PayMyTuition, as they concur that this provides better options for our International students from Nigeria and other countries where we are experiencing growth.”

b) Fan met Dr. Kristina Mojica (who leads the pilot transit service on the coast) through Zoom on November 7, 2023. Kristina shared that the pilot program had ended due to running out of funding. The transit service was between Stennis Space Center and the Gulf Park campus where students live. The original plan was to fund the program for a year, half by student activity fees and half by collecting fares. It is \$2.5 per ride (about 45 minutes ride). However, only 2 students used the transit service regularly, resulting in student activity fees running out in two months and the end of the pilot transit program.

c) Bob and Fan attended the ISAB meeting on November 14, 2023. The meeting was attended by student leaders from different countries and ISSS staff. Students voiced many concerns, including lack of transportation, lack of funding, the increasing living cost, actual costs higher than listed on their I-20, etc. The international student office and different student associations organize many interesting events. One of the organizations named the Nations facilitates the collaboration between international students and US students, and among different international student groups. The president of the Nations mentioned a few issues he saw and suggested negotiating a better rate with Enterprise so that students can rent a car at the same rate as the USM-Enterprise rate.

- Structural integrity

a) We have not received the final report from the structural engineer who inspected the Walker Science Building about 3 weeks ago. Mark will follow up after the holidays to see if the final report has been received.

- Students with Disabilities

a) Mark stated that next semester a focus of the committee would be to get as much information on mobility issues for disabled people on campus and communicate them to the rest of the Faculty Senate and the administration. Kate Smith, Assistant to the Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences expressed her willingness to assist.

- University Retention

a) Robert spoke with Kate Smith, Assistant to the Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is willing to help with the initiative to help reduce our high dropout rate. She suggested a word that might be more acceptable than ‘mentoring,’ which gets a negative reaction from faculty. The use of the word “connection” to faculty staff would be a better word choice for the program.

Recommendations:

Based on our discussions, the Welfare and Environment Committee recommends the following actions in addition to the Faculty Senate approval:

- (For Faculty Senate or FS officers) The committee strongly recommends the creation of a transportation system between the Hattiesburg and Coastal Campuses. This is a critical step towards addressing the needs of the international student community and enhancing the overall functionality of the university. This initiative will bridge gaps, foster inclusivity, and create a more interconnected and efficient campus environment, benefiting not just international students, but the entire USM community.

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.

Outside Committee Reports/Other University Advisory Committees' Reports

AAUP President plans to reach out to state legislators and those who make appropriation decisions, especially those who responded positively to the rally for fair pay. He recommends holding another rally in the next semester. Dr. Courts suggests that FSEC and the executive committee of AAUP could meet together with legislators. FSEC mentioned this possibility to the president and provost already, and they suggested particular legislators to talk with and said they would facilitate getting FSEC in touch with them.

Consent Items

None.

Unfinished Business

A senator asks about any new developments in programs' ability to establish new emphasis areas. Professor McCardle responds that she has discussed this issue further with Dr. Masterson, and he wants to meet with programs/schools on an individual basis to try to work out solutions. Professor McCardle will follow up with Dr. Masterson again to gain more information about this issue. Dr. Puckett mentions that these emphasis areas are very important for recruitment.

New Business

None.

Good of the Order

Everyone is invited to CFD Cocktails and Conversations, sponsored this month by Faculty Senate.

Dr. Eickelmann invites anyone who is interested to be interviewed about their research for a film project that he and Dr. Mistretta are doing. To see previous interviews, you can visit the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNJyevARx0nULcwf4U4Ectg>

Announcements

14.1 Senate Spring Retreat at GCRL, January 12, 2024

14.2 Next Faculty Senate Meeting, January 19, 2024 (We will be joined by Dr. Motter VPSA.)

Motion to Adjourn

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

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy establishes a consistently administered means for the University to recognize the academic achievements of students who were deceased prior to but nearing formal completion of degree requirements of the programs being pursued.

This recognition is reserved for degree candidates who, in addition to current enrollment in a degree program in the university and good academic standing, have completed 75% of degree requirements, including coursework, capstone, internship and research requirements and have the minimum GPA necessary for graduation.

Awarding of a posthumous degree requires evaluation of the student's record to ensure the integrity of the academic degree and the institution. Therefore, posthumous degrees may only be awarded in cases when specific criteria are met via evaluation of the student's academic record, pursuant to the procedures described below.

REASON FOR POLICY/STATEMENT

This policy is required for the effective communication of University policy regarding posthumous degrees.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW THIS POLICY

All members of the University Southern Mississippi Community.

DEFINITIONS

A posthumous degree is a degree that is awarded after a student passes away prior to completing all degree requirements.

POLICY/PROCEDURES

Section 1: Criteria/Eligibility

At the time of the student's death, student must have been:

- a. currently enrolled in the university (winter and summer terms excluded) or their continuous enrollment was interrupted by their injury, illness, deployment, etc.
- b. in good academic standing (good standing is defined as not being on academic probation, continued probation, suspension, or dismissal).
- c. nearing completion of work required for award of degree.
- d. had no disciplinary sanctions pending.

Section 2: Requirements

Requirements for the award of the degree are "nearing completion:" Specifically:

For undergraduate degree candidates, completion of a minimum of 75% (e.g., 90 of 120 hours) of coursework required by the degree program (a) the semester that the student died or (b) within one additional semester of university attendance.

For graduate students in thesis and dissertation degree programs, 75% (e.g., 45 of 60 hours) or more of the coursework should have been completed and the student should have commenced the research process. Graduate students in non-thesis programs should have completed 75% or more of required course work. Professional students should have completed 75% or more of the course work for the degree.

The President or Provost may consider cases that do not meet the above criteria when extraordinary circumstances prevail.

Section 3: Procedures

The University of Southern Mississippi may confer baccalaureate, graduate and professional degrees upon students who are deceased prior to but nearing formal completion of degree requirements of the programs being pursued. Any student who is deceased after completing degree requirements but prior to the conferment of the degree will receive the earned degree with no posthumous designation.

A deceased student who is enrolled in a degree program at the university at the time of death may be nominated for a posthumous degree by the Dean of Students or by the Dean of the college of their major.

The Dean of Students (or designee) or Dean of the student's college (or designee) will recommend the candidate for a posthumous degree in the form of a formal written request to the Office of the Registrar. The request must include the name and ID number of the student, the degree to be awarded, and the recommended semester for degree conferral. Office of the Registrar will verify death of the student, enrollment status, academic standing and progress on degree requirements upon submission of the request. Once these steps are completed, the Office of the Registrar will provide the Dean's formal written request to the Office of the Provost, along with the verification done by the Registrar's office.

If supported by the Office of the Provost, the formal written request will then be returned to the Office of the Registrar for degree processing.

- The Registrar's Office will post the notice of the award of the posthumous degree to the student's transcript. There will not be any indication of a posthumous award of the degree on the student's diploma.
- The Registrar's office will notify the recommending Dean, the Dean of Students (if not the recommending Dean), and the Office of the Provost once the degree has been posted.
- The Dean of Students will inform the immediate family of the university's decision to recognize the student with a posthumous degree.

Section 4: Degree Considerations

- Latin honors are not awarded on posthumous degrees.
- The statement "awarded posthumously" will be printed on the student's academic record, but not on the diploma.

REVIEW

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the review of this policy every four years (or whenever circumstances require immediate review).

The Dean of Students, Deans of the academic colleges, Dean of the Graduate School, and the Office of the Provost should review any future revisions and provide input and guidance.

FORMS/INSTRUCTIONS

N/A

APPENDICES

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

N/A

DRAFT



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

118 College Drive #5129 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.4407 | Fax: 601.266.6401 | southernmisssga.org

A Bill to Implement a “Seymour’s GECs”

1
2
3 **WHEREAS**, the implementation of a web page to aid students in the selection of which
4 courses to enroll in each semester titled “Seymour’s GEC’s”.

5
6 **WHEREAS**, research has been conducted into what other universities have implemented as a
7 syllabus bank system. Meetings with faculty determined a better option for this university is the
8 inclusion of important information without the syllabi.

9
10 *BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF*
11 *THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:*

12
13 **SECTION 1.** A policy will be implemented that describes and highlights the primary course
14 components of a GEC (General Education Curriculum) course. A questionnaire will be
15 administered to the School Directors and/or Program Coordinators for disciplines in the GEC
16 courses. This questionnaire will consist of content 16 questions regarding the GEC courses from
17 that department.

18
19 Some of the questions will go as follows:

- 20 1. What is the name of the course?
- 21 2. What is the typical point value that will equal a letter grade?
- 22 3. What is the typical attendance policy?
- 23 4. Please give a summary of the typical type of assignments.
- 24 5. What is the typical exam structure, i.e. tests, projects, etc.?
- 25 6. What is the approximate reading load for this course?
- 26 7. What do you believe is the most anticipated aspect of your course?

27
28 **SECTION 2.** Once the schools have completed these forms, the information is then added to a
29 webpage. This webpage, “Seymour’s GEC’s”, will be linked on the USM webpage. It will be
30 organized by the title of the GEC course first and then by the professors’ names. This will go
31 into effect in Spring 2024.

32
33 **SECTION 3.** Upon passage through Senate, this Bill shall be sent to Mr. Christopher Lee,
34 Senior Vice President; Ms. Ashley Lankford, President of the Student Government Association;
35 Mr. Carl Thomas, Advisor to the Student Government Association if passed by the SGA Senate.

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37 *Respectfully submitted on the 15th of February 2023.*

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39



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

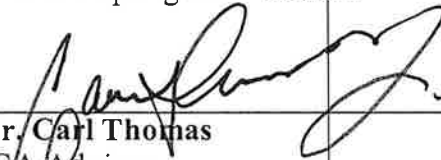
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

118 College Drive #5129 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

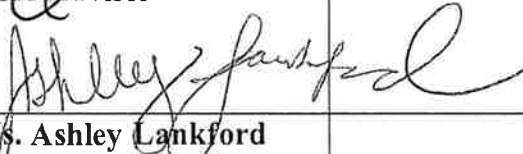
Phone: 601.266.4407 | Fax: 601.266.6401 | southernmisssga.org

IN WITNESS WHEREOF

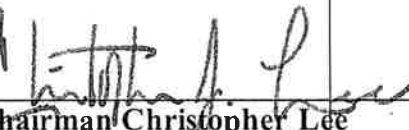
I have approved this legislation and have hereunto set my hand and affixed my signature to Bill 11 of the Spring 2023 session.



Mr. Carl Thomas
SGA Advisor



Ms. Ashley Lankford
SGA President



Chairman Christopher Lee
SGA Senior Vice President

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