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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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November 10, 2020

University of Mississippi. Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Minutes– November 10, 2020

Zoom – @ 6:00 pm (details at end of Agenda)

- **Call Meeting to Order**

- **Approve minutes from the October 13, 2020 meeting**

- Motion

- Second

- Vote

- **Updates - Provost Noel Wilkin**

noted that since the November 1 census date for enrollment has passed, we have updated enrollment numbers, as highlighted below (see attached slide presentation):

5,299 undergraduate degrees were awarded last year and 116 doctoral degrees.

Over 100 doctoral degrees cleared for second year in a row.

Record high six-year graduation rate for the 2013 cohort is 66.7%.

Record high retention rate for the 2019 cohort is 85.7%.

Funding from the Woodward-Hines Foundation has allowed us to work with students to help them stay on track to graduate.

Our retention rate has hovered above 80% for some time, but this has been another year of decline, including at UMMC and regional campuses.

We are pleased with the trends in graduate enrollment, which are consistent with other universities' numbers. He praised the hard work of deans, associate deans, and retention staff.

Nationwide there has been a 4% decline in enrollments, yet Mississippi State and University of Southern Mississippi have increased enrollment this year.

Mississippi residents account for 59.7% of our students.

Liberal Arts, Business, and Applied Sciences remain the largest schools, though all schools experienced a decrease this year.

USM has smaller programs so comparison is not fully apt across all programs

We are the third smallest SEC institution and second smallest public university; we expect to be smaller than MSU this year.

People see our enrollment as a temperature, and when it goes down people regard it as a problem; we want to change that perception.

Incredible efforts since 2017 have helped turn these trends around, including using Common App, reworking academic websites, increasing name buys, and using predictive analytics to buy those names and improve yield rates associated with students choosing to come to UM.

The university also reorganized admissions counselor positions to base regional representatives in Virginia and Nashville; reorganized to create a Coordinator of Diversity Recruitment; partnered with IT for an additional IT position to assist with CRM implementation; partnered with Marketing/Communications to create a marketing assistant position to focus on digital/social media and print content; reorganized positions to create a campus visit team to improve our campus visitation programs and communication; conducted a campus visit audit to improve the visit process; and contracted with NearPeer for student engagement yield strategy.

These are the larger scale initiatives implemented.

We are also looking at scholarships and how additional dollars might move yields and are in our 3rd year with consulting firms that are helping us identify new markets.

Thanked IT, admissions, enrollment and registrar for getting CRM implemented, now we have to work harder and use the data most effectively.

MainLine with dean's input so we are coordinated in how we communicate with students and their parents, so we can track digital and print components.

VC for Enrollment Management to take it to the next level; search has kicked off

We focused so much on managing growth that we had trouble adapting to the decline, and now things are a lot more competitive.

Graduate enrollment trends:

Education, Liberal Arts, Applied Sciences saw the most increases.

Professional programs: Law had seen nationwide declines but are stabilized now and seeing increased enrollment, as national trends have turned around and due to their own hard effort.

Double digit declines in Pharmacy track with nationwide trends.

There was a dip in applications, especially for doctoral programs, but there was an increase in overall graduate enrollment. Kluck and Clark are looking into these trends.

Freshmen trends:

There was a dramatic increase in applications; over the years we've seen increased GPA and ACT scores as well.

Going into 2016 we implemented a review threshold meaning they met the same admissions criteria (set by IHL) but we had a review process and now admissions are on the rise but we are not yielding them for enrollment.

Strong majors continue to be the main reason students decide to come to UM.

Only 30% of freshmen report a family connection to UM.

Retention and graduation rates are on an upward trend, due to a lot of people's hard work.

Steady progress since 2011, 66.7% is our highest rate yet.

Compared to SUG, we are climbing toward average but outperforming state competitors, in the 85% range.

Degrees awarded is at their highest levels in the past two years.

UMMC enrollment trends for diversity:

Diversity, declining freshman minority rates, compared between residents and non-residents; we are still #2 in SEC in terms of % of African American students but when it comes to overall minority enrollment we are below the SEC average.

Increase in minorities but decrease in enrollment generally.

On the Oxford campus alone, 20.2% are African American, little changed from last year; they are not enrolling.

Faculty trends:

Decline among all faculty, full time and tenure (7 FT gone).

65% TT and the rest NTT.

Salaries are not increasing, and we are starting to see a slight decline at the full professor level.

Q: Do you think we would have made more progress in admissions if we hadn't been handicapped by Covid or would you have expected much the same?

Provost Wilkin: There is no way to know for sure. 136 miles is the average students go for college but some students probably stayed closer to home this time. But we did yield stronger students attracted to stronger programs for their major. The pandemic did hurt us, but the fact that USM and MSU both reported increases, though decreases among freshman class, is worth noting. We are not in a race with MSU but it gives us another data point for what is happening with students in-state. But they do have more online programs, especially for graduate students. There are additional opportunities for us to grow our graduate programs.

Q. Do we have programs that specifically target students who withdraw for non-academic reasons?

A. Yes, we have a retention team that tracks that daily and they reach out to students to find out what is preventing them from enrolling and seek to eliminate those barriers. This has been a big factor in our 85-86% retention rate. Six-year graduation levels also include tracking students at four-year level to see what would help them graduate.

Another effort during the pandemic is that we reached out to the Compete to Complete program to let students know of classes they could take to fulfill their requirements and hired coaches to identify cohorts to help students progress and remain connected.

Q. Is salary information for non-tenure track faculty lecturer and senior lecturer data available?

A. Yes, we do track that data in Tableau but it can be somewhat dated information.

Q. Are there any updates on parents' group making lots of demands?

A. The Facebook parents' group is tracking closely what is happening on campus and taking issue with lots of things being said, including minutes of these meetings. It has become relatively quiet, though we followed up with them to try to find out how to engage with them and respond to them. They want us to do everything 100% in person and go back to the way it was before Covid, which can't be satisfied while staying safe. They were frustrated with our responses and came after individual faculty members. Deans have responded to those faculty as well. But our first priority is to keep the virus from spreading.

Q. Huge cluster-hires are being made around race and ethnicity at a time when other hiring is suspended. How do we maintain quality and retain faculty?

A. Our strategic plan lays out those initiatives.

Q. Are we capable of getting insight into new freshmen who were admitted but chose not to enroll?

A. Admissions is engaging in efforts to understand this but it doesn't have a great response rate. I can follow up to see what issues have emerged. It seems to have been that they got more money or a better package elsewhere but let me see what I can learn.

Q. What is the greatest weakness in the student enrollment pipeline? Also, what can you comment regarding the human element of our enrollment retention efforts. Beyond numbers and analytics... Changing the narrative and image of the University as the public sees and assesses. And what can we do as faculty to assist in those efforts. What about changing the narrative and perceptions about the university?

Some of the evidence is anecdotal, but we are somewhat competing on perceptions. We'll have to dig into the data to see what we can learn. Our scholarship strategy is as effective as it's ever been. We have outstanding programs that can compete in the SEC and nationally. One of the greatest challenges to recruit non-residents is to convey how to truly understand what it's like to live here and be a student here. In-state competition is intense, but we do a good job of getting interest yet have trouble with the actual

enrollment part. Faculty can play a key role here because you can communicate best what we do here, and students want to come because of a specific program. Deans have been incredibly responsive to getting students to come for admitting day and other events, and we have a good yield rate from those who come.

Q. Graduate student stipends are the number one issue for grad students, far from a living wage, especially given housing costs in Oxford. Any discussion of raising that rate?

A. Graduate education costs more than it brings in, but Dean Kluck is working to offer competitive packages for highly sought candidates. We have institutionalized the minimums, which didn't increase enrollments and didn't fill the hole. In external funding departments, they have increased the thresholds themselves, but that won't solve the problem for most other programs. How to use research dollars to pay tuition? Better enrollment at undergraduate level can help fund graduate stipends. We think about this problem a lot and talk about it, but we all need to work together to bridge that gap and begin making progress.

Q. The university went through a similar phase in 1990s and we created a campus-wide initiative to increase enrollments. Are there artifacts from that time that could be useful to your project? Recruitment and retention representatives from each department participated to help turn things around. John Van Winkle?

A. Thanks. I will look that up. Faculty do play a critical role in bringing in and keeping students. An undergrad learned he could work in the lab as an undergrad and chose to come here instead of a major university. Those files can give us a window into the role faculty can play in recruitment and retention, and everyone can play a critical role. The Chancellor could not come tonight but wanted me to reiterate how important faculty are to our recruitment and retention.

Q. At one point we had lots of separate fees that are now consolidated into one tuition charge. Athletics get zero revenue from academics but the allocation from fees this year came to \$411,778 (.45% of revenues) from student fees. Can you comment?

Provost Wilkin: The IHL had capped how much a university can spend on athletic programs, which is now set at \$1 million, and there are caps on FTE as well. But we are nowhere close to that at \$411, 778.

Q. The Chancellor mentioned the budget would need to wait on enrollment numbers. What can you tell us about the health of the budget?

A. Spring semester is what's uncertain now, so until registration occurs we won't know the impact on the budget. We are trailing a bit by last year's day to day average of students who have set up their schedules. But there's a lot of uncertainty right now so we are not too surprised by that. As they enroll in classes, we are seeing students choosing

remote and online and only 11% had only online, so we should expect an increase in student density on campus.

This has been an incredibly difficult time, and I feel bad I don't have better news about enrollments. Thank you for everything you are doing to keep engaging our students, keeping your research going forward, and serving our community.

Chair: I serve on a lot of committees and I get to see how much hard work you all do. Thank you to you, Provost, and your office for your hard work and effort this semester, as always.

- **Committee Updates**

- Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Corina Petrescu)
 - No report
- Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff)
 - No report
- Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle)
 - No report
- Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly)
 - No report
- Governance (chair: Daniel Durkin)
 - No report
- Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley)
 - No report
- University Services (chair: Carrie McCormick)
 - No report

- **Old Business**

The Senate was asked to revisit a conversation from last month but want to draw attention to the bylaws, so we all know the process. Typically, we would circulate items to the Senate beforehand (see 8.3 of the bylaws), however, this was not possible. Therefore, we need to vote to suspend the regular rules to consider the proposed resolution. Given our current attendance numbers we must have at least 38 people vote to

suspend the rules before the resolution can be discussed. After that the resolution can be passed with a simple majority.

- Motion to suspend the rules: Alex Watson
 - Seconded: John Labor
 - Vote: 80% voted to suspend the rules. (7:12 PM)
 - Discussion of the resolution
 - Motion to table discussion of the resolution to allow conversations within departments until the next meeting of the Faculty Senate December 8, 2020:
Phillis George
 - Seconded: Willa Johnson
 - Vote: 95% voted in favor of tabling the resolution until next meeting. (8:25 PM)
 - Copy of resolution will be distributed with the agenda of the December 8, 2020 meeting
- **New Business**
 - **Adjournment at 8:30 PM.**
 - Motion
 - Second
 - Vote

NEXT MEETING: December 8, 2020 @ 6:00 via ZOOM

Meagen Rosenthal is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91930047263?pwd=WFVVVHFSejhZMDNpTDNRbE82cDg0UT09>

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