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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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12-8-2020

**December 8, 2020**

University of Mississippi. Faculty Senate

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## **Faculty Senate Minutes – December 8, 2020**

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

**Senators Present:** Alex Lopez, Angela Green, Brad Jones, Brian Boutwell, Brian Reithel, Carmen Sanchis-Sinisterra, Carolyn Higdon, Carrie McCormick, Carrie V. Smith, Charles Stotler, Chip Wade, Chris Mullen, Christy Nielson, Cole Stevens, Corina Petrescu, Christie Ellis, Daniel Durkin, David Golgor, Darren Grem, Donna Buckley, Fei Lan, Hyunwoo Joung, Jenny Bucksbarg, John Lobur, Jon-Michael Wimberly, Jordan Ballou, Joseph Carlisle, Julia Bussade, Kathleen Fuller/Robert Van Ness, Kenya Wolff, KoFan Lee, Kyle Fritz, Lance Yarbrough, Lauren Cardenas, Mary Hayes/Shari Holt, Meagan Rosenthal, Michael Repka, Mikaela Adams, Phillis George, Randy Dale, Richard Gordon, Tom Brady, Whitney Sarver, Willa Johnson, Zenebe Beyene, Beth Ann Fennelly

**Senators Absent (Excused):** Alex Watson, Mandy Perryman, Stuart Schafer

**Senators Absent (Unexcused):** Aaron Joy, Jim Cizdziel, Joel Mobley, Sue Ann Skipworth

- **Call Meeting to Order**
  
- **Approve minutes from the November 10, 2020 meeting**
  - Motion
    - Second
      - Vote - APPROVED
  
- **Update on 2020/21 Benefits:**
  - Assistant Director of Benefits Pamela Johnson was unable to attend due to illness, so other guests spoke in her place.
  - Stuart Haines, former faculty senator, gave an update on 403(b) plans we can opt into as a supplemental retirement plan available to faculty and staff.
  - 3 options: AIG Retirement Services/VALIC, TIAA/CREF, and Voya.
  - Each charges a fee including the underlying investment charges and for record-keeping of your retirement plan
  - Over a two-year process we have consolidated vendors, reduced the fees charged, and hired a company, CapTrust, to advise.
  - 
  - Keaton Brewer, consultant from CapTrust, was introduced.
  - Brewer noted that he graduated from UM and is happy to work with his alma mater.

- After more than a decade of a “wild west” in funds, we have so many vendors in the field that we issues an RFP to identify the best vendors moving forward, with a robust list and a process that’s coming to a culmination.
- Voya and TIAA are the two finalists, both of them unique funds. TIAA is well known in higher ed. Voya is a strong leader that can push us through. Savings is one aspect and something we are happy to offer. 75 basis points have been reduced to 35, and 18.5 basis points to 12. We are very pleased with the savings we were able to realize for the university and we expect they will continue to decrease over time.
- VALIC was eliminated through our due diligence. If you have been with VALIC, we will hold town hall meetings in February, probably virtual, to discuss changes and options and explain money movement and the savings you can expect. If you are not in one of the two plans, you will have to make an active selection if you continue to participate in a 403(b) plan. We will stay in communication and ensure a smooth transition. There won’t necessarily be apples-to-apples comparisons, so we want to streamline as best as we can to create an open architecture platform so we have the best funds in each of those slots from the best funds available.

Question: What if we have a current account and want to move into a new account? Is that possible given the rollout is not until February?

Brewer: Yes, absolutely. It should be very clear to folks how much you will save moving to new accounts. You can move and consolidate money into one account.

Haines: Record keepers will increase participation by offering this education to faculty and staff and that’s one reason we went with Voya, because of their educational platform that will help allow us to make a good retirement.

Brewer: There will be a single landing page for faculty staff participating in a 403(b) plan. Don’t be scared that AIG is going anywhere. They are still part of the PERS system; this is just for the voluntary 403(b) plan. Don’t feel like you to have to make a move on that. Feel free to reach out to me and my office with any questions.

- **Committee Updates**

- Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Corina Petrescu) – report on cheating (attached)

Question: Are there any recommendations regarding the academic discipline process?

Petrescu: No, there was no discussion of changing the process. Dr. Berry emphasized the need to put something on the syllabus about cheating, especially if there is something like CHEGG in your discipline

Question: But doesn't that lead to students innovating when it comes to cheating? Do we risk having to enumerate every possible form of cheating on the syllabus? What about our need to also teach ethics?

Petrescu: Students will cheat, no matter what. We can't completely eradicate cheating, creative or otherwise. What I do on my syllabi, in German and on German, I give them a few examples of translation sites that are forbidden and include the phrase "and the like" as not considered acceptable. I have a reputation for being strict and students have come to expect the attitude that I will not allow help from such sites.

Comment: I spoke with Dr. Berry at length at a time when a large number of students were caught cheating from the same class. They may be allowed some things in high school that we don't allow in college. So we may want to make those things clear on our syllabi.

Chair: We have considered inviting Dr. Berry to come to the wider faculty senate to describe the process and how we might avail ourselves of it. Is there consensus around having him come in the spring to have that conversation?

Question: Maybe a lunch-and-learn through CETL or somewhere would be good?

Question: CETL would be excellent as a way of helping us think through how we assign work to prevent students from cheating.

Question: If there is concern whether something is or is not cheating, it probably is. A faculty member usually 99+% of the time will likely make the right judgment and there will be an appeals process, but that might lead to a harsher outcome. They are not in high school anymore, and we have to be clear about that going in. Communications is usually the easiest way around most issues.

- Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff)

- Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle)
  - Will invite Pam Johnson or Andrea Jakobson to come talk about the 3% increase to our insurance costs
- Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly)
- Governance (chair: Dan Durkin)
- Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley)
  - The committee is gathering data on how faculty have navigated the work-life balance during Covid, looking into borrowing a survey from another university and also looking to the Isom Center for help identifying faculty interested in doing research on this subject.
- University Services (chair: Carrie McCormick)
- **Old Business**
  - Chair: Three possible resolutions to consider, one discussed at the November meeting, another introduced since our last meeting, and a third resolution being shared over the past couple of days but will be considered as part of new business. Process should proceed by considering the first resolution under old business and the second two under new business. A motion is needed to amend the rules, by 3/4 vote, to open up for discussion the third resolution (Section 8a3).
  - Comment: we can remove the first resolution later but are not required to do so at this time.
  - Resolution presented from November 10, 2020 Faculty Senate meeting (see attached)
  - Carrie Smith moved to suspend the rules in order to discuss Resolution 3. Willa Johnson seconded the motion.
  - Vote to suspend the rules passed with 98%.
- **New Business**
  - Alternate Resolutions shared. Carrie Smith moved to consider the resolution presented on screen
  - Question: can we use a ranking system to determine which resolution has the most support before making changes to the document?
  - Question: can we adopt more than one resolution, as long as they don't contradict each other?
  - Comment: there are no limits on the number we can adopt.
  - Comment: there is merit in both proposals, both the specific and the general.

- Comment: I read all information available before going before a judge. The second paragraph of the website for ScholarStrike contradicts the definition of work stoppage.
- Comment: the most salient thing is that Dr. Thomas did not violate the statute because the auditor is ignoring specific language in the statute defining work stoppage or a strike. Read excerpt from Richard Gershon's December 4 letter (see attached)
- Comment: we can alter some of the language but the problem is the auditor has laid bare his intentions. Looking at his Twitter feed, we see him making fun of faculty, making fun of liberals, and delivering a lump of coal to a teacher in this cartoon. Now the chilling effect is that anyone can be on his naughty list. Any legal scholar can see that this did not meet the legal definition of a strike, but I'm in favor of softening the language in that part.
- Comment: we are almost jumping to a legal conclusion so I would caution us to stay in our lane of what we are doing.
- Comment: the state auditor has not approached other faculty and staff about doing similar actions, as when the football coach led student-athletes out of practice to march to the Square to protest racial injustice. Not only was Dr. Thomas doing what he was paid to do, but others were not called out for doing the same kind of thing he did. It's clear this was about just one professor.
- Comment: The auditor has ceased seeking Dr. Thomas's firing but, in order to save face, is now just asking for him to repay the money he allegedly forfeited by choosing to participate in ScholarStrike, a sum of \$2000.
- Brian Reithel: call the question
- The resolution passed 65% to 35%.
- Carrie Smith moved to consider the second resolution. After a series of proposed changes, the resolution was put to a vote.
- The resolution passed with 88% of the vote and 13% disagreeing.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM.

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- Motion
  - Second
    - Vote - APPROVED

<p><b>NEXT MEETING: January 19, 2021 @ 6:00 via ZOOM</b></p>
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Zoom details:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98347451342?pwd=TTRSQVRsYm5vVW42dklOVW1XVHhYQT09>

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## Report on Cheating

Cheating during covid-19 seems to be more of an issue in lower-level classes. In 300- and 500-level classes, faculty members have taken steps to minimize the possibility of cheating.

In lower-level classes, a majority of faculty rely on video surveillance by using software that accesses students' webcams to directly monitor them while taking tests and exams, yet this has not solved the issue.

In 300- and 500-level classes, faculty in the Modern Language Department, for example, have redesigned courses so that cheating is not possible because the assignments/ tests were created with the idea that the students *will* have access to their notes/ books. However, students must have enough prior working knowledge of the concepts/ information to complete in assignments/ test successfully, as they only have time to consult the notes quickly. The assignments and tests are also designed in such a way that students must go beyond simply knowing the information. They have to recognize it in new ways, they must create something new with it, and/ or go find real-world examples of those concepts. For classes taught in the hybrid and F2F mode, students have a choice of in-class or take-home exams, which leads essentially to students completing different tasks with different resources with different time constraints, but learning the same material. In the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering a faculty member has used "Pools" and "Random Blocks" in the Blackboard Suite by creating a database with large number of questions and has setup exams such that each student pulls a random set of questions from the large database. These strategies have been more successful in curbing or eliminating cheating.

Based on this information as well as a discussion with Dr. Will Berry, Chair of the Academic Discipline Committee, it is apparent that:

- Students will cheat, particularly if the stakes of a course are high and they feel pressured to do well because their grade is based solely on a midterm and a final exam.
- It's impossible to create a cheat-proof online test.
- Students will always find new and creative ways to get around faculty's policing efforts be they proctored online exams or punitive time limits for online tests.
- For classes that rely on memorization for assessment, faculty should ask the administration to create in-person testing labs because according to Dr. Berry *Proctorio* doesn't work! Aside from students feeling surveilled, they also take screenshots of the tests and sell them to other students.
- Faculty need to engage with students in a different way to motivate them to do the work properly. Here are some suggestions:



1. Instead of big high-stakes assignments/ exams, give small weekly tasks/ tests;
2. Students, who perform poorly on a weekly task/ test, should go see the faculty for extra-help or guidance;
3. Introduce an honor statement per course or for each test at the beginning or at the end of it or both;
4. In STEM classes, ask students to explain their problem-solving process;
5. In writing-intensive classes, assign small writing assignment to get to know a student's writing style before a longer paper is due. To avoid the burden of heavy grading, faculty can assess such small assignments on a complete/ incomplete scale;
5. Use the discussion forum on Blackboard to assess learning;
6. Have clear evaluation criteria for each assignment or discussion comment;
7. Give students a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning (reflection papers, vlogs, audio recordings, interviews) not just through tests or papers;
8. Give students a choice in how to be evaluated.

- Faculty also need to find new ways to communicate with students. Here are some suggestions:

1. Faculty need to choose one means of communication with the students and clearly state that on the syllabus, reinforce it in their first interaction with the students, and keep only that means of communication with the students throughout the semester;
2. Early individualized communication with students who are struggling in a class, can lead to a student reaching out to the faculty for help rather than resort to using "tutoring services" of the Chegg-type;
3. Faculty need to state clearly on their syllabi that using Chegg (or other such platforms commonly used in a discipline) constitutes academic misconduct at UM;
4. Faculty should also clearly state that using GroupMe to transfer graded assignments between students constitutes academic misconduct;
5. When a faculty member catches a student cheating, she/he should point the cheating out to the student in a more generous manner and articulate the consequences empathetically, while also asking the student how the faculty member can help the student with his class work.