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2-22-2022

February 22, 2022

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Recommended Citation

University of Mississippi. Faculty Senate, "February 22, 2022" (2022). *Meeting Minutes*. 245.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/facsen_minutes/245

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Faculty Senate Minutes – February 22, 2022

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

Senators Present: Kenya Wolff, KoFan Lee, Shari Holt, Kerry Bowers, Alex Watson, Joseph Carlisle, Joe Sweeney, Melissa Bass, Lance Yarbrough, Robert Barnard, Angela Green, Dan Durkin, Carrie McCormick, Matteo D’Alessio, Lauren Cardenas, Sasan Nouranian, Elliott Hutchcraft, Carmen Sanchis-Sinisterra, Donna Buckley, John Berns, John Lobur, Cole Stevens, Carolyn Higdon, Whitney Sarver, Christy Nielson, Hans Sinha, Joel Mobley, Carrie Smith, Brian Reithel, Heather Allen, Gabriel Garrido, Brad Jones, Sujith Ramachandran, Scott Mackenzie, Jesse Cromwell, Joshua First, SueAnn Skipworth, Simone Delerme, George McClellan, Zenebe Beyene

Senators absent (excused): Mandy Perryman, James Cizdziel (Jason Ritchie proxy)

Senators absent (unexcused): Mike Cinelli, Jennie Lightweis-Goff, R.J. Morgan, Yunhee Chang, Randy Dale, Michael Repka

- **Meeting called to order**
- **Minutes approved from the January 18, 2021 meeting**
 - Motion
 - Second
 - Vote
- **Alex Langhart (Director of the University Health Center) – COVID-19 update**
 - Presented on behalf of Provost Wilkin
 - Statewide downward trend in new Covid cases but still a high death rate
 - CDC transmission tracker for Lafayette County shows the expected strike in January as students and faculty returned, followed by steep drop-off.
 - Our Covid-19 dashboard shows the same, only 6 new cases over the past 7 days
 - Baptist Memorial has only 14 Covid patients in the hospital and have no occupational strain due to Covid
 - Dr. Matteo has been excellent working with us on our wastewater surveillance program and that data seems to match these trends
 - We have set up testing at the Depot and haven’t had a positive case since February 9, which is a low positivity rate.
 - We still offer vaccines on campus, including walk-ins at the pharmacy, and testing elsewhere on campus and at the county site.
 - We are in a much better place than we were at the beginning of the semester and since the start of the pandemic.

Q& A

- Q: Are we expecting another spike after spring break, as we've seen the past couple of years?
- Langhart: Hard to say but we need to monitor it. Omicron has really outpaced the Delta variant from the fall, so we assume a lot of infection and transmission have already taken place. But we need to look at the sub-variant to know what we can anticipate. We will also see what happens at schools with earlier spring breaks than ours.
- Chair Durkin: Can you please give us a quick breakdown of the message about masks?
- Langhart: Mask requirement was lifted for everywhere other than instructional spaces and clinical settings. It's important to respect the needs of immune-compromised and those who cannot be vaccinated.
- Chair Durkin: Contact the Provost office to help people who at special risk of Covid to seek shield, masks, and other means of protection. Thanks to Alex Langhart for coming.

- **Bob Cummings – Update on Student Evaluation of Teaching Task Force 2 (see slides attached)**
 - First task force formed in fall 2020 to evaluate how well SETs are used
 - Several questions need to be changed because they address instructor behavior as opposed to student learning in a course
 - We should not overly rely on SETs but find alternate ways to evaluate teaching effectiveness; SETs should never be the sole measure of teaching
 - SETs 2 was created December 2021 to consider changes to the questions
 - Will provide best practices and guidance to chairs and deans, as well as faculty
 - Will arrange meetings by schools/college to get faculty input at a more granular level, including from senators in dialogue with their faculty
 - Will report back to senate in May, with Dan's permission
 - Will propose a new set of questions and partner with IT to pilot the new questions in fall 2022 and report to you in December
 - Will hold town halls to pilot new questions on a limited basis
 - Will conduct assessment and then fall 2023 have new survey for faculty
 - Especially grateful to Josh Eyler for providing and helping us understand the voluminous research on SETs, to Maurice Eftink for his many years of working with these data, and to Chris Reichley for helping us understand the IT implications
 - Town halls after spring break and will host meetings with chairs about how they use SETs to assess faculty
 - Please share timeline with your faculty and solicit their feedback.
 - Please also know this work is ongoing, and we want to continue to communicate with you

- We need more diverse perspectives on our task force and invite you to get involved

Q & A

Q: Is the task force only made of senators or any faculty?

Cummings: Any faculty can serve.

Q: In the early part of the SET process you talked about identifying peer institutions? What sense of peer are you using?

Cummings: Peer usually means SEC institutions. Auburn has just gone through that process and can share that report. MSU has also gone through a new process and we are communicating with them. We are also working through teaching and learning centers.

Q: Is there a pedagogical sense of peer I am not aware of or a model you are looking at in particular?

Cummings: No, we haven't made any predeterminations of any kind.

Q: Will we have access to the presentation you just shared?

Cummings: I will share it with Dan.

Durkin: You can place the timeline in a separate document and put the request for additional faculty on the task force there.

Q: Can you clarify what you mean by deemphasizing student behavior over learning?

Cummings: I meant faculty behavior. Questions we know that are behavior oriented that might talk about appearance, or a sense of humor (fortunately we don't have those particular questions but other places do and these tend to be strongly biased). Questions about enthusiasm or speaking clearly can be behavior questions.

Q: Are you also reconsidering the star system?

Cummings: The stars have come up but there hasn't been a major discussion about it yet.

Q: Are these across the board across all schools or do separate units have different means of evaluation?

Cummings: I just learned that Business has its own evaluation and there are questions that only make sense in a music class, for example, or fine arts. We want all the input from you we can possibly get.

- Chair Durkin asked that Committee reports be given prior to the main business of the evening.

○ Committee Updates

- Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff) – nothing to report

- Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Alex Watson) – Our labors are the primary item on tonight’s agenda. Otherwise, nothing to report.
 - Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly) – nothing to report
 - Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle) – nothing to report
 - Governance (chair: Carrie Smith) – Committee met to review proposed grievance policy and like where the document is heading but still have a few points to resolve and we hope to have a new meeting to report on soon.
 - Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley) – nothing to report
 - University Services (chair: Heather Allen) – nothing to report
- **Chair Dan Durkin reported a request from the Chancellor**
 - The Chancellor is looking for support for the faculty from state lawmakers, especially for faculty wearing multiple hats without sufficient support. Please email Dan to share your thoughts on what resources we should specifically ask for, and he will collate those responses for the Chancellor. He wants to know what can we do to make a difference and how more financial support can help. Will follow up with an email asking you to talk to colleagues in your departments. For example, in Social Work we are down 3-4 faculty and I want to know if can request support to fill those gaps.
 - Q: Is there something else the Chancellor has in mind other than more faculty and more pay? Do we have fewer startups than our SEC counterparts, for example, or less research to do specific projects?
 - Watson: Two examples came up while we were talking and both concern centralizing services like advising to take that pressure off of faculty and also providing more support to libraries. I was able to argue that we have the smallest and worst funded R1 library outside of UC-Davis.
 - Q: We could request more support for grad assistants to attract more talent and better support faculty research. We should also stop having to design our own web pages and instead provide meaningful web pages that will allow us to reach out to the public. I wasn’t hired to be a web designer.
 - Chair Durkin: Jim Zook presented last week about the new web design.
 - Wolff: The Chancellor noted that accreditors were looking at a particular school that had one faculty member per 300 students, whereas we have one per 800. He said frequently, “We’re running so lean, so much leaner than our peer institutions.” Comparing us to other SEC and aspirant institutions would help him make the argument that we could achieve these particular outcomes.

- Q: It might be useful to draw up comparisons showing where our lacks exist and pull them all together in one document compiling research from other places.
- Chair Durkin: In our department we are running lean because we have lost faculty. Our MSW is rather small but we have a need for it in the state and also are developing an online program. We're not just running lean now but also in the future.
 - Try to have some dialogue with your colleagues about what the Chancellor has ask for to help faculty; try to keep it two a couple or paragraphs or a page. What could we do differently from what we are doing now?
- Bowers: A common concern I was thinking of was counseling services. It's so disappointing to see students in need who cannot get appointments at the counseling center. We have to not only keep up with peer institutions but we also have to have real support for our students. We're doing great considering we've been operating on a shoestring for a long time, but students need more help.
- Chair Durkin: Thanks, Kerry, for putting that so well. The request doesn't have to be specifically departmental but we can do both: request for our departments and for the whole institution, including students.
 - We can create a Box folder where everyone can contribute and collate all the requests. If anyone has ideas about how to make this work better, please send me an email and let me know so we can make this process as efficient as possible. The Chancellor emphasizes every time he talks about his focus being on faculty and really helping get us the support we need.
- Q: What is the timeline? The legislative session ends in April.
- Anything by the end of the week would be great. He likes to give lawmakers very specific examples because they listen to those more than to abstract requests for money. There is money available this session, and there is a lot on the line for higher education.
- Q: Could we create a Qualtrix document?
- Durkin: That's probably a better idea. Let's skip sending it to me by email.
- Bowers: We could start things in Box, gathering all the data, and then narrow things down in Qualtrix.
- Durkin: The Chancellor also wanted to be sure to include centers, like Sarah Isom, etc. so please ask your colleagues.
- Q: There are campus-wide offices that make life easier for faculty. Can we compare our services to those of other institutions?
- Q: Alex Watson, where would we get access to information like this from other universities?
- Chair Durkin: He may have stepped away for a moment.

- Q: To what extent would this procedure be binding? Will these be parceled out according to the best applications? Is the university best served by departments competing with each other for resources? Will the Chancellor be bound by our requests?
- Chair Durkin: Right now the Chancellor wants ideas, but you're right that the usual suspects often do get the resources. It may be that he will want to focus more on the university-wide requests, which would also be more equitable, and we may want to make that specific request.
- Q: A poetry professor wouldn't be able to compete on the numbers with other kinds of departments.
- Chair Durkin: You may want to prioritize things with your colleagues as you discuss them. It's highly unlikely everyone will get what we want from the legislature so perhaps this process has help clarify each department's priorities. This conversation is helpful. I would like to go back to the Chancellor to get further clarification, and then I will seek your requests.

- **Chair Durkin Introduced the Senate Resolution with Regard to Teaching on Social and Racial Justice at the University of Mississippi**
 - The Academic Affairs Committee has drafted the resolution we are reviewing, after much deliberation. I inquired into how to do this procedurally and want to get your feedback on how to proceed.
 - One possibility is inviting a motion to consider the resolution and then get a sense of the body by inviting statements no longer than one minute or so with no senator speaking twice, and then seek a motion to proceed. We could then move to Committee as a Whole to revise the document.
 - I want to repeat verbally that the change that occurred was that something happened in the legislature. The senate passed a bill more quickly than anyone in the state expected it to, so we were all caught off guard. It surprised even some of the senators. The big moment happened when all the African American senators walked out before the vote. That prompted Jackson State, whose senate was already scheduled to meet that Friday, to issue the first statement of its kind. Mississippi State politely declined to participate in the statewide organization, for whatever reasons. But each university was going to address CRT in some fashion at their regular faculty meetings, all of whom have different processes for passing resolutions like this one. A vote will be taken in March of all participating faculty senates and a resolution will be drafted for distribution to all faculty before being finalized.
 - Inviting a motion to consider the resolution

- Vote
 - Second

Statements from senators, limited to one minute each.

Mackenzie: I do want to speak for the committee who has been working on this resolution very hard. We all can see this legislation is a sham that is clearly meant to mobilize people against academics. We should probably recognize that nothing we as faculty say will likely be taken into account by lawmakers. But we can influence faculty and students who see that we have done nothing so far, especially as we are starting to see many faculty leaving, especially African American faculty.

Bowers: This is also about posterity and about pointing out that this violates academic freedom. The best we can hope is someone will hear.

Sinha: Is this the draft of February 16?

Chair Durkin: Yes.

Barnard: My department is divided about part of the resolution. The commitment to academic freedom was non-negotiable, but specific references were not supported unanimously. Commitment to academic freedom has more than one side. Centers and their platforming someone from

McCormick: My faculty was concerned about the scope of the resolution and we also asked who is our audience? Who is this intended for? Faculty and other members of the public, as it seems early in the document, but later references to the Chancellor may sound like blaming the administration for wrongdoing.

Reithel: Very much in favor of senate taking a stand for academic freedom on any matter and on reaffirming the 1948 AAUP statement. We remove paragraphs 2 and 4 because they are unnecessary to academic freedom rather than contributing to the political conversation or movement. Our duty is to protect faculty's academic freedom.

Ballou: My department is also in favor of removing paragraphs 2 and 4.

Nielson: My department supports the first line and highlighting academic freedom as the issue here and not including the line to the Chancellor.

Durkin: I sent the AAUP models so you could see how our statement compares and what's unique to us. Professor Yvette Butler is also here to answer any questions you have about CRT.

Watson: She was also at our EC meeting and provided a lot of excellent context. The folks I have talked to had serious concerns about the vague

wording in the bill that might affect how librarians collect materials donated to the university.

Carolyn Higdon is caught in an Ohio snow storm.

Bowers: We wanted to see how we go about collecting data to show the Chancellor what we need as faculty.

Chair Durkin: Is anyone crackerjack with Qualtrics?

Bowers: I am and I enjoy working with it.

Wolff: Back to the resolution, I would love to hear someone who wants to keep the two sections being proposed for deletion.

First: I would like clarification on which paragraphs you wish to strike.

Reithel: I did not make a formal motion but did suggest deleting the second and fourth paragraphs because they take away from the issue of academic freedom. Those paragraphs portray this as a national movement that is beyond our jurisdiction in Mississippi. I believe the faculty should take the unilateral stance that we reject any outside authority trying to come in and regulate the curriculum.

McCormick: I agree. Members of my department were also concerned about the part calling on Chancellor Boyce and Provost Wilkin to affirm they “reject and will resolutely resist any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter.” That implies wrongdoing on their part.

Watson: I’m happy to speak to what the committee was thinking when we put that together. Or we can address that when we get to edits.

Chair Durkin: Can committee members speak for the argument for keeping the other paragraphs?

McClellan: My colleagues and I in Higher Ed think that isolating this from K-12 is a mistake because the students there come to us and if they are not prepared to be in our classrooms, that becomes our problem. The state also engages in Dual Enrollment that places faculty and students in a bind.

We see paragraph four as related to academic freedom *and not a divergence from but an amplification of* the conversation. I don’t recall being asked to not speak about national issues as a senator.

Lobur: I want to echo what George [McClellan] said and say we can use our voices to show solidarity with others targeted by this legislation. The actual text Bob Barnard was referring to earlier is not in the actual document itself.

First: I support all four paragraphs and as a member of the History department, I think it's very important to realize that this bill will affect some faculty more than others because they are more likely to discuss race in their classes, and I ask that we defer to these colleagues. Of course we have to stand in solidarity with our K-12 colleagues, and we typically take stands like these. Without this context we lose the significance of what this bill is ultimately trying to do. So we need all four paragraphs so as not to dilute it so it becomes practically meaningful. The point is to let our colleagues, our students, and anyone else who wants to read it where we stand.

McCormick: In the past as a senate, have we ever addressed issues affecting community colleges, which are not under the IHL, and will we set a precedent that this body will be bound by in the future?

Bowers: Writing and Rhetoric also works closely with colleagues in K-12 and community colleges. Academic freedom is our overarching goal, but removing those two paragraphs would send the wrong message.

Watson: DACA also affected and still affects K-12 as well as us, and that is one precedent we should consider.

Jones: The Biology department, those who spoke up, fully supports the document as written.

Lobur: The Classics department is also in full support.

Chair Durkin invited Law Professor Yvette Butler, to speak on the matter as she teaches the only class in the state on Critical Race Theory.

Yvette Butler: I did not prepare anything specific but want to answer any of your questions. Please also let me know whatever parameters I need to follow. Is there a specific question?

Bowers: Critical Race Theory has become this term that's bandied about but I understand it's a very specific thing. How would you characterize the way this theory has been discussed?

Butler: The founders of CRT would never have imagined this discussion. It was born in the legal academy in the 1980s devoted to asking why, post civil rights, we still have persistent racist outcomes in our systems. It looks past specific bad actors and ask deeper questions about implicit bias, intersectionality and how people's various identities interplay. It was born to study the laws but has come to affect some disciplines outside the law, though rarely outside of graduate classes.

Mackenzie: As a legal scholar, would you say the bill is aimed specifically at CRT or at some other set of academic activities?

Butler: It does not seem actually directed at CRT, like Section 1A talks about not compelling anyone to believe that any one race is inherently inferior or superior. This goes against one of CRT's central tenets since any biological discussion of race is considered junk science, which is why we're investigating social hierarchies to ask the right questions and achieve true equality. The bill is really vague and raises more questions than it actually answers.

Lobur: It sounds like what they're doing is attacking a straw man. How does this make you feel as an educator whose teachings are under attack?

Butler: I was personally in support of paragraph 2 for K-12 for the reason cited earlier—that those students come to us as undergraduates and later law students and they have vastly different understandings of the civil rights era and many other subjects related to race and history. Some of them were still taught about the “War of Northern Aggression.” That creates a situation where I have to focus on getting them caught up before we get to talking about the law as opposed to doing straight up history.

There have been moments when I have noticed myself censoring my speech and later apologized to my class because I second-guessed what to include in my Honors section on legal reasoning. One thing I didn't talk about regarding *Brown v. Board of Education* I left out and felt scared about for a day or two, then went back to just doing my job. I'm also a law professor and have read the law and have a lot more confidence than others might have in similar situations.

Lobur: I have heard students using the anonymous tip line to report faculty for teaching “CRT.”

Butler: I have heard that too and many of these rumors seem to be about students studying history and thinking that was CRT. Students have reportedly said faculty won't be able to teach that anymore if the bill passes, in a sinister tone.

Sinha: I think we're fighting two different things: the political movement around this and the actual language of the bill, that includes language no one can possibly disagree with. We need to distinguish between responding to this bill, which does not specifically address CRT, and the politics and language around it.

Chair Durkin: The bill doesn't use the term Critical Race Theory except in the footer. Language has been crafted in similar ways around the country.

Butler: Yes, the bill has language that is so vague that no one could disagree with it, and there aren't any definitions in the bill, like what it means to "compel" students.

Bowers: The rhetoric wants to clothe itself as being about equality and asserting that people always have been equal and sanitize history.

Butler: The main concern is that this gives the state auditor a reason to look into what people are teaching and come to our classes.

Smith: Is it just me or that they also added sex to this bill? Is sex usually talked about as part of CRT?

Butler: Because Kimberlee Crenshaw founded CRT, sex has been there since the beginning but especially since Trump's executive order banning certain kinds of bias training.

Sinha: The possibility that this could lead to state sanctioned audits of the university is of real concern. They will pull up the language of the bill and say people are overreacting. We may want to add something to the effect that we would be inviting this activity from the state.

Bowers: This is a dangerous and frightening slippery slope, and that concern was raised in my department: that this will open the door to other kinds of intrusion.

Chair Durkin: A bill is expected to pass this term.

Butler: Some worry around speaking to certain language in the bill that would make our lives harder. Maybe say less now and see if a bill passes or dies by the first. Is it better not to be too specific? And what's good and bad in it, to avoid giving anyone any ammunition against us?

Reithel: My reason for suggesting we remove paragraphs two and four is because we need to speak singularly as a faculty that we are opposed to any attempt to dictate curriculum.

Lobur: To speak to Hans's brilliant point, we need to be specific that this is an attempt to censor and restrict.

Mackenzie: I want to affirm Professor Butler's point that addressing specifics of legislation that is intentionally vague is not advisable, though their aims are clear enough. I want to propose that although there are all kinds of ways to fine-tune this resolution, that we call the question.

Chair Durkin: To give people who had their hands up before you called the question, I'm going to let them respond now.

McClellan: I appreciate and respect the position Brian and others have pointed out. If I remember my AAUP history, shared governance requires

of us a duty of public service, particularly around areas of our expertise. So we should express ourselves more on these matters.

Barnard: One of the worst things that could happen tonight is that we could be perceived as being divided over the importance of these issues. I think we should focus on academic freedom first but there is nothing that prevents us from proposing another resolution for consideration and vote on that separately. Can we vote on a clean statement of commitment to academic freedom?

Bowers: It is important to show consensus and a united front. But if we can't agree even at this stage that we need to protect academic freedom, then that will send the wrong message.

Chair Durkin: Thank you, Professor Butler. If you haven't seen CNN's story about Professor Butler and her law class or the *Mississippi Today* piece it was based on, I suggest you watch it.

- Call the question – Scott Mackenzie
 - Seconded - Shari Holt
 - Vote

Mackenzie: Speaking to some of the reasons for discussing the details of the legislation, I don't see a purpose in going into that. I want to appeal to your humanity in asking you to consider voting for the resolution as written. Calling the question means to proceed to a vote or to discuss the wording of the language?

Reithel: A vote yes to call the question then you would be voting to end discussion and vote for the resolution as written. A no vote would amend the language.

Lobur: The background information is not technically part of the resolution and is not meant to be included in the resolution.

- Vote to end discussion passed with 31 Yes and 9 No votes.
- The resolution passes 32 Yes to 8 No.
(see Roll Call attached)

- Old Business
- New Business: Concern in my department about new FAR being moved to calendar year is affecting tenure decisions so that faculty going up for promotion and tenure for non-Covid reasons would be meeting with supervisor after going up for tenure. Move tenure extension deadlines to earlier in the academic year before the FAR is due?

- Durkin: Send me an email that I can send to Rich Forgette and we will continue our discussions and bring them back to the senate.
- Adjournment
 - Motion: First
 - Second: Ballou
 - Vote adjourned at 8:30.

NEXT MEETING: March 22, 2022 @ 6:00 via ZOOM

Daniel Durkin is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Faculty Senate Meeting

Time: March 22, 2022 06:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

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