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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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May 3, 2022

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Faculty Senate Minutes –May 3, 2022

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

Senators Present: Kenya Wolff, KoFan Lee, R.J. Morgan, Melissa Cinelli, Shari Holt, Kerry Bowers, Joseph Carlisle, Joe Sweeney, Lance Yarbrough, Robert Barnard, Angela Green, Dan Durkin, Carrie McCormick, Matteo D’Alessio, Lauren Cardenas, Sasan Nouranian, Elliott Hutchcraft, Donna Buckley, John Berns, John Lobur, Cole Stevens, Carolyn Higdon, Whitney Sarver, Christy Nielson, Hans Sinha, Brian Reithel, Heather Allen, Sujith Ramachandran, Shari Holt, SueAnn Skipworth, Simone Delerme, George McClellan, Gary Thielman, Randy Dale, Zenebe Beyene, Brad Jones, Gabriel Garrido, Carmen Sanchis-Sinisterra, Joshua First, Erin Holmes (for Sujith Ramachandran), Kyle Fritz (for Melissa Bass)

Senators absent (excused): Melissa Bass, Sijuth Ramachandran

- **Meeting called to order**
- **Minutes approved from the April 19, 2022, meeting**
 - Motion
 - Second
 - Vote
- **Update on SETS2 Task Force by Bob Cummings, Executive Director of Academic Innovations Group**
 - SETS1 started in April 2021 to review our existing teaching evaluation forms and determined they were in need of revision.
 - There is a clear need for peer evaluation and self-evaluation as additional methods of assessing teaching effectiveness.
 - The Provost created our task force to revise those questions to focus more on teaching and learning outcomes and less on teaching behaviors. Then we hope to come back to you with a set of new questions to pilot at the end of the fall semester, then report back the results the following spring.
 - We are always looking for more participants on the task force; we especially a graduate student and also a new undergraduate to replace Noah Hubbard.
 - Timeline: We have conducted town halls with all schools, the College of Liberal Arts, and SBA. All 10 town halls + ASB have been conducted in person, by Zoom, and also asynchronously, over the last 30 days.
 - We heard many suggestions, some of them contradictory. Among them were to:
 - Reduce the number of questions dramatically, even down to 2
 - Others called for expanding the questions.
 - Keep old evaluations to compare with others

- Do away with all old evaluations.

In sum, we heard a very wide range of opinions, and sometimes they contradicted themselves. More usefully, we found common denominators:

- Faculty are concerned students don't provide accurate feedback
- Understand gravity and their use toward tenure and promotion as well as improving the course.
- Some SETS don't apply to some classes.
- One question re: textbooks is one is enough or too many.
- Students can't
- Difficulty, Q10: 1) problem is that "difficulty" is not clearly understood by respondents: does it mean it's hard to do, or hard to manage, hard to even understand or is puzzling? Does it mean challenging?
- Comparisons to peers?
- Need for FAQ to explain the process and explaining how it aids in teaching and learning.
- Often I have said to Chris we need information for students to understand this, and the website says exactly that. The problem is perhaps the message needs to be heard in multiple places and there is still a greater need to understand and appreciate the process.
- Students should not be asked to speak about pedagogy but about their learning experiences.
- Some faculty had
- Some things are just not possible through our current system, such as customizing questions for each type of course assignment, delivery, etc.
- The same concerns about bias that appear in the literature on SETs have been experienced by our own faculty.

Some specific changes the task force has recommended:

- Deleting Q2 because it's clearly rife for bias and should be addressed much earlier in the semester than the SETs allow.
- Changing Q9 so that books becomes "required course materials."
- Changing Q10 from "Ole Miss" to "University of Mississippi."
- Considering conflating Q1 and Q3 into a new question and working on the wording.
- Q4 is something we wish to change to get away from "instructor attitude" and instead measure changes in student appreciation or enthusiasm.
- Narrative questions might be reduced to a revised N3: "What do you want this instructor to know about your experience in this class?"
- N2 presumes a negative where they might not be one.

- N4 is the question shared from student to student and we will look more closely at it too.
- We want to build a policy that solicits suggestions from faculty and gets them into the system.
- We want to know how a particular course builds community.
- We also plan to address venue-specific concerns (labs, online, study abroad or StudyUSA)
- We hope to also improve the timeliness of faculty receiving SETS.
- Pharmacy had issues with team teaching and allowing students to respond to collaborative teaching environments.
- Need to develop safeguards so N4 can be shared more accurately and to avoid the abuses in narrative form—not just profanity but ugly comments more generally.
- We will share with you again in October and hope to pilot new questions at the end of fall semester and come back with a report to you in March so that you may make a decision.

Q & A

Chair Durkin: Do you still have a need for diverse faculty?

Cummings: Yes, in terms of disciplines and

Chair Durkin: Pleased to hear you actually enjoy this.

Cummings: I do!

○ **Update about IHL changes by Provost Noel Wilkin:**

- I hope everyone is aware that at the last IHL board meeting made two policy changes: one to tenure and the second to searches, such as the Chancellor
- We learned about these changes at their March retreat, which I did not attend. They pushed a lot to the April meeting, and nothing appeared in the minutes or agenda items. Board book is finalized the day before the meeting. We learned about it just after we got the formal board book, Wednesday morning before the board meeting. This item was not on the agenda and it was not brought up by any other provost. This did not come on the Academic Affairs section but in the Legal section of the board book and in the meeting. GC Whitcomb was unaware of changes until he got the board book. Was not discussed at the presidents' meeting, which happened the same week.
- We got no notice and had no chance to provide input. The Chancellor and I met with the Senate EC about this and said as much.
- T&P: Big changes around process, leaving final approval to the president and not the IHL. I personally think this part is good for us, as we do this already for promotions, but I leave that for you to decide. We are looking at what changes we need to make as a result.
- Need clear definitions of terms like “collegiality,” “contumacious”

- We propose that you form a task force to recommend changes to policies and provide definitions for terms within board policy, much as we do for research or creative achievement. We can develop guidelines as a campus.
- We will work to find out what other universities do, consult with AAUP, and do lots of legwork over the summer so we can come back in the fall and begin engaging faculty and departments ahead of next year's tenure and promotion cycle.
- Dan might identify some faculty to serve on this task force.

Q & A

Sinha: I don't know the whole process, but tenure approval no longer goes to the board?

Provost Wilkin: Yes, that is the main *process* change. It would stop with the Chancellor. But there may be other process changes we want to work through, as it's not clear what other changes might be affected by this change. Other elements about tenure and how we make hires are still questions we need IHL staff to answer and involve our GC, David Whitcomb, to think through implications on free speech rights and other matters we need to articulate on our own campus.

Lobur: You partially answered one question, but looking at what's come out, a lot of people are deeply concerned about academic freedom. Dan, have people been emailing you and wondering what's going on? One thing concerning is that it happened with a lack of transparency. Was this done by the book? Should we look into this? The Open Records Act, for example?

Provost Wilkin: I don't know IHL bylaws exactly, but I know there must be a first and second reading on all academic changes. Waived first reading and voted on it in a consent agenda rather than the regular agenda. I don't know why that's the case or if it follows their guidelines, but I know they have a GC who is well versed on such matters so I would be surprised but I don't know their policies well enough to say if it does or doesn't.

McClellan: The lack of any meaningful consultation with the faculty is profoundly disturbing and puts you and the Chancellor in an incredibly awkward position. I appreciate the Chancellor's suggestion for dealing with this locally. What assurances do we have that the definitions we come up with will be respected and not redefined on a whim?

Provost Wilkin: We already define many terms on our campus regarding tenure and, given that we will not submit any of these for their approval, I don't expect the IHL to get involved. Tenure really is a set of policies on our campus. We have annual contracts and policies and guidelines implement tenure and post-tenure review. While I understand these terms are new to us and nebulous and concerning, we have the ability to define the terms and the process on our campus. I don't want to minimize how concerning these changes are.

McClellan: This is not about new or change but about lack of respect and integrity. I can handle new just fine.

Mackenzie: My question might be premature, but do we have any idea how these changes might affect accreditation, how it might affect recruiting and retaining faculty?

Provost Wilkin: Katie Busbee is here if there's anything to be concerned about regarding full compliance. It's hard to see how the introduction of new terms might affect accreditation. Transparency and decision making concerns are changes within their purview.

Chancellor Boyce: Excellent question. It will be our process to determine process and defining the terms. I don't know what they thought in giving the responsibility for tenure to our university, but we see it as a positive that we will get to define these ourselves. Our process is pretty flawless and I know you'll keep holding us to it. We're going to have our own attitudes and process but the question is when we all have different processes and policies, and eventually there could be a push to try to get us to have similar policies across universities in the system, but I push back against that.

Sinha: Do you have a red-line document I can share with law school faculty? I agree it's a win-win to have this control locally.

Provost Wilkin: The board book is about 180 pages and I have taken the relevant pages and can send them through Dan to the senate.

Bowers: To clarify, we're kind of pleased with the changes but not with the way they made them?

Chair Durkin: That sounds about right. It's an opportunity for us to define these terms we have had problems with for some time. We continue to have issues with the process.

Lobur: I can't find a single person who is happy about the addition of new criteria of evaluation: communication, collegiality, cooperativeness. All these seem restrictive of academic freedom. What is motivating the IHL other than to further constrict the free expression of faculty opinion?

Chancellor Boyce: One issue here is that they have been having these discussions since I was on the commission and have just now decided to do something. One challenge is that this was not brought up at the IAO meeting. How are we supposed to look at it? I believe it gives us freedom and it's up to us to determine how to use it.

Cromwell: If these changes are putting the ball in our court, I would urge you to rigorously define what contumacious conduct, effective communication, and collegiality are, with examples of what each of these is and is not. In History we recently had a very ugly termination that essentially turned on the question of whether a colleague was "collegial," so we need these terms extremely well defined.

Chair Durkin: We will go through a formal process in senate keeping in mind principles of academic freedom and the First Amendment, and we have a two-pronged approach right now.

Chancellor Boyce: As we get into the process, we will discover what questions we really have and may ask the IHL to clarify their intent. "Collegiality" does seem like a term we need to define carefully.

Nielson: The intent was to align the policies with other universities? How common is this? Will this affect our recruitment?

Provost Wilkin: I don't know how common it is to assess collegiality and I don't know they define that term. AAUP has issues with the use of this term because it is rife for abuse. We need to define what that section of the policy means on our campus. I think it will come down to how well we articulate how the tenure process works to prospective candidates and what policies we can point to surrounding those terms and policies.

McClellan: I just want to share that today our department was lucky enough to offer a position to an amazing candidate and two of his questions today were about the tenure process and the CRT bill. I don't know about others but we are already having that experience.

Chair Wilkin: Other states are struggling with similar kinds of things, like even doing away with tenure altogether. The contract and the policies are about how employees are treated. All states are wrestling with these issues in today's environment.

Chancellor Boyce: The policy went into effect immediately so the tenure cases we had sent on to the IHL were sent back to us for our final approval. We have already approved them, and we will expedite them. We will have to believe in the process we had before all this.

○ **Update on legislature from Chancellor Glenn Boyce**

- I am proud of the state legislature for their financial support to UM and higher education generally. We were worried we might not receive much but got over 14% added to our bottom line. They were trying to get us back to 2016 numbers, which will allow us to give a bit larger raises, higher graduate stipends, and raise the minimum wage (though not as much as I would have liked). Unlike other places, we handle compression along with raising the minimum wage.
- We got something different, a package worth \$2M of our own. We are working on regional technology at the federal level to create technology hubs across America for about 6 months. Meeting with private business interests to get one of these tech hubs. I don't like the term "seed money," but that is maybe the easiest way to think about this money. I would love to talk to any of you about it if you have ideas.
- Received \$3M for AI and a new data center.
- Sen. Wicker did a great job of making sure rural states will get a chance to show what we are capable of. This bill could be approved as early as June and expect us to have everything in place to submit a grant through the Department of Commerce soon after.
- We finally got \$10M for an early learning evaluation center and nursery working with autistic and special needs children through our School of Education at the South Oxford Center, where we have about 20,000 sq. ft. we can build out.
- We are not going to see many years like this one in terms of funding of higher education.

Q& A

Mobley: Raising stipends for grad students is vitally important, but ours are largely self-funded. So what will the mechanism be for those funds to flow through departments?

Chancellor Boyce: You raise a great question and I don't know how exactly this will happen. We will need a process to take care of students in this category. I will get back to you.

Provost Wilkin: I just want to mention that all that legislative support didn't happen by accident but by the Chancellor and Perry traveling to Jackson and want to publicly acknowledge the hard work they did to make this a truly successful plan.

Chancellor Boyce: There was a huge team effort that took us the better part of a year and a half to get done.

Chair Durkin: I want to applaud the team for all their work.

Chancellor Boyce: I want to make this statement to all of you: I've always believed the best ideas happen on the ground. I was in the wrong place on the nursery until I met with the Executive Council, who helped me see the wisdom of this and why it was so important. My mind changed in about a five-minute discussion.

Chair Durkin: Shout out to the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women!

Barnard: I applaud the inclusion of salary compression as you raise wages for campus workers. Are there similar plans in the works for faculty? As someone who has been here for twenty years, seeing compression addressed seems imperative.

Chancellor Boyce: We will look at that before anything is done this year. The report was filled with data comparing us to SEC colleagues and we saw the obvious: in some cases we are very competitive and others not at all. So it's complex but it's in the works. I would be very interested in knowing that. The budget has to go in soon.

- **Update on State Organization of Faculty Senates from Chair Durkin:**
 - After the IHL announcement, we scheduled a meeting a few days later to come up with a strategy and decided we may request a meeting with the IHL. I will have an update after we meet in the coming weeks.
 - I did find out that Mississippi State has a new faculty senate president and will try to get them on board with us.
- **Update on “Where We Are Lean” Requests to the Chancellor**
 - Some folks have sent requests by email but Kerry Bowers and I are creating a Qualtrix survey we will distribute. We want to get the low-hanging fruit. A license for qualitative software is something we could ask for.
 - Sinha: Will that be a survey you send us to forward to our faculty or will you send it to faculty directly?

- Bowers: We will share the link with anyone who is faculty and will probably create a ranking question to help organize the responses into categories. Might even need to do a second survey. It's all kind of in the works.
- Chair Durkin: Some folks have sent emails of suggestions faculty worked on together, and I want to encourage more of that. We're getting really good ideas so far.
- Bowers: I sent it out just before the meeting.

○ **Update on the Faculty Grievance Policy by Carrie Smith, Chair of Governance:**

Smith: We sent around the grievance policy, which is ready for feedback. Several concerns have already been raised. Why are salaries not grievable, for example? I don't know. We are not at the wordsmithing stage yet but just clarifying ideas. I will place my email in the chat so you may send ideas to me there: Csmith4@olemiss.edu

Chair Durkin: Any questions or comments?

Overall census changes affected Faculty Census and we have not gone through that yet. This will determine how many seats each department will have and who is rotating off. That information is coming.

○ **Faculty Senate Elections: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary**

Chair Durkin: Carrie McCormick will be leaving for Mississippi State, her home, so will need nominations for Vice Chair and Secretary.

Watkins: Do we need to formally renominate you?

Chair Durkin: You may go ahead. Help me procedurally, though.

Ballou: By acclamation, we nominate Dan Durkin to a second term as Chair.

Chair Durkin: Anyone opposed?

Lobur: I would like to nominate Alex Watson.

McCormick: I would like to nominate Jon Michael Wimberly.

Bowers: I would like to second for Alex Watson.

Wolf: I would like to second for Jon Michael Wimberly.

Reithel: Seconds are not required on nominations.

Chair Durkin: Any other nominations for Vice Chair? (None).

Poll: Tied at 18 votes each.

Reithel: Chair casts the deciding vote.

Ballou: Did everyone vote and no one abstain? (None)

Chair Durkin: I will vote for Jon Michael Wimberly, though this is a tough choice.

Bowers: I affirm that.

Durkin: Other nominations?

Ballou: I move to close nominations.

Reithel: Acclaimed by nomination.

Chair Durkin: No other nominations? Kerry Bowers will be our new secretary.

- We need to decide whether to hold meetings in the fall in person or on Zoom.

Discussion:

McClellan: As a person who is immune-compromised and has mobility issues, I would personally like to remain on Zoom.

Wolf: On behalf of single parents and others with children, I find Zoom fabulous for that.

Lobur: I agree it's the most flexible means we have.

Smith: Sometimes on Zoom I find it hard to see hands up for Roberts rules and wonder if some business might be better handled face to face and some Zoom.

Chair Durkin: Is it possible to have both options? We can explore it. In person has the advantage of letting you meet new faculty, so that would be missing on Zoom.

Holt: For those of us on the Southhaven and Tupelo campuses, Zoom has been a godsend, especially after teaching.

Nielson: Since we have no maternity leave policy, I would not have been able to nurse while in a face-to-face senate meeting.

A poll was taken: 90% voted for Zoom.

○ **Committee Updates**

- Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff) – nothing to report
- Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Alex Watson) – nothing to report
- Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly) – nothing to report
- Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle) – nothing to report
- Governance (chair: Carrie Smith) – nothing to report
- Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley) – nothing to report
- University Services (chair: Heather Allen) – nothing to report

- Durkin:

- John Lobur suggested an end-of-academic-year social. I think that's a great idea.
 - This summer the executive committee will look at our bylaws and at committees that have not had much to do, while sometimes things come up that don't seem to be part of any of our existing committees. We will be looking at bylaws too and are looking into having a parliamentarian. We will bring everything back to you in the fall for us to discuss and vote on any changes.
 - I really appreciate the collegiality and support you have shown for the senate and the executive council. This is very important service and I am very grateful to everyone who has served.
-
- Old Business
 - New Business
-
- Adjournment
 - Motion:
 - Second:
 - Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

NEXT MEETING: August 23, 2022 @ 6:00 via ZOOM

Daniel Durkin is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Faculty Senate Meeting

Time: May 3, 2022 06:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://olemiss.zoom.us/j/93907482236?pwd=eTh0M3lQeUNrek0zRm9SbjJVU0k2UT09>

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