

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA**  
**Faculty Senate**

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**Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting**  
**Nov. 20, 2024, 3:00-5:00 p.m.**  
**MCOB 265**  
**MINUTES**

Present (In-house): G. Abeynanda, J. Adams, R. Bates, C. Baughn, M. Black, G. Borchert, C. Brock, G. Brower, W. Cutchen, C. Davidson, S. Davis, A. Donaldson, B. Dzwonkowski, J. Ellzie, L. Fleck, Y. Getch, C. Hauff, D. Meola, B. Minton, S. Ni Chadhain, T. O'Connor, A. Pavelescu, B. Rabideau, J. Richardson, A. Shea, A. Stenson, D. Streeter, V. Tate, E. ter Horst, R. Thomas, C. Thompson, L. Vrana, S. Walker, C. Wassenaar, B. Webb, and C. Wu.

Present (Zoom): T. Davis, R. Godang, N. Holliday, J. Huang, T. McDonald, M. Migaud, J. Miller, K. Pancione, J. Pfleeger, C. Raczkowski, C. Rawlinson, J. Swofford, R. Thomas, and D. Turnipseed.

Excused: J. Bunch, S. Ferguson, C. Gavrilita, P. Henning, C. Holliday, G. Hudson, Z. Khan, M. Lin, A. Marass, J. Robertson, M. Salvitt Fermin, and C. Shaw.

Unexcused: Y. Coronado, Y. Huang, W. Kilgo, B. Merritt, C. Raczkowski, M. Sehgal, and A. Williams.

Guests: D. Baxley (Speaker), P. Susman (Speaker), C. Selwyn (Parliamentarian), T. Cole, and S. Dasgupta.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm with President Christina Wassenaar presiding. Quorum was met.

**I. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS:**

Approval of Minutes: Approved by voice consensus.

Approval of Agenda: Approved, as amended, by voice consensus.

Presentation: Darren Baxley, USA Chief of Police, with introduction by Peter Susman, Chief Administrative Officer.

- Chief Baxley has been the new chief since last summer. He came from the University of Florida where he was the Deputy Police Chief.
- He believes, as a police officer, in having a close collaboration with the university community, its students and faculty.
- He wants to build an ecosystem of community-oriented policing at USA by training police officers to do more proactive, educational involvement with faculty, staff and students.
- There was a discussion about the tornado drill that happened this day, about what went wrong and what worked.
- USA law enforcement has jurisdiction for all of the University's properties, though at the present time, most of the off-campus properties are primarily being controlled through contract officers. The long-term goal is to grow the USA police force to include all of the properties so they can provide a seamless service across the whole system.
- There was a question about receiving training on what to do during emergencies such as tornadoes, fires, bomb threats, etc. Chief Baxley pointed out that events such as tornadoes or fires are really the purview of the safety office. The police department cannot make a plan for how individual colleges/buildings handle emergencies in their areas. They will need to be made by their own dean/chairs or the emergency coordinator for their units.
- The bottom line is that safety is a shared responsibility among various levels and groups. The police department can be a partner in the decision making but cannot have the sole responsibility.
- The University does have an overall All-Hazards plan, but there needs to be a building-level plan that is unique to the specific needs of an area.
- The key to making any public safety system work is being able to learn to communicate.
- Jaime Adams pointed out that there should be a building safety coordinator, usually within the college administration. Chief Baxley acknowledged that he would like to build on our current coordinator plan with additional training to make it more efficient.
- To make sure people know who their building safety coordinators are, Chief Baxley will send the current list to Christina to share.

President's Report [Written report distributed]:

- The search for the VP for Research & Economic Development is continuing. Last week a candidate, Kim Myers, came for an on-campus interview. Her presentation is available for viewing. There is a second candidate that the search committee is interested in, which hopefully moves forward to the on-campus interview stage.

## II. OLD BUSINESS:

- Proposal to change the Faculty Senate Bylaws [Section 4.1] to add summer & end of fall semester meetings (June, July, & December) as Zoom-only meetings in case of need to conduct business for extraordinary issues.
  - In the discussion there was a question about whether the meetings will be scheduled at the beginning of the term and then cancelled if they are not needed so that everyone has them on their schedule in advance. Christina indicated that this would be the case.
  - Generally speaking, the Executive Committee would know a couple of weeks in advance whether or not the extra meetings would be needed so there should be appropriate notice whether or not they will be needed.
  - **Motion carried by a vote of 46 approved, with no nays or abstentions.**
  - Bylaws will be revised as indicated and posted on the Faculty Senate website.
  
- Proposal for the *ad hoc* committee on Well-being and Retention with revised charge and assignment.
  - The number of members of the committee is yet to be determined, but the Executive Committee wanted to announce the charge and potential project so that new members of the committee will know what the work will entail.
  - The membership for the committee may include non-senators that are willing to contribute to the work of the committee.
  - There was a question about whether or not there be overlapping responsibilities of the *ad hoc* committee with the Sustainability & Environmental Quality standing committee. Christina believes the *ad hoc* committee will look at issues dealing with overall concerns on faculty well-being, while S&EQ will address more specific academic issues.
  - Sinéad wanted more clarification about what is meant by “Faculty Senate Legal Advocates”. This issue is related to the SB-129 issue that came about during last summer, when the faculty input was lacking in the discussion of how to work with the change in the law. This input was necessary when it came to how it would affect research and grant writing proposals. It would have been beneficial to have someone with expertise with legal advocacy.
  - It was proposed that, for clarification, that the term should be “Legislative Advocate” rather than “Legal Advocate” a term that is associated with the grievance process.
  - The goal with the proposal is to create a job description for two positions within the faculty senate that would serve as legislative experts – one within the healthcare side of the university and one from the academic side of the university. Having a faculty member as a resource person for the university administration dealing with legislation that affects faculty was something that the USA administration requested that the faculty senate would do.

### III. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

#### Standing Committee:

- *Evaluation* (Davidson) [Written report available]
- *Faculty Development & Mentoring* (Black)
  - Reminder that MéPLe has a program by Don Davis (Georgia State U.) on Friday (11/24). He specializes in positive psychiatry.
- *Faculty Salaries & Benefits* (Pavelescu)
  - The committee has established 5-6 items that they will be working on.
  - They will be working on a methodology on the inversion/compression study.
  - Christina mentioned that at the previous week's President's Council meeting that the ExComm requested a list of peer schools as it relates to R1 transition.
- *Research & Creative Activities* (Migaud)
  - Marie reported on the Research Huddle that happened on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>.
  - There were 41 RSVP with 36 people actually attending. There were 7 sections of the themes that had been selected by the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED).
  - About 1/3 of the attendees provided feedback.
  - There are plans to hold another Research Huddle next spring (date to be determined).
- *Sustainability & Environmental Quality* (Turnipseed)
  - The committee is looking at three topics for consideration:
    1. The need for more lactation areas on campus—the committee is proposing that every building on campus have a designated room reserved as a lactation area. This could be a low-cost, well-received idea for the USA community. There are three known lactation rooms on campus. Requirements for potential rooms are that there is an outlet, a refrigeration place to store the milk and a lock on the door to the room. ADA compliance is another consideration.
    2. Cars idling in the parking lots with air conditioners/heaters on (depending on the season)—the committee is looking for ideas of trying to reduce students from sitting in their cars between classes with the engines running.
    3. The need for childcare—consideration of using interns and students that need clinical hours in childcare-related areas as possible staff sources.
- *Teaching, Learning, & Technology* (Vrana) [Written report available]

- Laura, Michael, and Clay have been working together to get feedback on responses on the survey about overhauling teaching evaluation processes.
- *University Planning & Development* (Walker)
  - The committee is working on the strategic plan document for the university, which is a long document to review.
  - USA Faculty Senate will be hosting a Friendsgiving event on Tuesday, Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>. There have been emails sent out announcing the event. Food will be provided by the senate, with alcohol available for purchase. It is not a faculty-senate only event. All faculty members are welcome to come. RSVP is requested.
- *University Policies & Handbook* (Ní Chadhain) [Written report available]

#### Caucus Leaders Reports:

- *Arts & Sciences* (ter Horst):
  - At their caucus meeting they discussed establishing some guidelines for non-sabbatical leave applications (e.g. fellowships). They discovered that if the faculty member is not teaching on campus during the non-sabbatical leave, they are not entitled to receive their normal benefits. They are trying to determine who would be responsible for establishing these new guidelines. This is different from those faculty that have a sabbatical leave, since they are entitled to continue receiving their benefits.
  - Concerning retention of faculty, they are looking at non-salary ideas to help with retention, such as sources for more funding for faculty research; return on indirect; funding for internal awards; etc.
  - Planning a faculty forum with the Dean of A&S.
- *Nursing* (Thomas)
  - A big concern for the College of Nursing faculty is the lack of policies relating to promotion for non-tenure track faculty. What are the criteria needed for promotion? And the lack of evaluative feedback from the promotion committees/colleges dean on why faculty are denied promotion. Since the Board of Trustees do not meet until the summer, faculty do not know until the end of summer that they have been denied promotion. This gives them very little time to adjust their portfolio before they need to re-submit it in October. Currently they are relying on rumors as to why they were unsuccessful.
  - Sinéad pointed out that it sounds like the University Faculty Handbooks is being violated in the College of Nursing. Faculty being denied promotion without any

feedback during the process should be able to file a grievance about the process. The policy in the Handbook states that the department chair is supposed to provide a summary letter with the information on whether the promotion was recommended to the college committee or not.

- Sinéad offered the suggestion that the Nursing faculty make a list of cases where the feedback was not provided, which the Faculty Senate could use as the bases to write a letter to the Dean of the College of Nursing and the Provost to point out that the policy isn't being followed.
  - It is apparent that this policy of feedback letter at the department chair level not being made available to the faculty member going up for promotion is being violated in other colleges, too.
  - On a related issue, some colleges are not giving feedback on the required annual faculty evaluation, using a point system, whereby the determination of the points are not consistent across the college and are not provided as feedback to the faculty member.
- *Medicine* (Borchert)
    - The College is experiencing “growing pains” with the additional faculty members added to the college and the lack of space in the building that is needed for them.
    - Adjunct faculty in the college are not receiving Title IX training, so they are trying to remedy that.

#### University Committees Reports:

None given

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

- New proposed changes to the Non-Tenure Track policy (Section 3.15.5 to 3.15.8 of the Faculty Handbook)
  - The CAD has notified the Senate that they rejected our prior non-tenured track promotion policy revision, though Sinéad reminded them that we need some updates on the four other policies proposals that we have send them of the past few months to years.
  - The FS Handbook committee presented a proposal that strips out all of the language that addresses any non-tenured track faculty who are in an undefined position, and focus on the current non-tenure track professor positions.

- If you are at South in a non-tenure track position with more than 60% teaching responsibilities, all of your time in rank at South applies (rather than limit it to only three-years toward promotion that the policy currently states).
- **A motion to approve was made from the floor. There was no further discussion made. Motion carried by a vote of 44 approved, with no nays or abstentions.**
- The proposed NTT promotion policy will be sent to the Council of Deans for their consideration.
  
- Faculty Advocates (Section 4.2.4.a of the Faculty Handbook)
  - The appointment for the Faculty Senate Advocate has not been done in the last few years.
  - The USA Handbook specifies that each academic year, the Faculty Senate establishes a Faculty Advocate pool of a minimum of 4 tenured, senior (Associate or Full Professor) faculty who are not attorneys. The person does not need to be a member of the Faculty Senate.
  - The Faculty Advocates' role is to: a) assist the Grievant in determining whether to file a formal grievance and b) serve as a mentor and advisor to assist the Grievant during the formal process.
  - We have one volunteer so far (Sinéad Ní Chadhain) who is willing to serve in this role.
  - Christina requested that if anyone is interested in serving, to please contact her.
  
- Discussion of the Faculty Senate Secretary position
  - The current secretary, Vicki Tate, is resigning from the senate at the end of December.
  - Christina is requesting nominations for someone willing to serve as secretary, to be voted on at the next plenary meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm

Minutes submitted by Vicki Tate, Secretary