**FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES**

**North Carolina A&T State University**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Tuesday, January 26, 2021**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Dr. Julius Harp, Chair Presiding**

**Senate Members Present:** Stephen Bollinger, Dong Yang Deng, Zachary Denton, Nicole Dobbins, Yewanda Fasina, Galen Foresman, Julius Harp, Scott Harrison, Karen Jackson, Yahya Kamalipour, Hyung Nam Kim, James Kribs, Yu-Tung Kuo, Luba Kurkalova, Nicole McCoy, Matthew McCullough, Ahmed Megri, Carmen Monico, Shona Morgan, Hyoshin Park, William Randle, Ioannis Raptis, Dave Schall, Amy Schwartzott, Kalynda Smith, Shon Smith, Evelyn Sowells-Boone, Hong Wang, James Wood, Omar Woodham

**Departments Not Represented:**  Agribusiness, Applied Economics, and Agriscience Education; Computer Science; English; Family and Consumer Sciences; Kinesiology; Nursing; Nanoengineering; Physics

The meeting was called to order by Chair Julius Harp at 3:05 pm.

**Approval of the November Faculty Senate Minutes**

It was properly moved (by Dr. Smith) and seconded (by Dr. Bollinger) to approve the November minutes. Senators unanimously approved the minutes.

**Open Floor**

Dr. Harp opened the floor for **new member introductions or for sharing accomplishments**.

Dr. Cundall has recently finished his book on humor and is now pursuing publication through the UNC System Press. He will share the finished product with the Senate.

Dr. Bollinger announced that the library has partnered with ITS to loan laptops to students in need. The vast majority of the available laptops are recent models that are appropriate for coursework. Students can request laptops here: <http://library.ncat.edu/services/special-laptop-loan.html>. The standard loan period is for the entire semester, but they can also be loaned on an emergency basis. Students who are not graduating can keep them across semesters.

* Dr. Dobbins recommended that this information be shared on the COVID website.
* Dr. Randle asked how faculty can facilitate donation of additional laptops? Dr. Bollinger said that faculty should notify the Library or ITS if they are aware of extra laptops that can be distributed.

Dr. Kamalipour has also just published a book: *Global Media Perceptions of the United States: The Trump Effect.*

Dr. Foresman then opened the floor for **questions and concerns**.

Dr. Randle asked if senators are finding the physical classrooms ready for face-to-face meetings? Are there issues with the classrooms or availability of sanitation supplies?

* Dr. Randle shared that three of the classrooms in Carver Hall have not been cleaned since Fall 2020. He has collected pictures to document the situation.
* Dr. Harrison said that he has heard (per the UNC system) that every building is allocated a specific budget for upkeep. He has not yet found this information online. It would be helpful if input from the campus community could be considered further regarding building upkeep, especially if there is a dedicated budget for each building.
* Dr. Megri shared that one of his laboratory spaces last semester was never cleaned. When he asked about it, he was given wipes and told to ask the students to clean up after each lab.
* Dr. Harp suggested that we follow up with facilities with these concerns. If an acceptable solution cannot be found, then facilities should work with departments to find alternate room assignments.

Dr. Cundall shared multiple concerns on behalf of the Department of Liberal Studies.

* Department Chair Hiring Procedures**:** In the past 10 years, the department has only had a non-interim chair for 1.5 years. However, the most recent search process for the chair involved egregious mistakes and fundamental mismanagement. A brief overview of the situation:
	+ The search began almost one year ago, but faculty from the department were not included as members of the initial search committee. A conflict of interest was also found between the search committee chair and one of the final three candidates selected for interview.
		- Dr. Foresman said that the following hiring guidelines were ignored: [www.ncat.edu/provost/faculty-resources/hiring-toolkit-final-11\_16.pdf](http://www.ncat.edu/provost/faculty-resources/hiring-toolkit-final-11_16.pdf)
		- Faculty lodged formal complaints, moving through all administrative channels as recommended by the Chief of Staff, Dr. Hart (from Dean to Provost to Chancellor) without any response. After submitting a complaint to UNC System President Roper, the Provost and Dean agreed to a meeting, after which the Provost made the formal decision that the search was valid and could continue.
	+ The department subsequently sent their concerns to the new Vice Chancellor of HR for review. HR responded that the search appeared to have several improprieties and should be stopped.
	+ Despite the recommendation from HR, the search was reopened without any faculty involvement on December 24, 2020. On January 8, 2021, the department received word that the positioned had been filled, fully absent of any faculty involvement in the interview process.
	+ Faculty, however, have yet to hear from the new chair. They are also not completely clear on the chair’s official start date, as it was not stated in the formal welcome letter.
* Course Assignments: Faculty in the Department of Liberal Studies were assigned courses for Spring 2021 and had no involvement in scheduling, a practice that appears to have widespread variability across different departments.
* Administrative Support in Academic Dishonesty Cases: In Fall 2020, Dr. Cundall discovered that 5 of his students had cheated on an exam. He collected evidence, including similar start/stop times, identical (incorrect) responses, and acknowledgement from one of the students that they had created a groupme for the exam. When he issued final grades, he also gave his administration advanced warning that there may be some complaints; the Dean responded that the evidence he gathered was not sufficient.
* Dr. Cundall believes that the continuous overlook of faculty involvement has already led to disengagement and damaged the university, and the situation will only worsen if it continues. Faculty feel as though they have no further avenues to follow and have legitimate concern that anything done may be too little, too late. However, he is hoping that the Senate can at least make a strong statement on behalf of the faculty of the Department of Liberal Studies – the search concerns are very time-sensitive, but he believes that this is representative of larger concerns about shared governance.

**Senate Discussion**

Hiring – Department of Liberal Studies Chair and General

* Dr. Harrison shared his concerns that there are many cases where administrators are in interim positions for far too long.
* Dr. Randle said that his department’s latest search proceeded with appropriate faculty direction and involvement. He believes that the Senate should express its concerns about the Liberal Studies search in writing to the Provost, connecting the issue with larger concerns about the lack of shared governance on our campus. This situation should not happen again; it is a dangerous precedent.
* Dr. Dobbins stated that the Liberal Studies search is a serious issue that warrants documentation. If the department has already pursued all channels of follow-up and complaint, and received no response, then she feels that the Senate response deserves to be written differently.
* Dr. Wood said that the Liberal Studies situation is outrageous and an institutional embarrassment. He also believes there is another problem once chairs are hired: there is no opportunity for faculty to review their performance and they are “in place” forever. He has heard chairs state that they serve at the pleasure of their deans, which runs counter to the idea of shared governance. There is a chair’s review process at other system schools.
	+ Drs. Foresman and Randle agreed that chairs should be advocates for the faculty, and if the chairs serve the dean, then faculty appear to be left out. Dr. Randle said that faculty should also be able to evaluate deans and other leadership.
	+ Dr. Cobb said that there was some discussion about establishing dean and chair evaluations several years ago. The current structure reinforces hierarchies. However, he suggested that the Senate work to clarify the evaluation processes that are desired, including the specification of outcomes and consequences for good and poor evaluations.
	+ Dr. Foresman said that he received a request from OSPIE about submitting a deans evaluation several years ago, but he is unsure what came of it. Several others said that they had never received a similar request in their colleges.
	+ Dr. Dobbins said that some colleges have attempted to create an evaluation process for administrators, but it is very inconsistent across the institution.
* In a past search in his department, Dr. Megri served as chairman. Though the committee formulated recommendations, administrators selected the last candidate on the list to hire. The committee was told that the final hiring decision was left to administrators. He believes that the Senate needs to work on clear policy to direct searches for a department chair.
* Dr. Cobb believes that we should insist that faculty within the department serve on departmental searches. This needs to come through the Senate as formal, vetted policy.

Administrative Response about Cheating

* Dr. Megri said that he has experienced the same lack of administrative support in his department. There is the overall impression that faculty should not raise concerns about cheating, but it is rampant.
	+ Dr. Redd added that the administrative (lack of ) response to cheating may be an issue specific to certain departments. He had an issue in his unit with students cheating but received support from the Dean's offices of his own college as well as the other one that was involved. He believes that this is a question of leadership and should certainly be something that is discussed during the Dean's meetings.
	+ Dr. Harrison agreed that some of the current college leadership seems to get it right in terms of addressing cheating. Leadership needs to better on campus in various places.

Shared Governance (general discussion)

* Dr. Randle said there are persistent issues with shared governance. He has suggested in Executive Committee meetings that the Senate should compile a list of all issues that defy principles of shared governance. The Liberal Studies search needs to be included, as does the syllabus template, office hours, and noted scheduling concerns. We need to remind administration that faculty are part of the institution for a reason and want to be involved.
* Dr. Harrison asked how we can persist on these items in a united manner; how can senators contribute to the monthly meetings that the Senate Chair and Vice-Chair has with the Provost/Chancellor? He recommends ongoing iteration and discussion with stakeholders on some of these issues that matter most.
* Dr. Redd said that, at the very least, formalized objections should be registered. He is unsure if it should be via Senate Resolution or some other approach, but it needs to be clear when a decision is being made against the better judgement of the people who are supposed to be involved.
* Dr. Jackson said that it is important to be clear on our expectations surrounding shared governance, and the definition of it for our campus (including what co-creation looks like) before discussing accountability
	+ Dr. Dobbins said that Faculty Assembly will very soon share a document with faculty, chairs, deans, and all campus Senates to ensure consistent messaging about shared governance across the system.
* Dr. Foresman said that faculty need to support one another. He encourages all faculty to feel comfortable sending concerns to Senate leadership, even if the faculty would like to proceed discreetly on some matters.
* Dr. Harrison said that we should advocate for common objectives and a working and effective language across stakeholders for shared governance. He said that another missing item is administrative leadership, and the apparent failure to recognize the role of faculty as leaders at a university. He hopes the Senate can focus our communications so that when shocking concerns are described, it hits home with respect to advancing this university further toward excellence.
	+ Dr. Randle said he believes leadership development should be offered across all levels, including down to faculty. This will help with succession planning. Several senators expressed their agreement with this idea.
* Dr. Dobbins said that part of our shared governance initiatives need to focus on ensuring that all senators understand their own roles and committee roles. Junior faculty also need to understand the role of the Senate, and they should not be told to wait to become involved until they are tenured.
	+ Dr. Smith suggested that there be formal training or onboarding for all senators. This should be done even if departments are doing proper grooming.
	+ Dr. Dobbins said there are models we can use from other universities. We need to establish a clear model that includes succession planning to provide infrastructure for ongoing shared governance. She believes the Faculty Assembly document coming out soon will help to guide each university in the development of these processes.
* Dr. Randle said the Executive Committee has discussed pulling together a group of paid senators for the summer to look at infrastructure development, such as the number of committees, onboarding, constitution/documentation, etc.
* Dr. Harrison said that the Senate might consider being more strategic in our communications with administration. We can highlight areas of institutional improvement before following up with our concerns. He also wondered if the Senate should consider involving a professional negotiator. Executive guidance at this juncture might help us to be duly diligent with doing all that can be done during this increasingly critical time for our institution.
* Dr. Dobbins said that infrastructure development hasn’t matched the institutional growth, and this has influenced efficiency and work across all areas – contributing to some of the issues discussed at today’s meeting.

**Formal Senate Recommendations for Specific Action**

Hiring – Department of Liberal Studies Chair and General

* Dr. Harp requests that Dr. Cundall send him the letters of complaint that he has sent on behalf of the department. He would like to craft a Senate response in the very near future.
* Dr. Wood initially made a motion, but subsequently withdrew it, to formally request that the Senate immediately issue a request to upper administration seeking more information/resolution of this issue. After some discussion, he was comfortable with the actions that Dr. Harp planned to take and withdrew the motion.
* During Dr. Harp’s summary of his intended efforts to draft a Senate response to the Liberal Studies hiring situation, Dr. Harrison picked up on some potentially useful language for the letter: *There are major concerns that should be taken more seriously than they have.*

Dr. Smith made a motion to invite the Chancellor, Provost, and Vice Chancellor of HR to our meetings in the next three months. Dr. Foresman seconded the motion.

* Discussion followed.
	+ Dr. Dobbins favored this action, as we need to express our concerns now, without losing momentum; multiple senators agreed.
	+ Dr. Jackson said that she believes there are clear advantages to having an audience with all three administrators to discuss the façade of shared governance. Their attendance at a scheduled meeting might be more effective than simply voicing concerns in writing.
		- Dr. Foresman stated that a specific audience with the Senate would be more direct than the engagement faculty typically have with the Chancellor in the Faculty Forum.
	+ Dr. Randle is concerned that inviting all three to the same meeting may not allow for sufficient dialogue between senators and administration; Dr. Foresman agreed.
	+ Dr. Harp suggested that we invite the Provost to hear general concerns first.
	+ Since the Provost attended a recent Senate meeting, Dr. Randle believes that our first invitation should extend to the more recently hired Vice Chancellor of HR. This would provide the Senate an opportunity to discuss hiring best practices directly with her.
* After discussions, Dr. Smith amended the motion to suggest inviting these administrators one at a time.
* Dr. Harp called for the vote. One senator voted against, while the rest of the senators voted in favor of the motion to invite the Chancellor, Provost, and Vice Chancellor of HR to upcoming Senate meetings individually
* Dr. Harp will make this request in a couple of days.

**Other Issues Raised in Discussion**

Dr. Megri shared his concerns about faculty evaluation. He expressed frustration at an evaluation of a faculty member that fails to mention the millions of dollars in funding or the successful and diverse teaching record, only to focus on a late submission of an ABET report. He is also concerned that administrators conducting the evaluation may not have the appropriate record or credentials to merit a proper evaluation.

Dr. Foresman said there are also problems affecting NTTF and part-time colleagues. He shared that some part-time faculty he knew were recently going through evaluations last year and were being challenged – despite not having been paid for their first month of employment. While the faculty were frustrated in their evaluations, the individuals responsible for not having their payment ready do not appear to face any consequences.

* Dr. Randle said the same issue affects faculty, graduate students and student workers in the CAES. The slowness of reinstatement is a real problem, especially considering the amount of adjunct instruction that our university utilizes.
* Dr. Bollinger concurred that it is a real problem in Library Services. The required HR start date is problematic. When part-time contracts end, these employees’ emails and contacts are immediately turned off. This disrupts communication across departments, students and faculty. It is a long-term problem that needs to be addressed.
* Dr. Foresman said that faculty are frequently lost/disconnected over summers and even breaks.
* Dr. Dobbins wondered if this is an HR, Payroll, or Provost concern? Dr. Randle suggested that IT might also be involved.

Dr. Harp brought up ongoing faculty concerns about the website. Several have suggested that IT should reach out to faculty on a regular basis to identify issues and resolve problems. The Senate may need to push this through further contact with the website administrators and the Provost.

**New Programs and Curricula Committee Dr. Galen Foresman**

No formal report.

The next meeting will be held on the second Tuesday in February. Dr. Foresman has already received a number of packages for the meeting and he will acknowledge their receipt soon.

Dr. Park asked for a reminder of the levels of review through which new programs should be evaluated. Foresman said that once the college approves, it will move to the university level for review before being brought to the Senate.

**Academic Calendar Committee Dr. Galen Foresman**

No formal report

Dr. Foresman will pull the committee together in the near future to review several proposed calendars.

**Educational Policy Committee Dr. Zachary Denton**

The biggest focus for the committee is the syllabus template. Specifically, the committee plans to research its origin, why there has been no faculty input, and why they are sent out to faculty so late. The template should have been vetted through the Committee and approved by the Senate. Dr. Denton shared that the current templates are in conflict with documented best practices.

* Dr. Randle suggested that we loop student government into this discussion since their leadership expressed interest in our November meeting. Dr. Jackson supported this suggestion and said that it would be great to hear from students, since many acknowledge that they do not read the syllabus.

Dr. Dobbins asked for an update on the Office Hours Policy. Dr. Denton said that he has been working with Legal to create the final version of the policy, and to ensure that its language matches what was voted on by the Senate. The policy has been finalized and is now sitting at the Provost’s Office for approval.

**Nominating Committee Dr. Shon Smith**

The committee is following up with each college to nominate and elect members for the 2021-2022 Grievance and Hearing and Reconsideration Committees.

* Dr. Harp asked if each of these committees are adequately represented this year? Dr. Smith said that the Provost has pulled together last year’s Grievance Committee, but he is unsure about the Hearing and Reconsideration Committee.
* Dr. Smith requests that all senators share information about these elections broadly in their colleges, and to encourage faculty participation as a great way to have more voice.

Dr. Harp would like to see this committee establish protocols to guide timing of elections for these important positions.

Dr. Randle asked if we are allowed to have alternates for these committees? Dr. Smith said that he has suggested that we add alternates to provide continuity in situations where faculty have to step down from service.

**Handbook Committee Dr. Evelyn Hoover**

No report.

**Welfare Committee Dr. Bill Randle**

The committee has a lot of issues to tackle and plans to meet in early February.

Dr. Morgan asked if this committee would be looking into the extension of the RPT evaluation for all faculty. Dr. Randle said that the committee will be focusing on multiple issues, but that this is one of them

* Dr. Morgan noted the time-sensitivity of this concern. While faculty going up for review this academic year were given an extension, the pandemic has inevitably affected all faculty. There is an urgent need for this review timeline to be addressed.
	+ Dr. Smith said that the Provost appeared open to this consideration in a previous meeting. Dr. Randle said the committee had worked on a resolution, and that it will be presented in February’s Senate Meeting.

**Handbook Committee Dr. Evelyn Hoover**

No report.

**Constitution Committee Dr. Scott Harrison**

No report

**Faculty Assembly Report Dr. Nicole Dobbins**

Dr. Dobbins said there have been discussions about the fee structure used to charge for online vs. face-to-face courses across the system. She expects the conversation to continue, focusing on the viability of one set price for all modes of courses and how this might impact course competitiveness.

Student wellness, particularly mental health, is also a big focus. There is system-wide interest in making sure that students are aware of all of the resources available to them through counseling support at each institution. Faculty/staff wellness is also a point of discussion.

The final report of the Racial, Equity, and Diversity Task Force was presented to the Board of Governors last week. She publicly applauds all colleagues across the system who have spoken out to share their story. The report is extensive, candid and included 6 recommendations. The Task Force has asked for a response to all of the recommendations.

* There have already been some responses and conversation in the media. A new system-level diversity officer was recently created, but placed under HR. The Task Force recommends that the officer instead report directly to the President, since the issues extend far beyond HR.
* She believes that in absence of authentic response to the recommendations made, many faculty will become further disengaged and frustrated, to the detriment of the system and its institutions.
* On our campus, Dr. Sherrice Allen is serving as Interim Chief Diversity Officer. An internal survey will be coming out in February/March and all faculty, staff and students will be asked to candidly respond.
* Dr. Dobbins will share the recording of the presentation to the Board of Governors, along with reports mentioned, with Ms. Ingram for distribution to senators, deans and chairs.

Dr. said that we may also want to consider term allotment for the Faculty Assembly delegates. She invites those interested in serving as a delegate to attend an Assembly meeting.

**Statement from Chair Dr. Julius Harp**

Dr. Harp thanked all faculty for their hard work last semester and wishes everyone a good Spring 2021 semester. Senator service is strongly appreciated even if it is not routinely rewarded. Dr. Harp appreciates the dialogue and he will move forward with concerns expressed today.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10PM

Dr. Elizabeth Newcomb Hopfer

Secretary