

Meeting Minutes, Faculty Senate, full meeting, September 26, 2023

In attendance:

Phoebe Ajibade (A), Faisal Alkaabneh (S), Jeffrey R. Alston (S), Jennifer Beasley (S), Tonya Amankwatia, Uchenna Anele (S), Mohammad Azad (S), Stephen Bollinger (S), Trevor Brothers (A), Kelvin Bryant (S), Kimberly Bunch-Crump (S), Subrata Chakrabarty (A), Daphne Cooper, Mike Cundall (S), Zachary Denton (S), Sherrie Drye (A), Jeffrey Edwards, Chastity English, Robert Ferguson (S), Yvonne R. Ford (S), Tiffany Fuller (S), Etta C. Gravely (A), Corey Graves (S), Scott Harrison (S), Nina Ingram, AKM Kamrul Islam (A), Yuhan Jiang (A), Cindi Khanlarian (S), Luba Kurkalova (S), Mahmoud Mahmoud (A), Antoniette Maldonado-Devincci, Nicole McCoy, Kimberly McNeil (S), Ahmed Megri (S), Defang Mehta, Venkatesh Pandey (A), Sharon Parker (S), Bill Randle, Sydney Richardson (A), Derrick Robinson (A), George S. Robinson, Jr., Ecaterina Stepaniuc (S), Jacqueline Roebuck Sakho (S), Mashooq Salehin (S), Dave Schall (S), Amy Schwartzott (S), Roberta Silva, Vijay Singh (S), Nichole Smith, Tonya Smith-Jackson, John Teleha, Davi Thornton (S), Li-Shiang Tsay (A), Pauline Uwakweh (S), Maylee Vazquez (A), Venkatesh Pandey (A), Nakeshia Williams, Jeff D. Wolfgang (S)

(S): Senator

(A): Alternate

Roll call began at 3:00 pm to 3:05 pm. The agenda was presented by Dr. Fuller and the meeting called to order by Dr. Harrison. Dr. Harrison described the general nature of service as a representative. Dr. Harrison and Dr. Fuller then presented the proposed 2023-2024 Faculty Senate Committee rosters. Dr. Harrison then encouraged broad engagement and involvement with these committees from all faculty at any level of appointment at the university. Dr. Harrison specifically mentioned professional track faculty and the objective for connecting with perspective and insight from the wealth of talent across the university.

The discussion then moved to an issue of concern with principles of shared governance. Dr. Harrison related that, for some time, there has been concern from faculty about the establishment of a university-level curriculum committee with limited input from the faculty community. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Senate Officers did reach out to university leadership during the prior year (2022-2023). The ad hoc university-level curriculum committee established by administrators was formed to address some challenges with respect to curriculum package review in the Spring and Summer of 2022. Most of the committee members were directly selected by administration to serve on this committee. Faculty Senate leadership sought to communicate with respect to how the intended innovation could be enacted with respect to central considerations of shared governance. Although the inception of this committee was to, in the words of the university leadership, “come from us” (Faculty Senate and administration), it really did not. Dr. Harrison described the broad concern among faculty about how faculty are to, in a representative manner, specify the curricula. Dr. Harrison also referred as well though to the policy framework of the UNC System regarding administrative authority.

Dr. Alston mentioned hearing about shared governance principles in terms of a general idea for discussion and inquired about the supporting policy framework for shared governance within the UNC System. Dr. Edwards offered some perspective on UNC System policy and university policy. Dr. Edwards referred to a document on UNC System principles of shared governance where it expressly stated actionable practice regarding shared governance for universities in the UNC System with respect to each university's administrative body and permanent faculty body. With respect to the faculty body's involvement in teaching courses, a main piece to shared governance is the content and structure of the curriculum. Dr. Edwards cited the UNC System principles of shared governance as including the following stanza - "The university's curriculum is primarily the responsibility of the faculty. The faculty, acting as a committee of the whole or through representatives elected by the faculty or designated pursuant to procedures established by faculty legislation". In summary, the faculty (Faculty Senate) should be determining who is on the university-level curriculum committee. Dr. Harrison concurred that the meaning of the UNC System principles of shared governance was simple and straightforward in this regard, and that further resolution on this issue remained well-warranted within the university.

Dr. Harrison then raised the issue of the recent shortening of final exam sessions (period of time during which a final exam can be taken) from a typical time frame of more than two hours to a much shorter period of time.

Dr. Harrison described the objective for elected representation of non-administrative faculty from each college with respect to the Hearing and Reconsideration Committee and Grievance Committee. Dr. Harrison presented the potential rosters for the representative faculty of the university's colleges on these two committees. Dr. Ford opened the floor for nominations. Dr. Harrison mentioned his understanding that the current roster of faculty were elected within each college. It was mentioned that nanoengineering had elected faculty for the committees, and would be sending the names of these faculty before the end of the session.

Dr. Ford raised the topic of UNC System Faculty Assembly nominations. Dr. Harrison indicated some of the nominations thus far. Dr. Harrison further described the general experience and involvements of UNC System Faculty Assembly representatives and the associated two-year terms of service for being a UNC System Faculty Assembly delegate. Dr. Ford then reported some further nominations from the floor. The resulting set of nominations for the open positions on the UNC System Faculty Assembly were as follows. For UNC System Faculty Delegates: Daphne Cooper (2023-2024, 2024-2025) and Brandis Phillips (2023-2024, 2024-2025), and for UNC System Faculty Alternates: Dana Carthron (2023-2024, 2024-2025) and Corey Graves (2023-2024, 2024-2025).

A motion was made and seconded to approve the indicated rosters for the Hearing and Reconsideration Committee and the Grievance Committee as well as nominated additions to the UNC System Faculty Delegates and Alternates for our university. A voice vote was unanimous in support of the committees and representatives for the UNC System.

Dr. Harrison described an imminent area for policy development being that of workload at the university. Dr. Harrison then invited comment from the floor regarding potential areas for the Faculty Senate and its committees to be engaged in. It was mentioned that there was a need for some further consideration and action regarding salary equity. It was proposed that this could be something to discuss with the Provost during the upcoming session later in the meeting with the Provost.

Dr. Harrison mentioned some areas for survey development within the faculty community and university. Regarding shared governance, a survey had been under development by a shared governance committee and initiatives drawing from faculty, staff, student and administrative constituencies. Dr. Harrison presented some of the developing questions on the shared governance survey, and gave strong credit to Dr. Armstrong for the work of her and her students in developing many of these survey questions. Dr. Armstrong recounted the effort on developing these questions with reference to the literature and similar initiatives at ten other university, along with preliminary discussions with the university community including staff. Dr. Armstrong described the weekly meetings and efforts of the university shared governance committee with respect to critical understanding and initiative surrounding shared governance. Dr. Harrison then thanked other faculty, including Professor Marka Fleming, Dr. Jacqueline Chestnut and Dr. Shona Morgan for their considerable involvements on the shared governance committee. Dr. Harrison mentioned that research on campus was another area for which a survey-based effort was underway to better delineate what it is that we cannot do that we could be doing.

Dr. Harrison welcomed the Provost, Dr. Smith-Jackson, to the meeting and thanked her for her advocacy for faculty and scholarship at the university. Dr. Smith-Jackson thanked the faculty for their ongoing effort for student success at the university and for the university mission.

The Provost spoke about how important faculty are to the university and the essential purpose for academic freedom and respect for academic institutions in transforming the world through knowledge. The Provost then spoke about the 2030 Strategic Plan as guiding actions across the colleges of the university, including recently drafted implementation plans for each college. The Provost emphasized major priorities for the university as being hiring new faculty and developing existing faculty to promote innovation and elevation of the Aggie Experience, inclusive pathways to promote accessibility of education for all including methods for distance education and credentialing programs, and identifying and enacting transformational approaches for wholesale organizational improvements.

The Provost mentioned that the statewide budget for higher education was pending. The Provost spoke about incentivizing approaches to salary to promote faculty retention with some specific comments regarding engineering and nursing faculty. Based on the statewide budget, a 7% pay raise over the next two years appeared to be likely. Recently as well, there is further progress regarding matching support with respect to agricultural research at our university

from the state. Funding for athletics and cybersecurity is increasing as well based on general statewide budgeting for universities across the UNC System.

A recent salary study was conducted by the university. This analysis is proceeding now to more active consideration of workload, especially with respect to the UNC System policy changes surrounding the issue of faculty workload. The need for addressing salaries is well recognized as relating to both recruitment and retention.

Faculty engagement is a strong priority for the university to promote awareness and involvement with proceedings at the university in areas such as shared governance, representative bodies, reappointment, promotion and tenure.

Student success was then emphasized as a major consideration for the university. Timely addressal of deadlines regarding attendance reporting and grade reporting is critical. It is important to verify classroom rosters from the Registrar with respect to those who are attending class.

Regarding the calendar, the Provost inquired about ideas surrounding wellness days so as to promote well-being. The Provost indicated the need and benefit for using AggiesNav with respect to tracking student performance and advisement. The Provost mentioned the effort to centralize advising and the hiring of sixteen professional advisors. This will help faculty to better focus on activities of teaching and research with respect to historically heavy advisement loads.

Challenges with the potential usage of generative AI with respect to classroom scenarios were discussed. Both a survey and general effort involving university faculty to develop principles surrounding this potential usage were underway. Ideally, some policy language for syllabi may be recommended.

The Provost encouraged faculty to be available and interactive with students in their student organizations. The Provost encouraged faculty to be available and interactive with students in their learning. Revisiting material to address apparent gaps in understanding can be very helpful.

Following the presentation from the Provost, discussion with the Provost related to issues such as curriculum, salary, and hiring of personnel. Faculty members are currently concerned about not knowing the status of curriculum packages advancing to a university-level of review and which faculty are involved in the university-level review. Regarding the altered formation of a university-level curriculum committee, faculty were interested to identify the specific issues relating to this current situation and identify representative approaches to their resolution in the future. There was concern that the altered formation of a university-level curriculum committee was counter to documented standards for shared governance within the UNC System. Dr. Harrison commented that he and other Faculty Senate leaders had been informed by university leadership that the recently altered formation of a university-level curriculum committee was itself subject to a "sunset provision". In that regard, it therefore seemed

reasonable to look into this matter further. In terms of salary, one of the issues raised was that other universities are making clear and routine use of Annual Raise Process (ARP), following guidance by the UNC System, and more could be done in this regard at the university. There was concern expressed with respect to timely hiring of adjunct and other faculty prior to the start of the semester. While some of this can relate to deadlines associated with hiring processes – a point indicated by the Provost, it was suggested that various service units could be in better alignment and operational efficiency with respect to credentialling, background checking and hiring procedures through human resources. Dr. Harrison thanked the Provost for her time and engagement with the Faculty Senate. The meeting then adjourned.