

Meeting Minutes, Faculty Senate, full meeting, April 22, 2025

In attendance:

Osasohan Agbonlahor (A), Phoebe Ajibade (A), Jeffrey Alston (S), Ayanna Roxanne Armstrong (S), Jennifer Beasley (S), Stephen Bollinger (S), Trevor Brothers (S), Dewayne Randolph Brown (S), Chantel Simpson Carroll (S), Roymieco Carter (A), Arvind Chandrasekaran (S), Eunho Cho (S), Daphne Cooper, Mike Cundall (S), Robert L. Ferguson (S), Yvonne R. Ford (S), Tiffany Fuller (S), Etta Gravely (A), Corey Graves (S), Scott H. Harrison (S), Tom Jackson, Floyd James, Yuhang Jiang (S), Lizbeth Johnson, Stephanie Kelly (S), Joy Kennedy (S), Roland Leak (S), Wade Maki, Blessing Masasi (A), Adam L. McClain (S), Nicole McCoy, Ahmed Megri (S), Hyosoo Moon (A), Hamidreza Moradi (S), Cephas Naanwab (A), Letycia Nuñez-Argote (S), Thomas Patterson, Xiuli Qu (A), Bill Randle (S), Craig Rhodes, Cindy Saylor, Dave Schall (S), Nichole Smith, Natasha Spellman (A), Ecaterina Stepaniuc (S), Christina Tupper (S), Pauline Uwakweh (S), Yongjie Wang (A), John Paul Ward (S), Tammy Webb (A), Jeff Wolfgang (S)

(S): Senator

(A): Alternate

Call to order was done by Dr. Scott Harrison at 3:00 pm. Roll call was led by Dr. Tiffany Fuller. There was a link to attendance sent out and a QR Code. The agenda was presented. A motion was made by Dr. Gravely and seconded by Dr. McCoy for the agenda to be approved. The motion passed unanimously. Prior meeting minutes were then presented. A motion was made by Dr. Randle and Dr. Cundall for minutes to be approved.

Results from a recent survey on research and teaching were presented. Faculty generally reported satisfaction with peer evaluations of teaching, although there were some concerns about potential for exacerbating divisions at times within some academic departments. For information technology, faculty reported challenges with hardware and software support. There were concerns about there needing to be more general support at the university for supporting research. This includes a need for budgetary support as well as staff support for research engagements, and a recognition of current challenges faculty are having with fulfilling multitudinous support roles beyond what happens at other universities. Many faculty supported changes in their departmental program curricula. Many faculty reported that more could be done in their department for tracking graduates' professional careers.

Dr. Cundall inquired about dialogue with administration concerning academic minors. Dr. Harrison replied that there had been such recent dialogue with the Provost's office. Dr. Harrison mentioned as well that the legal affairs division had been contacted regarding what kind of attention could be given to revising policies to create better advantages for students.

Nomination and election then proceeded for the position of Vice Chair within the Faculty Senate. The sole nomination put forward for the position of Vice Chair was Dr. Arwind

Chandrasekaran. Dr. Chandrasekaran was subsequently elected unanimously for an upcoming two-year term beginning in Fall 2025.

Nomination and election then proceeded for the positions of Faculty Assembly Delegates and Alternates. There were six nominees. Setting up electronic voting then began while further items on the agenda were addressed.

Vice Chancellor Tom Jackson shared information with the Faculty Senate on the learning management system Canvas as a platform to be aware that was under some general consideration, including by statewide governing bodies. It is currently used extensively throughout North Carolina, including in public K-12 and the community college system. Prior deliberation at our university had occurred, several years prior, regarding various learning management systems. At that time, it was not recommended to move away from Blackboard. There appear to be some cost savings with a potential move to Canvas, and some added advantage to how high school and community college students who enter our institution would likely have already used Canvas. A current interface and feature comparison that has been conducted appears favorable regarding Canvas. There remains some question and concern expressed from a faculty member, however, regarding compatibility with third-party product integration and support for question types compatible with licensing examinations. Additional comment from faculty during the meeting concerned whether there would be a viable period for training and migration of content, whether there would be some automation to the migration of content, and how far back in time there could be migration of content. Dr. Randle inquired about any potential migration timeline. Vice Chancellor Jackson indicated that a goal was to strive for a relatively long migration period, and also indicate that there would be staff to assist with migration. There was additional discussion about being able to access prior blackboard data to a substantial degree in terms of past history, and Vice Chancellor Jackson acknowledged the need for that. Dr. Ford asked about where potential cost savings might be utilized, and also whether specific question types would be supported relating to licensing board examinations. Vice Chancellor Jackson replied that cost savings are anticipated to help further fund classroom technology, but was not sure about the kinds of questions that could be supported within Canvas. It was commented upon that the learning curve for Canvas may be considerable at times, and there may not always be a simple transition for some content.

The beginning of electronic voting for Faculty Assembly delegate and alternate positions was then announced. As voting took place, the next item on the agenda was a presentation from Faculty Assembly Chair Wade Maki, the chair of the UNC System Faculty Assembly. Faculty Assembly Chair Maki described engagements with the Board of Governors and other UNC System level meetings, and a goal for bringing about faculty representation at the UNC System level. Maki thanked members of the NC A&T Faculty Senate for their involvement and support with the Faculty Assembly that had included recent involvements of Daphne Cooper, Kristen Rhinehardt and Scott Harrison. Maki described the general structure of the UNC System relating to the Board of Governors, the UNC System President, and UNC System Office. Faculty Assembly Chair Maki emphasized the value of earning and maintaining positive working relationships with university administrations and partnering with respect to problem solving.

This approach has been effective in realizing an environment of shared governance. Recent involvements involving the Faculty Assembly and the UNC System have related to areas of retirement incentive plan, post-tenure, workforce, and faculty recognition. Each working group formed for these areas included representation from university administrations, such as provosts, in addition to membership on these working groups involving faculty. Other, even more recent, involvements have included making the case for higher education and the liberal arts and academic program review policies. Maki contrasted this mode of interaction with top-down compliance structures, and emphasized the comparative benefit for constructive modes of interaction oriented upon problem-solving. Doing more to consider, describe, and deliver upon the value of higher education in relationship to public expectations and confidence in higher education remains pivotal at this time. Planning and advocating for successful outcomes in higher education can be a better path than contentious approaches to argument. Dr. Harrison commended Faculty Assembly Chair Maki, and further commended the work and constructive outcomes made possible by activities of the Faculty Assembly.

Results of voting were then announced concerning Faculty Assembly positions. Dr. Yvonne Ford and Dr. Nicole McCoy were elected for two-year positions on the Faculty Assembly as delegates to begin July 1. Electronic voting was then initiated for the two Faculty Assembly alternate positions among the four remaining candidates.

The next item on the agenda was put forward by Dr. Roymieco Carter. Dr. Carter reported on a discussion within his college surrounding approaches to attendance policies and what would be accepted as an absence. In particular, might there be ways to discuss possibilities surrounding a university-level attendance policy, and whether a wellness day policy was or was not something to be agreed upon across the campus. Other faculty commented on managing extreme levels of absenteeism and whether that should equate to a failing grade. In discussion-based classes, when a substantial fraction of the class is absent, the quality of the class is diminished when there are people who are not prepared or engaged. An issue of expectations was also discussed as to how there can be content specific to what is presented in class that be tested on relative to background material provided in a textbook. It was mentioned that faculty need some general independence to make those decisions on absenteeism in their courses given their specifics. Another faculty member volunteered that, in their graduate classes, they permit just one absence. This relates to some objective within their courses to prepare students to be professionals to go out in a professional setting. Students need to develop an ability for engagement in the class similar to if they were interacting with a client. If a student misses a large part of the semester, that's a lot of content area and then we are putting them out into the profession, ill-prepared and not ready to deal with life situation. This is also a matter of representation for the university regarding quality of graduates. A faculty member mentioned that, regarding engagement, having students put their devices down and engage in conversation. The language in the student handbook has been recently altered in a way that no longer indicates attendance to be mandatory, and it was recommended that there be a stronger statement from the university to make sure that students understand that classroom attendance is valued. At present, and as relates to some of the DFW rate, there has been a general level of disengagement. One strategy suggested was to have signing in at the beginning

of the class to involve submitting answers to chapters (and students not submitting answers would need to wait until the end of class to sign out). Having further dialogue with students and the Student Government Association on this general issue was recommended as well.

Results of voting on the Faculty Assembly alternates were then presented. Dr. Michael Cundall and Dr. Patrick Webb were announced as being elected for two-year positions on the Faculty Assembly as alternates to begin July 1.

Discussion then proceeded to the Faculty Handbook. It was suggested that faculty applying for promotion for rank advancement be able to pursue that as an alternative to post-tenure review. Faculty also mentioned the need to improve policy as surrounds accessing reassigned time. A seven-year waiting time, especially for recent hires, could impede opportunities in scholarship having substantial value to the institution overall. The Faculty Handbook revision draft was then mentioned. Some of the updates include broadening representation for professional-track faculty. The involvement of department chairs in the reappointment, promotion and tenure process was then discussed. It was urged that department chairs remain effectively connected with the general department RPT evaluation. Otherwise, chairs may “do whatever it is they want to do” and have their own divergent views and actions taken on policy. This is all the more concerning for how department chairs (and deans) are not subject to annual evaluation in any manner comparable to faculty. The general advantages of having a three-part review (department RPT committee, college RPT committee and college dean), with advancement of applicants to the university level based on having two or more favorable reviews from the three-part review, were mentioned. In order to deliberate further on the proposed Faculty Handbook revision draft, a meeting for the following week was then suggested.

The meeting then fully concluded with a motion to adjourn by Stephen Bollinger that was then seconded by Dr. Etta Gravely. The motion passed unanimously.