

Meeting Minutes, Faculty Senate, full meeting, April 29, 2025

In attendance:

Phoebe Ajibade (A), Ayanna Armstrong (S), Roymieco Carter (A), Arvind Chandrasekaran (S), Daphne Cooper, Mike Cundall (S), Sherrie Drye (A), Yvonne Ford (S), Corey Graves (S), Scott H. Harrison (S), AKM Kamrul Islam (A), Floyd James, Stephanie Kelly (S), Joy Kennedy (S), Roland Leak (S), Adam McClain (S), Ademe Mekonnen (A), Hyosoo Moon (A), Cephas Naanwaab (A), Letycia Nuñez-Argote (S), Bill Randle (S), Ginger Redd, Kristen Rhinehardt (S), Sydney Richardson, Derrick Robinson (S), Mashooq Salehin (S), Dave Schall (S), Natasha Spellman (A), Ecaterina Stepaniuc (S), John Teleha, Pauline Ada Uwakweh (S), Nakeshia Williams, 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. Scott Harrison. There was a link to attendance sent out and a QR Code. The agenda was presented. A motion was made by Dr. Cundall and seconded by Dr. Kelly for the agenda to be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Harrison and Dr. Armstrong presented a written narrative of the results for the survey on research and teaching. Discussion proceeded on the research climate and support for research at the university. It was asked whether the results could be indicated per college. Dr. Harrison responded that this initial survey had sought to be simple and focused on the university environment without capturing information on respondents' specific academic units, but that future surveys could plan to collect college and other academic units of participating survey respondents. It was suggested that it may be helpful to first get some idea from the administration as to their degree of interest regarding whether it would matter to uncover academic unit variation. In particular, would the upper administration be interested do more to ensure an effective support system for grant development and research implementation? A challenge can be that, as middle levels of administration are established, there may not always be a clear understanding of what had been originally needed by faculty. It was further suggested that training support be provided to mid-level administrators, management and staff to support how things may be effectively done.

Dr. Harrison then described efforts of him and Dr. Ford with respect to nominations, and presented rosters of nominations for the Faculty Hearing and Reconsideration Committee and the Faculty Grievance Committee. With a roster of faculty members for these committees each having been elected within their respective colleges, the Faculty Senate was then to review and vote on recommending those on the indicated rosters to the university leadership. Dr.

Rhinehardt motioned accordingly to proceed with said vote and Dr. Cundall seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The discussion then proceeded to the handbook revision draft. The college-level representation for the university RPT committee was presented for discussion. Academic units proposed for representation on the university RPT committee were “standard academic colleges” (being typically multi-departmental, having tenure-track and/or tenured faculty, and focused on a specific subset of academic disciplines by providing for curricular offerings and specific disciplinary degree programs) along with Library Services. Trade-offs were discussed concerning the current model of some colleges having more representation than other colleges on the university RPT were discussed versus a model of one representative per college. The current model had been calibrated to correspond roughly to the respective sizes of the different colleges. It was suggested that the current model may provide a richer base of knowledge on the university environment overall. In general however, within the discussion, multiple faculty indicated a preference for one faculty representative per college due to the broad nature of the university-level review, the complexity of otherwise adjudicating varying numbers of representatives per college, and how one elected faculty representative per college achieves a substantial number of faculty overall to ensure the goals of a robust review at the university level. Dr. Wolfgang motioned for there to be one representative faculty member per college. Dr. Cundall seconded the motion. The motion carried almost unanimously with all votes being yea with the exception of one nay vote.

The discussion then proceeded on the composition of the department RPT committee and the overall RPT process. There was broad interest in continuing further with the three vote model with a department-level vote, a college-level faculty vote, and the college dean vote. Within this three vote model, two out of three votes in support of the applicant would generally lead to them proceeding further in their application towards then having a university-level evaluation. A concern was raised by an attendee regarding outcomes associated with a proposal for moving the department chair off of the department committee. Does that lead to the department chair then having a separate fourth voice (and fourth vote)? The process then cedes power to the chair, dean and provost as individual administrative voices, weakening the peer manner of evaluation. The situation is exacerbated further because there currently is not any regular evaluation of department chairs by faculty. Another attendee pointed out that having a chair on the department RPT committee could lead to a skewed conversation and finding on the faculty applicant due to the chair’s level of influence in the department (i.e., not being entirely on an equal basis with respect to other faculty of their department). It was then pointed about by another, however, that not having the chair on the department RPT committee might be challenging for departments with low numbers of tenured and tenure-stream faculty. It was pointed out though that, in the event of not having enough faculty to form a department RPT committee, faculty from associated departments could fill in the gaps. It was then reported, based on discussions from a group that faculty that worked on the RPT issue during the summer of 2023, that there were contrasting examples: having a chair on the committee working well; having a chair’s voice that, while potentially contrarian, was weighted and proportionate with findings from the overall department committee; and having a situation

where the department chair being on the department RPT committee negatively impacted the department RPT committee process. The general view was that, for the most part, it had not been a net positive to have the department chair on the department RPT committee. Yet, others pointed out that chairs could at times provide added and informed comment to the findings of the department RPT committee. It was proposed that, if the faculty member applicant for the RPT process had wanted additional input from the department chair to be incorporated into the RPT review, and if this could be put concisely into a final formulation within the handbook revision, then that would be ideal. In addition, the department chair's role would have a managerial role in ensuring "the trains run on time" - providing general notifications to the departmental RPT committee of their role and involvement in the overall RPT process. A motion was made and seconded to not have the department chair on the RPT committee, to allow an applicant for the RPT process to request additional input from the department chair to be incorporated into the RPT review, and to recognize the managerial role of the department chair in the departmental RPT process. The motion passed unanimously.

There was some further review of handbook contents. Dr. Harrison commented that, as would be considered as part of final voting on the handbook revision, the faculty senate executive committee would work to finalize language on the intended provisions concerning the departmental RPT process and department chairs within the handbook revision. Dr. Harrison further indicated that, as called for within the revised handbook, the handbook committee would be, in the future, reviewing 20% of the handbook every year. This would be a way to help address things more rapidly in the future. Dr. Harrison mentioned as well that curricular and academic program review involvements of the Faculty Senate were put forward in the handbook revision. In addition, the handbook revision clarified standards and designations for professors of practice. A motion was then made to approve the faculty handbook revision draft pursuant to the changes discussed. The motion was seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Nakeshia Williams from the Provost's Office then presented on a potential revision to the individualized instruction policy. Individualized instruction would be required to have a syllabus with student learning outcomes and indicated credit hours. All assignments must be completed within the academic term and final grades assigned. There would be a maximum of three undergraduate individualized instruction courses. The application for an individualized instruction course was then described as needing to occur at least one week before the end of the registration period for that term. Students may not enroll in more than 12 credit hours per semester of individualized instruction. In general, there would need to be exceptional circumstances surrounding approved courses and such approval would include the department chair. A comment was made that diversifying deadlines (such as having the application be due one week before the end of the registration period) could add complexity, but that some need for this could be appreciated as well. It was mentioned that, in this instance, policy concepts were being presented to the Faculty Senate ahead of posting a more fully developed draft policy for formal review (per the university's "policy on policies"). Gratitude for this opportunity for input and discussion was expressed by Dr. Harrison toward Dr. Williams. A next area for policy development was then presented regarding the university withdrawal policy which, if

approved, would lead then to a reformulation of the forgiveness policy to supplant 2-year and 5-year forgiveness policies with a 1-year forgiveness policy. There would be a general process from the university where students, their advisors and department chair would be notified of those instances where a student has withdrawn from 10 credit hours. In addition, dynamic forms are being implemented soon for course withdrawal requests. Finally, similar to retroactive withdrawal, there would be several administrators involved in reviewing extenuating circumstances for individual course withdrawal requests. Dr. Harrison affirmed the value of having a reliable means for general calculation and notification concerning withdrawal requests. Process improvement efforts were then further described regarding credit repeats. Students would be alerted when they are at 12 credit hours having been repeated. Additional credit repeats beyond 12 credit hours would require that an appeal be made to the department chair, foreseeably through a dynamic form. A faculty member asked whether a similar provision could also be made when students had 12 credits of withdrawals. Another faculty member asked if students could be notified when being at levels of 8 withdrawal credits or 8 credit repeats. Dr. James asked to clarify the intention about 12 credit limits, when the system allows for levels of 16 credits. Dr. Williams responded that the purpose of reducing it to 12 credits was to support students earlier rather than later if there were issues. By catching it early, there can be an opportunity for focused advisement oriented upon the student's success, because once the 16 credit limit levels are surpassed, in terms of either withdrawals or credit repeats, there is not an opportunity for degree completion. Finally, a potential policy for prior learning was mentioned, if there could be examination and feedback on what was being developed.

For new business, Dr. Harrison then mentioned that a wellness day policy had been described to the Board of Trustees at a recent meeting, and that his feedback at that time was that not a single adjustment or consideration to the policy appeared to have been implemented in response to concerns described by faculty. It was requested that more be done from a place of collaboration and consensus. These comments were well-received and a member of the Provost's Office indicated that there would be further dialogue and development.

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.