

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
February 7, 2024, 3:00-4:15 p.m. | Online Meeting

Number of attendees: 130 ([List of Names](#))

- I. **Call to Order:** Senate President Melissa Broeckelman-Post (MBP) called the meeting to order at 3:02pm.

- II. **Approval of the Minutes of January 24, 2024:** Approved as posted.

- III. **Special Orders: Rector Blackman**
 - We are continuing to deal with funding challenges but they are not catastrophic or critical. We're in ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth to bring our budget in line with other institutions. We have been moderately successful and made some progress, but we keep having this issue every year and need to get to a more permanent revenue model that provides a level of support commensurate with being a top 50 university with large and growing enrollment.
 - There are some more acute issues regarding funding, such as the Law School. We are working with the Law School to address their issues and provide more funding. There are different pots of money that funds come from and we need to adjust those accordingly.
 - There is not much to report on the accreditation front. The reports back from SCHEV have been positive.
 - The tenure cases went through without issues, and we don't expect to have issues going forward.
 - You're probably aware of an effort to undertake a partnership with a professional cricket league, entailing construction of a facility on West Campus (approved in December and may have already broken ground). There will be a temporary stadium to host some World Cup games this summer and then a permanent stadium built. This will be entirely funded by a private party and will enable us to provide more facilities for our athletics department, as the stadium will be shared with our baseball teams.
 - Additional capital infrastructure investments are being made around campus to keep up with demands.
 - Questions
 - Delton Daigle: I understand the BOV meeting structure is going to be changed, particularly around presentation of financial information. Can you elaborate?
 - I was very involved in this – try not to make unilateral decisions as Rector. I have received a lot of feedback about this – it's not just about the financial information. Prior to COVID, committee meetings ran simultaneously. During COVID, legislation allowed us to meet virtually but it meant all meetings became televised, so now we have to have the meetings laid out in linear fashion, which became inefficient. We realized not every committee needs to meet at every meeting, and that we can timebox some of the committee reports. It is about being efficient rather than taking away time from committees. If committees need more time they can have it, and there will still be a public comments session in March that will go unchanged.

- Some of the public comments sections got a little troubling in some previous meetings, so we have gone back to a process where we get these comments in writing and catch them for the record. This is in line with other universities.
- Alan Abramson: Some of us have been under the impression that the Law School has been excused from paying the same overhead as other schools and not contributing to the budget reduction in the same way as other schools have been asked to. For example, my school had to give back a \$2 million reserve fund. Is this correct?
 - Some of the financial dealings with the Law School are currently in flight so I will answer as best I can.
 - The Law School is not exempt from contributing to overheads. But we have waived this in some past years because the school was running some deficits and we needed to ensure they had adequate funding and remained in compliance. Is it a policy? No. Has it happened? Yes. Will it continue in future? Absolutely not. All units need to contribute and be run in a fiscally responsible way.
 - Follow-up question from Alan Abramson: I recall that significant gifts were made when the school was renamed, for the purpose of hiring new faculty and recruiting students. A concern of the faculty at the time was that this would increase operating costs. It sounds like the university is now on the hook for this increase in faculty size but correct me if I'm wrong.
 - It goes back a number of years, even predating my tenure on the board. There was a gift for naming rights – that is accurate. The agreement covered a number of things and I am not well-versed in every aspect, but some of what you're describing is true. But the Law School must be and will be self-sustaining like every other unit; it should not be put back on the other units in the university. President Washington is on the same page. There is zero white space between him and I on this issue.
 - We have to make sure the E&G pot is right – where the money comes from and what it's used for.
 - I understand that the Law School has experienced some declining enrollment, which means revenue may be declining while costs are holding or increasing. We're working with them to fix that. I can't give you a definitive answer today that we've fixed it, but it's got to be fixed and we are going to make sure it is, so we get to a point where the Law School is self-sustaining.
- Tim Gibson: The Faculty Handbook states that faculty has primary responsibility for unit reorganization, design of programs, curriculum development, standards of admission, programs and requirements for majors. AAUP guidelines are equally clear that faculty have responsibility for this. We've learned that the BOV has requested and published course syllabi for the Just Societies requirement of the Mason Core. I've been here 22 years and cannot recall a similar request. Can you speak about the board's reasons for this request and what you plan to do with this information?
 - The board is a governing body that focuses on governance, not operating and managing. Some or, in my opinion all, of what you just described is

around operating and managing. I think there may be some confusion relative to the approval of programs and requirements for graduation – those are things the board typically does and will continue to do. If there’s a sense that the board is reaching into the design of curriculum and courses, that’s not something the board is going to do. It’s not in the business of designing curriculum, approving syllabi, or getting involved in that. There’s some discussions around some DEI and other issues, and people are welcome to ask questions about that, but in terms of what the board does and doesn’t do that’s pretty clear. I don’t think you should anticipate a change in how the board operates in that regard.

- Marvin Powell: You just mentioned DEI. We’ve been hearing news that the BOV have asked about tenure and promotion dossiers and some of my colleagues are concerned that there might be an intention to scrutinize faculty who are DEI or social justice oriented. Can you speak to these concerns about the BOV reviewing faculty dossier and should this be a concern to faculty who are using terms like DEI and anti-racist language?
 - Going back to my previous answer – the board is in the business of governance. From my perspective having served in every role on the board, the list for tenure comes before the board, presented largely en masse by the provost or representative. We don’t go through each one, largely for practical reasons, and we largely approve them en masse. To my knowledge there is no plan to go through every application. From my perspective, if the leadership is putting forward these requests and believe they are the right folks, we approve it unless there is something glaringly awry in the process.
 - Visitor Witeck: I welcome these questions because there is obvious anxiety for all of us who believe in academic freedom about the role of the board or others outside the board in telling faculty and students where studies should take them. I agree with everything Rector Blackman just said about knowing our lane. We are advised by legal counsel and the powers that be in Richmond about that. I will raise concerns about any attempts to restrict how our curriculum is designed. We are more than meeting the needs of our students and the contemporary marketplace. In doing so you have to have the confidence that we will stand up for those values with our faculty as we move along. I know we face risk because we're in a public environment. But we're also very conscious of what our proper role is, and I will actively join with our rector and others to defend and safeguard it.
 - Marvin Powell: So, can we use terms like DEI and anti-racist language in our dossiers?
 - Blackman – I think the language of the dossier is not ours to parse. We are more interested in the process.

IV. Committee Reports

Senate Standing Committees

- *Executive Committee (Melissa Broeckelman-Post)*
 - Welcome Anthony Terrell as the new senator for CEHD, replacing Dominique Banville. Thank you for stepping up.

- We have started getting legislative reports that highlight changes to laws being discussed in Richmond. I've started posting these on the Senate website so you can start reaching out to representatives as needed.
- HB1467 just passed – a bill that requires governing boards to have a faculty and staff senate rep that are chosen by faculty, staff, and students. We're ahead of the game on this, but other institutions have not been fully represented or have not been able to choose.
- We are working on building talking points and evidence in case we need it via white papers – internal conversations for now.
- *Academic Policies (Doug Eyman)*
 - [Change to AP.4.4](#)
 - Distinction between awarding a posthumous degree vs a recognition – the existing policy is not clear that not all posthumous conferrals are degrees.
 - No discussion
 - Approved by acclamation (unanimous)
 - We've been asked to look into the length of the summer semester, which appears to be longer than usual. We have clarified that when you calculate contact hours, we are on 15-week semesters and the exam week counts as part of that. This equates to 2250 minutes of contact for a class. For asynchronous and other online courses, it has to be the equivalent of that, which we leave to the faculty to figure out. In the summer there is currently an additional 250 minutes scheduled. We are not proposing to change the schedule because there are so many different approaches to summer courses, so we are just advising faculty to ensure that their syllabus equates to at least 2250 minutes of contact. This is not an issue to vote on, but this is where the committee has landed at this time.
- *Budget and Resources (Delton Daigle)*
 - Faculty salary data was posted on the Senate website yesterday. It includes raises given in both the fall and in January.
 - We are meeting with Provost Walsh and EVP Dickenson on Tuesday to discuss the university budget model and financial transparency. Please reach out to me at ddaigle@gmu.edu if you have feedback for us to share at that meeting.
- *Faculty Matters (Solon Simmons/Mohan Venigalla)*
 - We have been working on the Gallup survey (combining Faculty Staff Engagement Survey and Faculty Evaluation of Administrators). We are hoping to get a higher response rate than ever before and be able to analyze data across both surveys.
 - We are also trying to incorporate chair evaluation into the survey – if your division uses a different term other than “chair,” please let us know. The proposed items for this evaluation have been shared – we went to the Faculty Handbook for chair expectations and had Gallup turn these into survey items. We are also getting feedback from chairs directly.
 - We are interested in putting forth a motion for the Faculty Senate to eliminate a line in the GMU Faculty Handbook section 2.8: "The decision whether to appoint or reappoint a Term Faculty member may not be appealed." This is not coming for a vote today as we have not discussed in committee yet, but we want to revisit this given all the work we have done to eliminate distinctions and divisions between term and tenure-track faculty. The issue of job security for term faculty is a vulnerability in our systems.

- We are also having conversations with stakeholders in the university and this item keeps coming up.
- We welcome feedback from the faculty on this issue.
- I (Mohan) have served on UPTRAC and noted much of the process is set up around tenure-line faculty. The process for promotion and reappointment of term faculty is completely different and was not in front of UPTRAC.
- Questions:
 - Tim Gibson: Thank you to the committee for taking this on. It can go in different directions – doesn't have to fully mirror the process for appealing a tenure denial, but important to have a process where we give a second look to term faculty who have not been reappointed and received no explanation. Term faculty deserve a process that ensures everyone is being treated fairly and decisions are based on rational reasons rather than abuse or personal relationships.
- Update on leadership track for full professor. Right now, service and leadership is not considered in full professor promotion, even though leadership is key to running the institution. The issue is people getting stuck at associate professor level despite doing significant work for the institution. This is about leadership, not standard service. We made a presentation to the VP Council that was well-received, and now we need to meet with the committee and bring this back to the Senate.
 - Questions
 - Eugene Kontorovich: Will this be available to all faculty or just certain faculty, and if the latter who would it apply to?
 - It would be open to all in theory and would have to be demonstrated in the same way as excellence in research or teaching.
- *Nominations (Richard Craig/Bijan Jabbari)*
 - Four nominations being put forward by the committee today:
 - Academic Policies: Anne Verhoeven (COS)
 - Grading Process Task Force: Leslie Dwyer (Carter)
 - Grievance Committee (temporary replacement): Hongmei Sun (CHSS)
 - Mason Core: Shora Moteabbed (CBUS)
 - No nominations from the floor
 - All nominees approved by acclamation (unanimous)
- *Organization and Operations (Lisa Billingham/Charlotte Gill)*
 - [Senate Standing Rules](#)
 - Second reading of revised Standing Rules after discussion in December meeting
 - Since the last meeting we removed one line in item 3, regarding how people may submit items to the Senate meeting agenda, due to redundancy.
 - We also added the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development as an invited permanent member of the Executive Committee and considering adding the Faculty Handbook Committee chair to the Executive Committee, given the amount of work and importance to the institution.
 - May need to review charge change here.
 - We had a suggestion to combine the Standing Rules and Bylaws in the last meeting. We believe there is a distinction between these two documents.

- Doug Eyman: The Standing Rules are very process-oriented and too specific and details for Bylaws and need a shorter timeframe for changes than the Bylaws. It would be very difficult to enact a change to the bylaws such as a switch from Zoom to virtual reality
- Questions
 - Tim Gibson: Under article 3, it looks like general faculty members need to send items to Senate or University standing committees or O&O to get it on the agenda. What happens if none of those committees let it through to the agenda? Does this change what we had before and what recourse would faculty members have?
 - This has been the rule – people don't often look at this document and we are working on our own committee charge to ensure we review these rules regularly.
 - As an example, to answer the first question, if something comes to O&O and we don't know where to send it, we take it to the Executive Committee. If we don't deem that it is for the whole wealth of the faculty, we would also take it to the Executive Committee for discussion, not dismiss it ourselves.
 - MBP: As additional examples, the issue about term faculty went directly to Faculty Matters, but if they had sent it to me, I'd have sent it to them. Someone sent me an issue that was appropriate for the grievance committee, so I sent it there. This speeds things up a bit. Our bylaws do indicate that faculty can bring up new issues under New Business in meetings – we work through committees first because they have been discussed, but you can raise things there, e.g. urgent issues that are the business of the Senate that you can bring under New Business and it will likely be sent to committee.
 - Tim Gibson: With the addition of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development, would that affect the voting of the Executive Committee?
 - MBP: We don't vote much in that committee. It's more about discussing and previewing what happens in these meetings. We meet with the Provost, EVP, and now the Vice Provost, but they don't vote – they are not members of the committee.
- Vote to approve the Standing Rules by acclamation (unanimous)

Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

- Research Advisory Committee
 - Meeting with Andre Marshall on a regular basis as charged.
- Technology Policy Committee
 - Mentorship training for Canvas will start next week and will start piloting in the summer. Sandboxes should be available later this semester.
 - This is a great opportunity to rethink your pedagogy as you convert a course to the new LMS!

V. New Business: None

VI. Announcements

- Interim Provost Walsh
 - Unable to join today
- EVP Dickenson
 - Following on from Rector Blackman’s talk, we have the Finance and Land Use Committee coming up on February 22. Materials have been posted to the BOV page: <https://bov.gmu.edu/postings/> - please look. Rector Blackman did a great job explaining the changes to the meetings. I’ll be presenting for 5-8 minutes and then it will open up for discussion. We have a great story – lots of meaningful reductions and great teamwork across the university.
 - We are still focusing on the funding disparity – shout out to Lauren Posey, Paul Liberty, and President Washington who have done so much work with our patrons. We are asking for \$18 million, primarily directed to compensation. There has been pressure to reduce costs at the Commonwealth level, so this was reduced to \$9 million, but we are continuing to push our patron bills for \$18 million. We are looking forward to Mason Lobbies to continue discussing this issue.
- Student Senate townhall with President Washington: February 7 at 1pm in the HUB Ballroom
- General Faculty Meeting with President Washington: February 21 at 3pm in Merten 1204 and via Zoom (<https://gmuzoom.us/j/96214146379?pwd=REIPRWJoUXN2RklZNIRpU1U2Wkw4Zz09>)
 - This will be formally announced soon – formally called by the President, not us. It will be both in person and have a virtual option.
- Nominations for the Jack Wood Award for Town-Gown Relations Open Through March 15.

VII. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty

- Jack Fedak, student government representative
 - Student Government has learned that Disability Services is limited by what services it can provide based on what the course objectives state. For example, a student said that course objectives stated certain content had to be “memorized” – this caused difficulty with their specific disability as it was not phrased broadly enough to allow for other accommodations (such as memory aids). Planning to connect the student with Doug and Academic Policies to look into this issue.
- Keith Renshaw, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
 - Shelley Reid, Executive Director of Stearns Center and I have been talking about artificial intelligence (AI) and will be putting out a call to see how faculty are thinking about and using AI so that we can coordinate information-sharing.
- Lisa Billingham
 - The first information session for the Faculty-Staff Choir will take place next Friday, February 16 from 9:30-10:30am in the Performing Arts Building. Feel free to email me at lbilling1@gmu.edu for more information. Aiming to teach singing in a positive and light way with a focus on wellbeing.

VIII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:07pm.

ACADEMIC POLICIES: CHANGE TO AP.4.4

Reason for the change:

AP.4.4 was examined to provide clarity to the policy for the families going through a tragic loss of a student and for the administrators making the conferrals. There are two different types of changes found below. The first is the change of "In Memoriam" conferrals from Degrees to Recognition. This is in line with the procedures that the Registrar currently uses to issue these recognitions and in line with SACS and SCHEV requirements for degree conferral. The second type of change is a few clarifying pieces such as the title change.

AP.4.4 Posthumous Conferrals

A posthumous degree or certificate is an official Mason degree or certificate, as applicable, that is awarded to a deceased student in recognition of the student's academic achievement. The criteria for the award, listed below, are established in order to uphold academic and institutional integrity.

If a student does not qualify for a posthumous degree or certificate, an "In Memoriam" Recognition may be awarded to a student in good academic standing. Either award is subject to final review by the Provost.

Criteria for Posthumous Degrees and Certificates

A posthumous degree or certificate may be awarded if, at the time of the student's death, they were enrolled in George Mason University, were in good academic standing, and were nearing completion of the requirements in the major degree or certificate program.

- **Undergraduate:** The student must have completed 90 credit hours, with at least 30 credit hours completed at Mason.
- **Graduate - Certificates:** The student must have been admitted into a degree-seeking status; completed at least 80% of the credit hours required for the certificate program, with more than half of the required minimum credits for the certificate program completed at Mason; and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 which does not include more than 3 credits of C.
- **Graduate – Masters:** The student must have been admitted into a degree-seeking status; completed at least 80% of the credit hours required for the degree, with more than half of the required minimum credits for the degree completed at Mason; and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 which does not include more than 6 credits of C.

If the degree requirements include a thesis, the student must have completed sufficient research or scholarship such that a thesis or one or more articles can be prepared. The student's thesis committee must approve the thesis or article(s) and recommend granting the degree.

- **Graduate – Doctoral:** The student must have advanced to candidacy; completed all coursework required for the degree with more than half of the required minimum credits completed at Mason and a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 which does not include more than 6 credits of C; and must have completed a full draft of the dissertation. The student's dissertation committee must determine that the dissertation could have been defended and recommend granting the degree.

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STANDING RULES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

1. At the beginning of the academic year, it shall be the responsibility of the chairs of the Senate standing committees and the chairs of university faculty standing committees to verify the continuing presence on the George Mason University faculty of all members of each committee. Committee (co)chairs shall be responsible for notifying the Chair of the Senate Committee on Nominations of any vacancies. ~~that occur(12/10/75)~~
2. Each elected Senate standing committee shall include members from more than one college or school. Membership in University faculty standing committees are determined by the Organization and Operations Committee and should contain at least ~~five and at most seven voting members of the General Faculty; membership shall include~~ one senator. ~~3. All Business to come before the Senate should first be submitted to the Organization & Operations Committee, which shall refer items requiring study and action to the approximate committee(s) or collegial faculties. The Organization & Operations Committee shall report its referrals to the next regular meeting of the Senate. (10/6/82)~~
3. Committee chairs may submit business items and reports for inclusion in the Senate agenda on behalf of their committees before the meeting agenda is posted. Senate committee chairs may also bring new business to the floor during their committee reports on behalf of their committees.

Any member of the General Faculty may submit items of business for inclusion in the agenda prior to the agenda being posted. Items that are clearly aligned with the responsibilities of a specific Senate or University Standing Committee shall be referred to that committee. All other items shall be referred to the Organization and Operations Committee, which shall refer items to the committee it deems most appropriate; the Organization and Operations Committee shall report its referrals at the next regular meeting of the Senate.

4. The Executive Committee of the Senate is composed of the Senate President, the Senate Secretary, ~~and~~ the chairs of theits Faculty Senate Standing committees, and the chair of

the Faculty Handbook Committee. The responsibilities of the Executive Committee are to meet regularly with the Provost, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development, and other members of the central administration as needed for discussion and resolution of matters raised by Senate Standing Committees and the broader faculty. The Executive Committee shall act for the Senate during the summer months, when the full Senate does not normally meet.

5. Each standing committee of the Senate shall produce an annual report at the end of the academic year that identifies accomplishments and completed tasks, a record of participation of committee members, and a list of items of business remaining unfinished. These reports should be sent to the Senate Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



STUDENT TOWN HALL

WITH PRESIDENT WASHINGTON

FEBRUARY 7, 2024
1PM - 2PM | HUB BALLROOM

Register on Mason360:



The Office of Government and Community Relations is now accepting Jack Wood Award nominations. Please feel free to make a nomination and/or share it with your colleagues or contacts.

Nominations for the Jack Wood Award for Town-Gown Relations Open Through March 15

The Jack Wood Award highlights the outstanding contributions of faculty, staff, students, businesses/not-for-profits, community members, and elected officials/staff who demonstrate leadership in fostering mutually beneficial relationships between the university and the community. This illustrious distinction honors former Mayor Jack Wood, who played an instrumental role in establishing Mason in Fairfax and establishing Town-Gown relations between the university and the community. Awardees will be notified by March 29. The Board of Visitors will honor awardees on May 2.

Nominations are due by **March 15**. Self-nominations are welcome. Make a nomination at <http://tinyurl.com/mwdur74s>. Community relations/outreach professionals are not eligible. Questions? Contact Traci Kendall at tkendal2@gmu.edu.

Best regards,

Roddena I. Kirksey, M.A.
Public Relations Specialist
Office of Government and Community Relations

P: 703-993-8761

Web: <http://relations.gmu.edu/>

February 07, 2024

LIST OF ATTENDEES

116 Total Listed Attendees (46 Senators and 70 Visitors)

14 Additional Visitors attended who chose not to be listed

46 Senators Present: Alan Abramson, KL Akerlof, Jatin Ambegaonkar, Ioannis Bellos, Alok Berry, Lisa Billingham, Virginia Blair, Michelle Boardman, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Jamie Clark, Richard Craig , Tim Curby, Delton Daigle, John Dale, Sebahattin Demirkan, Doug Eyman, Daniel Garrison, Tim Gibson, Charlotte Gill, Victoria Grady, Michele Greet, Liling Huang, Seth Hudson, Jessica Hurley, Bijan Jabbari, Eugene Kontorovich, Kerri LaCharite, Lisa Lister, Siona Listokin, Tamara Maddox, Alexandra Masterson, Anna Pollack, Marvin Powell, Greg Robinson, Pierre Rodgers, Ellen Rowe, Catherine Sausville, Gene Shuman, Solon Simmons, Kun Sun, Rebecca Sutter, Anthony Terrell, Mohan Venigalla, Anne Verhoeven, David Wong, Jie Zhang

6 Senators Absent: Ed Gero, Thalia Goldstein, Laurie Miller, Alexander Monea, Katherine Rosenbusch, Christiana Stan

70 Visitors Present: Jessica Adams, Wayne Adams, Miriam Ahmed, LaShonda Anthony, Ann Ardis, Sharnnia Artis, Joy Banks, Ernest Barreto, Horace Blackman, Tom Butler, Alan Byrd, Morgan Chalfant, Carlos Chism, Kimberly Davidson, Shannon Davis, Truman Deree, Deb Dickenson, Kathleen Diemer, Fatou Diouf, Gesele Durham, Kim Eby, Jack Fedak, James Finkelstein, Teresa Finn, Kimberly Ford, Renate Guilford, Tamara Harvey, David Heilbrun, Jessica Holtzman, Caitlin Horan, Ginny Hoy, Jason Kinser, Kristen Koehler, Laura Kosoglu , Vin Lacovara, Megan Laures, Bethany Letiecq, Ingrid Lopez, Mary Lucal, Karen Manley, Doug McKenna, Amanda Menjivar, Jennifer Meslener, Shora Moteabbed, Shá Norman, Rene O'Neal, Anne Osterman, Cindy Parker, Sarah Parnell, Thomas Polk, Laura Poms, Keith Renshaw , Lauren Reuscher, Marguerite Rippy, David Rosenblum, Lori Rottenberg, Mohammad Salama, Pam Shepherd, Charlie Spann, Frank Strike, Burak Tanyu, Cath Tompkins, Amanda Torres, Vikas Velagapudi, Wendy Watkins, Preston Williams, Bob Witeck, Elizabeth Woodley, Courtney Wooten, Claire Wurmfeld