

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING

October 23, 2024, 3:00-4:15 p.m. | Online Meeting

Number of attendees: 189 ([List of Names](#))

1. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Solon Simmons at 3:03 PM.

2. Approval of the Minutes of September 25, 2024

- No corrections to the minutes from the last meeting.
- Minutes stand as submitted.

3. Agenda Adjustment

- Proposal to move committee reports ahead of the new business of institutional neutrality.
- No objections noted; the agenda was adjusted accordingly.

4. Committee Reports

Academic Policies (Douglas Eyman)

- Updating the charge, currently with O&O for review.
- Adding academic standards and integrity to the charge.
- Clarifying the role regarding new schools and research centers.
- Graduate Council updates:
 - Passed updates to the embargo policy for master's theses and dissertations.
 - Updates to university policy 307 and AP695 regarding dual degrees and secondary masters.
 - No significant impact expected from these updates.
 - Open for policy review requests.

Budget and Resources (Delton Daigle)

- No meeting with Deb Dickenson, Executive VP, yet this semester; one scheduled in a couple of weeks.
- Attended the executive committee of the budget redesign with Supriya Bailey and Victoria Grady.
- Emphasis on transparency in the budget redesign process.
- Slide deck available on the budget redesign website.
- Three committees (space utilization, indirect group, waste and means group) are actively working.
- Ambitious timeline to complete the budget redesign by the end of the spring semester.
- No updates from Deb Dickenson at this point.

Faculty Matters (Mohan Venigalla)

- Discussion on AAUP inquiry to President Washington about the revision to university policy 1201.
- **Solon Simmons** explained changes to UP 1201 to align with state and federal law, specifically mentioning the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).
- The Faculty Matters Committee (FMC) is examining the implications of the process and the change on faculty academic freedom.
- **Mohan Venigalla** highlighted the task of the FMC to assess the impact of new revision to UP 1201 and the process by which it is revised on academic freedom. Awaiting input from Tom Bluestein from the DEI office.
- **Tim Gibson** raised concerns about whether adopting the IHRA definition was a choice rather than a legal necessity.
- The FMC awaits further clarification before drawing conclusions.
- Other items under discussion with FMC, not ready for full Senate discussion yet.

Student Government Input

- **Garv Jain** suggested a town hall with faculty senate and student government to discuss Policy 1201 and ensure transparency.
- The FMC will consider this proposal in the upcoming Senate Executive Committee meeting.

Organization & Operations (O&O) Report

- Catherine Sausville reported on researching the potential increase in the size of the faculty senate.
- Revisions to bylaws are being considered to address committee membership, representation, and term limits.
- Requests to disband the Academic Initiatives Committee and the Salary Equity Committee Equity Study Committee will be addressed.
- Academic policies have submitted revisions to their charge. Feedback from committee chairs is being collected to assess workloads and potential changes.

Nominations (Lee Black)

- Two committees are up for nominations:
 - Faculty Matters Committee: Needs one additional member.
 - Writing Across the Curriculum Committee: Requires five members.
- There is a vacant position for a member representing the Carter School.
- Five individuals have volunteered for the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee.
- **Solon Simmons** confirmed that Lisa Lister is no longer part of the Faculty Matters Committee, necessitating a new selection.
- Benoit Van Aken was nominated for the Faculty Matters Committee.

- **Simmons** called for votes. All present members voted in favor of Benoit Van Aken. Benoit Van Aken was welcomed to the Faculty Matters Committee.
- **Simmons** welcomed ThanhVu (Vu) Nguyen, a new senator representing CEC, to the Senate. ThanhVu (Vu) Nguyen is from the Computer Science Department.

Summary of Discussion on Institutional Neutrality:

1. Introduction and Context

- **Solon Simmons** initiated the discussion on institutional neutrality. Emphasized structuring the conversation to allow both faculty senators and general faculty to share views and questions. Provided background on the topic and referenced the 1967 Kalven report from the University of Chicago.
- **Simmons** discussed the purpose and claims of the Kalven report. Noted the historical context of the report, including the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War protests. Highlighted the importance of the report in maintaining an environment of freedom of inquiry and independence from political pressures.
- The executive committee of the Senate wrote to President Washington for his position on institutional neutrality. Shared President Washington's detailed response with the Senate.
- **Simmons** Mentioned the formation of an *ad hoc* committee by the provost and Visitor Burke to engage with university leadership and stakeholders.

2. Provost's Input

- **Provost James Antony** elaborated on the Board of Visitors' decision to address the issue through the APDUC subcommittee. Explained the purpose of the listening sessions with various university groups, including the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, deans, and student leaders. Mentioned the formation of an *ad hoc* committee by the provost and Visitor Burke to engage with university leadership and stakeholders.
- **Solon Simmons** opened the floor for senators to comment and ask questions.

3. Timing and Context:

- **Kevin Dunayer** and **Alexander Monea** questioned the timing of the discussion. Provost James Antony noted it was prompted by the Board of Visitors and is part of a national dialogue among university boards.

4. Complexity of the Issue:

- **Melissa Broeckelman-Post** emphasized the complexity of institutional neutrality, criticizing the Kalven report for oversimplification. She stressed the need for clear definitions and guidelines, highlighting the importance of communication and academic freedom. Discussed the adverse implications of silence and the importance

of communication in higher education. Referenced the Kellogg Commission's view on universities as honest brokers of information.

5. **Concerns Raised:**

- **Alexander Monea** expressed worries about the policy's timing and its necessity and its potential negative impact on the university's diverse community, particularly regarding LGBTQ events. Raised concerns about the university's ability to sponsor LGBTQ-themed events and the president's ability to send messages on Pride Month. Emphasized the importance of faculty participation in shaping the policy and the potential harm to marginalized groups if the policy is implemented.
- Free speech / academic freedom / tenure and promotion. **Melissa Broeckelman-Post** stressed the need for faculty to have academic freedom and reminded that the president is also a faculty member with academic freedom. **Mohan Venigalla** suggested defining values that safeguard tenure and academic freedom as part of the university's core principles. **Tim Gibson** highlighted the potential consequences of the policy on the president's ability to make statements about tenure and academic freedom, especially in politically charged environments. **Provost James Antony** emphasized the importance of defending tenure and academic freedom, highlighting that these are non-negotiable principles for a research university. Expressed willingness to use every instrument available to argue for maintaining these values.
- **John Dale** discussed broader implications beyond speech, including investments and budgeting, and the challenges of maintaining neutrality. Highlighted the difficulty of maintaining neutrality and the need for consensus on actionable items. Expressed concerns about narrowing the concept of neutrality to just speech and the impact on the university's authority to speak back.
- **Anu Aneja** emphasized the problematic nature of neutrality and objectivity, highlighting their historical use as politically divisive terms. Expressed concerns about the compulsion for the president to remain silent on ethical concerns that impact the university community. In response, **Solon Simmons** shared an anecdote about President Washington's response to the October 7th events, highlighting the importance of engagement and dialogue across differences.

6. **Engagement vs. Neutrality:**

- **John Dale** discussed the implications of the Kalven report's framing of the university as a corporate entity and the need for engagement from both the top down and the bottom up.
- **Richard T. Craig** argued for engagement over neutrality in academic discussions, with Simmons questioning the feasibility of neutrality in conflict resolution. Highlighted the need for scholarly discussion based on research and theory, even at the leadership level.
- **Solon Simmons** referenced debates in the conflict resolution field about the concept of neutrality, questioning its feasibility. Noted that 'institutional restraint' may be a better term than 'institutional neutrality.'

7. **Presidential Role:**

- Several participants, including **Delton Daigle** and **Jessica Hurley**, highlighted the president's role in representing the community and facilitating critical conversations. Concerns were raised about the potential restrictions on the president's ability to address important issues.
- It was noted that president is also a faculty member with academic freedom, and it shouldn't be lost in this conversation that focuses his role as the president.

8. **Student Voices:**

- **Garv Jain**, representing student government, stressed the importance of protecting diverse voices and involving students and faculty in decision-making processes. Raised concerns about the process for determining what is considered political messaging and the involvement of student and faculty engagement in decision-making.
- **Solon Simmons** discussed the potential loss if the president is restricted from making statements and stimulating conversations within the community. Highlighted the importance of engagement and the president's role in addressing and reflecting on issues that impact the university community.

9. At various points in the discussion, **Solon Simmons** discussed the importance of supporting values and the potential impact on university leadership and faculty. Highlighted the need for a collaborative approach with the Board of Visitors to discuss and define the university's core values. Emphasized the importance of considering the broader implications of institutional neutrality on the university community.

10. In closing, **Simmons** encouraged continuous feedback from faculty and emphasized the need for open conversations about the implications of institutional neutrality. Encouraged faculty members to share their thoughts and concerns with the executive committee and the provost.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

October 23, 2024

LIST OF ATTENDEES

189 Total Attendees (Senators and Visitors)

43 Senators Present: Ioannis Bellos, Alok Berry, Lee Black, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Jamie Clark, Richard Craig, Tim Curby, Delton Daigle, John Dale, Doris Davis, Sebahattin Demirkan, Kevin Dunayer, Douglas Eyman, Tim Gibson, Victoria Grady, Seth Hudson, Jessica Hurley, Aditya Johri, Melanie Knapp, Kerri LaCharite, Siona Listokin, Tamara Maddox, Alexandra Masterson, Laurie Miller, Alexander Monea, ThanhVu Nguyen, Val Olmo, Robert Osgood, Anna Pollack, Greg Robinson, Pierre Rodgers, Ellen Rowe, Catherine Sausville, Zachary Schrag, Solon Simmons, Cristiana Stan, Caroline Sutter, Anthony Terrell, Benoit Van Aken, Mohan Venigalla, David Wong, Syed Abbas Zaidi, Jie Zhang

8 Senators Absent: Supriya Baily, Jehanzeb Cheema, Kelly Dunne, Daniel Garrison, Ed Gero, Thalia Goldstein, Eugene Kontorovich, Debra Stroiney

4 Ex-officio Senators Present: James Antony, Ann Ardis, Anne Osterman, Ken Walsh

142 Visitors Present: Leah Adams, Wayne Adams, Paul Allvin, Elizabeth Alman, Jackie Anderson, Anu Aneja, LaShonda Anthony, Jaimie Appleton, Marie Arnold, Sharnnia Artis, Alex Baker, Ernest Barreto, Jennifer Beck-Wilson, Regina Biggs, Lisa Billingham, Heidi Blackburn, Chrishon Blackwell, Tom Bluestein, Lisa Breglia, Alecia Bryan, Amanda Bryan, Crystal Buckley, Alan Byrd, Xiaomei Cai, Lauren Cattaneo, Morgan Chalfant, P. Daniel Chen, Jenny Chism, Raeshelle Cooke, Taylor Crickenberger, Silvia Danielak, Kimberly Davidson, Shannon Davis, Deb Dickenson, Kim Dight, Fatou Diouf, Christopher DiTeresi, Ted Dumas, Gesele Durham, Kim Eby, Aketa Emptage, Jen Fehsenfeld, Larrie Ferreiro, Teresa Finn, Kimberly Ford, Alice Fox, Meghan George, Marcy Glover, Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen, Rick Gray, Emily Green, Jeff Grim, Renate Guilford, Pallavi Gullo, Maggie Hall, Sandy Harris, Tamara Harvey, Sharon Heinle, Carolyn Hoffman, Caitlin Horan, Daniel Houser, David Hull, Garv Jain, Ibrahim Kargbo, Kaithlyn Kayer, Matt Kelly, Nick Kirkvarro, Teresa Klock-Taube, Joseph Kochanek, Vin Lacovara, Andrea Landis, Alison Landsberg, Andrew Lane, Susan Lawrence, Minh Le, Quyen Le, Amy Lebrecht, Chris Lee, Michelle Lim, Ingrid Lopez, Christopher Lowder, Stephanie Lowe, Robyn Madar, Chris Magee, Dhafer Marzougui, Keiana Mayfield, Jenna McGwin, Doug McKenna, Kimberly Meltzer Weisman, Amanda Menjivar, Jenny Meslener, Clifton Murray, Chrystal Mwangi, Alicia Nelson, Bobbi Nelson, Cheryl Oetjen, Catherine Olien, Whitney Owen, Eunkyong Park, Min Park, Cindy Parker, Sarah Parnell, Rose Pascarell, Thomas Polk, Laura Poms, Rebecca R.G., Marguerite Rippy, Corey Robinson, Mohammad Salama, Sheena Serslev, Kylie Sertic, Joan Shin, Jacquelyn Sims, Antonio Stewart, Frank Strike, Kun Sun, Yinan Sun, Rebecca Sutter, Burak Tanyu, Joel Thurston, Kuo Tian, Jack Tieszen, Daisuke Tokuda, Evelyn Tomaszewski, Cathy

Tompkins, Amanda Torres, Girum Urgessa, Niki Vlastara, Lauren Wagner, Eric Waitthaka, Tobi Walsh, Bob Weiler, Eleanor Weis, Preston Williams, Tricia Wilson, Karen Witt, Elizabeth Woodley, Susan Woodruff, Courtney Wooten, Claire Wurmfeld, Andrea Zach, Aberry