

Annual Report of the Faculty Matters Committee

George Mason University Faculty Senate

Academic Year 2025–2026

Submitted: April 22, 2026

Committee Charge:

(Revised – February 28, 2024 & April 30, 2025)

The Faculty Matters committee champions the general welfare, professional growth, pecuniary interests, equitable workload distribution, and fair performance evaluations for all faculty. The Committee shall be responsible for collaborating—with other University committees as appropriate—in interpreting, formulating, and recommending University-wide standards and policies on faculty matters, including but not limited to the following:

- A. Initial appointments, rank, renewals, reappointment, tenure and promotion;
- B. Salaries, stipends, and contract length;
- C. Study and professional development leaves;
- D. Benefits, broadly defined, including health and retirement;
- E. Workload policies, including teaching and service loads;
- F. Evaluation of faculty performance;
- G. Academic freedom; and
- H. Initiating revisions to Faculty Handbook on existing or new policies related to faculty.

Composition: The Faculty Matters Committee shall include at least one term faculty and at least three tenure-line faculty. At least two committee members should hold tenure.

Co-Chairs: Mohan M. Venigalla (CEIE, College of Engineering and Computing) and Caroline J. Sutter (College of Public Health)

Members: Kelly Dunne (School of Integrative Studies), Lisa A. Giacumo (College of Education and Human Development), Alireza Ermagun (College of Science)

Committee Activities

Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA)

The FEA remained the committee’s primary ongoing responsibility throughout the year. Key actions included:

- **Scorecard Preparation and Release:** The committee worked with Stacey Ellis (HR, Faculty and Staff Engagement Program) and Andrew Lane to finalize the 2025 FEA scorecards for the President, Provost, and Deans, including both U.S. and Mason Korea versions. For the President’s and Provost’s scorecards, Gallup sentiment analysis was incorporated directly. For Deans’ scorecards, the committee identified recurring themes from qualitative comments where Gallup’s 50-response threshold was not met.
- **2026 FEA Survey Questions:** The committee unanimously voted (via email, January 2026) to retain the existing FEA questions for the President, Provost, and Deans without substantive revision, except for replacing the “diversity and inclusion” question with

language aligned to the university’s strategic direction: “Effectively advances the university’s goals of access and inclusion.” This change was coordinated with HR and forwarded to Gallup for integration into the combined 2026 Faculty and Staff Experience Survey.

- Department Chairs Data: The committee voted unanimously not to collect FEA data on department chairs in 2026, citing persistent technical issues, data reliability concerns, equity problems across differently structured colleges, and the fact that chairs are already assessed through their own college-level processes.

Syllabi Availability During Registration

At the request of Senior Associate Provost Keith Renshaw (via Faculty Senate President Solon Simmons), the committee considered a Student Government proposal to make course syllabi available to students during registration. The committee discussed the idea at its October 31, 2025 meeting, acknowledging that while the goal of giving students more course information is worthwhile, significant practical and policy barriers exist—including faculty autonomy over syllabi, the fact that instructors of record are often not finalized at registration time, and heightened scrutiny of syllabi content. The committee agreed to keep the discussion open for further exploration but took no formal action during this reporting period.

Faculty Handbook Revisions (Sections 2.2 and 2.4)

Co-Chair Venigalla, in his concurrent role as Co-Chair of the Committee on Faculty Roles and Rewards (CFRR), briefed the FMC on the proposed revisions to the Renewal, Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RRPT) framework at the March 17, 2026 meeting. The FMC discussed the “overall excellence” standard, student success language, and protections for faculty autonomy through LAU-defined standards. The Faculty Senate voted unanimously to approve the revised Sections 2.2 and 2.4 on March 25, 2026. The FMC will have ongoing jurisdiction over this new policy under shared governance.

LAU Promotion and Tenure Guideline Alignment

The committee identified that certain local academic units, including the College of Engineering and Computing, have adopted promotion and tenure criteria that deviate from Faculty Handbook Section 2.4 (e.g., requiring genuine excellence in research only, rather than offering the dual pathway of excellence in teaching or research). The FMC determined that such deviations are incompatible with the Handbook and is preparing a formal memo to the provost requesting alignment of all LAU guidelines with the Faculty Handbook. The committee also raised concerns that some guideline changes may have been implemented without adequate faculty input.

Term Faculty Contract Concerns

The committee received a formal inquiry from a senior term faculty member regarding repeated one-year contract renewals despite consistently high-performance evaluations, in apparent conflict with Faculty Handbook Section 2.7.1. The FMC consulted with the Faculty Senate President and determined that the most appropriate course of action is to raise the issue with the provost at the policy level to seek clarity on multi-year contract practices. Co-chairs are currently following up on this issue and expect to submit a findings memo in May.

Cross-College Collaboration Working Group

Dr. Victoria Grady (Costello College of Business) requested time to present findings from the University Working Group on Cross School/College Collaboration, based on survey data collected in Fall 2025. At the March meeting, representatives from the working group presented their findings to the FMC.

Meeting Schedule

The committee established a **recurring meeting schedule** on the **second Tuesday of each month at 3:00 PM via Zoom**.

- Meetings were held on the following dates:
 - September 12, 2025
 - October 31, 2025
 - December 15, 2025
 - February 10, 2026
 - March 17, 2026
 - April 14, 2026
- Several meetings required **rescheduling** due to:
 - Member availability
 - Academic calendar conflicts

Appendix: Evaluation of Presidential, Provostial, and Senior Vice Presidential Interactions

1. Has the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President announced initiatives or acted upon issues under the charge of your Committee? Was the Committee consulted?

The provost's office, through HR (Stacey Ellis and Andrew Lane), collaborated with the FMC on the FEA process, including scorecard preparation, question revision, and planning for the 2026 combined FEA/FSE survey with Gallup. This collaboration was timely and productive. The Senior Associate Provost (Keith Renshaw) appropriately routed the syllabi-during-registration proposal through the Faculty Senate President to the FMC. No unilateral actions affecting the committee's charge were identified.

2. Did your Committee seek information or input from the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President? Did they respond adequately?

Yes. The committee worked directly with HR on FEA materials and received responsive and thorough cooperation. The Office of University Branding (OUB) responded promptly when consulted about revised question language for the FEA. The committee intends to engage the Provost on two outstanding matters: alignment of LAU promotion and tenure guidelines with the Faculty Handbook, and clarification of multi-year term faculty contract policies.

3. How might the President, Provost, Senior Vice President, and/or their staffs more effectively interact with your Committee?

The committee recommends that the Provost's office issue clear guidance to all colleges and schools requiring that LAU-level promotion and tenure criteria remain consistent with the Faculty Handbook, and that any revisions to such criteria involve meaningful faculty input.

Additionally, the committee encourages the Provost to proactively communicate expectations regarding multi-year term faculty contracts consistent with Handbook Section 2.7.1.

4. Additional information regarding interactions between your Committee and the President, Provost, Senior Vice President, or their staff.

The committee appreciates the continued professionalism and responsiveness of Stacey Ellis and Andrew Lane in HR. The transition to a combined FEA/FSE survey instrument with Gallup for 2026 represents a positive step toward a more integrated faculty engagement assessment. The committee notes that HR indicated further support for FEA work would be limited going forward, and the FMC will need to assume greater responsibility for scorecard editing and dissemination in future cycles.

The Faculty Matters Committee looks forward to continuing its work in AY 2026–2027, with particular focus on ensuring LAU guideline alignment with the revised Faculty Handbook, supporting the rollout of the combined FEA/FSE survey, and advancing term faculty contract protections.

Respectfully submitted,

Mohan M. Venigalla, Ph.D., P.E., F.ASCE
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