

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020**  
**ELECTRONIC MEETING - 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Lisa Billingham, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Richard Craig, Shannon Davis (chair), Sr VP Carol Kissal, Timothy Leslie, Bethany Letiecq, Kumar Mehta, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden.

**I. Approval of Minutes:** we were very busy during the summer and will review them to look at during our next meeting.

**II. Announcements**

Chair Shannon Davis noted this is our first meeting of the academic year. She thanked everybody for their willingness to serve and for being part of the leadership team of the Senate.

- Senior Vice President Carol Kissal: Provided EXC with an update on the budget, and an update on COVID testing protocols that are being introduced.

Budget:

- The budget gap from expectations is now nearing approx. \$115M
- Noted extensive engagement around campus to identify ways to fill that gap.
- There were discussions regarding furloughs and layoffs. Based on feedback, those avenues are not considered currently.
- Schools and units have been asked to reduce their budgets by 5 or 6%. Her office has worked with all the teams on addressing that reduction. She noted that half of the required budget reductions are likely unfilled vacancies; the others are mostly direct expenditures.
- Enrollment has been slightly higher than expected in July and has helped reduce the gap.
- The balance of gap is being addressed through use of carry forward funds from previous years.
- Use of carry forward funds is being limited to avoid potential impact on credit rating.
- Further details will be shared during the October 1 Board of Visitors meeting.

Discussion:

- Senator inquired if at the state-level Mason's continued strong enrollment and management of resources has been considered positively to prioritize providing budget relief to Mason.

Sr. VP Kissal: President Washington is actively communicating these points to the legislature in Richmond. It is hoped that once the legislature completes its work, it would provide some of the resources that were promised to Mason before COVID. She noted that the \$115M budget gap is a conservative estimate without consideration for any additional revenues from Commonwealth of Virginia or Federal Government.

Testing Protocols:

- Currently, there are 4 or 5 different ways and protocols for testing. This includes surveillance testing, direct testing, diagnostic testing.
- Number of questions have been raised regarding the COVID dashboard. The data recording and display is challenging since there is a 2-to-3-day gap between testing and results. Someone will be joining the meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> to answer all of the questions.
- President Washington has announced the decision to retest all the resident students. The spit tests will be conducted by Rutgers Lab, and logistics managed by company named "Vault". Every resident student has received communication for scheduling their tests. 1000 students each day Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday will be tested. The results are expected probably by following Monday.

Discussion:

- Senator expressed concern regarding the Kallaco contract. Noting that testing kit was not FDA approved and that there was no CLIA for the Opteo lab, raises questions regarding the validity of those tests. Senator noted that it is problematic to continue to include those tests on the dashboard and requested if it is possible to present data without the Kallaco results.
- Following up, Senator noted that dis-aggregations of the data that would be helpful. Citing example of UNC Chapel Hill which shows by dorm rates of positivity and numbers of cases. Some of that might be helpful for our campus to do as well.

Sr. VP Kissal: Regarding excluding the data of Kallaco results, she was unsure if Dr. Washington would want to do that as they set the protocol for what the reporting is going to be. She shared that she is pretty sure that the data could be aggregated in different ways. She indicated that if Faculty Senate wanted to see disaggregated data, it can be done.

She noted that UNC, Tulane (and some others) are using a wastewater testing for monitoring prevalence for each dorm. This helps reduce overall testing requirements and helps intensify testing for subgroups as may be indicated by wastewater testing. Mason's scientists are looking into possibility of using such an approach and its fit for Mason.

- Senator followed up with questions regarding the Kallaco contract. Noting that the contract specifies that Kallaco would use kits and procedures that were FDA approved or had received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from FDA. Given the fact that they administered tests that were not FDA approved, is the university is going to investigate this contract, or investigate further, the procedures, to potentially hold Kallaco accountable to their lapse in upholding a critical point of the contract? That contract can be extended up to 2020-2021. Are there any plans to continue this relationship with this company, that has not upheld its end of the contract?

Sr. VP Kissal: She does not believe that there are any plans to continue any relationship with Kallaco. She noted that Dr. Washington has clearly communicated this. The chief

procurement officer is doing due diligence that they always do on contracts. Agreeing that this contract is very controversial, she also assured that lookback on all of our contracts is always performed. If for some reason we identify that the university was harmed, then there are protocols in place that would be exercised.

- Following up Sr. VP Kissal's comments – a Senator noted that if Mason decided that an action was warranted, the State Attorney General's office would be the deciding factor. Mason itself would not be the prosecutorial body.

Sr. VP Kissal agreed that Mason would not be involved in the prosecution. Mason would be only looking at the performance on the contract.

- Senator shared her understanding that Kallaco and Opteo Lab may be investigated by the FDA and the State of Louisiana. Senator expressed hope that Mason would cooperate with any such investigation and inquired if Sr. VP Kissal had any additional information. Senior VP Kissal indicated that she did not.
- Chair Davis noted that the surveillance testing that is happening at the Global Center. She asked for confirmation that those results are being handled by a Mason-related organization and can provide results in 48 hours.

Sr. VP Kissal confirmed the information. She also shared that the lab has two machines, and she believes that they can do a thousand tests / day. She noted that Mason pays for these tests but believes that it is less than Kallaco. She shared that the testing could be faster but would need more people. In this environment, there is a shortage of healthcare professionals and nurses. Currently, Mason has 14 or 15 professionals doing the testing but needs more to get to the goal of 800 to 1000 tests. She also shared that because of involvement in conducting the tests and disseminating the results, Mason is navigating the complex regulated world of managing health information.

- Senator: Previously online education related activities were funded through the online course fee that was applied to all fully online courses. This fee was suspended because of state and federal COVID monies which reduced/replaced it for this semester. What is the plan for when those monies run out? Will the online course fee be applied for any online course? Many courses are more hybrid now, so this affects tuition. There is a lot more push for hybrid now, what all those structures need. What is the plan funding structure for that moving forward?

Sr. VP Kissal: All of our fees ought to be examined. If students do hybrid learning, they might not be experiencing some of the things that some of the other fees cover. Her office is currently looking at that, analyzing what should Mason charge for an online fee? How do we charge for it per credit? What really makes sense? That is ongoing work right

now and she is unable to provide a timeframe. She believes it will be determined before Fall semester next year (2021).

- Follow up: Will this lead to a different online / person to person course set of tuition fees?

Sr. VP Kissal: Currently, all of the fees together are approx. \$3500/year. It might not increase the fees, but fees might be recalibrated by putting them in different buckets. She emphasized the need to examine all of the fees associated with the student and not restrict to only the online fees.

- Senator: Is there a forecast for what spring semester looks like?

Sr. VP Kissal: The Safe Return to Campus plan assumes that we would be in the same structure for Spring 2021. That said, during Fall 2020 if we are successful in maintaining the safety of our students, faculty, and staff, -- questions regarding possibility of having more courses held in the classroom? And expanding capacity in the spring will be examined.

Chair Davis added that this was discussed during the Instructional Continuity Working Group meeting.

- Rector Jimmy Hazel to address the Faculty Senate on September 30, 2020 and February 3, 2021.
- Engagement with President Washington

Fall Executive Committee meeting with President Washington. EXC needs to determine the choice of modality. The President has requested in person (if possible). Chair Davis acknowledged that some may not be able to attend in-person despite use of appropriate distancing.

Discussion:

- Some indicated preference for in-person meeting.
- Several expressed concern about lunchtime session and what that would mean for mask wearing requirements
- Concern for colleagues who may not be able to attend in-person meeting
- It was noted that if some members attended by Zoom and others in-person – the meeting would not be quite inclusive.
- It was decided that meeting will take place in Merten 1201. Most indicated preference for Wednesday, November 18, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. with an acknowledgement that preference is for hybrid or Zoom so that we are completely inclusive.

Spring Executive Committee meeting – Dr. Washington will be attending the March 3 Faculty Senate meeting. Options for EXC meeting are:

- Monday, April 5, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. (lunch session)
- Wednesday, April 7, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. (lunch session)
- Monday, April 12, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. (lunch session)
- Tuesday, April 13, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. (lunch session)
- Thursday, April 15, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Discussion:

- Differing teaching schedules and some members do not know their teaching schedule for Spring 2021.
  - Since Senate meetings are on Wednesdays, it is easier to keep Wednesday open and to commit to at this point.
  - Preferably no lunch.
  - Decision would be made at next EXC meeting. Melissa to create a Qualtrics poll to rank order choices.
- General Faculty Meeting: Per the Faculty Handbook, the meeting occurs once per year. Chair Davis will meet with Provost Ginsberg and Ken Walsh, Chief of Staff, to discuss the past general faculty meetings, and to get their thoughts for this year. Since this will be President Washington's first general faculty meeting, not sure what his thoughts are. Chair Davis invited everyone to email their ideas.

Discussion:

- Senator noted need to ensure that the meeting stays focused on making decisions and take votes on matters of importance.
- Senator Billingham recalled earlier conversation regarding improving timing of the meeting to prevent conflict with teaching. She also noted that in the past the meeting was scheduled right before start of semester. As Chair of O&O, she will review the bylaws and rules regarding the meeting.

### **III. Progress reports, business, and agenda items from Senate Standing Committees**

#### **A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden**

Chair Davis shared other institutions are starting to make modifications to the academic calendar for Spring 2021. Most notably, they are starting semester later and eliminating the spring break. She asked suggestions to be shared with Academic Policies. Various suggestions have been put forth in Instructional Continuity (IC) Working Group, but no proposals are forthcoming from IC.

Discussion:

- Senator highlighted the critical role played by the spring break in providing time to regroup. While understanding the reasons for eliminating, Senator also expressed desire to advocate against such elimination.

- If Spring 2021 is much like Fall with predominantly online classes, Senator wondered about the need to cancel spring break.
- Senator inquired if it was possible to test the students returning after Thanksgiving, and whether similar approach can be adopted for spring break instead of having students go 14 weeks straight without break.
- Senator Slayden: AP can discuss the issue after having obtained additional information. She indicated her desire to frame the options such that following normal procedure the Faculty Senate can vote “yes” or “no” to any plan.
- Chair Davis observed that any change to Spring 2021 calendar should ideally be completed prior to November 4, 2020, when registration begins.
- Senator Slayden noted that instead of disruption due to snow days or disruptions because of hurricane/storm – there is need to maintain some flexibility in schedule because of technical infrastructure outages.
- Chair Davis shared that the matter was under discussion at the IC Committee and also scheduled for discussion at the Emergency Management Executive Committee meeting. She will share summary of their deliberations and inclinations with Senator Slayden to help inform formulation of options by AP.

#### **B. Budget and Resources – Tim Leslie**

Committee is looking into the Kallaco contract that was discussed earlier. Two main questions: (1) Was the procedure followed properly? Based on work by University Auditor and other elements, even though it was a sole source procurement process, they did fulfill the official requirements of that process, based on timeline. (2) The other element that came to light because of that: Kallaco was the only vendor who was able to get tests back by the date. Every other vendor that was asked would not have been able to get the tests back in time for Mason to allow students to move in. The 4-5 positive results that were flagged, would not have happened with any other vendor. The other aspect is the performance element: did Kallaco use test kits that should not have been used? Did they defraud the institution? The committee is continuing to look into these issues.

#### **C. Faculty Matters – Bethany Letiecq and Solon Simmons**

- Faculty Evaluation of Administrators  
Committee met with Rawa Jassem and Gesele Durham (Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning) to discuss the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators. Only deans level evaluation is being conducted this year because of transitions at Provost and President level. Committee requested annual administration report from 8 deans due October 2, with launch of faculty survey shortly thereafter. The plan is to keep survey open till Thanksgiving week.  
Last year’s response rate was abysmal (in high 20s%). To improve the response rate:
  - committee will launch the survey using Faculty Senate email
  - ask faculty to encourage their colleagues within their colleges to participate in the survey.

- have provost make a statement on how he plans to use information in his evaluation of the deans and to encourage faculty to fill them out

Evaluation of (department) chairs: Committee started to do the work and then started to collaborate with CHSS on their plans to pilot an evaluation. This process got interrupted because of COVID. FM Committee will reengage with CHSS to pilot the evaluation.

Chair Davis and several senators noted that Associate Deans should also be part of evaluation. It was discussed for Faculty Senate to be involved as a body and to encourage collection of data that is actionable.

Senator Simmons noted the difficulty with evaluating internal administration of various schools. Noting that the roles of Associate Deans are too flexible, there is need for evaluations to happen at college/unit level. In addition, with evolution of these roles there are problems with continuity for the evaluations to be effective.

Senator Slayden noted that the only positions not evaluated in FH structure are chairs; who have a role both as faculty and administration. With increase in number of interim department chairs, they are responsible to no one. She believes that such initiative needs to be implemented before arrival of new provost with support from office the interim Provost. It is important for Provost to gain visibility into faculty's evaluation of their department chairs.

Additional points discussed:

- Growth in number of Associate Chairs
- Ways to use open-ended questions to conduct qualitative evaluation of Associate Deans.

Senator Simmons:

Provided updates from term faculty committee that may have implications for revision of Faculty Handbook.

- Whether there needs to be an alignment in promotion standards for term faculty vs. tenure-line faculty. More specifically need for genuine excellence vs. only high competence.
- Mason Korea has separate policies

In addition, he noted some items currently under discussion:

- Faculty annual evaluations
- Syllabus and related academic freedom issues – there is a lot of language that faculty are mandated to put into the syllabus, other syllabus requirements, course templates and assignments.

Discussion:

- Senators shared various examples of syllabus requirements practiced by different units
- Discussed the need for uniformity in courses with multiple sections
- Senators discussed whether the issue would be better fit for AP Committee.

#### **D. Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig**

One outstanding seat representing the Carter School on the WAC committee has received a nominee – Dr. Suzanne de Janasz. This nomination will on agenda for next Faculty Senate meeting.

Chair Davis reported an issue to the Nominations Committee that was raised at a college faculty meeting about a Senate meeting last week. There were questions for the Nominations Committee about how the vetting process worked within the Nominations Committee. Chair Davis encouraged everyone in preparing for the next meeting, to explain the process, to prepare for future nominations, for them to think through what they are interested in serving.

#### **E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham**

Chair Davis and Senator Billingham had a productive meeting with Ken Walsh, Chief of Staff and Lester Arnold, VP Human Resources and Payroll. They have requested a one-page summary from the committee with some specific data points needed to move forward with an ombuds position.

- Data points on other universities that have included students and staff
- The current thinking is a broader Ombuds position that one proposed
- Senator Billingham believes that the 4 years of hard work by O&O committee will bear fruit.

Chair Davis commended the work by O&O and for championing it.

### **IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**

#### Intellectual Property Committee:

The committee is comprised of individuals appointed by the Provost/VP for Research and others elected from the Faculty Senate. In addition, there is a joint position that needs to be filled. Chair Davis noted the need to identify individuals who are willing to serve on the committee and have not been elected to other committees (or already on the IP Committee).

Chair Davis shared the names, and Senator Broeckelman-Post has requested their bios and is verifying their interest in serving on the committee.

Discussion:

- Senator noted the need to ensure that the candidate is qualified for the role and knowledgeable in IP issues since its impact is going to be far reaching.



- Suggestion was made to see if faculty specializing in IP law from Law School would be interested. Chair Davis shared that there are two Senators with specialization in IP Law who are already serving on the committee.
- After discussion, committee concurred with Chair Davis's suggestion to refer one individual to Interim VP of Research, so she can fully complement the committee.

## **V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion**

- Follow up letter to Interim VPR and Provost regarding copyright/pandemic/faculty asking to exclude portions of course material such as videos etc.

Chair Davis met with the Provost and with Interim VPR Aurali Dade to again discuss the possibility of a moratorium on any components of instructional work that is being produced this academic year while the IP policy is being revised. They are steadfast that moratorium will not be provided by the university on any specific component or any work, for this academic year. However, they are also steadfast in supporting the faculty member's right to request that if there are specific concerns they have, with, say a specific video or any images or content being produced this academic year or, until the policy is revised.

The process of relaying that information to department chair/LAU head and the Provost Office is in place. If there are violations or concerns about their materials being used without express permission, the faculty member has the right to request enforcement by asking their dean and requesting an investigation. Chair Davis shared that many faculty have asked for details of the process and also requested written language about how to proceed.

Chair Davis asked EXC if everyone is comfortable with proceeding or there is a need to re-engage with Provost and VPR office to insist on moratorium.

### **Discussion:**

- Senator asked if EXC or FS can send a note on behalf of each faculty member to opt them out? If they would like to opt back in, they can do so. Can we just bulk opt everybody out? Chair Davis acknowledged that she did not know if we have the authority to do that.
  - Senator noted that the email inboxes are likely to get flooded with faculty requests. Chair Davis noted that Provost's office has indicated that they do want the information in order to inform the policy.
  - Senator suggested creating a petition or a form with template that would make it easy for faculty to draft and send customized email.
  - Some Senators expressed concern about using web-based forms/templates. Senators discussed various ways for simplifying the process for faculty.
  - Chair Davis reiterated that her priority is to get this as quickly as possible to the faculty. Suggested using an email from Chair of Faculty Senate and including the process and a template that faculty can use to send their own emails.
- Online sign-in procedures for Senators and visitors at Faculty Senate Meeting. Kumar is working on making sure that everyone gets signed in correctly for the next Senate meeting to make sure that we have a list of FS and Visitors clearly articulated, so that we can have that information for the minutes.

- Faculty Success Initiative
  - How can we prepare faculty to be successful in the post pandemic university? Any initiatives must be faculty centric and faculty driven. The initiative must build on existing data regarding supports for and structural constraints to success (e.g., evidence from COACHE survey and Summer 2020 QWL pulse survey) but go beyond. Initiative must determine the most pressing concerns from faculty (aim for five). Initiative must create a mechanism by which the Senate holds the administration accountable to addressing the top five concerns within a reasonable amount of time.
  - A three-member subcommittee from the Executive Committee tasked with
    - Meeting with faculty from across the university to determine their most pressing concerns (during Fall 2020)
    - Partnering with administration to determine timeline and methods by which the administration will work to address the faculty concerns, including the accountability structure between the administration and the Senate (by the time we meet with Dr. Washington in Spring 2021)
    - Creating a public-facing reporting/accountability structure for the Initiative
  - Chair Davis: How the Faculty Senate, specifically the Executive Committee, can be more active in the ways in which we are supporting the faculty overall. She observed that she had also brought forward at the last FS meeting -- thinking about Faculty Success Initiative.
    - How is it that we can be proactive in engaging the concerns of the faculty, and making recommendations to the administration about how faculty should be supported as opposed to waiting for recommendations, or waiting for direction from the administration, as to how faculty can be successful?
    - In subsequent conversations she has been impressed by the amount of data that have already been collected: a) Quality of Work Life survey over the summer; b) Coache data, c) analysis of the qualitative data from specific targeted groups: from underrepresented minorities, term faculty, associate professors, full professors, (and one other group), data collected over the summer.
    - She shared her belief that the Faculty Senate needs to play an active role in this conversation.
    - She expressed her support for the work that has already happened with Kim Eby (and her office), but she recognizes the value of the ways in which faculty driven, faculty centered initiatives, can create change and also create engagement.
    - She noted the Provost's expectation is that the deans will have at least one of their goals to be responsive to the Coache data from the college.
    - Chair Davis proposed we form a subcommittee of this EXC committee, to get together, to work in particular to work in collecting additional data from faculty, but in particular using those data to work to formulate recommendations by the end of this semester/calendar year. This would ensure that by the end of spring semester, we have a set of guidelines, benchmarks, proposals – specific ideas that the administration will need to be responsive to and support faculty not just right now dealing with COVID, but post COVID. She has asked Senators Simmons and Craig to help undertake this task.
- QEP
  - Faculty Fellow will be reporting to Executive Committee with updates and when they need to be on the agenda to share information
  - Selection of FS Rep to QEP Development Committee

Chair Davis: There is a request from Matt Smith that we have a representative from the Senate to serve on the QEP Development Committee.

Discussion:

- Several EXC members interested, but availability and workload prohibit them.
- It was decided that Nominations Committee will discuss how to approach this and then communicate with the Faculty Senate to solicit nominations before and invite nominations from the floor. Chair Davis will obtain additional information regarding the responsibilities to include in the call for nominations.
- Presentation on Safe Return to Campus Data Dashboard for 9/30 meeting – Whitney Owen, lead person, Julie Zobel and David Farris, backups.
- Instructional Continuity Group – Internet-based academic integrity violations – Lashonda Anthony and Charlie Kreitzer for 9/30 meeting
- Possible Senate Participation in the Mason Nation Thriving Together Virtual 5K

Chair Davis encouraged people to participate in the Virtual 5K supporting student emergency fund and food pantry to put on the agenda. Important for Faculty Senate to encourage civic engagement.

- New initiative brought forward from one of our Senators to be brought to Tom Davis as BOV Liaison to the FS: issue of Horizon Hall to the BOV on behalf of the Senate. Chair Davis has a scheduled meeting with Tom Davis to talk about how it is he would like to engage publicly around that, given that this came to him from him. To make sure he is also able to speak with as much information as possible, so he has been given the resolution from the spring.
- Chair Davis asked the committee members to send any agenda items for the next FS meeting as quickly as possible. Chair Davis suggested that we may need to hold two hour EXC meetings in the future.

## **VI. Agenda Items for FS Meeting September 30, 2020**

- Approval of the draft FS Minutes September 2, 2020
- Opening Remarks: Shannon Davis, Chair
- Rector Jimmy Hazel

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **A. Faculty Senate Standing Committees**

Executive Committee

- *Safe Return to Campus Data Dashboard – Whitney Owen, Julie Zobel and David Farris*
- *Internet-based Academic Integrity Violations – Lashonda Anthony and Charlie Kreitzer*
- *Faculty Success Initiative*

Academic Policies

Budget and Resources

Faculty Matters

Nominations

Organization and Operations

#### **B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**

- **New Business**
- **Announcements**
  - Provost Ginsberg
  - Sr. VP Kissal
  - Background Check Report (FY 2020) – Carol Dennis, Human Resources
  - Honor Code Updates – LaShonda Anthony, Director, Academic Integrity, University Life
  - Assessment Council update: Peer Review of Annual Assessment being launched this year
- **Remarks for the Good of the Faculty**
- **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kumar Mehta  
Secretary