

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2020
ELECTRONIC MEETING - 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Present: Lisa Billingham, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Richard Craig, Shannon Davis, Mark Ginsberg, Carol Kissal, Tim Leslie, Bethany Letiecq, Kumar Mehta, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden.

I. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of July 13, July 22, and August 3, 2020 were approved.

II. Announcements

Provost Ginsberg:

- On day 13 of 14-day quarantine after potential exposure, Provost Ginsberg shared his experience and positive assessment of processes and staff involved with contact tracing and COVID testing.
- Shared that he has been hosting a series of virtual luncheons with conversations on variety of issues. He asked EXC members to convey the open invitation to faculty colleagues.

Spring Break (2021):

- Noted that this is a very important issue for Mason Community.
- He shared his opinion that the decision should take into consideration the advice of scientists (on campus and around the country) who are advocating policies that prevent large body of student population leaving and returning to campus over spring break.
- Cited number of universities that have already announced the decisions to cancel spring breaks, and others who are in process of making a similar decision.
- Shared his perspective and reasoning that beginning Spring 2021 a week later would be optimal.

Faculty Evaluation of Administrators:

Looks forward to continuing conversations with Faculty Matters Committee to:

- Help improve the response rates
- Improve the effectiveness of the evaluations
- Enable use of the evaluation as a constructive feedback mechanism for administrators

Spring 2021:

- Academic units have submitted their initial plans for class scheduling to the Registrar
- Hopes that the capacity utilization can be increased from current 80-85% of planned capacity under safe return to campus planning.
- Based on feedback from students: a) increase vitality on campus; b) increase options for in-person classes; and c) accommodate additional students on campus.
- Goal for Spring is 4200 students in residence halls (increase from current 3000).

Discussion:

- Senator acknowledged successful management of safe return to campus plan in Fall with regular testing. In Spring, a much higher risk for COVID concurrent with flu season, is anticipated. Considering this increased risk and plans to increase density of students in residence halls – what commensurate risk mitigation strategies are being developed?

Provost Ginsberg:

- Reassured that there is no plan to increase capacity beyond planned in terms of: a) students on campus; b) number of students in residence halls; c) enrollment within sections, or d) increase the number of classes on campus.
 - Plans are to continue testing students in Spring. The specifics of testing rate are being determined and will be adjusted as conditions require.
 - Reassured that safety of Mason Community will not be jeopardized.
 - Sr. VP Kissal followed up to share that the committee responsible for testing plans makes use of sophisticated risk matrix that it uses to inform the decision making on allowable activities and testing.
- Senator inquired about number of sections that would need to be added to increase capacity utilization from current 80-85% to 100%?

Provost Ginsberg:

- Not certain of the actual number
 - Capacity goal is not only number of classes but also enrollment in those classes. He noted that 40% of classes require some degree of on-campus involvement. But these account for only 17% of registrations. Most of these require only once a week presence as opposed to more than once per week.

Follow-up: Senator wondered if it would be helpful to let faculty know about available options for the remaining in-person classes. Especially for any faculty who may prefer in-person class but are not aware of the possibilities.

Provost Ginsberg:

- Expects to have a more complete picture in near future.
 - Shared that there have been changes from previous semester (by School/Colleges) in terms of number of classes as well as number of times the classes meet each week.
- Senator Simmons (co-chair Faculty Matters Committee) inquired if Provost is planning to use an item from the COACHE survey on the deans' goals for each year? If so, Faculty Matters could use the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA) and build that goal into how the faculty evaluate the deans? Senator Simmons noted that using something directly from COACHE holds real promise and sought Provost's clarification and perspective.

Provost Ginsberg clarified that as part of dean's annual review -- he has asked the deans to address the COACHE survey findings from their colleges and use that for their self-reflection and self-assessment.

There was follow-up discussion on usefulness of using COACHE survey findings to guide development of action plans for deans and also serve as a basis for their evaluation.

Sr. VP Kissal: Noted that she had nothing additional to share beyond updates she provided at Faculty Senate meeting but was available to answer any questions.

COVID testing:

- Senator reiterated need for making available disaggregated COVID testing data that can be analyzed along different dimensions.
- Senator requested more information on TruGenomix Lab¹ that has been previously mentioned as conducting the COVID tests.

Sr. VP Kissal:

- Most of the lab tests are being conducted by LabCorp. TruGenomix is one of few other labs that Mason uses for testing protocols and has likely done 1200 – 1500 tests to date.

Follow-up: Is TruGenomix Lab Mason based or is it one in Maryland?

Sr. VP Kissal:

- It is a Mason-based lab at the SciTech Campus.

Follow-up: Senator observed that no lab with that name (TruGenomix) is registered under CLIA.

Sr. VP Kissal:

- Noted that TruGenomix is one of the partners of Mason with Dr. Lance Liotta in-charge of that partnership. Mason uses the lab for variety of testing.
- Suggested contact Julie Zobel for additional information.
- Senator inquired about communication of test results. For those tested, do they receive actual test result, type of test, etc. that can be reported to their medical provider?

Chair Davis shared that at the time of testing, a card is anticipated to be provided that states that it is a PCR test. In addition, it includes email and phone number in case of additional

¹ <https://trugenomix.com/>

questions regarding the test and testing procedures. No protected health information is included in email.

- There was follow up discussion based on experience of EXC members with testing and included extensive discussion and clarification on sampling strategy adopted for identifying individuals for surveillance testing.

University Budget Planning Advisory Council (UBPAC):

Senator Leslie shared that the University Budget Planning Advisory Council (UBPAC) has been dissolved and inquired about spaces for continuing similar engagement.

Sr. VP Kissal:

- Recommendations from the 3 committees were very helpful
- They are forming team of subject matter experts to implement them.
- If problems occur in implementation, they will re-engage to figure out how to pivot

Follow-up: Inquired about projected shortfall in Spring 2021, and if it decreases if we increase number of students in residence halls to 4000.

Sr. VP Kissal:

- The deficit is \$110M based on expected enrollments
- At the time of Fall planning (2021-2022), we will be starting with the same deficit unless all projections increase by over 2% from this time
- General Assembly is looking to reallocate the funding that was suspended at the start of COVID crisis. Final decision will be known by October 8.
- Is hopeful that after October 8, legislature will reinstate \$10M allocation to help begin closing the funding gap between Mason and other public universities in VA.

Engagement with President Washington reminder(s):

- Fall Executive Committee meeting – Wed., November 18 (1:30 – 3:00pm via Zoom).
- He will be attending the Faculty Senate Meeting on October 14, 2020.
- Awaiting confirmation of dates for Executive Committee meeting with Dr. Washington in the Spring 2021.
- He will be attending the Faculty Senate Meeting on March 3, 2021.

Other Announcements:

- Received confirmation yesterday that Dr. Alessandra Luchini will be the jointly appointed Faculty Representative to the Intellectual Property Committee.
- BOV Updates – October 1, 2020 BOV Meeting

- Lots of great questions around how we are proceeding financially with enrollment
- Official vote on the new creation of the College of Engineering and Computing, and how they are going to proceed from there with moving forward to SCHEV.

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

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden

Vote on Spring 2021 academic calendar changes at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

B. Budget and Resources – Tim Leslie

Committee is continuing to work on:

- Re online space: course development fees are supposed to cover online classes. A common standard approach is needed. Committee has tried to reach out to Renate Guilford (Associate Provost for Administration) and not received much of a response.

Discussion:

- Chair Davis: All fees are going to be re-evaluated. Because UBPAC has been dissolved, there may be implementation teams moving forward. Which group is charged with fees?

Senator Leslie:

- There are three of them, nonspecific to fees.
- There are many different fees, but none of the committee has student representation even though they are paying the fees.

Follow up discussion stressed on outreach and communicating to relevant parties the importance of shared governance and involvement of all stakeholders during the discussion phase.

C. Faculty Matters – Bethany Letiecq and Solon Simmons

- CHHS Workload Policies

Senator Letiecq summarized number of problematic areas with CHHS Workload Policies:

- Research inactive states increases the teaching load incrementally to 4:4
- Review by Senator Keith Renshaw (member of Faculty Matters Committee) has identified numerous violations of the Faculty Handbook.
- Concern about potential violation of employment contracts
- Senator Renshaw is preparing a letter outlining the findings of the review

Discussion:

- The matter of having Faculty Handbook Committee (FHC) validate the findings of review was discussed. It was noted that FHC is not charged with enforcement and thus involving FHC is not advisable.

- Senators discussed the changes in hiring practices and incentives for new hires (including teaching reductions). This provides foundation for a different career trajectory with respect to receiving grants than those who joined under different system and later are evaluated on same expectations.
- Senators noted that “grant awards” are dependent on nature and type of research conducted by each faculty. Expecting all faculty to obtain grants diminishes value of certain important types of research.
- The issues surrounding evaluation criteria, evolving expectations and harm of punitive actions were discussed.

EXC agreed to lend its support to the findings and sign on to the letter.

- Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA)
 - Committee is close to distributing the FEA (awaiting three administrator reports).
 - End date for FEA will be based on when the reports are posted.
- Academic Freedom: Syllabi requirements, required course templates/assignments
 - Syllabus:
 - There are numerous: a) requirements, b) commitments, c) suggestions, etc. for course syllabi. Various examples from Colleges and Stearns Center were shared during the discussion.
 - Senators noted that by the time all are accommodated the syllabus becomes several pages long and critical items of syllabus are lost.
 - Need and benefits of standardization and consistency were discussed and whether they needed dictating syllabus content.
 - Alternate approaches for inclusion of university values, school statements, etc. without requiring them on every syllabus were discussed.
 - Role of Faculty Senate was discussed
- Evaluation of faculty 2020-2021
 - There are a lot of concerns about online course evaluation.
 - Research productivity continues to be impacted because of impact of COVID on personal and professional lives as well as work environments.
 - Research funding has become really curtailed and challenging..

Discussion:

- Chair Davis:
 - Kim Eby (Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development) had reached out with some information about what other institutions are doing.
 - There are distinctive differences between GMU and other Virginia universities such as UVA, VCU, William and Mary. Need to look at the policies of our peer institutions such as the University of Illinois at Chicago and USC. (urban and draw on a very diverse first gen populations of undergrads and are also R-1).

- Stressed the need to holistically approach evaluations rather than exercise in counting publications, research dollars, courses, etc.
 - Need to be cognizant of the professional development that is critical for all the pieces of faculty's work.
 - Emphasized that we approach the issue of evaluation for not only this academic year but how this is going to have ripple effect for potentially a decade or longer.
- Senators shared their individual experiences and examples of service engagements were disregarded during annual evaluations.
 - After further deliberation and discussion, EXC recommended taking a two stage approach:
 - Address the more immediate need of attention to the concerns about annual evaluation for this academic year (2020-2021).
 - Begin a broader conversation of meaningfully conducting annual evaluations in the longer-term.

D. Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig

Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

Suzanne de Janasz (Carter School)

QEP Development Committee

Megan Call-Cummings (CEHD)

Faculty Senate of Virginia

(must be members of the External Academic Relations Committee)

- Rebecca Sutter (Senator: 3-year term)
- Jatin Ambegaonkar (CEHD- Elected Representative, 1 year term)
- Linda Monson (CVPA- Elected Representative, 1 year term)
- Alok Berry (VSE- Elected Representative, 1 year term)

E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham

- Updates on committee charge revisions:
 - Will be sending note to the chairs of Senate Standing Committees and working along with University Committees on their charges.
 - Have already started working on that with some of the university committees.
- Ombuds: Continuing progress on previously reported (ongoing) discussions with Ken Walsh and Lester Arnold.

Discussion:

- Faculty Matters Committee Charge – Solon Simmons
Faculty Affairs and Development within the Provost Office has a section that is called Faculty Matters. The section includes individuals who form the Faculty Matters Committee. This creates both a connection point with administration and creates potential source of confusion.

Chair Davis:

- Noted potential for Senate Faculty Matters Committee to connect with the administrative unit committee with same name.
- Suggested similar potential may exist for other standing committees.
- Suggested considering revision of charge that best reflect the opportunities committees have.

IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion

- Participation in the Mason Nation Thriving Together Virtual 5K:
 - Chair Davis encouraged EXC members to join her in the event, and alternatively consider donating to emergency food or the food pantry for Mason students.
- Administration of Online Course Evaluations:
 - There is recognition that in transitioning quickly from the paper form to Blue there was a mistake. That mistake used only 3 points out of the 5-point scale, and it used the same labels as the original labels, and that was an error. That was fixed within 48 hours of it being noticed.
 - Online evaluation will look different but it will have the exact same content as paper.
 - Effective Teaching Committee is ready to pilot the new instrument that was passed by the Senate before COVID. They are working again with OIEP to stratify sampling.

Chair Davis has a meeting with Gesele Durham (Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning) to discuss having the town hall and have a Q&A session. There is a set of Q&A online about the course evaluation online transition to Blue, and then eventually the pilot instrument that will be done. There is expectation that the Faculty Senate will see something at the November meeting.

- MS Teams information for Senators:
 - Chair Davis: CHSS has created an MS Teams channel for all CHSS Senators. It is an opportunity to share files and communicate. There is also an email address for the team, which can be used by any of the faculty if they would like to get in touch with the Senators. It was successfully used to solicit feedback from faculty on the Spring Break issue. Chair Davis recommended considering adopting similar approach so that Senators can better engage with faculty within their units. EXC members appreciated the suggestion.
- BOV has approved the new College of Engineering and Computing within which there will be two schools, the Volgenau School of Engineering, and the School of Computing. Each of the schools will be headed by divisional deans. Searches are beginning right now. Ken Ball will be dean of the College of Engineering and Computing.

Discussion:

 - This would be one more structure to consider for the Faculty Handbook and implications on all the processes including annual evaluations, and tenure and promotion decisions.
 - Senators noted the increasing number of administrators at the expense of hiring full-time faculty.
 - Chair Davis:

- The divisional deans will actually be considered as school directors as currently listed in the Faculty Handbook.
- The expectation is that should SCHEV approve the new College, they will then write by-laws and specifically address the question of who is involved when in the RPT process. The role the school directors/divisional deans will need to be defined in the by-laws.

VI. Agenda for FS Meeting October 14, 2020 (continuation of Sept. 30, 2020)

• Committee Reports:

A. Faculty Senate Standing Committees

Executive Committee

- *Internet-based Academic Integrity Violations – Lashonda Anthony and Charlie Kreitzer (requested video, moving this to Announcements)*
- *Faculty Success Initiative (moving this to Announcements)*

Academic Policies

Proposed Change to the Spring 2021 Academic Calendar

Budget and Resources

Faculty Matters

Nominations

Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

Faculty Senate Rep to QEP Committee

Faculty Representatives to the Faculty Senate of Virginia

Organization and Operations

B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

Academic Appeals Committee

Effective Teaching Committee

Faculty Equity and Inclusion Committee

Intellectual Property Committee

Mason Academic Assessment Council

Mason Core Committee

Master Plan Steering Committee

Technology Policy Committee

Undergraduate Council

University Naming Committee

(brief report Bob Pasnak from Recreation Advisory Committee (to include))

• New Business

- *Menasce motion*

• 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