

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MTG.
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020 ELECTRONIC MEETING - 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

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

I. Approval of Minutes: August 6, August 18, August 24, September 14, and October 5, 2020: to postpone to the November meeting.

II. Announcements

Provost Ginsberg:

- Expressed his interest in hearing EXC members' perspective on petition by students for offering alternative grading for Fall 2020.
- He met with Chairs of Faculty Matters Committee (Senator Letiecq and Senator Simmons) to discuss:
 - Extending eligibility of extending tenure clock by 1 year to faculty who joined Mason in Fall 2020.
 - Encouraging faculty to participate in Faculty Evaluation of Administrators. Provost's office will assist by including it in the newsletter.
- Appointment of Dr. P J Maddox (Chair, Department of Health Administration and Policy) to Salary Equity Study Committee. Dr. Maddox will be replacing Dr. Weiler (professor and associate dean for academic affairs in the College of Health and Human Services).
- Planning for Spring 2021
 - Plan to enrich on-campus experience for students and Mason community.
 - Increase on-campus class capacity (hybrid or fully in-person) by 10%
 - Expressed full agreement with Faculty Senate decision to cancel Spring break.

Discussion:

- Senator Leslie (Chair of Budget and Resources Committee) shared his view on the importance of faculty being part of the conversations around university budget and planning and reported encountering resistance from administration representatives to including faculty in the committees. Noting that inclusion of faculty in the conversation in the planning stages would reduce conflict, he inquired about ways to enabling that.

Provost Ginsberg:

- Reiterated his support for shared governance and expressed agreement that faculty need to be part of formative process. He indicated that he will advocate and communicate his support for inclusion of faculty on committees identified.
- Senator noted that there is recognition of stress on Assistant Professors from the COVID crisis and its impact on their research productivity and resulting extension of tenure clock. However, similar recognition of stress for faculty post-tenure (Associate Professors) was notably missing.

Provost Ginsberg:

- Expressed his agreement and noted that Provost's office has been working with FMC in addressing this through annual evaluations.

Follow-up: Another Senator noted that there was a disconnect between the message from Provost's office guidance on annual evaluations accommodating impact of COVID crisis and the actual practice being followed by the academic units. Senators from other units noted similar disconnect in their experience.

- Provost Ginsberg noted that he would have it on Deans' Council agenda to talk about consistencies. He also remarked that since each unit has its own processes, some variations are to be expected.

Follow-up: Senator shared faculty concern around revision of workload policies in midst of a pandemic. Impact of revisions that introduce external funding mandates (at a time of funding decline) and minimizes service at a time when service obligations have become more important.

- Provost Ginsberg appreciated Senator sharing faculty concerns and expressed support to engaging in an ongoing conversation to address the concerns.

- **Chair Davis**

- Spring 2021 - Planning Enhancements Project Update**

- At the request of Chair Davis, the Emergency Management Executive Committee (EMEC) has asked Dr. Charlene Douglas to co-facilitate a set of eight sessions that will include faculty, students, staff and the MCCT groups' senior leadership - EMEC Group, EOG, to try to get feedback to improve planning for Spring 2021.

- BOV Liaison Meeting:**

- Visitor Davis will be attending November 16 EXC meeting.
 - Reminder to all standing committees to invite him to one meeting per semester
 - Noted the value of sharing concerns from our perspective and engaging in a conversation to understand BOV perspective.

- Summer Compensation for EXC Members:**

- EXC members acting on behalf of the Faculty Senate dedicate extended amount of their time. Summer 2020 required a lot more from the EXC committee members.
 - Chair Davis thanked Provost's Office for acknowledging the work by EXC members by providing \$1000 stipend to each of the EXC members in Summer 2021. If there are co-chairs of a committee, they will either split the stipend or designate one person to be chair for the summer.

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

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden

Alternative grading for Fall 2020 –

- It will be on the agenda for the Faculty Senate meeting November 4.
- Anticipating spirited discussion, recommended that we poll our colleagues with hope of being able to receive their opinions (and potentially be able to address them) before the meeting.
- Awaiting response from Registrar regarding summary statistics of students' choice of alternative grading. This would be particularly informative in helping understand how many students chose alternative grading. Noted that not all students possibly knew of the option in time, and possibly some students requested to revert back to traditional grading scale because of requirements for graduate school admissions or other requirements.

Discussion:

- We had clearly communicated that Spring 2020 alternative grading was an exception because completely unprecedented circumstances for everyone, and that beginning Summer it was going to be only traditional grading scale. Students registering for Fall 2020 clearly understood that it was going to be traditional grading scale.
- Noting that alternative grading scale available to students who took summer classes, Senator asked if it would be made available retroactively.
- Senator shared that in Spring 2020, approximately 15% of students chose alternative grading. Provost Ginsberg added that it was around 15% but was not sure finally how many students chose the option as some may have requested late and others requested to revert.
- Provost Ginsberg has received a resolution from the Student Senate requesting alternative grading option. Chair Davis shared that she had also received it and shared it with Academic Policies Committee Chair (Senator Slayden).
- Senator Slayden noted that UVA required students to make their choice by November 6th.
- Provost Ginsberg stressed the need to quickly decide on making the alternative grading option available so as to allow students time to consider their choices.
- Additional discussion followed on merits and best way to implement alternative grading policies.
- Chair Davis and Provost Ginsberg will work to help AP receive the requested information from Registrar and Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education.
- Senators discussed on ways to effectively gather feedback from their colleagues.
- AP will discuss and craft the proposal outlining the options for alternative grading.

B. Budget and Resources – Tim Leslie

Class Sizes: Several faculty have expressed concerns that because of pressure on resources class sizes are being substantially increased without consulting the faculty.

- In hopes of identifying a structural solution, inquired with Registrar about encoding a per course maximum that was pedagogically sound. Registrar's office indicated that it is possible, but the process would be too long and require numerous considerations regarding approval, audits, etc. – thereby, making this approach not suitable. The goal for any solution ought to be that the enrollment cap is pedagogically sound and prevents areas of conflict between faculty and the department chairs.

Discussion:

- Provost Ginsberg noted that the change in enrollment caps from physical to virtual was not surprising and to be expected. He also observed that resource requirements are a real constraint on dictating class sizes – resources that are required not only for delivering the course but also for redevelopment that may be necessary for the virtual environment.
- Discussion points made by EXC members:
 - Potential for tension between increasing tuition revenue and reducing cost of delivery through increase of enrollment caps.
 - Concern being expressed more often by term and adjunct faculty who feel burdened by the increased enrollment caps.
 - Increase in number of administrative roles shifting teaching load to full time faculty.
 - Possible coordination between FMC and Budget and Resources Committee to further work on this issue.

Budget Situation: There has lack of transparency with regards to budget situation, and faculty are not involved in formative process. Additionally, there is no visibility regarding which groups / subgroups need to be contacted or to be part of for informed engagement. It was emphasized that the involvement needed to be voluntary, and the committee chair should not have to start filing FOIA for access to the necessary information.

C. Faculty Matters – Bethany Letiecq and Solon Simmons

Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA):

- CEHD and COS are not participating this year because they currently have an interim dean.
- Deadline is October 30, 2021. High response rates are necessary for the evaluation to be taken seriously. If higher response rates are necessary, the deadline will be extended.
- FMC is going to be more attentive to the granularity of the comments data to allow individual voices to come through. Provost Ginsberg is interested and supportive of the process.
- FMC will be joining the provost and deans to form a working group to bring about effective revision to the FEA.

- In the discussion EXC members noted the concerns of faculty about retribution because of fear that the comments might somehow identify them.

Term Faculty:

- Ongoing discussion about removing 25% limit on proportion of term faculty from the Faculty Handbook.
- Other discussions include how to ensure that term faculty have a standard expectation of longer contracts, study-leave or something equivalent, and access to Emeritus status

Discussion:

- A broader trend in universities – increasing proportion of term faculty
- Differing expectations between tenure-track and term faculty for promotion to the same ranks of Associate Professor and Full Professor. Particularly, it was noted that for promotion of term faculty there is no requirement to demonstrate genuine excellence in any category. If genuine excellence is demonstrated – why not create a pathway to tenure?
- Implications of increase proportion of term faculty:
 - Increasing proportion of term faculty proportions in different colleges – some as high as almost 50%.
 - Increased proportion of term faculty weakens faculty power and weakens shared governance.
- Models rewarding research that bring in external funding result in loss of diversity in scholarship – notably scholarship that do not attract external funding. This influences workload policies that increases reliance on need for greater proportion of term faculty.
- EXC members noted that it is important to continue this conversation and requested continuing updates.

D. Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig – no report.

E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham

- Updates on committee charge revisions:
 - Will continue to remind committee chairs to review and identify the revisions that need to be made.
- Ombuds:
 - In the next few weeks, Senator Billingham will assist Dr. Ken Walsh with a proposal to the President.

IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

- Faculty Conduct Working Group – Shannon Davis
 - Final set of procedures will be ready for November 4th meeting. These will be a draft of processes, policies and procedures to observe if they work as intended.
 - Noteworthy example of true partnership and deliberation between the Faculty Senate, the faculty in general, and multiple offices across the administration.

V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion

- Mason Korea representation on Faculty Senate [Appendix A](#)
Faculty at Mason Korea have created a Mason Korea faculty assembly. They have formally requested representation on the university Faculty Senate. Previously EXC has discussed the issue of representation for faculty members who are employed by units on the Fairfax campus and are teaching at Mason Korea, that they are represented on the Senate through their college or school representation. Mason Korea faculty assembly is making a specific request (see Appendix A) based on which an independent unit is defined in the Faculty Handbook. The question is whether Mason Korea counts as an independent unit. Last year Provost Wu said it did not, that those individuals had the opportunity to be represented through their home units. The Executive Committee, Provost Ginsberg discussed if they shared a different interpretation (than Provost Wu). In consultation with Senator Slayden, Faculty Handbook Committee Chair, to identify possible pathways towards inclusiveness that allows faculty from not only Mason Korea but also those connected other units such as INTO Mason.

Discussion:

- Provost Ginsberg indicated that he is open and expressed interest in listening to EXC members' perspectives. He shared that he has invited Robert Matz, Dean at Mason Korea to join the Deans' Council meetings when time difference allows.
- If faculty at Mason Korea or other similar units are connected to our academic units, it is incumbent upon the units to be more inclusive by inviting them to department meetings, college meeting and Faculty Senate meetings.
- If they are a separate unit, then they should have representation on Faculty Senate like all other units and should not have a separate senate of their own.
- EXC members noted that Mason Korea is technically Mason LLC
- Chair Davis observed that having an ex-officio member would be:
 - Consistent with the Dean of Libraries as ex-officio member of the Faculty Senate (similar to all other Deans).
 - Consistent with how we think about academic unit as interpreted in the Faculty Handbook.
 - Consistent with how Mason Korea faculty view themselves.
- Chair Davis suggested making formal recommendation following further discussion at the next EXC meeting and possibly present the recommendation at the Faculty Senate meeting in December.

VI. Agenda for FS Meeting November 4, 2020

- **Committee Reports:**
 - A. Faculty Senate Standing Committees**
 - Executive Committee
 - Academic Policies
 - Budget and Resources
 - Faculty Matters
 - Nominations
 - Organization and Operations
 - B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**

Adult Learning and Executive Education
Athletic Council (*pending*)
Faculty Reps to BOV Committees: APDUC, Finance and Land Use, Research
Faculty Conduct, Policies and Procedures Working Group
Faculty Handbook Revision Committee
Grievance Committee
Mason Academic Assessment Council
Mason Core Committee
SACS-COC Reaffirmation Committee
Technology Leadership Council
Writing Across the Curriculum

- **New Business**

Faculty Conduct Working Group Report

- **Announcements**

- Provost Ginsberg
- Sr. VP Kissal
- COACHE Update – K. Eby, S. Baily (report pending)
Mason [FACTS](#) (Faculty Activity and Collaboration Tools) (Executive Team Update – Molli Herst
(report pending)

- **Remarks for the Good of the Faculty**

- **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,
Kumar Mehta
Secretary.

Appendix A

From: Lester Kurtz <lkurtz@gmu.edu>

Sent: Monday, October 19, 2020 2:07 AM

To: Shannon N Davis <sdaviso@gmu.edu>

Cc: Claude Drolet <cdrolet@gmu.edu>; Robert I Matz <rmatz@gmu.edu>

Subject: Mason Korea representation on Faculty Senate

Dear Shannon,

Hope you are doing well and surviving the COVID storms!

The Mason Korea Faculty Senate is in the process of being constituted and voted in our meeting this morning to request representation on the GMU Faculty Senate. I have cc'd Claude Drolet on this message, who is our Acting Chair, along with our campus dean, Robert Matz.

It seems to me that the Mason Korea faculty should be given voting representation on the Senate given the [Charter's](#) definition of Senate membership.

The number of Senators representing each collegiate unit (College, Independent Unit or Unit Pool) shall be determined according to the principle of proportionality, based on the full-time equivalent size of the Instructional Faculty of each Collegiate Unit or Institute Pool on February 1st of each year, with the following restrictions....

I cannot find where an "Independent Unit" is defined but I would imagine that is what George Mason University Korea (GMUK) is since we are not a college but a unit comprised of faculty from several colleges and schools.

Can you advise us on what procedure would be involved in adding Mason Korea representation? If possible, it would be good to include Mason Korea in the process of determining the proportionate representation in February 2021. In the meantime, I'm wondering if a representative could attend meetings as a nonvoting member in order to establish communication between our faculty and those of the home campus.

There has been a concerted effort recently to enhance the relationship between Mason Korea and the University and this would be a good step in that direction. Many of the issues considered by the GMU Faculty Senate directly affect Mason Korea and it would facilitate communication and enhance faculty governance as this campus continues to construct its identity within the broader University.

Many thanks and warm regards,
Les