

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OCTOBER 6, 2021
ELECTRONIC MEETING 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Present: Lisa Billingham, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Richard Craig, Charlotte Gill, Mark Ginsberg, Carol Kissal, Kumar Mehta, Keith Renshaw, Suzanne Slayden, Solon Simmons, Matt Theeke

I. Approval of Minutes: September 9, 2021: Hearing no objections or corrections, the minutes were approved as submitted.

II. Announcements

- **Provost Ginsberg** made announcements.
 - Thanked group for being involved in Provost Extension Review Committee.
 - Noted that the university is approaching close to 2/3 undergraduate classes being face-to-face, 1/3 virtual in spring (at graduate level, about 3/4 to 1/4). Seems to be matched by registrations, too, so looks like the right balance – probably need just a bit more face-to-face.
 - Also working on how to ensure the right balance of hybrid student services – will be involving Instructional Continuity Working Group in that work.
 - Family weekend will be October 15 -17th. Many events are sold out, which means we have a really large number of parents coming.
 - Presidential Investiture takes place the week of October 18th – substantive program is planned.
 - Provost Ginsberg has made the following four appointments to the Task Force for Reimagining Faculty Roles and Rewards:
 - Kim Eby – Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development
 - Ken Ball, Dean CEC (Dean rep)
 - Jaime Lester, Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs, CHSS (Associate Dean Faculty Affairs rep)
 - Rosemary Higgins, Associate Dean for Research, CHHS (Research Council rep)
 - Provost has agreed to centrally fund some administrative resources to help with TFRFRR (project management assistance or wage assistance for a graduate student, perhaps in the Higher Education Program)
- **Sr. VP Kissal** made announcements.
 - Tomorrow's Master Plan Meeting is culmination of work done in Phase 1 & 2.
 - Trying to tie together Strategic Plan, Master Plan, and (Capital) Campaign over next 10 years
 - Had successful Board of Visitors meeting on Thursday. Thinking about groundbreaking in Arlington in January.

- Extensive infrastructure work on campus administration and operations underway. Lot of headway in (e.g., wi-fi, financial, administrative or research systems) – hope to speak about this at October 20th or subsequent Faculty Senate meeting
- SVP serves as chair of CBOs for all universities in Virginia this year with regard to legislature, and President Washington spends a lot of time talking to legislative representatives about funding. Virginia Business Higher Education Committee poised to align with GMU to ask for about \$800M to be added to base for higher education (400M next year, 400M following year), spread out among all the institutions across the Commonwealth. Working with a lot of people to secure this – will see how it goes in context of election year.
- In response to question on enrollment and budget, SVP Kissal indicated revenue is actually up from the projected budget that was passed in May, due to federal relief money and increase in other revenue lines like research. Impact of decrease in projected number of credit hours is about \$14M loss in revenue, but overall revenue picture has gone up slightly.

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

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden, Chair

- Add/Drop Deadline Issues with the Registrar: Registrar indicated they wanted every add/drop deadline to be on a Monday – but classes do not always begin on a Monday, so deadlines should not be on a Monday (in years when classes begin on Tuesday, classes meeting on Monday only will have less opportunity to evaluate class before having to decide on drop/add). Academic Policies Committee unanimously agreed that Monday deadline was not suitable – should be what Faculty Senate approved ~10 years ago, which is add deadline is 8 days from the first day of class excluding holidays, and drop deadline is 22 days from the first day of classes, excluding holidays. Haven't yet received response from Registrar on this.
 - Provost Ginsberg indicated he would contact Registrar to understand issue and ask him to get in touch with Chair Slayden quickly

B. Budget and Resources – Kumar Mehta, Co-Chair

- No report – trying to get a handle on university budget and prioritize issues for the year

C. Faculty Matters – Solon Simmons, Chair

- Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA) survey is closed – getting ready to distribute responses and start analysis – will also inform process relevant to provost extension
 - Timing of next FEA survey is an issue. Three different major surveys in play: Gallup Core, COACHE (chaired by Kim Eby) and FEA. Gallup, COACHE scheduled to launch in spring.
 - We fielded FEA this fall, but still missed evaluation cycle for Deans, etc. Would like to field FEA in Spring to hit evaluation cycle, but that would mean COACHE from Feb – Apr, and FEA probably be in May, alongside Gallup.
 - Surveys all serve different purposes: COACHE is for nationally comparable data about faculties. Gallup is for employees (faculty and staff) to compare experience of our

employees with those of other industries in the region, not just universities. FEA is to provide feedback for shared governance.

- With these factors in mind, Chair Simmons asked Executive Committee's opinion about the timing for the next FEA survey – May 2022 or early fall? Subsequent discussion raised the following points:
 - Need data within first couple of weeks of Fall to include in evaluation process. Period of evaluation is technically through June 30.
 - Option: run FEA mid-late April, and FM works on before “2-week post-finals” end of contract availability. Pro: Get full quantitative and qualitative data in time for evaluation. Cons: Busy time of year, conflicts with either COACHE or Gallup (or both), doesn't include full period of evaluation (goes through June 30)
 - Option: run FEA a couple of weeks before the fall semester starts (e.g., August 1 – September 1st). Pros: better time of year for engagement, no conflict with COACHE/Gallup, likely gives enough time for FM Committee to get quantitative results to be considered within evaluation process. Cons: very fast start for FM Committee, not enough time for qualitative analysis to be included in evaluation, possible some faculty won't engage due to timing of launch (last bit of summer)
- Another issue – Deans want their report of activity included for consideration by faculty completing FEA. FM had done this for a couple of years, couldn't do it this past year due to timing. Deans would need to prepare it before FEA is distributed. Some sentiment that Deans should consider communicating what they've done to faculty *independently* of FEA – they don't need to rely on FM's distribution of FEA to communicate.
 - If we go with Aug 1 – Sep 1 timing, Deans could combine report of prior year's activity with a “welcome back” message of sorts
- Faculty have raised concern about the global understanding requirement in Mason Core – specifically how content might be determined by central administrative (e.g., an associate provost would determine 2/3 of content, which would then bring it back for faculty), which raises issues of academic freedom. Also, concern about removing this requirement, as it seems like, particularly these days, more global understanding would be better than less.
 - Resulting discussion noted that proposals from Mason Core Committee have not yet been finalized, so still in flux. Some of this relates to a foundational social justice course that gets at structural issues related not just to racism, but to other inequities in society. Trying to figure out how to do this without increasing the size of the Core. Mason Core Committee will bring a proposal to FS probably late Fall or early Spring.
 - Two primary issues are (1) idea of pitting “domestic” versus “international” diversity (why give up on the global university concept?); (2) control of the curriculum in the foundational course (learning objectives are one thing, but specific assignments determined to 2/3 content would be problematic)
 - Another discussion point was whether issues like this could be addressed outside of a course (e.g., speaker series) – but that is much easier with grad students vs. undergrads. Also, this has budget implications in current budget model (where is “revenue” to compensate the time needed for speaker series)

D. Nominations – Richard Craig and Charlotte Gill, Co-Chairs

- Need a call for nominees for Grading Process Task Force, Faculty Senator to serve on the Technology Policy Committee, and to confirm whether a member of the UPTRAC committee wishes to resign, for which we may need a tenured faculty member (not Senator) also.

E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham, Chair

- No news on hiring someone for Ombuds position
- O&O has met, still working on goals overall, but two big goals are to make needed edits to Standing Rules and By-Laws. Will confer with Melissa and committee about whether one has priority, both need to be rewritten.
- Put out a call to see if any committees want to make changes to their charges, so we can work as a committee or individual committee members. There are some items coming from the Technology Policy Committee and ATAC

IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

A. Faculty Handbook Revisions Committee – Suzanne Slayden

- Potential revisions to the committee's charge were discussed, with some historical context.
- Comments and suggestions from the Executive Committee included specifically naming Provost appointees as ex-officio members, framing the committee charge so any FS requests for changes to proposed revisions from the committee must be referred back to the Faculty Handbook Committee as a whole, and whether revisions to the charge must be incorporated into Handbook itself. O&O Committee will also look at the charge.

V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion

A. Select appointees for Task Force on Reimagining Faculty Roles and Rewards

- Extensive discussion by the Executive Committee with regard to identifying possible members that will meet all requirements of approved task force composition
- Chair Broeckelman-Post will approach identified possible members after the meeting, with goal of finalizing before next FS meeting.

B. Grading Task Force

[Appendix A](#)

- Call for nominations to be distributed

VI. Agenda for FS Meeting – October 20, 2021

- Call to order
- Approval of FS Minutes – September 22, 2021

Committee Reports

Faculty Senate Standing Committees

- Executive Committee
 - Senate Coffee Chat: Friday, October 22, 9:30am
<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/97056826569?pwd=a0g1TitvME1ZUHRub1JFT1hFaHl6dz09>
- Academic Policies
- Budget and Resources
- Faculty Matters

- Nominations
- Organization and Operations

Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

Academic Appeals Committee

Research Advisory Committee – presentation M. Laskofski (Assoc.VP Research Services)
(*deadline to submit October 12*)

- **New Business**
- **Announcements**
 - Provost Ginsberg
 - SVP Kissal
 - Background Check Report (FY 2021) - Carol Dennis, Human Resources
(*deadline to submit October 12*)
- **Remarks for the Good of the Faculty**
- **Adjournment**

VII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith Renshaw
Secretary

Appendix A

Grading Process Task Force (Long-Term Project)

GOAL

The Grading Process Task Force will consider the grading scheme used at George Mason University for its undergraduate and graduate students and make a recommendation for our future grading processes. This task force is intended to evaluate the university's previous use of the plus/minus grading system prior to COVID-19, assess the implementation of the alternative grading system as a result of COVID-19, and develop a proposal for how we will transition from the optional alternative grading system used during this crisis to the grading scale that will be in place for the future. The Task Force is further asked to be mindful of students and programs with a variety of backgrounds, as well as the communicative value of grading schemas to students once they leave the institution.

CHARGE

The Grading Process Task Force is charged with doing the following:

- (i) Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the current A+ to F structure in place
- (ii) Conduct a thorough review of peer institutions, best practices, and existing scholarship about the advantages and disadvantages of other known schemes, including such options as Mason's 'Alternative Grading Scheme' used in Spring/Fall 2020, High Pass / Pass / Fail, ranked grading, straight A-F scales, plus/minus scales, and any other system deemed worthy of consideration by members of the committee
- (iii) Make a recommendation about which grading scheme best fits the institution's mission, providing a rationale and support for that recommendation.
- (iv) Outline a potential timeline, cost, and a communication plan for implementing any recommended changes
- (v) The Task Force Chair shall be someone with a wide understanding of the Mason educational system.

DELIVERABLE OUTCOME

The Task Force is charged to bring a report, including proposed action items and rationales, to the Faculty Senate for subsequent approval and implementation by University Administration. If appropriate for time-sensitive elements, intermediate reports and action items are welcomed.

TIMELINE

The Grading Process Task Force shall deliver a preliminary report to Faculty Senate the semester following its inception, and in year two a report for final recommendations. The committee is encouraged to share regular progress as a part of the Faculty Senate agenda.

COMPOSITION

The Task Force shall be composed of:

- (i) One instructional faculty member from each college or school, elected by the faculty of that college or school, (this is not limited to tenure-track faculty)
- (ii) One member of the Academic Policies Committee
- (iii) Two students: one elected member of GAPSA and one elected member of Student Senate
- (iv) the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (or designate)
- (v) the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (or designate)
- (vi) the Director of the Stearns Center (or designate),
- (vii) representative from the Graduate Council
- (viii) the Registrar (or designate).