

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MTG.
JANUARY 19, 2022
ELECTRONIC MEETING 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Present: Melissa Broeckelman Post (chair), Lisa Billingham, Richard Craig, Mark Ginsberg (Provost), Carol Kissal (Senior VP), Kumar Mehta, Keith Renshaw, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden, Kim Eby (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development), Supriya Baily (Director, Office of Faculty Development/Professor, CEHD), Ken Walsh (Chief of Staff)

I. Approval of Minutes: October 6 and October 25, 2021 were approved as posted.

II. Announcements

- Provost Ginsberg made a series of announcements
 - Lots of changes with new Commonwealth administration, omicron variant.
 - Currently still planning for classes to being in the modality in which they've been scheduled on January 24.
 - Nationally, enrollment continues to drop. Northern Virginia Community College has had large dip for spring (maybe 10% drop compared to last spring). About 1% decline in head count, 3% in student credit hours, at Mason compared to last year. Most of the 3% decline is in undergraduate population in 3rd year or above, mostly in in-state Virginia students. A unique issue with many of our local students – maybe older, have multiple responsibilities (caregiving, finances, etc.). Because of robust out-of-state enrollment, material impact on finances should be minimal.
 - Preparing to address increased demand for behavioral/mental health care services. Worked hard last semester to develop proposal to augment services and increase preventive interventions – implementing now.
 - Several actions related to COVID.
 - Data are encouraging over the last week, relative to a few weeks ago – both regionally and on our campus.
 - The directive by Governor Youngkin obligated us to remove the requirement for vaccination and boosters for our faculty and staff, but not students. Nearly all of our faculty are already both vaccinated and boosted.
 - Continuing surveillance and screening testing protocols. All faculty and staff being tested this week, and we are pre-testing our returning residential students (all sent a testing kit that they have to complete before they come to campus, and will also be tested immediately upon arrival on campus, and a third time during first week of the semester).

- Increased our supply of N95 masks that are available to community - encouraging people to wear N95 or KN95 masks rather than cloth masks as the guidance has shifted.
 - We've asked all academic and administrative units to prepare a continuity of service plan in the event that personnel become ill and cannot be at work.
 - Given the difficulty in finding test kits, we have instituted a drive-through diagnostic testing service for any member of our community that has been in close contact with or has symptoms of COVID, separate from the surveillance or screening service. We don't want those groups co-mingling and is safer to have testers go out to cars.
- Chief of Staff Ken Walsh shared data related to COVID cases at Mason and in the region.
 - Things looked good over Fall semester – there had been some mild concern after Thanksgiving Break, but that “spike” looks barely noticeable in the context of recent omicron surge.
 - Over Winter Break, there was a dramatic increase in cases – currently, still using 14-day definition of “active cases,” so many of the “active cases” showing now are actually already resolved as of several days ago, but still within 14 days of detection.
 - With the very small number of tests conducted in the first week of January, a problem with the data feed related to student athletic testing (positive cases were being reported, but number of tests conducted were not) became apparent – the problem existed last semester, but given the large number of cases, was never detected. So the rate that had shown for student positivity (around 25%) was actually closer to 16% or so.
 - Now, when looking at day-by-day data, the cases per day are much lower than the peak in early January – almost back down to levels we were seeing in Fall. Generally, we are down now to positivity rates of 2%-3%, and that's in the context of large volume of surveillance testing.
 - Mason's own testing data shows that positivity rates in unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff are about twice as high as those for vaccinated individuals.
 - Also, Mason data shows, fairly steadily, about half the positivity rates of those in Fairfax County.
- Senator asked whether there would be a category added to the “Accommodation, Adjustment, and Modification” (AAM) criteria related to having a child at home who was *unable* to be vaccinated due to being under the age of 5.
 - Provost Ginsberg and SVP Carol Kissal noted that this category was not being added – but the university was removing the requirement to upload medical documentation of vulnerability of someone who lives with you. The university

would be respecting faculty/staff determinations of vulnerability in those who live with them.

- Senators responded that the lack of capacity to request AAM due to having a child under 5 (no vaccines yet available) is leading to undue distress in faculty and staff (and students) that is severe enough to interfere with optimal teaching and learning. It might be difficult for faculty and staff who are not privy to this level of detailed conversation might not understand the impact of the change in not requiring a doctor's note to support the vulnerability of someone you live with.
- Another Senator asked whether it is possible to have guidelines for week-by-week decisions on accommodations. SVP Kissal noted that this would open up the possibility of very different decisions across individual schools/colleges or even departments, which would be difficult to manage.
- Senator mentioned the possibility of some messaging around some of the information shared and discussed today, including:
 - Data shared by Chief of Staff Walsh, which may help to mitigate some anxiety
 - How to handle the need for temporary medical accommodations (e.g., yellow-code Health Check), as opposed to wholesale modality changes for the semester

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

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden, Chair

- Meeting with the Policy Management Group on Monday and will know after that whether we'll have something for the FS Meeting agenda February 9th.

B. Budget and Resources – Kumar Mehta, Chair

- Matt Theeke will not serve as co-chair for the spring term.
- B&R has been invited to IT investment review committee (new way of managing IT portfolio) – Chair Mehta will represent B&R. Looks promising.
- Salary data coming in February. We may have to make a second request, because there is more than one cycle of salary adjustment.
- We are in conversations with Mark and Ken on getting some B&R “face time” with “Ways and Means,” so that we can start participating in the conversations before decisions are made.

C. Faculty Matters – Solon Simmons, Chair

- No report

D. Nominations – Richard Craig, Chair

- No report

E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham, Chair

- Worked on by-laws at last meeting.
- Also working on a committee charge, sent to EXC and then back to the committee.
- If work quickly, may have something for the February 9th agenda.

IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

- Update on COACHE survey – Kim Eby & Supriya Baily, Co-Chairs
 - Thanked FSEC for letting them be part of meeting.
 - Introduced Supriya Baily (Professor & Director of Faculty Development, CEHD) as Co-Chair of Mason COACHE leadership team, with Vice Provost Eby
 - Reviewed overall benefits of COACHE faculty engagement initiative, and reviewed upcoming launch of next survey this spring (slides in [Appendix A](#))
 - Spring 2022 survey gives opportunity to compare faculty sentiment now to that of 3 years ago
 - Despite pandemic, there has been real progress in salary and compensation, clarity of RPT criteria (e.g., work in CVPA), intentional mentoring programs (e.g., CHSS), recognition and support for interdisciplinary work (e.g., CHSS), faculty support (e.g., CEHD), other efforts (e.g., CHHS has COACHE team with three different subgroups), etc.
 - Phase 1 was initial survey, and Phase 2 was analysis. Phase 3 was a data sharing effort, trying to tell people what the data might have told us, but also to encourage deans, department chairs, etc. to share transparently with all faculty. Phase 4 was deep dive with specific populations to gather and analyze qualitative data to identify ideas around action plans with different areas of focus (e.g., some things best handled at department level, others at the college level, and others at the university level). Phase 5 continues to be extensive data collection and mining, summary reports, trying to get this in front of as many stakeholder groups as possible (e.g., ARIE committees, Research Council, Term Faculty Committee), and preparation for the spring launch.
 - Had the opportunity to add custom questions for spring launch – spent extensive time thinking through those.
 - Some new questions related to reappointment and promotion for term faculty, following up on changes to Faculty Handbook, work in schools/colleges, recent incorporation of term faculty promotion within Interfolio.
 - Also added some questions about climate around inclusion – we’ll be able to analyze for differences across demographic groups
 - A Senator asked about how to have someone present to specific units. Vice Provost Eby noted to email facaffs@gmu.edu. Either she, Supriya, or someone else from leadership team would be happy to.
 - A Senator asked how results from this survey would be tied to Dean’s action plans, and how results would be disseminated directly to faculty. Vice Provost

- Eby indicated she would be happy to speak with Provost Ginsberg about how to make results readily accessible to all faculty, while still protecting confidentiality of respondents (e.g., data are identified by CIP code, so when there are few faculty within a particular CIP code, respondents could be potentially identifiable)
- A Senator noted that, in addition to COACHE survey, Gallup survey and Faculty Evaluation of Administrators survey would also be distributed this spring. Each is important – need to work on messaging to try to get strongest participation possible in each.
 - Given time constraints, the Executive Committee agreed to schedule another meeting for Monday January 31, 2022 (prior to distribution of Feb 9th Faculty Senate meeting agenda) to focus on committee reports and deeper discussion of the Task Force on Reimagining Faculty Roles and Rewards. A quick preview was provided:
 - Many things have been discussed – mostly falling into two broad areas:
 - Proposals that keep separate term and tenure-line faculty positions. Have been thinking less about “pathways” and more about ways to balance different kinds of contributions faculty make within those roles. Term and tenure-line faculty would be hired into a pathway, but that pathway may have options for workload adjustments. This model fits with Faculty Handbook as it is now, and it is already used in some units – but there is great variability in by-laws and approaches to documentation. There are different perspectives on whether or not this is desirable or feasible. The main focus within this approach is making sure that evaluations are aligned with the ways the workload has been constructed across the unit (for both term and tenure-line faculty). The primary distinction between tenure-line and term faculty: tenure-line are expected to do teaching, research and service, whereas term might be doing two of the three or one of the three.
 - Proposals that remove the distinction between tenure line and term faculty (and provide tenure for all). The discussion here focuses on what the practical difference is between a tenured contract and an evergreen contract. There are questions about implementation and how to move between tenure-track and term roles.
 - Provost Ginsberg noted that the second option would be a major change in paradigm – need to think about how it fits with President Washington’s vision for the university going forward as a major R1 institution. Will bring about quite a bit of controversial conversation.
 - A Senator responded that the controversial conversation might be needed, so that all can get on the same page and decide where the university is going. There are several pieces of this discussion. Are you allowed to shift workload pre-tenure or only post tenure? How much flexibility is there in terms of what warrants promotion from associate to full, as opposed to what warrants tenure and

promotion to associate? How we define tenure in the first place (e.g., Faculty Handbook states excellence in teaching/research and high competence in the other – teaching 4:4 and doing service would not meet that definition)? Or do we start with what tenure is supposed to be and what it is supposed to do (historically, it's about protecting academics in terms of what they study and what they teach, which is a different starting point)? If we think about it as reward, then we can decide what activities deserve a reward. If we think about it in terms of what is its function, that might lead us to a different place.

- Vice Provost Eby noted that what has been front and center in task force's discussions is the kinds of faculty roles and contributions that we need to acknowledge and build into a reward structure to help us meet our two-pronged mission of R1 and access to excellence. A Senator responded that a fundamental question is whether tenure is *a reward* or something else.
- A Senator noted that CEHD has a process for faculty who, after getting tenure, “drop off” in their research productivity – it involves reformulated workload with more teaching and even new titles.
- A Senator noted that we already do a lot of this in some units, which is reflected in the comments that President Washington made, when he noted that many term faculty are not teaching 4:4 – that is because so many of them have administrative jobs. So we are already doing this, but one thing we are not doing uniformly across units is dealing with Associate and Full Professors who are no longer fulfilling the “promise” of research that came with conferral of tenure – they need to be put to more productive use, which is not in their research anymore. If they are reassigned, we get more teaching – but 4:4 teaching for a lifetime may be untenable for anyone.

V. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith Renshaw
Secretary

COACHE Update: Spring 2022 Launch of Faculty Satisfaction Survey

Spring 2022

Prepared by the Mason COACHE Leadership Team
Kim Eby and Supriya Baily, co-chairs



What is the COACHE Partnership?



- ▶ Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE)
 - ▶ Harvard Graduate School of Education
 - ▶ National, research-based initiative designed to understand the job satisfaction of full-time I/R faculty
 - ▶ Opportunity to benchmark and learn from our peers
 - ▶ COACHE has over 250 partnerships, including multiple Virginia schools and R1 institutions

Background: Mason COACHE Initiative



- ▶ Mason's COACHE Faculty Engagement Initiative goals:
 - ▶ Develop a more robust picture of faculty satisfaction through collection of comprehensive data
 - ▶ Benchmark results to and collaborate with peer institutions
 - ▶ Create Mason-specific action plans
- ▶ Leadership Team is broadly representative across schools/colleges and key collaborators
- ▶ Results are benchmarked to
 - ▶ A cohort of generally similar institutions (Spring 2019, n=103)
 - ▶ A group of five self-selected peers: Iowa State University, North Carolina State University, Purdue University, University of Central Florida, and Virginia Tech.
- ▶ Factors that influenced peer selection: R1 Carnegie Classification, SCHEV peer, institutional size, number of faculty, and institutional mission.

The COACHE Faculty Satisfaction Survey



Survey Themes		
Nature of work in research, teaching, and service	Departmental engagement, quality, and collegiality	Interdisciplinary work, collaboration, and mentoring
Resources and support	Institutional leadership	Retention and negotiation
Tenure and promotion	Shared governance	Appreciation and recognition

- ▶ Mason's Response Rate in Spring 2019 was 63% (n = 954)
 - ▶ Representative sample of Mason faculty across colleges, demographic groups, and faculty rank
 - ▶ 16.7 percentage points higher than cohort; 13.5 percentage points higher than selected peers

Leadership Team Key Findings: Strengths and Areas for Growth at Mason



- Based on an integrated look at the data, the Leadership Team identified the following key findings:

Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
Faculty would recommend Mason	Salary and compensation
Department/LAU culture and leadership	Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT)
Faculty leadership	Mentoring and mentoring support
Satisfaction with support for teaching and learning	Appreciation and recognition
Visible leadership for support of diversity	Support and reward for interdisciplinary work

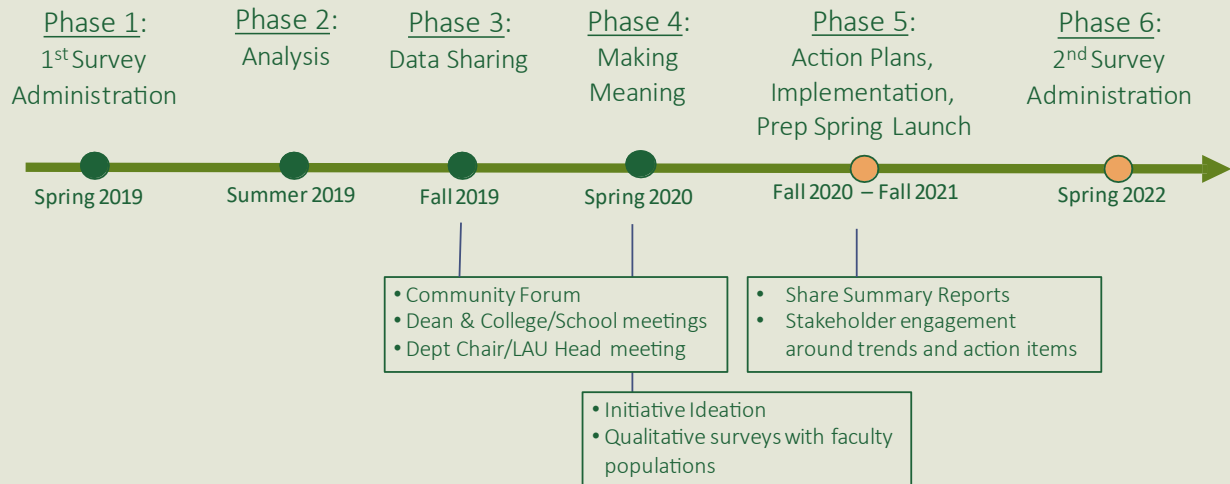
Qualitative Surveys for Key Populations



- Conducted open-ended, qualitative surveys with key faculty populations to gather more detailed information on the areas of growth and identify action items.

Term Faculty	Assistant Professors	Associate Professors	Female Associate Professors
Full Professors	Underrepresented Minority Faculty	Faculty with Inter/Multidisciplinary Research Interests	Department Chairs/LAU Heads

Our Process for Community Engagement



Why your participation and feedback matters...



- Our exceptional response rate, 63%, gave academic leadership across Mason high degrees of confidence in the data.
- Data sharing with colleges/schools has led to important discussions among leadership teams about how to use COACHE data to measure progression on issues important to faculty.
- We need to assess where we have made progress and where we continue to need significant growth since spring 2019.
- We aim to integrate COACHE metrics into Mason's strategic planning efforts to advocate for high-quality data that measures progress around faculty satisfaction related to particular aspects of faculty work life.

What's Coming This Spring...

Survey Launch:
Early February – Early April

Mass Communications Campaign

- Provost Newsletter
- The George
- Email Communications
- School/College/Department Meetings
- Blackboard Signage
- Faculty Senate
- Yard Signs
- Information Sheets
- Newsletters

- ▶ Our Goal: 75% of all I/R Faculty
- ▶ We will track response rates by College/School
- ▶ We need YOUR support, please...
 - ▶ Encourage your faculty to participate
 - ▶ Share communications to relevant listservs
 - ▶ Invite a Leadership Team member to speak with your faculty and academic leadership
 - ▶ Share how you are/have been taking actions in response to results
 - ▶ Identify COACHE metrics that could be used to measure the impact of current strategic efforts (e.g., Inclusive Excellence Plans)

For access to reports & data

[Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education \(COACHE\) - Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning | George Mason University \(gmu.edu\)](#)

For more information about Mason COACHE

[Faculty Satisfaction Survey | Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President \(gmu.edu\)](#)

Questions?

E-mail: facaffs@gmu.edu

