

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AGENDA FOR THE SPECIAL FACULTY SENATE MEETING

APRIL 21, 2021

Electronic Meeting 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

The Purpose of the Meeting is to complete unfinished business from April 7, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting and to discuss revised charge of the Faculty Success Initiative.

Only business stipulated in the call to the special meeting may be transacted.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Approval of the Minutes of March 3, 2021**
- III. Committee Reports**
 - A. Senate Standing Committees**
 - Academic Policies– Suzanne Slayden, Chair*
 - Budget and Resources– Tim Leslie, Chair*
 - Faculty Matters – Solon Simmons, Chair*
 - Nominations– Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig, co-chairs*
 - Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham, Chair*
 - Grading Process Task Force [Appendix A](#)
 - B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**
 - Sustainable Research Collections Group* [Appendix B](#)
 - [Faculty Senate of Virginia Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Master Plan Steering Committee* [Appendix C](#)
- IV. New Business**
 - Motion Requesting Faculty Matters Committee to Propose Term to Tenure-line Pathway – Tim Gibson [Appendix D](#)
 - Faculty Success Initiative – Revised Charge
- V. Announcements**
 - Provost Ginsberg
- VI. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty**
- VII. Adjournment**

ELECTRONIC MEETING

Topic: Faculty Senate Special Meeting (April 21, 2021)

Time: Apr 21, 2021 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Primary Electronic Meeting Venue - Zoom:

For security purposes -- all attendees *MUST* login using any valid zoom account to join the meeting.

IMPORTANT: Faculty Senators must login using their GMU login/password from <https://gmu.zoom.us/> to be recognized.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/92559698716?pwd=OGNQMjVqRy8yc0ljendrnbQUWN2Zz09>

In case of problems with joining the meeting, use the following information to join –

Meeting ID: 925 5969 8716

Passcode: 274050

Having Trouble Joining the Meeting with the link above?

All attendees must sign in into zoom before joining the meeting.

- Zoom sign-in: Either using your own zoom account credentials.
 1. If using GMU Zoom Account (required for all Faculty Senators)
 - a. Go to <https://gmu.zoom.us>
 - b. Click on [Sign into Your Account]
 - c. Use GMU login credentials to login. (May require 2FA authentication)
 - d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
 - e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
 - f. If asked for Passcode: enter the Passcode (highlighted above)
 2. Joining Senate Meeting using an account other than GMU Zoom Account
 - a. Go to <https://zoom.us>
 - b. Click on [SIGN IN]
 - c. Use credentials for your existing zoom account
 - d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
 - e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
 - f. If asked for Passcode: enter the Passcode (highlighted above)

One tap mobile

+12678310333,,92559698716#,,,,*274050# US (Philadelphia)

+13017158592,,92559698716#,,,,*274050# US (Washington DC)

Dial by your location

+1 267 831 0333 US (Philadelphia)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
Meeting ID: 925 5969 8716
Passcode: 274050
Find your local number: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/akWXYgifL>

Join by SIP
92559698716@zoomcrc.com

Join by H.323
162.255.37.11 (US West)
162.255.36.11 (US East)
115.114.131.7 (India Mumbai)
115.114.115.7 (India Hyderabad)
213.19.144.110 (Amsterdam Netherlands)
213.244.140.110 (Germany)
103.122.166.55 (Australia Sydney)
103.122.167.55 (Australia Melbourne)
149.137.40.110 (Singapore)
64.211.144.160 (Brazil)
69.174.57.160 (Canada Toronto)
65.39.152.160 (Canada Vancouver)
207.226.132.110 (Japan Tokyo)
149.137.24.110 (Japan Osaka)
Meeting ID: 925 5969 8716
Passcode: 274050

Backup Electronic Meeting Venue – Blackboard Collaborate (in case of problems with Zoom)

Once activated – A Blackboard announcement will clearly indicate the venue has been moved from Zoom

Collaborate Ultra:

Faculty Senators must login into Blackboard and join meeting to be recognized

- Organizations: Faculty Senate
- Menu: “Collaborate Ultra”
- Click on meeting link

Guests must use the following link to join:

<https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/6d83e373afff4c86982579ee6a10666b>

Dial-in for Collaborate: +1-571-392-7650 (PIN: 221 532 2011)

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).

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Report to Faculty Senate Spring 2021

This report provides updates on the Libraries' Elsevier journal subscriptions, the costs of large journal packages (or Big Deals), and efforts to build communication channels between the Libraries and Mason's faculty.

Elsevier "Big Deal"

In January, six members of the Virginia Research Libraries (VRL) group completed existing contract negotiations with Elsevier, one of the largest publishers of scholarly journals. Through a revised, one-year agreement for 2021, the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, William & Mary, and James Madison University libraries addressed their priorities for affordability, accessibility, and equity. This group (along with Virginia Commonwealth University) will be back at the negotiating table later in 2021 aiming to reach a longer-term agreement with Elsevier.

The 2021 agreement frees the VRL institutions from Elsevier's bundled journal package or "Big Deal," the Freedom Collection, allowing for a collection that better reflects users' needs at each of the universities. Each institution involved reduced its overall spend for the year, balancing its COVID-distressed budget for 2021. Mason now subscribes to 223 Elsevier journals, and achieved a cost reduction of 45%. Those savings enabled the Libraries to cover the cost of inflation on the rest of our electronic resource subscriptions, and thus to avoid wide-ranging cuts in our online collections, despite a reduced library research materials budget.

To learn more about our amended contract, please visit the Libraries' [Elsevier overview site](#).

Continued Access to Elsevier Articles

Mason researchers continue to have access to all Elsevier articles through the Libraries. In many cases, our researchers still have immediate access to articles. For unsubscribed journals, articles published in or before 2020 are largely covered by delayed open access (OA) and/or by our perpetual access backfiles. For articles published in 2021 in unsubscribed journals, we have instant access to OA articles only. For any articles not available at a single click, we are utilizing our interlibrary loan networks.

Recently, the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) invested in an improved interlibrary loan service (RapidILL) for all Virginia public institutions that will decrease both turnaround time and costs.

To learn more about alternate methods for locating articles in journals we no longer subscribe to, please visit the Libraries' [Alternative Access site](#).

Big Deals & the (Library) Research Materials Budget

Most of the Virginia research libraries involved in the Elsevier negotiations are experiencing budget shortfalls for 2021 and projecting budget shortfalls for 2022, and Mason is no exception. The Research Materials Budget (RMB) is the total budget allocation from the university to support the Libraries' collections. Since 2015, the RMB has been reduced every year, with the exception of a slight increase to assist with inflation in fiscal year 2020. Generally, the total cost of library materials increases by

about 3% per year, largely due to price inflation on subscription resources.

The table below provides the total cost of the five largest journal packages (Big Deals) Mason has alongside the total RMB. The five Big Deals are Elsevier, Springer-Nature, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.

Year	Cost of 5 Big Deals	Research Materials Budget	Big Deals as % of Budget
FY2014	\$ 2,435,770.41	\$ 10,121,105.00	24%
FY2015	\$ 2,527,393.78	\$ 10,381,105.00	24%
FY2016	\$ 2,616,798.66	\$ 10,221,105.00	26%
FY2017 ¹	\$ 2,550,472.45	\$ 9,936,369.00	26%
FY2018	\$ 2,649,133.13	\$ 9,455,369.00	28%
FY2019	\$ 2,726,665.14	\$ 9,405,131.00	29%
FY2020	\$ 2,871,907.92	\$ 9,505,131.00	30%
FY2021 projected ²	\$ 2,943,337.34	\$ 9,005,131.00	33%
FY2021 actual	\$ 2,406,949.54	\$ 9,083,651.00	26%

Communications with Faculty

In Fall 2020, the Libraries launched the Sustainable Research Collections Group (SRCG) to foster communication among faculty and librarians on the matters of changing scholarly communications models, sustainable journal prices, and the value of our largest journal packages. The faculty representatives on the SRCG are: Timothy Gibson (Faculty Senate), Ali Andalibi (College of Science), Jaime Lester (College of Humanities and Social Sciences), Kathryn Jacobsen (College of Health and Human Services), Christine Green (CEHD), and Richard Klimoski (School of Business). The SRCG meets approximately monthly to share information, work on a communications plan, and establish new communication channels.

In a rapidly changing scholarly communications landscape, with journal price increases outpacing library budgets, it is highly likely that Mason's other large publisher journal packages will undergo changes in the future. Mason faculty are key partners in making any necessary changes, and we welcome their input. To that end, we are currently working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning to conduct a survey of faculty and graduate students prior to our next round of big deal negotiations.

In the meantime, faculty may contact their [subject librarian](#) or fill out this [feedback form](#) to share any questions or concerns.

¹ The total cost of the five packages fell in 2017 because, due to budget cuts, the Libraries unbundled a portion of the Taylor & Francis package.

² The projected total Big Deal cost for 2021 reflects (a) the contractual price of our 2021 Elsevier subscriptions pre- negotiations, (b) zero price increase for 2021 on our Taylor & Francis package, voluntarily offered by the publisher in light of budget pressures on libraries due to the pandemic, and (c) slight price reductions on our Wiley and Springer Nature packages, negotiated by the respective consortia, again due to the pandemic.

Appendix C

Master Planning Steering Committee (Submitted by Zachary Schrag, Faculty Senate representative – March 31, 2021)

The Master Plan Steering Committee first convened in May 2020. The initial meetings featured detailed, oral presentations—accompanied by slides—by Dr. Gregory Janks of Dumont Janks, with some opportunities for questions. Those meetings did not include an explanation of the role of the Steering Committee.

On August 21, 2020, the committee first discussed its role in the campus master planning process. Dr. Janks explained that "At the completion of next month, Dumont Janks will summarize the options, and will circulate to committee for comment and review. That report will close out this first phase of work."

At the September 4, 2020, meeting, Dr. Janks set October 5, 2020, as the tentative deadline for draft distribution of the Phase 1 report. His presentation included a slide showing a comment period running from October 5-18, 2020.

On October 2, 2020, the committee met again. At this meeting, Tobi Anne Walsh, Assistant Vice President, Capital Strategy & Planning, explained that the report would not be ready as planned, and that senior leadership would have a chance to comment before the steering committee saw the report. Dr. Janks stated that adding "a couple of months to the investigative phase" would not harm the overall schedule. The steering committee did not meet again until February 12, 2021.

On January 20, 2021, the Faculty Senate representatives asked about the status of the draft report. Laura Manno, Director, Strategic Academic & Research Facilities Planning, replied that "Regarding the Phase 1 draft report for review and comment, we are targeting sharing that draft by the end of February. We'd like to update the Steering Committee that first week in February since we have been away and then release the draft soon after."

At the February 12, 2021 meeting, Dr. Janks stated that the draft report would be ready at the end of February.

On March 30, 2021, we inquired again. Ms. Walsh replied that "The Phase 1 draft report was not compiled until Phase 1 officially ended on 3/2 at the Town Hall. The report is has presently completed 2 rounds of internal review and will next go to the SC once comments are incorporated from DJ, which should be any day now. We're presently on schedule per the attached plan from last Fall, and there is still plenty of time to capture comments that will impact the Master Plan."

Appendix D

Motion Requesting Faculty Matters Committee to Propose Term to Tenure-line Pathway

Proposed by Tim Gibson

Whereas research and teaching are co-equal dimensions of intellectual life at this University.

Whereas research enriches instruction, and Instruction enriches research.

Whereas the Faculty Handbook recognizes the central role of teaching by offering two pathways to tenure: genuine excellence in teaching and genuine excellence in research.

Whereas the principle of tenure is necessary for the protection of academic freedom and the equal participation of faculty in shared governance.

We call on the Faculty Matters committee to:

1. Develop and propose an accessible, fair, and transparent application process for faculty appointed to a specific term to change their limited-term contract positions to tenure-line positions by direct appointment.
2. Develop and propose a tenure-review process for genuine excellence in teaching that is suitable for term faculty whose intellectual identities are centered on instruction and mentoring students.
3. Present a proposal for changing the Faculty Handbook to accomplish the above by March 2022.