

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE**  
**OCTOBER 7, 2015**  
**Robinson Hall B113, 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.**

**Senators Present:** Alan Abramson, Mark Addleson, Dominique Banville, Jim Bennett, Alok Berry, Lisa Billingham, Doris Bitler Davis, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Carol Cleaveland, James Conant, Betsy DeMulder, Charlene Douglas, Michele Greet, Jesse Guessford, Mark Houck, Bijan Jabbari, Chris Kennedy, Larry Kerschberg, Timothy Leslie, Kevin McCrohan, Kumar Mehta, Daniel Menascé, Linda Monson, Elavie Ndura, Bob Pasnak, Paula Petrik, Keith Renshaw, Pierre Rodgers, Catherine Sausville, Joe Scimecca, Suzanne Slayden, James Steele, Susan Trencher, Iosif Vaisman, Jenice View, Phil Wiest, Shelley Wong, S. David Wu, Masoud Yasai, Stanley Zoltek.

**Senators Absent:** Peggy Agouris, Changwoo Ahn, Kenneth Ball, Deborah Boehm-Davis, Henry Butler, Ángel Cabrera, Andrew Carle, Cher Weixia Chen, Lloyd Cohen, Rick Davis, John Farina, Mark Ginsberg, Dimitrios Ioannou, Bruce Johnsen, Karina Korostelina, David Kuebrich, Jim Metcalf, Sarah Nutter, Thomas Prohaska, Mark Rozell, June Tangney, John Zenelis.

**Visitors Present:** LaShonda Anthony, Director, Academic Integrity, University Life; Michael Biggiani, Talent Acquisition Manager, Human Resources/Payroll; Jason Byrd, Chair, Librarians' Council, University Libraries; Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, University Professor/formerly Vice President for Research; Aurali Dade, Assistant Vice President for Research Compliance; Shannon Davis, Associate Professor, Sociology; Pat Donini, Assistant Vice President, Human Resources; Kim Eby, Associate Provost for Faculty Development/Director, Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence; Cody Edwards, Associate Provost for Graduate Education; Kimberly Ford, Personnel Project Manager, Enrollment Planning and Administration, Provost Office; Mark Fournier, Assistant Vice President of Business Services, Auxiliary Enterprises;; Linn Jorgenson, Assistant Dean/Director, Disability Services; Megan Kirk, Vice Chair, Staff Senate and Human Resources Consultant, Human Resources/Payroll; Gerardine Mobley, Equal Opportunity Specialist/Trainer & Provost Liaison, Compliance, Diversity and Ethics; Janette Muir, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education; Dan O'Brien, Student Senate Liaison; Pam Patterson, Associate Vice President, University Life; Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Associate Professor, College of Education and Human Development/Chair, Effective Teaching Committee; Julian Williams, Vice President, Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics.

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

**II. Approval of the Minutes of September 9, 2015:** The minutes were approved.

**III. Announcements**

Chair Charlene Douglas introduced Provost S. David. Wu. Provost Wu reported President Cabrera has scheduled to visit all academic units, with four already complete. The Provost generally goes on these visits, and has been pleased by the far productive conversations.

Provost Wu specified four top priorities that were submitted to Richmond as part of the University's six-year plan:

(1) **Financial Aid for students.** Over 30% of our undergraduates are eligible for Pell grants, and Mason looks for continued support of underserved populations.

(2) **Faculty Compensation:** Mason is in the most expensive region in the Commonwealth, and salaries are becoming a major challenge for us in attracting and keeping quality faculty.

(3) **Request for support for research institutions.** We aspire to become a high research institution, and this requires very specific budgetary assistance.

(4) **Funding discrepancy per student.** Mason receives per-student funding at 75% the rate of in-state doctoral peers. We have submitted data and requests to try to close gap as much as we can.

The Provost said that President Cabrera made a comprehensive presentation to Virginia legislature at the end of the summer that was well-received. We are optimistic, although we are focusing on the first and second years in the budget cycle that will have the largest impact on our budget.

We recently had the kick off for the Capital Campaign. You received a summary at the last meeting. The kick-off event at the Johnson Center was well attended; we are off to a good start.

Lastly, there was a university-wide website update released recently. There were some concerns expressed such as existing sites now harder to find. We are working with University Communications Team, the Deans, and department chairs to address concerns. We share many concerns and doing our best to address issues.

Questions:

Senator: With respect to the research initiative, is funding request targeted to specific kind of research or research as a whole?

Provost Wu: Twelve different priorities, three research oriented such as faculty start-up funding. This is a very broad request that includes many different elements.

Chair Douglas reminded Senators of the Town Hall with President Cabrera, Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-4:30 p.m. Merten Hall 1201. It will also be telecast to the Arlington and Science and Technology Campuses. Both the Rector and President will be at our next Faculty Senate meeting (November 4<sup>th</sup>).

#### **IV. New Business – Committee Reports**

##### **A. Senate Standing Committees**

*Executive Committee* – no report

*Academic Policies* – Suzanne Slayden, Chair

We have received the academic year calendar and summer calendar and plan to submit them at our next meeting (November 4<sup>th</sup>).

*Budget and Resources* – no report

*Faculty Matters* – Keith Renshaw, Co-chair

We are summarizing the comments from the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators survey.

*Nominations* – no report

*Organization and Operations* – Mark Houck, Chair

We are in the process of assigning two items submitted to committees. He asked committee members to meet for a few minutes at the end of this meeting.

## **B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**

Report from the Effective Teaching Committee – Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Chair and Betsy DeMulder (Please see [Attachment A](#) for text of the full report)

In a brief presentation, Professor Valdez Pierce reviewed the charge of the Effective Teaching Committee, reproduced below:

### **Effective Teaching Committee** (*Charge revised and approved by the Faculty Senate April 23, 2014*)

**Charge:** To develop and help implement procedures which encourage and reward effective teaching, and to enable faculty to improve their teaching effectiveness independent of any evaluation procedures, and to implement procedures or evaluation of effective teaching. Also, to recommend policy to the Senate and to monitor the use of such policy for the evaluation of teachers and courses, including the following:

- A. Review, improve, and provide guidance for Institutional Research and Reporting on the course evaluation form and related procedures at least once every three years;
- B. Review existing policies relating to the faculty evaluation process, identify alternatives to these policies and recommend changes to the Faculty Senate;
- C. Work closely with the Center for Teaching Excellence to support the use of formative and self-assessment techniques and materials for promoting faculty professional growth and teaching effectiveness, including strategies for robust student feedback.

The committee conducted a survey of all full- and part-time instructional faculty in May-June, 2014. Our charge was to obtain feedback on the usefulness of the Course Evaluation form for improving teaching effectiveness. The Course Evaluation form was last revised in 2006. Over the past two years, we have worked on reviewing course evaluation forms at other universities, and preparing an annotated bibliography. Our primary goal to promote fairness and accuracy in evaluation of faculty and policies and practices that support improved teaching effectiveness.

With our report, we seek to inform the Faculty Senate of our activities and obtain their feedback on our work and recommendations. We based our recommendations on responses that indicated at least 30% agreement on a single item. For example, almost 40% of respondents indicated they want an online evaluation form.

#### Future Plans

- (1) Review research literature on reliability and validity and best practices for using course evaluations for faculty evaluation.
- (2) Provide input and guidance to IRR for revising form and online system.
- (3) Begin with already-validated items
- (4) Validate items on Course Evaluation Form

We see this as a multi-year process, with pilot testing-with randomly selected faculty.

#### Questions and Discussion:

Senator: For undergraduate academic programs that get reviewed for accreditation every 3 to 6 years by the relevant professional societies (or the Provost's office for graduate programs), can we include questions to be assigned to the accreditation objectives?

Professor Valdez Pierce: Yes. Some faculty not aware they could add instructor-specific items. This suggests a need for an awareness and information campaign where faculty are fully informed of where to go and how to add items to their course evaluation forms.

Senator: There is a discrepancy between paper and online survey forms response rates. We use paper. Fewer students respond to online forms.

Senator DeMulder: We know from experience that response rates tend to be lower online. My understanding is that IR&R has a plan in the works to introduce a new student rating of instruction system that is entirely online.

Senator: Is there research on motivation to fill out surveys online? Some schools do not allow students to see grades until the survey is completed. Maybe an option for students to say "I won't respond" before grades distributed.

A Senator from the College of Science reported they stopped making all evaluations online five years ago. A Senator from the School of Business reported they stopped using online evaluations for face to face courses two years ago because of low response rates.

Senator DeMulder: It's clear that it will be important to have a representative from online system come and talk with us. In regard to the system that we were asked to review, their service includes emails to students that allow them to access and complete all courses as a single effort. The system also sends reminders to students.

Senator: I understand interest in polling students online is not the best format no matter what questions are. Why are we not talking about this, that IR&R wants to move to a system?

Professor Valdez Pierce: We only heard about this last month.

Senator: Why is the decision to back to the paper evaluations by the colleges being overturned? Online evaluations appear to have been a failed experiment.

Senator DeMulder: It seems that the Faculty Senate has not been involved, although the Committee didn't know that.

Senator: Isn't this an issue to be addressed by the Academic Policies Committee, not by IR&R?

Senator: Have you considered the effects of gender and racial bias? In US institutions, faculty of color are consistently rated lower.

Professor Valdez Pierce: Our annotated bibliography is an initial exploratory attempt at identifying research on the subject of course evaluations. We recently found a book with over 100 references on validity and reliability of course evaluation forms. We will include in our search for additional references the role of racial, ethnic, gender, and other forms of bias.

A Senator: Has the committee tried to address the issue of overly high ratings on most questions? University-level averages on teacher evaluations tend to be close to 4.5 out of 5. I was wondering whether they might consider the possibility of trying to create clearer anchors that might leave room for more variance in students' responses.

Professor Valdez Pierce: This is something to be addressed in the validation process for course evaluation forms.

Provost Wu: My understanding is that this discussion began before my arrival, and that it is a national issue. I applaud your approach to see what other people are doing and reaching out. We should keep an open mind, not outright a bad idea, to look at it from different angles, not going to one side or the other.

Senator: Do you have a sense of how much this costs?

Professor Valdez Pierce: Putting the forms online was not a decision we made, that we were only asked by IRR to review software they had already identified, and for that reason I thought it best to address that question to IRR.

Senator: We did this five years ago, faculty said NO. Thank you for your work.

## **V. Other New Business**

### **A. Update on Restructuring Plan for the Office of Research – Claudio Cioffi-Revilla**

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some ideas and key communication on reform about a year ago. Some of you participated on the Task Force and know with more detail than we can go into today. Orientation in world of research and Mason and how it has changed. Not like an agile canoe... more like a large scale ship beginning to change course. As a systems scientist, Provost Wu communicated that if the environment changes and system does not change, then the end is near. Things have changed, some things within, some things beyond our control. Catastrophic collapse in public funding for public education in Virginia as the capacity for research has grown. We need to re-engineer activity. Fundamental underpinnings guided work of Task Force, please see [Attachment B](#).

### **Discussion**

Senator: This does not make a lot of sense to me. How much research money is coming in today? What do you predict in 5-10 years' funding?

Professor Cioffi-Revilla: This is not a bureaucratic movement; you do need some changes in personnel and faculty activity. Research funding is at \$100M right now, which is not enough to get to next level (\$300-500M/year). We cannot make this shift in a year, and hope to approach this change in 3-5 years' time. There should be significant, notable change in five years' time.

Senator: Four questions:

1. How many faculty serve on the Task Force? Not many...
2. How much will the reorganization cost?
3. What is the place of humanities and fine arts in this?
4. What is the point of this?
5. Greater than \$100M? Research in research category 1?

This doesn't do anything for the faculty of this institution, puts a feather in the administration's hat.

Professor Cioffi-Revilla: The point is to move ahead and make progress as a university. Stakeholders have an investment in the institution to see us grow, and attract more growth, in humanities and social sciences, not targeted to individual disciplines

Senator: Everything in this report is focused on Centers. There is very little attention beyond PI Faculty.

Professor Cioffi-Revilla: Quite a number of programs are not made for centers such as summer funding, seed funding, and multidisciplinary grants. We do not have a program where centers can apply. Centers should be crucibles for collaboration to take place, lowering costs by providing spaces, and staff know-how in ways departments are not designed to do.

### **B. Exam Procedures – Office of Disability Services**

Chair Douglas reported that the Office has found some irregularities within the tests it proctors. She recommends that all professors now make use of the option to request a scan of the exam before it leaves ODS and verify that it matches the exam delivered to the instructor.

### **VI. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty**

A Senator spoke of concern for colleague Rick Coffinberger, a former senator, who was moved out of his office during his final semester on campus before retirement due to "space considerations." After being placed in an office allotted to another faculty member who was off campus, Dr. Coffinberger was asked to share this space with another faculty this fall. After protesting this arrangement, Rick was given a new office away from his colleagues. The senator wanted to deter those with the power to make these decisions from acting in this way again.

A Senator observed he did not feel he had enough information for evaluation of President Cabrera in the Presidential Reappointment Survey distributed today. He suggested the Faculty Senate request in writing his (President Cabrera's) accomplishments related to the survey.

### **VII. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Timothy Leslie  
Secretary

#### **ATTACHMENT A**

Report from the Effective Teaching Committee is posted on the Faculty Senate website at [http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/senate/MINUTES\\_FS\\_2015-16/Effect%20Tchg%20Comm%20Annual%20Report%20Sept%202015%20Rev.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/senate/MINUTES_FS_2015-16/Effect%20Tchg%20Comm%20Annual%20Report%20Sept%202015%20Rev.pdf) .

#### **ATTACHMENT B**

Update on Restructuring Plan for the Office of Research is posted on the Faculty Senate website at [http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/senate/MINUTES\\_FS\\_2015-16/ORED%20POWERPOINT%209.24.15-TO%20BOV-RC.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/senate/MINUTES_FS_2015-16/ORED%20POWERPOINT%209.24.15-TO%20BOV-RC.pdf) .