

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
NOVEMBER 2, 2016
Robinson Hall B113, 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

Senators present: Alan Abramson, Mark Addleson, Alok Berry, Lisa Billingham, Doris Bitler Davis, Virginia Blair, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Carol Cleaveland, James Conant, Shannon Davis, Betsy DeMulder, Charlene Douglas, Pamina Firchow, David Galloway, Pamela Garner, Michele Greet, Jesse Guessford, Dimitrios Ioannou, Bijan Jabbari, Rebecca Jones, Chris Kennedy, Larry Kerschberg, David Kravitz, David Kuebrich, Timothy Leslie, Daniel Menascé, Linda Monson, Elavie Ndura, Robert Pasnak, Daniel Polsby, Jeremy Rabkin, Keith Renshaw, Catherine Sausville, Joe Scimecca, Suzanne Slayden, James Steele, June Tangney, Susan Trencher, Girum Urgessa, Iosif Vaisman, Jenice View, S. David Wu, Stanley Zoltek.

Senators absent: Peggy Agouris, Kevin Avruch, Kenneth Ball, Dominique Banville, Jim Bennett, Deborah Boehm-Davis, Henry Butler, Ángel Cabrera, Rick Davis, John Farina, Mark Ginsberg, Diana Karczmarczyk, Bethany Letiecq, Kevin McCrohan, Kumar Mehta, Sarah Nutter, Thomas Prohaska, Pierre Rodgers, Mark Rozell, John Zenelis.

Visitors present: Sr. Vice President J.J. Davis; Esther Elstun, Professor *emerita*, Modern and Classical Languages; Kim Ford, Personnel Project Manager, Academic Administration, Provost Office; Janette Muir, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education; Professor Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Chair, Effective Teaching Committee; Dr. Kumar Raghuraman, Associate Provost for Research and Assessment.

I. Call to Order: Chair Keith Renshaw called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. Approval of the Minutes of October 5, 2016: The minutes were approved.

III. Announcements

Provost Wu provided a quick recap of the Budget Town Hall Meeting which he and Sr. Vice President J.J. Davis just held. He presented an overview of big initiatives in the university, beginning with Diversity and Inclusion. Half of our students are from different minority groups and are the first generation to attend college; 30% of students qualify for Pell grants. Across all these different groups they have comparable accomplishment rates in terms of graduation. Our graduates have the highest starting salaries in Virginia. With diversity of population, students ask we're diverse, but are we inclusive? Do students always feel welcome, included, in social experiences here on campus, in dorms? We are trying to increase awareness of these issues in the faculty and staff hiring process; to find ways to increase the diversity of the pool of applicants. Search committees receive training to identify unintended biases in reviewing CVs, etc. Also deepening campus dialogue, to do a campus climate assessment survey to see what people are experiencing. We will offer Cultural Competency Training using internal expertise to increase awareness of faculty. Not trigger warnings or things of that nature. To broaden student support services, organization of University Life is changing; adding resources to support diversity of population, including the Writing Center. Our guided Pathway Program enhances our partnership with NOVA. Students at Nova can explicitly express intention to attend Mason so we can make them aware of appropriate changes so they will be more successful when they come here. Our transfer student population is a little larger than our freshman class. Transfer students perform better, and are highly motivated, thanks to strong school systems in northern Virginia. Referred to

the Mason Impact Project, which he noted in his initial letter to faculty at the beginning of the semester.

Update for online partnership – we signed a ten-year maintenance agreement with Wiley. They provide a university-wide platform allowing academic programs to take advantage. Selecting Wiley is the result of a long selection process with 18 vendors, committee narrowed down to 8 then to 3, then made site visits and selected Wiley. Wiley is the primary provider for some regional peer schools such as Johns Hopkins. They do marketing and student services, monitor student performance (attendance) but all of the academic side remains under complete control of our faculty. They have a professional-looking website and are well connected.

Plug for faculty and staff club – started by Joe Scimecca and some other faculty members at the Tyler House. Will open January 30, 2017 – a great opportunity to get a nice breakfast or lunch. The more people who sign up, the cheaper it gets for all.

Questions/Discussion:

A Senator asked the Provost about a reported directive to all deans that if scholarly activity doesn't meet a standard that teaching loads would rise. Since the university has stated that teaching and scholarship were equal, would there also be a reverse, for example, if teaching evaluations were not high enough would faculty be required to teach to produce more scholarship? If not, adding courses to the workload of faculty for a "shortfall" in publications, looks like teaching is a punishment. Were all colleges told to come up with a plan of this sort?

Provost Wu: That's totally news to me. But what is going on – in a retreat with deans last spring, topic of faculty workload guidelines was discussed. Each of the ten colleges and schools has its own guidelines (or not), inconsistent with each other. The #1 problem is transparency, guidelines need to be written, known to all. He asked deans over the course of the academic year to develop with your faculty a workload guideline faculty can agree on. He's OK with each college with its own guidelines, but there is a need for some guidelines. He did not tell them how many papers to publish...

Follow up: If in fact people decided publishing a certain number of articles and a certain number of cases, then they would be assigned to teach more courses like a punishment?

Provost Wu: Some colleges have guidelines at different stages of career in teaching and research, to recognize different kinds of contributions and adjust workload composition accordingly. Person with a lot of advising PhD students different workload than others, to recognize. To have a thoughtful and equitable policy everybody can agree on. He asks deans to develop this with faculty. Faculty need to be engaged in this, suggests you ask your dean.

A Senator: Re Strategic Plan: Goals of graduation, excellence of students, research institution: Different faculty in some departments have different profiles. To come up with useful homogenous set of guidelines unproductive.

Provost Wu: Not to have university guidelines, to do what each college/school wants to do. Not to reinvent the wheel, best practices already in place, to pick what makes sense. We need to have expressive guidelines for transparency; to reach agreement via internal deliberation to come up with them.

A Senator from the College of Health and Human Service noted our dean sent out guidelines with 20% of our salaries from external funding or face a higher teaching load. The policy would not be as stringent as stated, but need clarification.

Provost Wu told deans to work with faculty to come up with equitable set of guidelines – engagement piece very important. Faculty need to have input in process; never intended as a top-down mandate. Provost Wu’s only mandate is that we need to have one.

Senior VP J.J. Davis provided a brief recap on the budget situation. Last spring the state of Virginia declared a surplus, but that was eviscerated in the fall. For FY 16 they pulled \$8M pay raise money and told us we couldn’t do pay raise. The BOV approved a 2% raise on average for everyone, Most of us will see pay raises in December... Strategic Retention Initiative. There will be no increases in health insurance in December. The state is threatening to take away Robinson and utility (upgrade) funding, they want us to come up with money first. Don’t see a lot for the current FY – one cut (\$3M) we are working through. FY 18 is a new ball game. There may be considerable readjustments – we have been told to prepare for sizable base budget reductions of 3%, 5% and 7%. All options are on the table. We have to continue to diversify revenue structure, less dependent on the State of Virginia; a long term national trend. We are looking at tuition pricing in a new way, to get a working group together soon. Fundraising and partnerships among other ways to increase revenue. At this point we cannot rule out base budget cuts. Will have more information by December, just before Christmas when the Governor’s Budget will be released. This is the time for us to work together.

Questions/Discussion:

A Senator: What caused the Commonwealth of Virginia’s finances to go south?

Sr. VP Davis: The state built a certain number of assumptions which were overstated, resulting in a \$1.6B budget shortfall.

In response to a question from another Senator about tuition pricing, Sr. VP Davis responded we will need to look at option of increasing tuition. There is lots of different information – Virginia does not have enough resources ...for FY 18 budget today.

A Senator: J.J. has had to come with 1.5% of raise; they came up with a 2% raised. If that money isn’t found, we get nothing. She thanked J.J. very much for her efforts. (Applause).

Sr. VP Davis responded it was a team effort, it takes all of us.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Senate Standing Committees

Executive Committee – Keith Renshaw, Chair

The committee is working on a number of issues. If you have business for us to consider, please send before our next meeting (November 21).

Academic Policies - Suzanne Slayden, Chair

We are waiting for the Registrar to submit the Summer 2017 and next three-year Academic Calendars. The AP Committee is charged with the review of the AP section of the catalog. The committee recommends approval of minor modifications to the

[University Catalog: AP.3.9 Grade Appeals](#). A suggested revision to the fifth paragraph, fourth sentence “If the dean decides that a recommendation to a change of the grade is appropriate...” to replace “a” in front of “change” with “the” was included to clarify how the

dean figured into this. No further suggestions were made. The motion was accepted. Thanks to Dr. Robert Reiser of the History Department for his suggestions.

Budget and Resources – no report

Faculty Matters – Alan Abramson, Chair

We are talking about a number of issues: qualifications for unit heads – some not tenured, referred to Faculty Handbook Committee. There is no requirement for evaluation of unit heads, also referred to the Faculty Handbook Committee. Also looking at requirement/interest in faculty generating salaries from grants. He invites faculty to send suggestions to the committee at aabramso@gmu.edu .

Nominations – Mark Addleson, Chair

The committee presents the following slate of seven nominees to fill five vacancies on the Ad Hoc Institutional Conflict of Interest Policy Committee. Brief statements of interest provided by each nominee were also distributed from the floor. He edited D. Polsby's statement; please contact me if you wish to see his longer statement. No further nominations were made from the floor. Ballots were distributed with instructions to vote for five nominees. Nominees must be elected by a majority of the Faculty Senate. If not all the nominees receive a majority vote, there may need to be a run-off election of any remaining candidates. Faculty committee members must represent three different colleges/schools. At least one member of the committee must be a senator.

The nominees are:

Matthew Karush, Professor, History and Art History, CHSS

Chris Kennedy, Assistant Professor, Environmental Science and Policy, COS (Senate)

David Kuebrich, Associate Professor, English, CHHS (Senate)

Bethany L. Letiecq, Associate Professor and Program Director, Human Development and Family Science, CEHD and CHSS (Senate)

Lance A. Liotta, MD PhD, University Professor and Co-Director, Center for Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine and Clinical Proteomics Lab, COS

Daniel Polsby, Professor, Antonin Scalia Law School (Senate)

Jim Wolfe, Entrepreneur in Residence and Assistant Professor, School of Business

Ballots were distributed by the sergeants at arms and tabulated.

The five candidates each received a majority of votes cast and were elected to serve:

David Kuebrich, Associate Professor of English, CHSS

Bethany Letiecq, Associate Professor/Director, Human Development & Family Sci. CEHD

Matthew Karush, Professor, History and Art History, CHSS

Lance Liotta, University Professor, COS

Chris Kennedy, Assistant Professor, Environmental Science and Policy, COS

Organization and Operations - Lisa Billingham, Chair

DRAFT MOTION TO CREATE THE “RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE” AS A NEW UNIVERSITY STANDING COMMITTEE

Background George Mason University is Virginia’s largest public research university. Research is a key focus of its strategic plan and associated 10-year goals. In the last year, George Mason was also moved into the “Highest Research Activity” classifications, becoming one 115 universities in that top ranking.

Despite the clear and increasing importance of research at George Mason, there is currently no group of faculty devoted to considering and providing input on issues related to research at George Mason. The new VP of Research, Deborah Crawford, has indicated a desire for greater and more systematic faculty input on issues related to research. Given that research is anticipated to be a major focus of the University in the foreseeable future, there is a need for an established, continuing committee to fulfill this purpose.

Therefore, it is moved that:

Motion

- 1) The Faculty Senate create a new University Standing Committee entitled “Research Advisory Committee.”
- 2) The composition of the committee will include five tenure-line faculty members (at least one of whom is a Faculty Senator) elected by the Faculty Senate. These faculty members should represent a minimum of three different colleges/schools, with **at least two faculty** members at the level of Professor and at least two faculty members at the level of Associate Professor. These five elected members will serve staggered 3-year terms. Finally, the committee will include one ex-officio member, who is one of the two faculty representatives to the BOV Research committee.
- 3) The charge of the committee will be: “To work in concert with the Office of Research and its subsidiary offices (e.g., Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, Office of Sponsored Programs), as well as the Associate Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, in shaping the research initiatives and policies of the university. The committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Vice President of Research, the Associate Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and associated offices. In this role, the committee will meet at least twice per semester with the Vice President of Research, and as needed with other individuals and offices. The committee will provide a report on its activities to the Faculty Senate at least annually.”

Discussion:

Are the nominees voted upon across the university?

Chair Renshaw: A broad call for nominees was distributed, but voted on by the Faculty Senate.

In response to concerns expressed by several Senators which mandates participation by three schools among five elected committee members, ***an amendment was made and seconded to increase number of committee members from 5 to 7 members and change representation***

from 3 to 5 different colleges and schools as a way to diversify research committee membership. ***The amendment was approved.***

A second amendment to specify one committee member must be from a humanities based discipline was proposed. Should we specify one member must be included from CHSS? Several Senators objected to singling out one college/school over another. With respect to specific disciplines, many people call themselves social scientists – splitting hairs difficult. By expanding committee, not hard to get someone in social sciences. To include acknowledgement that humanities have a hard time in this setting – an institutional problem. Particular nature of research – individual, not so much collective/large-grant based research. What does everyone have in mind, to have a sense of what humanities are? There are distinctions between the humanities side and social sciences side in CHSS (College of Humanities and Social Sciences). There are other ways to define it. Philosophy research very different than history research – to require one member must be included from humanities/CHSS is bound to leave people out.

The amendment to specify one committee member must be from a humanities based discipline was not approved.

One Senator asks if the new committee as an advisory committee to provide input to the Vice President of Research? Another Senator disagrees, sees the committee provides an opportunity to work in concert with the Vice President of Research on a policy-making committee; to keep open to those willing and ready to serve.

A third amendment “The Research and Advisory Committee should avoid recommendations that conflict with the University’s COI policies and its policy recommendations will not in any way supersede the authority of the University’s COI policies.” was made and seconded.

Discussion: Amendment proposed to avoid ambiguity. This committee, like any committee, should not go against policy.

The amendment was not approved. Senator Kuebrich, author of the third amendment remarked the amendment was voted down because it was unnecessary observation not to recommend COI policies and would not supersede authority of University COI policies. Chair Renshaw responded he cannot speak to the people’s intention on this.

A fourth amendment to delete “tenure-line” in the composition of the committee was made and seconded.

We have a lot of research faculty; membership on the committee should be open to include them. Should committee membership be opened to research and term (instructional) faculty as well? As tenured faculty, we are the long term researchers; research faculty move in and out of the university, supported by soft research funding; is funding by external research grants contrary to the motion? Some research faculty have been here for twelve years. Is it fair to ask research faculty to serve on committee which may require a lot of time commitment? Federal regulations have a lot of gray areas in terms of research, why not allow research faculty who wish to volunteer to serve on committee to do so? Faculty involved in teaching only would not have the expertise to deal with research. Trying to be as inclusive as possible, we contradict ourselves here, very problematic. Faculty without tenure or without possibility of tenure are at

risk in ways tenured faculty are not. If we include “tenure-line” would this include administrative faculty?

The amendment was not approved.

The motion as amended (below) was approved:

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B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

External Academic Relations Committee – Alok Berry, co-chair.

Mason Lobbies Day will take place on Wednesday January 25, 2017. We have had very good support in the last three years. He asked faculty to support students’ absence from classes as they participate in this day-long event and encourages more students to attend.

V. New Business

A. **Online Course Evaluations** – Dr. Kumar Raghuraman, Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment: Dr. Kumar thanked the Faculty Senate for giving him an opportunity to speak. He has also taught as an instructional faculty member at assistant professor level, and has seen all sorts of systems as he worked in two other institutions over the past fifteen years. Please see his presentation: [Student Ratings of Instruction \(SRI\) – Paper vs. Online.](#)

In “Concerns about Online SRI”, he noted in the first two years, expect a 30% drop rate. You will always see 10-15% drop for several years, based on other institutions/vendors. Need to be tolerant, understanding for 2-3 years. Online evaluation suffers with small classes of 4-5 students. Faculty/institution need to decide how to address (participation) by students who don’t attend class. He also assured faculty that not accessible to administrators – a fully secured system with only three employees involved.

Questions/Discussion: Is there a way for those who teach large courses with multiple instructors to communicate results internally? Yes.

Why are the results of Evaluation Surveys not subject to FOIA? Not FOIAble as between student and professor.

Departments chairs not supposed to look at paper based anyway, we used to have a department chair that looked at student comments – policy routinely violated. Suggestions to incentivize student participation made and countered as students may also use evaluation as way to punish faculty. Please send comments and suggestions to Dr. Kumar and Chair Renshaw.

VI. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty

Senator Charlene Douglas will receive the David W. Rossell Quill Award at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow. Congratulations Charlene! Please email concerns about technology issues to Professor Stanley Zoltek (szoltek@gmu.edu) Chair of the Technology Policy Committee.

VII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene Douglas
Secretary