

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APRIL 21, 2021
Electronic Meeting 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

Number of Attendees: 126

Senators Present:

Alan Abramson, Karen Akerlof, Matt Andre, Ann Ardis, Alok Berry, Lisa Billingham, Virginia Blair, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Eric Claeys, Carol Cleaveland, James Conant, Richard Craig, Shannon Davis, Betsy DeMulder, Daniel Garrison, Edward Gero, Tim Gibson, Mark Ginsberg, Victoria Grady, Kenneth Griffin, Dimitrios Ioannou, Aditya Johri, Brett Josephson, Larry Kerschberg, Tim Leslie, Tamara Maddox, Kumar Mehta, Daniel Menascé, Maury Peiperl, Rachelle Perkins, Marvin Powell, Keith Renshaw, Pierre Rodgers, Esperanza Roman Mendoza, Mark Rozell, Catherine Sausville, Jessica Scarlata, Zachary Schrag, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden, Cristiana Stan, Benjamin Steger, Kun Sun, Rebecca Sutter, Matt Theeke, Susan Trencher, David Wong, Tom Wood, John Zenelis

Senators Absent: Robert Baker, Kenneth Ball, James Bennett, Meagan Call-Cummings, Rick Davis, Germaine Louis, Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm, Alpaslan Özerdem, Robert Pasnak, Ken Randall, Gregory Robinson, Joseph Scimecca, Gregory Washington, Jie Zhang

Visitors Present

Julia Adams (Adjunct - UNIV 100), Paul Allvin (Vice President, Strategic Communications and Marketing), LaShonda Anthony (Director, Academic Integrity), LaShonda Anthony (Director, Academic Integrity, University Life), Michael Bloom (Associate Professor, Global and Community Health), Carrie Bonilla (Assistant Professor – Spanish, Modern and Classical Languages), Lisa Breglia (Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, CHSS), Alecia Bryan (Admin Faculty / Associate Director of Development / CHSS Development), Andrew Bunting (Executive Director of Enrollment Services), Carlos Chism), Aurali Dade (Interim Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact), Angela Detlev (Assistant Provost, Institutional Research), Kathleen Diemer (AVP, Advancement), Gesele Durham (Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning), Kim Eby (Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development), Cody Edwards (Associate Provost for a Sustainable Earth; Executive Director, Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation), James Finkelstein (Professor Emeritus of Public Policy, Schar School of Policy and Government), Brian Fitzpatrick (Part-time Faculty, English), Lila Fleming (Term Assistant Professor, Global and Community Health, CHHS), Kimberly Ford (Director of Personnel Operations/Office of the Provost), Samuel Frye (School of Integrative Studies), Cynthia Fuchs (Interim Director, College of Visual and Performing Arts), Saiid Ganjalzadeh (Term Assistant Professor), Marcy Glover (Operations Manager/Office of the Provost), Renate Guilford (Associate Provost for Academic Administration), Jo Ann Henson (Business and Economics Librarian University Libraries), Kimberly Hoffman (Lead, Science & Technology Team and Mercer Library; University Libraries), Ginny Hoy (English & BIS), Ibrahim Kargbo, (CHHS), Jamie Lester (Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs/Strategic Initiatives, CHSS), Stephanie Liberatore (Term Associate Professor, English), Lisa Lister (Term Full Prof./Assoc Director of Composition/English), Troy

Lowery (Director, Student Outreach, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, CHSS), Cynthia Lukyanenko (Term Assistant Professor, English), Kimberly MacVaugh (Librarians' Council Secretary), Christopher Magee (Social Sciences Librarian / Librarian / University Libraries), Doug McKenna (University Registrar), Janette Muir (Associate Provost), David Namiotka (Dir. Finance Admin Systems Team / Fiscal Services), Amanda Ogisi (Associate Director, Academic Integrity, University Life), Eunkyong Park (Director of Assessment and Planning, University Life), Sarah Parnell (Interim Operations and Administration Manager, Office of the Provost), Cindy Parker (Faculty, SBUS), Christy Pichichero (Associate Professor of History and French; CHSS Director of Faculty Diversity), Justin Ramsdell (Associate Professor), Shelley Reid (Stearns Center), Marguerite Rippey (Associate Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs, CHSS), Beth Roszkowski (Team Lead, Social Science and Head, Arlington Campus Library), Lori Rottenberg (Term Instructor, INTO Mason, Academic English), Deborah Sanchez (Assistant Professor), Pallab Sanyal (Associate Professor, ISOM, School of Business), Catherine Saunders (Term Assistant Professor, English, CHSS), Laura Scott (Term Full Professor, English), Sheena Serslev (Associate Director, Institutional Assessment, Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning), Pamela Shepherd (Director for Communications, Office of the Provost), Matt Smith (Director of Accreditation/Office of the Provost), Paula Sorrell (Associate Vice President, Office of Research, Innovation and Economic Development), Diane Spence (SUBS Executive Director, Finance & Administration), Kevin Stagl (Assistant Director and Assistant Professor, Psychology), Colleen Sweet (Term Professor, Spanish, Modern and Classical Languages), Kate Sweeney (Term Faculty, Journalism Concentration, COMM), Susan Tomasovic (Term Instructor / Communication Dept), Evelyn Tomaszewski (Assistant Professor, Social Work, CHSS), Girum Urgessa (CEIE), Bethany Usher (Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education), Ken Walsh (VP/Chief of Staff - Office of the President), Tobi Walsh (Assistant Vice President, Capital Strategy and Planning), Wendy Watkins (Associate University Auditor), Aimee Weinstein (Term Assistant Professor, INTO Mason), Eleanor Weis (Director of Development, CHSS), Elizabeth Woodley (University Ethics Officer and Policy Manager, Compliance, Diversity and Ethics), Courtney Wooten (English), Andy Yao (ISOM)

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:** Chair Shannon Davis called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.
- II. **Approval of the Minutes of March 3, 2021:** The minutes were approved.

III. Committee Reports

A. Senate Standing Committees

Academic Policies– Suzanne Slayden, Chair

Report from the committee included below:

The Summer 2021 academic calendar posted on the Registrar's website differs from the one that was approved by the Faculty Senate on September 4, 2019 as part of the 3-year 2019-2022 Academic Calendar. Accompanying the Summer 2021 calendar on the website is the notation "*Academic Calendar*

Approved by the Faculty Senate on 3/16/2020". The Faculty Senate did not meet on 3/16/2020, nor did it approve the Summer 2021 calendar on that date. The change to the Summer calendar was done without notification to the Faculty Senate.

The change to the summer calendar was the cancellation of classes for the observance of Juneteenth (June 19, 2021) on Friday, June 18. In Summer 2020, when the date was made a Virginia state holiday on June 17, 2020, the Provost cancelled classes. The Provost and President have since affirmed this change to the academic calendar for the future.

Summer sessions are required to meet the same number of hours as in the regular academic year semesters, but in a much shorter time frame. Accordingly, the Academic Policies Committee requested and obtained documents from the Provost's office to ascertain if the new summer calendar met the hours requirement. It does. However, because of the variability of the Juneteenth weekday observance, and the many meeting patterns in the several summer sessions, the Registrar calendar planners will need to be careful with planning.

Because the subject of alternative holidays has arisen in the last year, the AP Committee is providing this brief background information.

The State of Virginia recognizes 12 legal holidays:

January 1	New Year's Day
3rd Monday in Jan.	Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
3rd Monday in Feb.	George Washington Day
Last Monday in May	Memorial Day
June 19	Juneteenth
July 4	Independence Day
First Monday in Sept.	Labor Day
Second Monday in Oct.	Columbus Day & Yorktown Victory Day
Tuesday following the first Monday in Nov.	Election Day
November	Veterans Day
11	
4th Thursday in Nov. and the Friday next	Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 25	Christmas Day

The university is not obligated to observe all of them (and some fall outside the normal semester class dates). The Virginia universities do not all observe the same set of holidays. For example, JMU, Radford, Mary Baldwin, and Christopher Newport do not observe Labor Day. None of the universities observe Veterans Day.

Discussion:

- There was discussion on various holidays and how balance is maintained in contact hours for classes on different schedules.
- Senator Slayden noted that in 2019, Faculty Senate passed a motion that summer calendars would not need to be presented to senate unless Registrar's office made or requested a change.

Budget and Resources– Tim Leslie, Chair

Report on the institution's efforts on compensation adjustments.

- First stage has aimed to address internal equity.
- Second stage will aim to address external equity (market-based adjustment).
- First stage has been completed and 137 faculty have received mid-cycle adjustments this year. The adjustments, by college, are presented below.

	Tenured/TT		Term			Tenured/TT		Term	
	N	Change (9mo)	N	Change (9mo)		N	Change (9mo)	N	Change (9mo)
Carter School					College of Health & Human Services				
Assistant Professor	1	3000			Associate Professor	1	32,670		
Professor	2	7,500			College of Science				
College Humanities & Social Sciences					Instructor			1	3,677
Instructor			1	5,496	Assistant Professor	1	2,226	6	17,956
Assistant Professor	2	6,940	8	38,278	Associate Professor	6	25,587	2	9,958
Associate Professor	24	92,454	6	25,720	Professor	10	61,218	2	8,409
Professor	14	83,222	1	3,947	College of Visual & Perf Arts				
College of Educ & Human Development					Assistant Professor			2	6,388
Instructor			2	5,000	School of Business				
Assistant Professor	8	12,715	10	22,900	Associate Professor			1	7,000
Associate Professor	7	14,401	7	13,999	Volgenau School of Engineering				
Professor	10	22,600			Associate Professor	1	13,520		
					Grand Total	87	378,052	50	173,729

Discussion:

- Senators inquired about: a) the methodology used for identifying candidates for adjustment in the first stage, b) factors used, c) process adopted to identify candidates and adjustment amounts, and d) who was involved.

Senator Leslie shared that the committee had filed FOIA for the methodology, but it is protected and thus not shared. The decisions were made by the Deans.

Faculty Matters – Solon Simmons, Chair

- Reminded everyone that the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators qualitative data has been released, and invited feedback for ways to improve the reporting and ideas for improving the response rate for FEA.
- The committee met to discuss the issue of term faculty promotion and conversion to tenure.

Nominations– Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig, co-chairs

- Call for nominations for the University committees have been sent out. Reminders will be sent out in June and July.
- Senate committee appointments will be sent out separately.

Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham, Chair

Grading Process Task Force

- This is a second reading.
- The term will be no longer than two-years.
- The overall goals and charges were discussed at our prior meeting. There were some questions regarding the composition that emerged in the previous meeting which have been addressed by increased faculty representation.

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).
-

There was no additional discussion. The motion to create the Grading Process Task Force as outlined in the appendix passed.

B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

- Sustainable Research Collections Group - Dean John Zenelis, University Libraries ([Report](#))
- [Faculty Senate of Virginia Meeting Minutes](#)
- Master Planning Steering Committee (Submitted by Zachary Schrag, Faculty Senate representative – March 31, 2021). [Report](#)
 - Senator Schrag provided update that the Phase 1 report, which was delayed several times, was completed recently (after submission of the committee report for the Faculty Senate Meeting).

IV. New Business

Motion Requesting Faculty Matters Committee to Propose Term to Tenure-line Pathway – Tim Gibson. Senator Gibson provided preface to the motion.

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.
-

The motion was seconded.

Discussion:

- Senator Solon Simmons conveyed that the Faculty Matters Committee had discussed the issue and was opposed to the motion. He clarified that while committee was supportive of the idea, it was opposed because of concerns regarding the process. He noted that there were numerous difficult questions that needed definition, examination and discussion.
- Spirited discussion followed with several senators seeking clarification and parallels with tenure appointments.
- Several senators took turns to express their reasoning in support of the motion.
- Several senators expressed their concerns about the specific motion: a) the process by which the motion was brought about, b) an oversimplification of the issues involved, and c) need for a much broader conversation and examination of the issues involved that cannot be undertaken by Faculty Matters Committee alone. Senators emphasized that this cannot be successfully addressed by Faculty Matters alone.
- A motion to amend the main motion was made: change the language to: "We call on the Faculty Matters committee to develop a process by which term faculty can be granted tenure."

The motion to amend the main motion was seconded.

Discussion:

- Senators discussed and debated the amendment.
- Senator moved to postpone further discussion on the motion and amendment until first meeting of Fall 2021 and to ask the Executive Committee to develop an alternate process over the Summer 2021.

Discussion:

- Senators expressed support for the motion to postpone discussion on the main motion and amendment.
- Senator moved the question and was seconded.

Vote was called on ending the debate on the motion and its amendment, and to charge the Executive Committee to develop an alternate proposal over the Summer.

The motion passed ending debate. The motion to postpone discussion on the motion and its amendment passed.

V. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kumar Mehta
Secretary

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 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.

Master Planning Steering Committee (Submitted by Zachary Schrag, 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."