

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA**  
**Faculty Senate**

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**Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting**  
**Sept. 18, 2024, MCOB- 3:00-5:00 p.m.**  
**MCOB 265**  
**MINUTES**

Present (In-House): G. Abeynanda, J. Adams, R. Bates, C. Baughn, M. Black, C. Brock, G. Brower, J. Bunch, W. Cutchen, C. Davidson, S. Davis, A. Donaldson, Y. Getch, R. Godang, C. Hauff, P. Henning, J. Huang, Y. Huang, G. Hudson, T. McDonald, D. Meola, B. Merritt, M. Migaud, J. Miller, B. Minton, S. Ni Chadhain, T. O'Connor, A. Pavelescu, J. Pfleeger, B. Rabideau, C. Rawlinson, J. Richardson, J. Robertson, C. Shaw, A. Stenson, D. Streeter, V. Tate, C. Thompson, S. Walker, C. Wassenaar, B. Webb, and C. Wu.

Present (Zoom): S. Ferguson, Z. Khan, A. Marass, K. Pancione, C. Raczkowski, E. ter Horst, R. Thomas, D. Turnipseed, and L. Vrana.

Excused: T. Davis, B. Dzwonkowski, J. Ellzie, L. Fleck, M. Lin, A. Shea, and J. Swofford.

Unexcused: G. Borchet, Y. Coronado, C. Gavrilita, C. Holliday, N. Holliday, W. Kilgo, M. Sehgal, A. VandeWaa, and A. Williams.

Guests: Julia Kristman & Deirdra Byas (Title IX Office) and Mathew "Maverick" Cox (Assoc. V.P., Enrollment Management)

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm with President Christina Wassenaar, presiding. Quorum was met.

**I. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS:**

Approval of Minutes: Approved, as amended with corrections, by a majority of quorum.

Approval of Agenda: Approved, as amended with corrections, by a majority of quorum.

Presentation: Mathew Cox spoke on the status of our fall enrollment. He started off with his appreciation for what the university faculty does for student support and enrollment. The overall enrollment for this semester is 14,003 students (versus 13,768 last year). The high point in enrollment was back in 2017 when there were just over 16,000

students enrolled. The three-year goal is to have over 15,000 students by fall 2027. Both freshman and sophomore retentions are both up over previous years. However, projections for future high school graduates are scheduled to decrease over the coming years.

The Office of Veterans Affairs has been renamed as the Office of Military Services and now has a new director, David Blair, who came from the University of Alabama. The office will now report directly to the Provost, rather than be under Student Affairs. This change will hopefully help with the enrollment of former military service members and their dependents.

A question was asked about recruitment of international students. Recruitment for that category of students is not part of Enrollment Services, but rather under Global USA and International admissions.

A question was asked about recruitment of graduate students in light of wanting to be a R1 institution. When increasing graduate enrollment becomes part of our strategic priorities, this will receive more emphasis.

President's Report (Wassenaar): Written report was sent to all members prior to Plenary meeting.

Additional information presented in the meeting:

- Christina highlighted the difference between the 4% salary increase vs the 4% salary supplement. The university administration's modelled different versions on how to distribute additional money to employees. They want to give as much as possible to the base salaries, though that would require the commitment to continue in future years. They would like to continue increases next year to make of for the past years, since that would help with retention of faculty.
- Some comments were brought up about the way the supplement is done:
  - Using a percentage of salary instead of giving an equal portion to everyone gives an unequal benefit to higher wage earners, while the lower-wage earners would get more benefit of an equal-share supplement. It was suggested that this topic be referred to the Faculty Salaries & Benefits Committee for further discussion.
  - Giving a supplement in one year and not in the next year effectively means a reduction in pay, and may affect retirement benefits.
  - It was suggested that the Senate put a recommendation in writing to the university administration about this so it would get a better chance of receiving a response.
- There was a comment about key point #5 of the President's Report regarding professional development issues for department chairs/deans/program directors.

There should be some mandatory training of supervisors to require that they follow evaluation guidelines consistently across colleges, rather than doing (or not doing) whatever they want. Christina and Bret have already started working with Clay (as Chair of the Evaluation Committee) to look into how to approach the request for additionally training/professional development.

Presentation [Pt. 2]: Julia Kristman & Deirdra Byas (Title IX Office) came to address any concerns faculty may have regarding how to follow the requirements from the mandate under Federal law for addressing sexual misconduct (discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, rape, stalking, dating violence, etc.) Flyers were distributed to explain how to initiate an incident report. It can also be done by going to the Title IX Office web site. The report is confidential. The Office will meet only with the aggrieved party; the faculty/staff that reports the problem will not be included in the investigation. Once someone is aware of an incident, the employee must report it to Title IX within three calendar days. Starting in January, all employees will be required to go through specific training.

Additional points--

- Students who are parents and are having difficulties with the education system at USA need to be part of the Title IX program before assistance can be given to them, including communicating with their class faculty to let them know about the student's rights and/or accommodations. Student must provide documentation regarding the problem.
- Pregnancy is different than parenting, in terms of accommodations. If the student is on medical leave during pregnancy, they are not allowed to do school work.
- Title IX does not cover childcare since it is not considered medical in nature.
- USA Campus Title IX office does not have jurisdiction over USA Health, which has their own Title IX program office.
- The person being reported for a violation of the Title IX policy will not know who reported them if the reporting individual does it anonymously. If the reporting person gives their name/contact information when reporting on the incident, then the person violating the policy will know this when the allege violator receives the incident report. However, the university has a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation. If the person retaliates, that person can lose their job.
- Anybody can file a Title IX violation. As a mandated reporter, you must report all known incidents of violations of the policy.
- The incident may be reported anonymously, but be sure to include ALL pertinent information since the office will not be able to contact you for further clarification.

- If the harassment is being done by someone that is not part of the USA community, that person can receive a “no trespass” status and would not be allowed back on campus. This would mean the campus police would be involved.

## II. OLD BUSINESS:

- **Status of the Removal from the Bylaws for the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Standing Committee:**
  - There was a motion before the Senate last month to rename this committee. But since that motion was made, it was clear from the university administration that we were required to remove this committee to comply with the recent Alabama law. Renaming is not an option. We need to withdraw the motion and comply with the law.
  - A new motion was made to withdraw the amendment to change the bylaws that was made in the August Plenary. The vote was 38 ayes (to withdraw the old motion), 0 nays, and 2 abstentions. Motion carried.
- **Nomination of Candice Selwyn for Faculty Senate Parliamentarian**
  - A motion was made to accept the nomination of Candice Selwyn for parliamentarian. The vote was 42 ayes, 0 nays, no abstentions. Motion carried.

## III. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- ***Academic Development & Mentoring*** (Black): No Report
- ***Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*** (Getch):
  - The DEI Committee held its final meeting on 9/4/2024 and submitted a final report. The committee will cease to exist at the end of September to comply with SB 129.
- ***Environmental Quality & Sustainability*** (Turnipseed):
  - No report available. The committee will be meeting in the new future to come up with what the focus should be in the coming term.
- ***Evaluation*** (Davidson):
  - Bret Webb reported for Clay. The committee will be focusing on issues concerning the proposed new charge of the committee, such as promotion & tenure policies and procedures across the campus, whether or not they are being adhered to; and faculty evaluations, how they are being carried out. The committee will be involved in surveying faculty to gather data about these issues.

- **Faculty Salaries & Benefits** (Pavelescu):
  - Andrei announced that the committee will be meeting soon and will discuss several items, including salary inversion and compression. They will also discuss the methodology for a salary survey.
  
- **Research & Creative Activities** (Migaud): [*Submitted as a written report.*]
  - The RCA Committee approved the proposed changes to the standing committee's charge to be presented at the Sept. Plenary meeting.
  - The organization of the Research Mixer event is progressing. The event should take place either the last week of October or first week of November. Details are still being worked out.
  - The RCS Committee discussed at length how to find a way forward to meet the requirement of the new law, AL-SB 129. Recommendations from the Committee include:
    - The South's legal team should provide PI/Faculty with defined criteria for grant applications.
    - The Committee recommends that a committee of PIs from different disciplines should work with the legal office to discuss and review ways to meet the Alabama's state requirement while still meeting the requirements of the RFAs from the funding bodies.
    - The RCA Committee would like for Dr. Chambers and South's legal team to come to the Faculty Senate and present a path forward that is clear for all.

A motion was made from the floor by J. Bunch to suspend the reports from the rest of the standing committees/caucus leaders/university committees, due to the exodus of some senate members, and amend the agenda so as to proceed to New Business. Motion was seconded. Motion was carried by a majority of the members.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Change in the Faculty Senate Bylaws -- Sections 3.1.1-3.1.2, 3.2.1-3.2.8:**  
 A summary of the proposed changes include:
  - 3.1.1 -- Concerning the listing of the Standing Committees, with the changes in the name of some of the committees, adding the Evaluation Committee, and removing the DEI Committee
  - 3.1.2. – Changing the names of committee chairs that will be voting members of the complementary university committees and the removal of the DEI committee.
  - 3.2.1. – Change in the charge of the University Policies and Handbook Committee.

- 3.2.2. – Change in the charge of the Faculty Salaries and Benefits Committee.
- 3.2.3. – Change in the charge of the University Planning and Development Committee.
- 3.2.4. – Change in the charge of the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee.
- 3.2.5. – Change in the name and charge of the Environmental Quality and Sustainability Committee.
- 3.2.6. – Change in the name and charge of the Academic Development and Mentoring Committee.
- 3.2.7. – Change in the charge of the Evaluation Committee.
- 3.2.8. – Change in the charge of the Research and Creative Activities Committee.
- Motions was made to consider these proposed changes to the bylaw at the next (October) Plenary session. The motion was seconded. The vote was 42 ayes, 0 nays, no abstentions. Motion carried.

- **FS1026 – Leave & Sabbatical Policy**

- The Council of Academic Deans/Leaders (CAD) returned our proposed changes regarding Leave and Sabbatical Policy for the USA Faculty Handbook with some of their changes.
- Faculty Senate had added a section (5.4.6) regarding “External Fellowship Leave” (i.e., leave that did not align with the sabbatical leave calendar). This section was struck entirely and replaced with the current policy of “Professional Leave”
- Under 5.5.1 “Eligibility” the word “sabbatical” was added before the word “leave” where it wasn’t before. CAD let these changes remain.
- We tried to remove exclusionary wording about “extraordinary” and “exceptional” but CAD returned the wording to the policy.
- One proposed change that remained in the final version, regarding transparency, was the inclusion of feedback in section 5.5.7 “Schedule.” Once the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendations, the “College committees provide feedback to all applicants.”
- Under 5.5.10 “Committees” the Faculty Senate added a request that colleges develop some sort of rubrics for evaluating proposals.
- While we did not get everything we wanted, there were enough changes to satisfy the FS Handbook Committee. Therefore, they recommend the Senate approve the changes.
- There was a motion from the floor to approve the adoption of these changes to the USA Faculty Handbook. The motion was seconded. The vote was 41 ayes, 0 nays, no abstentions. Motion carried.

**V. MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- The Council of Deans has officially voted down, in its entirety, the proposed changes of the Non-tenured Track promotion procedures (Handbook 3.15) that was sent to them last spring.

Meeting was adjourned at 5.00 pm.

Minutes were submitted by Vicki Tate, Secretary.