

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting
May 21, 2025- Zoom- 3:00-5:00 p.m.
MINUTES

Present (on Zoom): Abeynanda, Gayan; Bates, Robin; Baughn, Christina; Black, Michael; Bokhari, Amber; Brock, Casey; Brower, Greg; Bunch, Jaclyn; Capasso, Tom; Cole, Tracy; Coronado, Yun; Cutchen, William; Daniel, Casey; Davidson, Clay (Cordell); Davis, Tara; Dzwonkowski, Brian; Ellzie, Joel; Fesenmeier, Michael; Fleck, Lorie; Fox, Dalten; Fregeau, Laureen; Frye, Doris; Godang, Romulus; Holliday, Candice; Holliday, Nicolette; Hudson, Geoffrey; Kumar, Jatinder; Liebertz, Scott; Macdonald, Rebecca; Mbaka, Maryann; McDonald, Tyler; Merritt, Brandy; Miller, Jennifer; Minton, Bonnie; Ní Chadhain, Sinéad; O'Connor, Tracy; Ochoa, Juan; Pancione, Kirsten; Parsell, Karen; Pavelescu, Andrei; Pramanik, Paramahansa; Rabideau, Brooks; Robertson, Justin; Salvitti Fermin, Mariarita; Selwyn, Candice; Shea, Allyson; Stenson, Alexandra; Streeter, Donna; Swofford, Jim; ter Horst, Eleanor; Thomas, Rebecca; Vrana, Laura; Walker, Sean; Wassenaar, Christina; Williams, Katie; Wu, Charles (Kuan-Sheng)

Excused: Davis, Sara; des Neiges Léonard, Marie; Getch, Yvette; Wilbert, Arik; Hauff, Caitlyn; Huang, Jingshuan

Unexcused: Carmichael, Bishop; Gavrilita, Christina; Huang, Ying (Johnson); Marass, Ashley; Marri, Preethi; Santanu Dasgupta; Shaw, Christy; Wang, Jinhui; Williams, Ashley

Guests: Ying Johnson; Allen Parrish; Spencer Larche; Raj Chaudhury; Ron Jenkins; Clive Woods; Bri Ard

I. Preliminary Business:

The meeting was called to order ~ 3:05 pm with Vice President Laura Vrana presiding. Quorum was met.

Approval of Minutes: 49-Approved; 4-Abstained; 0-Disapproved

Approval of Agenda: 51-Approved; 2-Abstained; 0-Disapproved

President's Report:

Salary Survey: Faculty Senate is pushing for the inclusion of R1 institutions in addition to the institutions that are used as our peer institutions.

- Action Item: Follow-Up Faculty Survey to bring clarity about faculty who call themselves R1 Faculty (who bestowed that title; what does it mean; what are the current manifestations in terms of job description, expectations and compensation).

David L. Turnipseed Faculty/Staff Award for Wellbeing and Sustainability

- Christina Wassenaar updated the group on the creation of the commemorative award.
- The goal is to raise at least \$25,000 over five years and establish an endowed award with the focus of wellbeing and sustainability.
- Christina & team are putting together award criteria. There will be an Award Committee and a nomination process but the goal is to keep it very simple.
- URL to donate:
https://www.givecampus.com/campaigns/23442/donations/new?designation=dauidlturipseedfacultyawardforwellbeingandsustainability&in_honor_of=David%20L.%20Turnipseed&

Executive Orders Update & Federal-Funded Grants

- The ad hoc committee addressing this issue keeps working on financial implications.
- If you are experiencing issues, reach out to Joél Billingsley.

FS Committee Work

- If the meeting times for your FS Committee assignment or your University Committee assignment does not work for your schedule, please reach out to the FS officers so you can be reassigned.

Faculty One-Stop Landing Page for the University's Main Website

- Marketing & Communications has agreed to include a Faculty Landing Page (Jim Berscheidt VP and liaison for this project)
- A joint group of Library caucus, FS-Committee chairs for related committees, and FS officers is working with Jim Berscheidt on shaping this page.
- Action Item: please share ideas for what links should be included on such a page (resources, benefits, document, tolls) with the FS secretary.

Faculty Senate Website

- There is a plan to make the suggestion box more prominent and accessible & also to better distill (and then communicate) best practices for bringing issues before the Senate.

Facilities / Capital Projects

- Buck Kelly (Chief Facilities Management Officer) has invited feedback from the faculty regarding ideas for facilities and discussion of priority needs against the backdrop of evolving space use.
- Buck Kelly also indicated that there will be a faculty survey, so it's useful to start thinking about the issue in detail ahead of time so that responses to the survey can be detailed, specific but with broad applicability for the universal benefit of the Institution.

MCOB Caucus Leader Election and Chair for Sustainability Committee

- Individuals have been contacted and the process is in the works for both replacements. However, the process may take some time, as dictated by the need to allow space for grieving and adapting.
- Bylaws allow for mid-term replacements to be voted on by the Executive Committee in place of requiring a vote from the entire Senate.

I. Preliminary Business:

Guest Speaker: Dr. Allen Parrish. VP for Research & Economic Development.

Dr. Parrish outlined the two big changes regarding Federally Funded Projects:

- Grants already in place canceled or frozen since January: for those, work continues on assessing implications and developing preparedness (as best possible) as previously outlined for the Senate.
- Reduction in F&A: certain federal granting agencies have been ordered to retroactively & proactively cap F&A at 15% of the grant's budget instead of the agreed-upon rates. Dr. Parrish addressed this topic verbally at the Senate and soon after sent a message to the entire faculty that summed up the same points.
 - o When preparing budgets, proposals should utilize our full, federally negotiated F&A rate, regardless of recent policy changes that limit the rate to 15% at some agencies. Currently, there is active and emerging litigation around these rates, and we are seeing a rapidly changing landscape. Until there is more clarity regarding the future, and consistent with most of our peers, we will adhere to our current policies that require our federally negotiated F&A rate in proposal budgets.

- o The F&A rate we ultimately accept on any award will be determined when the award is issued to us, considering both the sponsor's current policies and the University's best interest.
 - o This approach will be in effect for the immediate future and until further notice. However, please be aware that things can change rapidly and should there be news or announcements that change this policy, we will reach out with an update.
- Overall, during the meeting, faculty were encouraged to focus on opportunities & the productive side of this particular challenge.
 - o Dr. Parrish pointed out that we are the right size to be agile and adapt, for example by expanding research priorities. Advanced manufacturing, cyber security, and defense were mentioned as examples of areas where opportunities might be opening up as other research areas might become less 'opportune' for a time.
 - o Collaboration with Industry was mentioned as another important opportunity crucial to explore. Innovate Alabama (workforce centric) was mentioned as an example. Dr. Parrish invited anybody for whom the concepts of reaching out to industry to explore local needs & interests (including concepts such as business-development & workforce development) resonate to reach out to him.
- In response to a question from the floor regarding adjustment of expectations from Chairs & Deans in the current landscape for federally-funded projects (specifically crediting submitted proposals highly, even if they are ultimately not funded), Dr. Parrish responded that he could not provide details yet, being rather new to the job, but he concurred that exploring appropriate expectations for federal grants and then communicating those properly to Chairs and Deans should be a goal of his office.

II. Old Business:

III. Committee Reports:

Instead of Committee Reports, we had breakout sessions for the newly-formed committees to delineate priorities and work on scheduling their meeting times.

IV. Caucus Leaders Reports:

A&S: Caucus Leader, Eleanor ter Horst, summarized the A&S faculty's primary unresolved concerns after the Townhall meeting:

- o Clarification of Legal Defense in case of canceled visas: FS Officers shared with the Senate the related information gleaned in follow-up during the Executive Committee plus President's Council meeting the week prior, which was:
 - o Dr. Kent stated that Global USA should be the first point of contact, given that this subject falls into this office's line of expertise. Richard Carter is the Associate VP for Global Engagement.
 - o She went on to say that, if necessary, after working with Global USA, faculty can then tap in Legal for assistance.
- o Facilities needs for academic buildings.

AHP: Caucus Leader, Casey Brock, stated that similar topics were raised during AHP's townhall as in A&S.

- o However, with nine open positions, hiring and retention of faculty also emerged as a main focus during this townhall meeting. The overall consensus impression was that Administration is trying to support as best they can.
- o Another important topic during this townhall was clinical placements for our own graduates; Dr. Bailey appeared supportive of giving South graduates first placement for open positions at our University Hospitals.

CIS: Caucus Leader, Michael Black, shared that the decrease in number of foreign visas emerged as a major topic during CIS's townhall.

- o For IS programs that are offered online, a possible remedy might be that students could take the course from their home country. This option was stated to be viable so long as the students do not have a visa; international students who do have a visa would be required to be on campus.

COM: Caucus Leader, Greg Brower, shared that an update on the new Medical School Building was a principal focus of discussion during COM's town hall.

All remaining caucuses stated that the same issues already mentioned by other Caucus Leaders crystalized during their townhall discussions as well.

V. University Committees Reports:

- **University Safety and Environmental Compliance Committee (William Cutchen)**
 - o Summer projects should not affect traffic
 - o Don't feed the alligator

VI. New Business:

Motion to Suspend the Rules to allow voting by email for the replacement of the Chair position for the FS Sustainability & Environmental Quality Committee - in case the Bylaws did not allow for voting in of a new Chair by the Executive Committee

- 49 votes in favor
- 0 abstained
- 0 opposed

Adjourned

Document prepared by Alexandra C. Stenson (FS secretary)