

Faculty Senate Steering Committee Meeting.
7-14-20

Attending: Barb Dahlbach, Rona Donahoe, Chapman Greer, John Vincent, Andre Denham, Rainer Schad, Mary Stone, Matthew Hudnall, Patrick Kung, Ajay Agrawal, Kelly Shannon-Henderson, Jennifer Dempsey, Suzanne Henson, Joy Burnham, Steven Yates, Susan Appel, Christopher Lynn, Ibrahim Cemen, Jeri Zemke, Past President Donna Meester.

Absent: Mirit Eyal-Cohen, Ignacio Rodeno

Guests: Regina Range, Heather Gunn, Leah Cheatham.

A letter from the Faculty Senate Taskforce to Transform Campus Culture Committee was presented by members of the committee – Regina Range, Heather Gunn, Leah Cheatham and Barb Dahlbach. The letter was written to address hate speech and digital racism comments. The Capstone Creed states: “As a member of The University of Alabama Community, I will pursue knowledge, act with fairness, integrity and respect; promote equity and inclusion, foster individual and civic responsibility; and strive for excellence in all I do”. The Taskforce expressed concern with racist and hate speech instances by both admitted and enrolled students. Recommendations from the Taskforce to address these issues includes scholarship/ financial penalties for those students failing to uphold the Crimson Creed core values, a more vigorous vetting process for potential students, substantive attention focused on diversity, equity and inclusion during student orientation and recruitment, and conditional admittance. The Taskforce presented these recommendations for Steering Committee/Faculty Senate approval. The Taskforce would like for the University to use these recommendations to spark action toward the response to any incident of racism or hate speech.

Dr. Myron Pope forwarded to President Donahoe the procedures followed by the Student Life Office when complaints are received concerning social media misconduct by students. The pre-enrolled student is directly contacted to verify the social media post was not altered. If the student accepts responsibility they will often choose not to enroll. A current student’s social media misconduct is reviewed by the Office of Student Conduct. The student must agree to and complete appropriate designated courses as part of imposed sanctions. UA does not publicize any details concerning steps or procedures involving a student’s social media misconduct. However, the process/policy should be publicized. President Donahoe suggested the letter be modified, approved and forwarded to UA administration. Publicizing and posting the policy could be a deterrent. A student’s commitment to equity and inclusion should be made clear the moment they apply for admission. This could possibly include a statement of adherence to UA’s policies of diversity, equity and inclusiveness. The suggestion was made for the Taskforce to meet with Dr. Myron Pope and/or Assistant Vice President of the Office of Student Conduct and the Admissions Office to determine what applicable policies are in place currently and what can be done to improve current recruitment and dealings with this type conduct. The question was asked how far back would a review go? Following revisions the committee will present the letter to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee at the August meeting.

Secretary’s Report – (*Barb Dahlbach*) Two sets of minutes for Steering Committee Meetings of 6-9-20 and 6-17-20 called meeting were approved.

President’s Report – (*Rona Donahoe*) The UA budget presentation by Vice President Fajack suggested a five percent budget cut. There is concern about Covid19 case increases by November and how to deal with the situation. When UA closed in March there were 200 cases a day in the state and now there are

2,000 at present with a prediction of 9,000 by November. Students testing positive will be quarantined. Bryce has 400 beds and Partlow has 50 beds. Apartment complexes are being evaluated for quarantine space. Faculty and staff testing will begin in seven to ten days (July 20) at Memorial Coliseum at appointed times with UA paying for each department. Student testing will be conducted by UAB called "Testing for Alabama" as close to the beginning of the semester as possible. Notification of test results is a problem and no certificate is issued to indicate a negative result. The time frame for faculty testing before teaching is unclear. The accuracy and lack of equipment and instruments also seems problematic. Continued discussion included faculty-student contact, being called back to work without being tested, symptom and contact tracking, concerns about testing today and teaching in two weeks would have no meaning. President Donahoe has suggested having town hall meetings to answer questions and concerns and to arrange informational opportunities such as a "Frequently Asked Questions" web site. Such a website would have to provide a signer for the hearing impaired, sub titles, vision impaired viewing and there would be a limited number of connections. Strategic Communications is investigating the cost of two or three Zoom sessions. What is the contingency if all classes go online was asked. No tuition would be refunded and housing and meals would have to be partially refunded. The Systems Office has instructed all three campuses to end all personal instruction prior to Thanksgiving and any breaks would be eliminated. Provost Whitaker has asked the Steering Committee for recommendations for the academic calendar. Classes will begin August 19, 2020. Final exams will be in an online format. There is concern for international students and the effect online courses would have on their visas. The timing of dead week, final exams, days of classes, staggering students moving out, the Iron Bowl and the academic calendar for the fall semester (hybrid, face-to-face and online) were discussed. Labor Day is a Federal holiday and must be observed. Following input from a well-represented academic group on the Steering Committee, different options were voted on concerning face-to-face instruction and the academic calendar including dead week. The Faculty Senate Steering Committee recommended the following: ending face-to-face instruction on Friday, November 20, 2020 before Thanksgiving week. Thanksgiving week would give students time to make travel plans, stagger students moving off campus and eliminate large scale interactions between faculty, staff and students at the beginning of the flu season. The Steering Committee also recommends that online instruction take place the entire week following Thanksgiving. The final exam schedule would remain the same and would be conducted online. Recommendations also included UA colleges and majors having requirements for instructional days seek waivers from their governing and/or accrediting bodies as was done in the Spring 2020 semester to safeguard against any unexpected turn of events that could cause the loss of instructional days.

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee and the Faculty Senate will continue to meet via Zoom through the fall.

President Donahoe will follow up on the progress of the Emeritus policy.

Vice President's Report – (*Chapman Greer*) No report.

Secretary's Report – (*Barb Dahlbach*) No report.

Academic Affairs Committee – (*John Vincent & Andre Denham*) The letter sent by Associate Provost Joel Brouwer to probationary faculty approving Covid19 tenure clock extensions resulting in a new mandatory tenure review year of 2022-23 should be corrected. The letter states these faculty members must have a Provost level review during 2020-21. This is a violation of the Faculty Handbook policy and the policy memo sent by the Provost's Office to probationary tenure-track faculty in April. The policy in the Faculty Handbook must be followed.

Instructions should be made clear to faculty exactly what the policy is and what procedure should be followed if a student refuses to wear a mask or facial covering. This information should be included in the syllabus.

Financial Affairs – (*Rainer Schad & Mary Stone*) The Financial Affairs Committee presented a graph showing information about UA graduate student stipend averages in data categories (9 months, 20 hour weeks) for 2018-19. UA minimum levels were established August 2019 and SUG (16 schools) averages from 2018-19. In comparison to institutional peers Business is competitive, A&S and Humanities level, Engineering lower. Summer pay varies from department to department.

Information Technology – (*Matthew Hudnall & Patrick Kung*) The Committee met with OIT learning that Covid19 testing will begin on July 20. Covid19 tracking was discussed. Proper cleaning will not damage equipment and hand sanitizer will be available across campus. Larger areas to be used for classroom space for social distancing includes the Ferguson ballroom. Microphone covers will be available.

Student Life – (*Jennifer Dempsey & Ruth Ann Hall*) The committee met with Dr. Myron Pope, newly appointed Vice President for Student Life, on June 16th to discuss mental stress and available resources for students due to the Covid19 crisis.

A meeting was held with Carolyn MacVicar, Manager of Wellness and Work Life, concerning work-life balance and the Well-Bama program. Previous screenings revealed a high percentage of staff member participants (72%) and a low percentage of faculty member participants (15.6%) go through screenings. Low faculty participation seems to be due to scheduling difficulties. The benefits of the program should be publicized more.

Next meeting of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee will be August 11, 2020.
Meeting adjourned 5:30 P.M.