

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

4-13-21

ZOOM

ATTENDING: Barb Dahlbach, Rona Donahoe, Chapman Greer, Ignacio Rodeno, Lyndell McDonald, John Vincent, Babs Davis, Rainer Schad, John Van Zee, Matthew Hudnall, Patrick Kung, Sriram Aaleti, Jennifer Dempsey, Ruth Ann Hall, Joy Burnham, Steven Yates, Christopher Lynn, Ibrahim Cemen, Jeri Zemke, Parliamentarian Robert Riter.

ABSENT: Ajay Agrawal, Susan Appel, Past President Donna Meester.

GUESTS: Grace Shepis-Crimson White.

Roll Call and quorum check by Faculty Senate Secretary Barb Dahlbach.

The minutes of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee meeting of March 2021 were approved with one correction

President's Report – (*Rona Donahoe*) President Chapman Greer and Past President Rona Donahoe met with Joel Brouwer concerning the Covid tenure extension. The discussion was to extend the offer to those refusing the first proposal. This policy will be reposted and will be retroactive to those faculty opting out of the offer last year. It will be for everyone hired before May 15 of this year. The policy will be reviewed this fall.

The Board of Trustees met at the University of Huntsville on Thursday and Friday. Vice President Matthew Hudnall attended the meeting on Thursday. President Chapman Greer attended the Friday meeting. The BoT Investment Committee discussed two investment funds; the Capital Reserve and the Endowment Fund. The discussion covered shifting some of the equity assets to private equity investments. The Finance Committee is looking to raising tuition on various programs at UAB. Those programs are dentistry, optometry and the general medicine program.

The Physical Properties Committee had minimal items for UA. Finishing UA's central thermal upgrade and a three-million-dollar improvement of the environmental warehouse were discussed. The bronze statue, "Tuska", was moved from North River Yacht Club to a corner near Bryant Denny Stadium. Greer and Hudnall will be happy to share notes from the meeting.

Each committee is requested to submit initiatives for 2021-22 to advance or align with administration to reach goals of improvement for everyone. One initiative to address would be student evaluation of teaching faculty.

End-of-year reports are due by May 15, 2021.

Vice President's Report – (*Matthew Hudnall*) A Faculty Senate Webmaster is needed to replace Sarah Meisse. The position does not require membership in the Faculty Senate.

Secretary's Report – (*Barb Dahlbach*) The new Faculty Senate roster and committee lists are completed. Committee assignments were made based on the Committee Preference forms assigning first choice selections when possible. Five members of the Campus Culture Task Force had to be replaced. A motion and a second was made to forward the lists to the Faculty Senate for a vote.

Orientation for new senators and alternates will be sent an invitation to attend a forty-five-minute orientation covering senator and co-chair responsibilities. A power point presentation will be conducted before the Faculty Senate meeting next week.

Senate Committee Reports –

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – The committee will continue meetings with Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Christine Taylor, and encourage the development of issues throughout the University. The committee has been meeting and pursuing the establishment of additional infinity groups. They are particularly interested in establishing an infinity group for disabilities and post docs. The committee met with Dean Messina of A&S to get ideas for implementation and organization for those infinity groups.

Community & Legislative Affairs – The Brewer-Porch Children’s Center teacher appreciation luncheon will be held on May 4th with the theme “May the Fourth Be With You”.

Senator Gerald Allen’s comments at the Legislative reception included voting redistricting based on the census.

Beginning March 31 meetings with the Community Affairs team will be held twice a semester. The Neighborhood Partnership Committee has started connectivity conversations. The most recent one was with Alan Tidwell discussing affordable student housing.

Rona Donahoe expressed dismay at the vote of the Legislature to toss the core curriculum out of K-12 and eliminating the college preparatory standard which will lose \$500 million dollars in Federal funding. This was not mentioned in the meeting with Senator Allen nor was the hormone replacement bill. Steven Yates will follow up on both these issues. Steven Yates checked on these issuers during the meeting and reported that Bill #440 has not gotten out of committee and currently not on any agenda. Steven also encouraged any senator or house representative to oppose any survey of personal political beliefs of educators. This does not appear to be on any agenda.

Academic Affairs – The end-of-the-year report will be submitted by the end of the week. The committee will be working on establishing a standard procedure to make changes to the Faculty Handbook. The committee will be following the progress of the General Education Taskforce. President Greer has spoken to the Provost about changes being made to the Faculty Handbook once a year. Academic misconduct and process for tenure promotion and review are priority issues for the committee.

Faculty & Senate Governance – No commencement Marshals are needed this year.

Research & Service – The Research and Service Committee will be seeking more support for graduate students.

Information & Strategic Communication – This committee spent part of this past year looking into security issues particularly in emails to make sure there were no broader implications across campus. Also, the committee followed the transference of email to cloud-based hosting to assure a seamless transition. There was a glitch of one-half day interruption of operations. The committee will welcome any suggestions of issues to be addressed. The committee would like a closer relationship with Strategic Communications. There is an issue of the lack of computation resources including the need of increased

storage for research projects, insufficient computer infrastructure and information technology support. The committee should address the status of surplus electronics. High performance computing and desk top support are validated concerns.

Faculty Life – One issue for this committee would be to solicit initiatives from faculty constituents. The committee worked with WellBAMA and will be looking at the best avenues to bring quality life improvements for faculty. Assisting hired faculty in finding spouse employment, family medical leave for both partners and child care are major concerns. Rona Donahoe is willing to lead these efforts. Available additional funding that is available now could be used to further these projects.

The point was made that some issues overlap with other committee efforts and more distinction should be established in committee issues and efforts.

Financial Affairs – The committee has a meeting with Vice President for Financial Affairs, Matt Fajack, later this month. Faculty raises, research overhead refunds, and \$13 million dollars coming from Legislature and how that will be distributed are issues the committee will be working on along with determining resources and how to drive Faculty Senate goals.

Student Life – Grab bags for students taking finals were stuffed and distributed. Reach is a program serving orphaned and homeless students. UA has about 900 students in that category with only 23 being identified this year. Joint service funds are available for Faculty Senate, OCSA and PSA Presidents.

Rona Donahoe reported the Safe Center banquet raised \$900 from Faculty Senate Steering Committee members.

Twenty-six students tested positive. As of Friday, one faculty member and 20 students tested positive. Six students were in quarantine in campus space as of last Tuesday. As of Friday, only one student was in quarantine. Sentinel testing is done every other week with a slight increase of eleven testing positive of a pool of 1,296 total tests which translates to .9% positives. The Covid death of the rabid basketball fan, Luke Ratliff, is a dire warning. He was tested three times during the basketball tournament with three negative results.

Social distancing has been reduced to three feet by the CDC impacting summer school attendance. Masks will still be required.

UMC as of last Tuesday has administered more than 10,000 vaccines and now over 12,000 have been administered. Two thousand doses will be received each month. There are rare exceptions to vaccinated people contracting the Covid virus. Students are now being vaccinated. Those vaccinated off campus should report this. State mandated wearing of masks has been terminated.

“A” Day game will require a five-dollar ticket to keep a count of those attending with a fifty percent occupancy stadium capacity. No social events or tailgating will be allowed.

Commencement will be held with a 600-student limit. Nine ceremonies over three days with social distancing and mask wearing is required.

Student block seating will be used this fall as an incentive for students to be vaccinated. Student groups not meeting requirements will not be admitted.

Students have been sent to Columbiana to assist with tornado cleanup efforts. There are opportunities for faculty and staff to join in those efforts.

State Legislature passed a bill making vaccine passports illegal. Any effort by an employer to make that a condition of employment is illegal.

Robert Riter was confirmed to continue as Faculty Senate Parliamentarian.

The link to contribute to the Joint Service Fund was given.

Meeting adjourned 5:00 P.M.

Post-meeting official activity-Andrea Wright, Senator from CCHS, was confirmed as the new Senate Webmaster. Seventeen Steering Committee members voted via Qualtrics. The vote was a unanimous confirmation.