

2022-2023 Student Life Committee Faculty Senate Report

Co-Chairs: Amanda Espy-Brown and Kim Parker

As a committee, we accomplished several things this year and hope to see continued work in the following areas:

1. As co-chairs we served as liaisons on the Homecoming Queen committee. We were asked to meet and give input on three different areas of dispute during the process. We also supported the Homecoming Queen Committee in submitting interested faculty names to help with the interviews of the Queen candidates as well as grading the applicant essays.
2. In an effort to understand, communicate with and support campus mental health resources and initiatives we met with the following people:
 - a. Interim Vice President of Student Life, Dr. Steven Hood. We discussed concerns about demands on the mental health services offered by the University of Alabama. Dr. Hood discussed plans to put additional funds towards these services, specifically toward hiring additional providers for the Counseling Center. We also shared the concerns of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee that Greek membership and diversity data be made available and easily accessible to faculty.
 - b. Executive Director of UA Counseling Center, Dr. Greg Vander Wal. We met with Dr. Vander Wal and discussed current services offered by the Counseling Center to UA students. Several improvements have been made in the past two years with additional staff and same-day calls for students in distress. The Counseling Center is now able to intake new clients and see them within a two week period. Dr. Vander Wal discussed ways in which faculty could support and advocate for the Counseling Center. He would like to see additional providers hired, but he also expressed that faculty can be of help by simply passing on accurate information to staff, other faculty and students. He would like to have a Counseling Center liaison within each department who could help disseminate information. Dr. Vander Wal also graciously spoke to both the Faculty Senate Steering Committee and the general Faculty Senate. He was able to field a number of questions and encouraged faculty to communicate with him directly about concerns.
 - c. Student Health Center Psychiatrist, Dr. Susan Arnold. Amanda Espy-Brown met with Dr. Susan Arnold to discuss the current demand for services and ideas about how to improve timely accessibility for students needing psychiatric services. At present Dr. Arnold is UA's only psychiatrist serving students. Two additional psychiatric nurse practitioners have been hired since the interview with Dr. Arnold. Among her suggestions were:
 - i. More competitive pay for psychiatrists. Difficulty hiring an additional psychiatrist has been rooted in the gap between median pay and that at the University of Alabama.

- ii. More flexibility in remote care. Many psychiatrists have positions which allow them to see patients remotely so this is an important issue for those applying for new positions. Dr. Arnold feels that the student response to remote care has been positive and sees a demand for this.
 - iii. Possible partnering with interns and residents. Dr. Arnold says that many avenues could be explored for working with the medical school in providing care.
 - d. Interim Chair of the Department of Community Medicine and Population Health, Dr. Crowther. We had one Zoom meeting with Dr. Crowther to learn more about the Mental Health Counseling and Treatment services she has at CCHS through a grant for Faculty and Staff at the University of Alabama. In this meeting, we discussed ways to gather information for faculty use when they were struggling to discern where to best send students with mental health needs.
3. Our committee also continued to support the REACH program which serves students who grew up in foster care, orphaned, emancipated minors or have been or are currently homeless. Faculty Senate participated in the “wish list” and gift card drive as well as brought pantry items to the meeting that were delivered to the REACH office. The plan is to continue serving REACH as a service project. REACH Director Shannon Hubbard shared these ways in which we can continue to support the program:
- a. Encourage faculty to participate in the mentor program.
 - b. Encourage faculty to share updates on the program with their home departments.
 - c. Continue to promote fund raising and donations.
 - d. Include information about the REACH program in our syllabi.

Recommendations for future progress:

We are hopeful that conversations with mental health providers on campus can continue and that the Student Life Committee will find ways to connect and advocate for these providers. One project that seemed to be of interest to faculty and to providers was an improved system by which staff, faculty and students could find and access mental health services. We received feedback that it would be helpful if there was a “clearinghouse” area on MyBama to make it easier to decide what services were best for any particular situation.

We are also hopeful that efforts to support REACH can continue. Having boxes for donations for the REACH pantry outside faculty senate meetings worked well and might be an easy and efficient way to continue to encourage support. Drop off at the REACH office after the meeting was quite easy as the staff will come and load donations directly from one’s car.