

FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
OCTOBER 17, 2023
1008 Nursing

ATTENDANCE:

Kristi Acker, Paulo Araujo, Craig Armstrong, Sheila Black, Serena Blount, Kimberly Boyle, Ibrahim Cemen, Brian Clark, Kim Colburn, Caryl Cooper, Jenni Cox, Ian Crawford, Nathan Culmer, Shibin Dai, Thang Dao, Babs Davis, Rona Donahoe, Heather Elliott, Nirmala Erevelles, Gayle Fought, Connor Franklin, Renata Fuchs, Marysia Galbraith, John Giggie, Ruth Ann Hall, Carl Hancock, Courtney Helfrecht, Alison Hooper, Matthew Hudnall, Stacy Hughey Surman, Hasan Isomitdinov, Jihoon (Jay) Kim, Tonya Klein, Sushma Kotru, Sundar Krishnan, Patrick Kung, Leah LeFebvre, Di Luo, Lyndell McDonald, Courtney McGahey, Micah McKay, Bharat Mehra, Alessandra Montalbano, Anil Mujumdar, Jennie Northam, Aislinn O'Donohoe Riley, Rebecca Owings, Shanlin Pan, Kim Parker, JoAnne Payne, John Petrovic, Shreyas Rao, Matt Reynolds, Soledad Sanchez Valdez, Josie Schmitt, Mallory Scogin, Harold Selesky, Stephanie Anne Shelton, Brenda Smith, Sara-Maria Sorentino, Michael Stewart, Shane Stinson, Weihua Su, Gary Sullivan, Edith Szanto, Theodore Tomeny, Rebecca Totten, Carrie Turner, Matthew Valasik, David Walker, Ruigang Wang, Charlotte Wegrzynowski, Susan Welch, Sara Whitver, Nelle Williams, Susan Williams, Steven Yates, Jeri Zemke

ABSENT: Tom Baker, Bruce Barrett, A.J. Bauer, Dale Dickinson, Natasha Dimova, Thomas Herwig, Kelly McPherson, Greg Starr, Clay Voorhees, Ruigang Wang

ABSENT WITH ALTERNATE:

Jessica Goethals/Xabier Granja, Xiaoyan Hong/Mark Weaver, Erin Stoneking/Wenfang Sun, Nicole Swoszowski/Kimberly Tomeny

GUESTS: Erica Shumate, Director of Benefits, Sandra Abrams, Asst. Director of Benefits, Josie Schmitt, CBA

PRESS: Laura Braddick (Strat. Comm.)

PRESENTATION: (*Erica Shumate, Director of Benefits*) –

- Open enrollment for Benefits has begun. An email has been sent out with a final reminder to be sent out on October 31st. FSA accounts must be renewed for 2024. They do not roll over. All others continue into 2024. You have the option to enroll in Benefit Focus on-line on the employee page of Mybama. We have a now mobile app for Benefits - UA-benefit focus. Your Mybama password and duo will be used for logging in. Everything can be done through the app. There will be no increase in Dental & Vision

costs. A 9-month grace period has been added for those who receive pay from September through May.

- There are very limited plan design changes. No PPO premium rate increases for medical insurance. High deductibles have increased as required by the IRS. The new deductible for HDHP is now \$1,600 for a single employee and \$3,200 for a family contract. HSA has increased annual contribution limits to \$4,150.00 for a single employee and \$8,300 for a family. For those 55 or older, there is an additional \$1,000 catch-up contribution each year. UA has increased seed money to \$500 for individual employees and \$1,000 for family that will be deposited in early January.
- Flexible spending account contributions have increased to \$3,050. It is a use it or lose it plan, and funds must be spent by the end of the year. There is no change to the dependent care FSA.
- Premium assistance is available and is based on family size and total household income. The application with documentation of income must be completed by the end of October for review. The university is matching the Federal poverty level of 2023 for this year. If eligible, they will receive a \$57 per month discount off their medical premium with a discount on parking permits.
- Anyone enrolled in the medical insurance program and dependents up until the age of 18, a digital physical therapy platform provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield will become available for use. An option for an employee or dependent with chronic pain, joint, skeletal, and muscular issues will be rolled out to assist employees with chronic pain and will target significant increases in muscular skeletal issues on the self-funded plan.
- Last year there were significant increases in major surgeries. Hinge Help is trying to avoid these major surgeries and complications. They are attempting to expand access to quality care without requiring you to go in for an appointment. If enrolled, you will receive a clinical screening for the type of pain, how often you experience it, your pain level and lifestyle factors. You will then be placed in a plan tier. The primary tier is chronic pain tier and high-risk members looking at potential surgery in the future. They will be paired up with a PT and a health coach and sent digital technology to help with recommended exercises and pain management. Demos for this product were sent out to HR employees and received positive feedback. The program is free to employees. The university will be covering the entire cost of the plan. A link is provided on the open enrollment page for sign up and to be placed on a wait list. When the program rolls out in January, you will receive additional communication from HINGE on how to complete the clinical screener and how to enroll.
- SAVI, a student debt solution, has been added. SAVI will help employees with student loan debt and loan forgiveness. Help will also be provided in getting the necessary paperwork completed and help identify opportunities that are available.

Roll Call and Quorum Check – (Rona Donahoe) –

- Minutes were distributed for the September meeting. One change for a correction in attendance was received. Minutes were approved.

President's Report – (Matthew Hudnall) -

- The childcare facility is going before the board in November. Rates are competitive. \$695 per child with additional child discounts.
- The facility is scheduled to be open in Fall of 2024 pending board approval. Phases I & 2 will go to the board in November which includes the architectural design.
- KinderCare will be the vendor. They will provide a hot breakfast and lunch plus two snacks. The average tuition will be \$695 per month.
- Classrooms will both state and NAEYC accredited.
- Renovation cost for Northington Elementary School is approximately \$11-12 million dollars.
- Priority will be given to faculty and staff, then student parents, and if any spaces remain, it would be open to the community.
- The initial capacity for the childcare facility will be 250 children with the potential to double that number if interest is shown by faculty, staff, and students.
- Extended hours will be offered both early in the morning for custodial staff and after the normal workday.
- Cutoff age for day care will be age 4 or 5.
- More information is needed on Pre-K. More investigation is needed.
- Currently working with SGA President on SOI. There are concerns from the faculty. The SGA expressed interest in a system like that of Ole Miss. The only difference is that the comments about the instructor, once vetted by the administration, are viewable to every student who could potentially register for the course, as well as the ratings that were provided for the previous semesters class and classes that instructor taught for that specific class. This could be a huge change for UA, and there could be significant issues associated with this.
- There is a need to improve SOI's from the student's perspective. They are interested in adding or modifying existing questions to provide potential feedback to students on what to expect from that particular course. Some questions may be content required for the course, to include cost of books, and the student's opinion on how tough the class was and providing that view in aggregate back to future students looking to register for the class. If doable with UA systems, for classes that are required classes and classes taught by multiple instructors, the results of those required classes would be made

available for future students on what to expect from a given class. These discussions are on-going. Looking at opinions on the class and not the instructor.

- At Ole Miss, if a student answers 50% of the SOI's in the prior semester, they can register for class a day early and receive their grades 12 hours earlier. This caused a rise in response rates.
- A suggestion was raised about numerical class evaluations and having students answer qualitative questions first and then answer numerical questions. This may have a beneficial effect on removing some of the bias that appears in numerical evaluations. Changes like this need to be discussed.
- At the institutional level it is up to the instructor on how they get response from SOI's.
- There is concern regarding bias. Helping students choose professors and classes will disproportionately adversely affect people who are already affected by SOI's such as faculty of color and women. There should be some consideration of this. If a customer service model-oriented approach to student opinions is created, students could describe the class in relationship to their feelings about the instructor.
- We rely too much on SOI's and better methods are needed. Students have too much power with SOI's which could have an impact on instructors. A discussion needs to take place on SOI's and ways to improve them.
- During the meeting with the provost, General Education reform is moving forward. More complex than thought. Looking at aspects of experiential learning.
- Rankings – UA has fallen from 147th place to 170th place in US news and world reports and was 5th in percentage of alumni giving back to the institution.

Removed from rankings:

- Percentage of alumni giving back to the institution
- Class size reduction
- Faculty with terminal degrees

Added to the rankings:

- First gen graduation rates – needs improvement
 - Citation statistics
 - Faculty salaries – negatively impacted UA on the instructor side of things
- The provost would like to focus on specific items which are important to us as an institution, such as employee salaries and first gen graduation rates. They will not be changing class size. Part of recruiting visits is to talk about class size. Approximately 48% of classes had the small class measure. The provost would like to continue to focus on this as an institution. UA went from 34% of classes having 19 students or less to 48%. This is something that the provost is interested in maintaining.

Vice Present's Report – (Steven Yates) –

- The Academic Regalia Loan Program is up and ready to roll in East Annex. Contact Steve Yates or Beth Widner.

Secretary's Report – (Rona Donahoe) –

- Please see Rona before leaving the meeting if you can't record your attendance using the QR code.
- As a Representative of this body to a University Standing Committee, you are a full voting member and expected to attend the meetings. Please notify your chairman or co-chairman of any time conflicts with Senate meetings.
- You are also asked to make reports back to the senate on any information that comes up during these meetings that you believe is of general interest to the faculty.
- As Senators, we have a responsibility to our faculty to make reports of any business that comes before the Senate back to them so that they are aware of the work that we do.

Senate Committee Reports

- **Community & Legislative Affairs – (Serena Blount & John Giggie) –**
 - A meeting was held with the University's lobbyists. They do expect that DEI would be a target for the legislature. They are willing to come to the department and explain what is happening. Please contact John Giggie if this is of interest to you so that they can facilitate it.
 - We need to keep a line of communication open between the senate and our lobbyists should anything come up, we can let them know what our concerns are.
- **Academic Affairs – (Rona Donahoe & Babs Davis) –**
 - In November, our guest will be Dean Stuart Usdan, chair of a committee that the provost had put together to create promotion paths for renewable contract faculty. A one- page summary of what will be covered will be sent out so that we can solicit questions.
 - Leslie Reid indicated that the procedure/protocol for student deaths is not posted on the UA website. UAB has a statement that is available to view on UAB's website. This will need further review. The Student Life and Faculty Life committees are also looking at this issue.
 - A request was received to change the Faculty Handbook to allow faculty who have joint appointments to serve on tenure, promotion and retention committees in both departments. The Handbook change allowing this with the agreement of the non-home unit was distributed to the Senate last month. The Senate voted to approve this Faculty Handbook change. It will be taken to OAA.

- Recognizing faculty for years of service will be brought back. When this will take place is unknown at this time.
 - The Provost was made aware of the concern that faculty can become targets of individual students or the media over course content. Lesley Reid assured us that faculty members will be protected, as long as the content is germane to the class they are teaching. If anyone finds themselves in this situation, you should immediately contact the Office for Academic Affairs.
 - The Office for Legal Counsel has affirmed that course content, for example, PowerPoint slides and lecture videos, are intellectual property of the faculty and should be protected. When for-profit venues obtain information, such as exams, and make it available for a fee to students illegally, there are limits to what the university can do because the source of the information typically cannot be traced.
 - Discussion regarding +/- grading for Graduate students will be deferred to the November meeting. Please give this some thought and poll your colleagues in your units and divisions about their feelings on +/- grading. A poll was administered last Spring to graduate faculty, graduate program directors and department chairs. We need to administer our own poll to the Faculty Senate asking everyone to be a representative of your units. The poll results and recommendation will be taken to the Graduate School, Graduate Counsel, and Academic Affairs. A discussion at the November meeting will help our polling expert formulate questions for that survey. The goal is to get this done this academic year. The resulting polls will be distributed sometime in January to avoid the Winter break. Hopefully, we will have something to act on in the February/March timeframe.
- **Student Life** – (*Carrie Turner & Dale Dickinson*) –
 - Website additions have been added to the Service Project Tab and will be updated.
 - **(Matthew Hudnall)** – On compassionate responses to death, committees have been tasked with looking at the different institutions to see what they have. A spreadsheet is out with different institutions that have publicly available responses to student deaths as far as steps that faculty and others should take in that process. As an institution, this is something that UA needs to have available. We need to have policies and procedures on how to act available to us.
- **Research & Service** – (*Shanlin Pan & Clay Voorhees*)
 - Met with Allen Parrish regarding policies and the internal small grant program issue. Funding has decreased since 2019 from 81% down to 60% and in 2020-21

down to 23%. Data is still be collected for this year. Decision making will be in December. A meeting with the Office of Research will take place to see what the funding will be.

- **Faculty Life-** (*Kim Colburn & Heather Elliot*) –
 - An on-going project on family friendliness at the university focusing on leave time is rolling forward.
 - Research on friendly spaces on campus, specifically playgrounds, is being done. There are ideas for playgrounds that are more geared to adventurous play, imaginary play, and nature.
 - In response to a question on reduced university pool hours, since the university focuses more on faculty, staff and students, the use of PARA resources for family is recommended.

- **IT & Strategic Communications** – (*Patric Kung & Xiaoyan Hong*) –
 - Exploring technology support for students in need similar to those with food insecurities.
 - Exploring the lack of technology and software platforms used and with faculty having a voice in choosing software.
 - Software support – The current contract vendor for computers is Apple desktop.
 - Laptops are being offered to students.
 - Preferred name change is still an issue.

- **Financial Affairs** – (*Tom Baker & Shane Stinson*) –
 - Still in a holding pattern with a list of topics to discuss with Matt Fajak
 - The meeting has been scheduled for November 10th.

- **Faculty & Senate Governance** – (*Jeri Zemke & Ruth Ann Hall*) – No report

- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion** – (*Thoms Herwig & Sheila Black*)
 - Discussions have been held regarding name representation for the mining victims.
 - Suggestions made were naming buildings, a plaque, or display on the grounds of Bryce.
 - A DEI breakfast is planned, and it will be open for those who are interested in DEI. Emmette Lodree, who is over the Strategic Planning Initiatives at UA, involving HBCU and different departments at UA, will be the speaker. The purpose of the breakfast is to let people know about DEI programs. The breakfast will be on November 10th from 9 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

- The committee also discussed Issues regarding preferred name use. Why isn't more progress being made?
- A article written by a student about food supplies coming from the Alabama prison systems is being investigated further.

Reports from Other Committees

- **Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee – (Rona Donahoe) –**
 - Besides open enrollment and childcare, Susan Norton, Vice President of Human Resources, indicated that the report that was done on the staff salary study that was done is expected this month. Many staff will see a salary increase that would be a market phased type increase.
 - According to Matt Fajak, the additional revenue that the university received from state appropriations as well as the small tuition increase invoked on out-of-state students this Fall, was used for several purposes - salary increases, increased police presence and student counseling services. They have added eight additional psychologists for the student counseling center, four psychology positions for UMC/Student Health Center.
 - Compliance training is due in two weeks and daily reminders will be sent out.

Old Business

New Business

Reminders

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on November 14, 2023 – Venue: 1008 Nursing.

Meeting Adjourned – approximately 4:30 p.m.