

FACULTY SENATE MEETING
November 14, 2023
1008 Nursing

ATTENDANCE:

Kristi Acker, Craig Armstrong, A.J. Bauer, Sheila Black, Serena Blount, Kimberly Boyle, Ibrahim Cemen, Brian Clark, Kim Colburn, Caryl Cooper, Jenni Cox, Ian Crawford, Nathan Culmer, Shibin Dai, Babs Davis, Dale Dickinson, Natasha Dimova, Rona Donahoe, Heather Elliott, Nirmala Erevelles, Gayle Fought, Connor Franklin, Renata Fuchs, Marysia Galbraith, John Giggie, Ruth Ann Hall, Carl Hancock, Thomas Herwig, 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, Kelly McPherson, 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, Brenda Smith, Sara-Maria Sorentino, Michael Stewart, Nicole Swoszowski, Rebecca Totten, Carrie Turner, Ruigang Wang, Charlotte Wegrzynowski, Susan Welch, Sara Whitver, Susan Williams, Steven Yates, Jeri Zemke

ABSENT: Paulo Araujo, Tom Baker, Bruce Barrett, Thang Dao, Courtney Helfrecht, Xiaoyan Hong, Alessandra Montalbano, Shane Stinson, Weihua Su, Gary Sullivan, Theodore Tomeny, Matthew Valasik, Clay Voorhees

ABSENT WITH ALTERNATE:

Alison Hooper/Melisa Fowler, Jessica Goethals/Xabier Granja, Gary Sullivan/Luke Herrine, Greg Starr/Kim Lackey, Bharat Mehra/Dongjae Lim, Edith Szanto/Nathan Loewen, Stephanie Anne Shelton/Firat Soylu, Erin Stoneking/Wenfang Sun, David Walker/George Mugoya, Nelle Williams/Andrea Wright

GUESTS: Claire Major, Director of UATA, Stuart Usdan, Dean of HES, Lesley Reid, Associate Provost, Victoria Lewis, Brett Shaw

PRESS: Laura Braddick (Strat. Comm.)

ANNOUNCEMENT: *President Hudnall* – If you have not already signed in, please do so along with any guests in attendance so that we may have good documentation of attendance in our minutes. The QR code will be put back up after the presentations.

We have two presentations today, the first being Dr. Claire Major, Founding Director of UA Teaching Academy as well as faculty in the College of Education and has been with UA for 24 years.

PRESENTATION – (Dr. Claire Major, Director of UATA) –

- Dr. Major is a professor in the Higher Education Program in the College of Education.
 - Teaches classes on college and university teaching and on learning focusing on technology.
 - Writes about teaching and learning and has 11 books total with seven being about teaching and learning as well as articles.
 - Speaks on campus throughout the US, holds workshops on teaching and learning and different aspects of it, engage teaching, lecturing, active learning short videos and different teaching techniques.
 - Her website is The K. Patricia Cross Academy.

- UATA is an organization, institution and unit developed to promote teaching excellence on campus. Being more excellent is our goal. Specific goals for the academy are to enhance faculty knowledge of teaching and learning, to help access and document teaching excellence on campus and to support scholarship on teaching and learning to inform others. We are a research institution.
- Some activities going on are a once-a-month newsletter, a website has been developed and is currently being worked on. A QR code is available to find out information on the website. It is also being sent out via email directly to your email.
- Workshops and seminars are held and are focused on teaching and learning. The first one was held last month on student engagement. The second one will take place tomorrow, November 15th, and will be focused on interactive lecturing and Adam Sharples Brooks will be leading this.
- There are national speakers that we host on campus. Our first one will be April 16, 2024 and will be led by Dr. Todd Zakrajsek.
- We do consultations and one on one support. Faculty who have questions may call and we will talk to you. We are here to help.
- We also do teaching observations with feedback and documentation. We will come to your class if asked, watch you teach and provide information on what is going well and what could be improved. We observe the teaching as well as the students. We can tell faculty what is going on with the students while they are teaching and make suggestions.
- We can also have focus groups with people and students. If you are wondering why your students are coming to class when not required, we can ask them what would make it more interesting and what they think is going well. We can talk to your students when you are out of the room and get the results in aggregate so you can get a bird's eye view.
- We can do assessments and data analysis. If faculty are wondering what the student evaluation means, we can help figure that out and what it might mean and look at trends and see things that are common across them.

- We do coaching for research on teaching. If someone wants to write an article about their teaching, gather data or do a reflective piece, we are here to help.
- Coming soon will be GTA training, particularly for units that don't already offer GTA training.
- We will be doing book clubs, mini grants for those who want to try out something in their class who may need support for resources and time to do the work, a scholarship for learning and research group or writing group who will meet over the next year to talk about how to do research on teaching and support each other through writing an article with the goal being having an article submitted for publication by the end of the year.
- We will also have a teaching fellows' program next year where we identify people identify those with teaching experience who are excellent at teaching. They will go through training on teaching and the next year, do a workshop or something similar back at their home department. The following year, they will run the Teaching Academy for the new group, so it becomes a self-running program.
- In terms of what this can do for the university, it will help faculty improve self-efficacy and satisfaction. When we work with faculty, we can let them know that they are excellent and doing good work. Everyone wants to be an effective teacher. It helps to have encouragement.
- Research tells us that if you teach well, your students learn better. Our goal here is to improve teaching excellence, but the ultimate goal is to improve student learning. We get better, they get better.
- We can also support the PNT and merit review process. It is not mandatory, but those who would like documentation of their review to include with their dossiers for promotion and tenure for promotion, we can help provide the information from an external source and help faculty gain additional publications. A teaching article may not work for everyone but may count for some.
- Research is one thing about teaching that we do behind closed doors and if we can get that information out, people can learn from our teaching.
- Think about this for later, do you have any ideas on how UATA might support faculty here on campus? Are there other things that you would like us to include in our catalog? If you would like to email me my email address is cmajor@ua.edu.
- The Graduate School has a future faculty program, and we are partnering with the graduate school to help with GTA training, however, we are not directly in charge of the program.
- Spread the word! We are brand new, and we are just getting started. Please share information with other faculty about the events as well.

Presentation #2 – (Dr. Stuart Usdan – Dean of HES) –

- Over the past year, we have been working on the promotions of renewable contract faculty, their titles, and promotional criteria. We have been working on changing the nomenclature a bit to be better in line with our peer institutions and to help to identify their job expectations and criteria more clearly what criteria they are to be evaluated on for promotion.
- Some impacts and objectives we are looking for is to develop these definitions of academic ranks based on an individual's job responsibilities and their past experience. We are trying to define these pathways for promotion for renewable contract faculty professional ranks. This aligns better with our peer institutions. The number of faculty we have here on campus that are renewable contract faculty is significant. There are 235 renewable contract faculty, assistant, associate, or full professors and 363 renewable contract instructors and senior instructors. A little less than 40% of our full-time faculty. We are at or above our peers in terms of our percentage of renewable faculty here on campus.
- Different colleges do different things. Some have been promoted and some have been able to promote renewable contract faculty. All instructors were switched about five years ago to where after a certain amount of service (6 years), are already promoted to senior instructors. The university has already made efforts in this process. Our college has been working on a process so we could promote renewable contract faculty assistant professors to move on to associate and full. We are trying to make it clear what criteria, how they will be evaluated, and how to put materials together to be reviewed.
- We looked at over 30 universities, peer institutions, other SEC schools and schools within the UA system. We were the only school in the SEC that did not have faculty criteria and definitions set up. Leslie and I have spoken with state university representatives, and they were helpful in guiding us and talking about issues they encountered and things we may want to consider.
- We identified UA faculty that represents each college, formed a working group and met in the Spring 2023 semester and collected information from 30+ universities to see how they broke it down. When the proposal was received and shared, we broke up into committees to define the different types of faculty and then shared it with the deans throughout the Summer. Once the proposal was tweaked, we presented it to the provost. Worked on it with Leslie Reid throughout the process. The proposal was refined based on the provost's recommendations. The proposal was presented to the senate subcommittee on Academic Affairs and feedback was shared. The working group members consisted of renewable contract faculty from every college on campus.
- We currently have renewable contract faculty, assistant associate full professors, and instructor to senior instructors. The longer they are here, the more their position may change a bit whether they are hired to teach or do research. As careers grow and change, some may do administrative roles in addition to other roles. How we are promoted is what needs to be recognized and starts and ends with your appointment letter. Everything is in the faculty handbook.

- Proposed categories for renewable contract faculty – teaching, research clinical professor to go on and be promoted to associate professor, then full professor and professor of practice. Teacher, research or clinical depends on the role that is open.
- Research Assistant Professor – primarily or fully engaged in research.
- Clinical varies by college or department – clinical setting and the clinical definition can vary in different disciplines.
- Professor of Practice does not have the traditional educational pathway and is someone who has experience in a particular field.
- An Instructor is promoted after six years.
- Principal Senior Instructor is promoted after an additional six years of service.
- Keep in mind that all definitions for teaching, research and clinical service are included in the faculty handbook. Job criteria is 80% teaching/20% service. Colleges and departments can come up with their own criteria, but the faculty handbook is the baseline that we all must adhere to. This all comes back to the letter of appointment, the evaluation of individuals and how we can make sure they can move forward and be promoted to associate or full level but will depend on their offer letter and what their expectations are. If it is fully teaching, then that is the criteria that is looked at. If it is teaching and research expectations, then that will also be accounted for.
- Appointment letters will indicate the length of the contract, most being three years. Criteria for promotion will conform to the current standards in the handbook. The weight of the expectations should reflect what is in the weight that of the letter and how the individuals job is broken down. This can vary by department or colleges.
- The biggest concern was what criteria should be used for evaluating.
- The difference between renewable contract teaching assistant professor versus and instructor is that renewable contract faculty is the terminal degree and expectations may differ if you are a renewable contract assistant professor.
- Leslie Reid commented that instructors and renewable contract teaching professors are faculty that we currently have on campus as part of the 2019 faculty handbook revisions. There are people in both groups. Promotion is automatic for instructors after six years of service. Your promotion comes with your contract renewal. For renewable contract assistant professors there are other criteria just as for tenure faculty beyond teaching classes. We are trying to better differentiate what the expectations were for renewable contract teaching professors to be promoted to associate since they are different from instructors.
- As stated in the faculty handbook, there is no promotion line between instructor and renewable contract assistant professor.
- We want to make sure we recognize that there are different groups of faculty who contribute in different ways to the overall mission of the university, not hierarchy with someone being at the top of that hierarchy.
- There is no automatic grandfathering from instructor to renewable contract teaching assistant professor if those positions are put in place. It cannot be automatic due to the way our HR system is set up. We continue to work with deans who want to make those transitions.

- In terms of renewable contract professor ranks, the vast majority across campus are predominantly teaching.
- Our faculty is predominantly tenure line faculty, and the university has no interest in changing this. Professor ranks allow for greater flexibility and greater opportunities for different types of faculty. There is no intention to replace tenure line faculty with research assistant professors.
- We are happy to take questions off-line.
- We hope to have this, if approved, in the handbook this spring to be ready for fall. Formal board approval is anticipated by Summer 2024 with full policy by 2025.
- It is up to the department, program, or college to determine what terminal degree is.

Roll Call and Quorum Check – (*Rona Donahoe*) –

- The QR code is out there, and a few paper copies are around. If you have trouble with the screen and cannot get the QR code to work, please see me before you leave the meeting, and I will report your attendance.

President’s Report – (*Matthew Hudnall*) –

- If you have not already signed in, please use the provided barcode.
- The UA childcare facility was approved at the last board of trustees meeting. KinderCare has a six-year contract and will be compensated \$250,000 per year to run the program in addition to 4% of the revenue from the facility. Great support was received from Trustee Brooks.
- It is a 24,000 square foot renovation that includes the gym. The project was increased and approved for \$14.1 million dollars. It was a stage 1 and stage 2 approval with the hopes of having it in place and renovations completed by Fall of 2024. CCR Architecture and Interiors, the same group who work on UAB’s facility, will be doing the renovations.
- A new mass spectrometer is going to Shelby Hall.
- A change to Board Rule 503 was approved. Board Rule 503 is the creation, merger and dissolution of centers and institutes, as well as departments and divisions. It has not yet been published on the System Office website. President Bell will try to get these published. These changes to rules will inherently govern the creation, and dissolution of academic units, centers, and institutes.
- Test optional was approved. UA will remain a test optional institution as well as UAB and UAH.
- There is a new center – The Alabama Institute for Advancement of Artificial Intelligence – AOAAI – based in the College of Engineering.
- The Analytics Institute is now the Materials Institute to better reflect what they do.
- We have reached out to UA HR about faculty name choice and received good intermediate feedback. Since Banner does not support this, we have good backing with HR Leadership to make whatever changes can be made. Susan Norton from HR, along

with others, will meet with the steering committee at the next meeting on December 5th to help discuss this topic. Progress is good and moving forward.

- Good engagement was received on SOIs. An SOI task force will be formed with the goal being teaching. Dr. Claire Major has agreed to be an ex-officio member of the group to help advise them. The task force will be charged with looking at the SOI questions, the order of the questions, other external evaluation mechanisms for teaching, and a holistic approach to evaluating teaching performance. This is a critical component and faculty need to have a say in how they are evaluated for teaching performance. The goal of the task force is to look at best practices with what they are doing at UA internally and come up with suggestions for change. I met with President Bell and gave him a heads up on what we were looking to do. He seemed very supportive and that he would be receptive of those changes and try to back them whenever possible.
- Several faculty have reached out to me about the lack of diversity in our VP candidates. This issue was voiced to President Bell yesterday and feedback was absorbed.
- The renaming of DEI campus wide was also discussed with President Bell. They have not settled on a new name. It was conveyed that there are several different things on the table. One concern is the impact of academic freedom in the context of that renaming.
- A Faculty Senate and DEI joint breakfast was held last Friday with Dr. Taylor and after the meeting small groups were formed and the majority of feedback that was received was the concern with renaming DEI related to academic freedom and how renaming might further their impacts on the ability to teach things in the classrooms. Assurance was received from President Bell and other leadership that within the statement that will be released, it will be related to academic freedom.
- We have identified two individuals to be part of the SOI task force and are looking to have 5-7 individuals, so if you have a passion for the topics we have discussed, please email me. We are looking for volunteers. It is something that would be an achievement for the senate to be able to change the way we evaluate teaching at our university. There will be work involved pulling together information from our peer institutions and looking at research and possibly involving students at some point. The task force can propose resolutions, present them to the senate, the senate can discuss then vote, and present them to the administration.
- President Hudnall commented that after speaking with President Bell, the DEI mission remains the same. The DEI renaming is a name change only.

Vice Present's Report – (*Steven Yates*) – No report

Secretary's Report – (*Rona Donahoe*) –

- The minutes were distributed, and corrections were made to the Academic Affairs and Secretary's report. Minutes were approved as distributed with no objections or abstentions.

Senate Committee Reports

- **Community & Legislative Affairs** – (*Serena Blount & John Giggie*) – No report
- **Academic Affairs** – (*Rona Donahoe & Babs Davis*) –
 - The Committee discussed the potential impact of the anticipated DEI name change on faculty academic freedom and course titles/content.
 - A Faculty Recognition Reception will take place in the Spring. Details are uncertain. Since the University Club will not reopen until May, the venue remains uncertain.
 - The joint-appointed faculty TPR committee service change to the Faculty Handbook approved by the Faculty Senate was submitted to Lesley Reid. She will take it to the Council of Deans and Provost for review.
 - The Committee discussed uncertainty about how to handle the unexpected death of a faculty or staff colleague. Besides having a student death protocol, something similar for faculty or staff may be needed. We will continue to pursue this.
 - One major topic is +/- grading for graduate course question. A draft Graduate +/- Grading Survey was created and discussed during the committee meeting. Questions were generated that more clearly determined whether faculty support having the option of adopting +/- grading for their graduate courses. The predominant concern emerging from the Graduate Schools 2021 survey was grade inflation. The University does not allow students to have an overall GPA over 4.0, even with grades of A+ being possible. Committee concerns centered on adverse selection of courses by students based on the grading scale used. Some faculty would therefore be more comfortable if +/- grading was adopted for every graduate course taught in their department. The current plan is to administer the survey just to the Senate and ask Senators to get the opinion of the graduate faculty in their units. We are open to comments on the survey and changes to it. The draft survey will be sent to the Senate for comment/input.
- **Student Life** – (*Carrie Turner & Dale Dickinson*) – No report
- **Research & Service** – (*Shanlin Pan & Clay Voorhees*) –
 - We have five candidates for the VPR position, three of which will be here today, two more tomorrow for an 8:30 presentation, and the fifth one will give a presentation on Thursday at 8:30 a.m. You are all welcome to attend, and we

welcome your feedback on candidates. Our committee has been invited to meet all the candidates.

- Regarding internal funding support, we have provided recommendations, including how to improve quality of review as well as finding better funding mechanisms to support research for those who need \$6,000 of support and for faculty who need some other area of internal support. This is still on-going and we will keep updating as we move forward, especially through the December final decision.

- **Faculty Life-** (*Kim Colburn & Heather Elliot*) –
 - We started the semester looking at possible playing places for faculty with children and it has progressed to possible considering our environment and the areas we can incorporate play into our everyday for faculty, children, and anyone else.
 - We are working with Well Bama and QR codes in different spaces. We are looking at something similar to Chattanooga North Shore – incorporating dance steps in the concrete on campus or along the quad and other areas and using our environment to create it.

- **IT & Strategic Communications** – (*Patric Kung & Xiaoyan Hong*) –
 - OIT is working on the HPC configuration and classroom technology. If you need help after 6:30 p.m., you will need to advise them in advance. Demand has been low, so assistance has been scaled back.
 - Some of the issues in classrooms are some computers are small and can be hidden. Some older classrooms have projectors but no computer (the college is supposed to supply the computer). OIT has a budget to update 15 classrooms per year, to include classroom computers dating back to 2007. Adding technology to older classrooms will require more money.
 - OIT-managed computers never require a log in, but other computers (e.g., Business School managed) may require one, so instructors would need a guest login.
 - In terms of password security, try not to login to a profile in a browser, and if you do, do not store your password.
 - We have exceeded our license in UA Box. Everyone gets a UA Box but not everyone uses it, and some have never logged in.
 - We have been asked to do a survey on how you use Box and going to a model where you only get UA Box to only those who need it. There is no storage limit to One Drive, but UA Box will remain available.
 - The University has mandated that all laptops be encrypted.

- A survey was sent out for interest in Calendly software, but currently there is no site licensing. An individual license can be purchased with an educational discount of 25%. There will be cost-sharing necessary for any individual license.
- **Financial Affairs** – (*Tom Baker & Shane Stinson*) –
 - We met with Matt Fajack last week and had a good discussion. The University is in strong financial shape even though we are going through changes. The transition is keeping up with growth to working on efficiency. Growth is beginning to plateau in terms of enrollment. We are no longer the leader and the provost and Matt Fajack expressed interest to reclaim that spot.
 - There is pressure to raise salaries and maintaining small class size.
 - Beginning in January/February 2024, staff salaries will be adjusted to ensure baseline levels as a result of a staff salary study. A faculty study is in the works.
 - The goal for staff is to get people to baseline levels in a peer group and the goal for faculty is to get to midline levels. According to the provost, there is money set aside to do this.
 - In regard to USA and World reports, we were hurt by two things. The renewable and downgrade of ranking factors such as alumni engagement and small class size and the increase in in-state health students which the university does not offer.
 - Despite all the pressure, the university is in good financial shape, \$1 billion in debt but \$1.1 billion in assets.
 - President Hudnall commented that in previous conversations with the administration, the gap with the instructor level is one of our largest gaps. If there are efforts to move people to midpoint, that group would be receiving in theory, the largest move to reach midpoint.
- **Faculty & Senate Governance** – (*Jeri Zemke & Ruth Ann Hall*) – No report
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion** – (*Thoms Herwig & Sheila Black*) –
 - A DEI breakfast was held with Dr. Taylor and Dr. Landry as guest speakers.
 - We are also working a summit for the Spring but time has not been set.

Old Business

New Business

Reminders

Meeting Adjourned