

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Executive Committee-President's Council
Sept. 11, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
MCOB 101
MINUTES

Present for FS Executive Committee: Christina Wassenaar (presiding), Bret Webb, Vicki Tate, Michael Black, Clay Davidson, Yvette Getch, Marie Migaud, Sinéad Ni Chadhain, Andrei Pavelescu, David Turnipseed (Z), Laura Vrana, and Sean Walker.

Present for President's Council: Jo Bonner, Andi Kent, Charlie Guest, Nick Lawkis, Jim Berscheidt, Michael Mitchell, Peter Susman, Buck Kelley, Kristen Roberts, Kristin Dukes (Z), Joel Erdmann, and Joél Billingsley.

Old Business – Update on Faculty Senate's DEI Response

Christina Wassenaar addressed the status of the Faculty Senate's DEI standing committee. The Executive Council has had several conversations about the DEI changes and SB 129. We want to be in alignment with the law, but we also want to determine what the change would mean regarding issues before the Faculty Senate. We know that the committee will be removed from the bylaws by Sept. 18th as a result of the law. On the other hand, the Faculty Senate will not vote to dissolve the committee. The *"action that we would like to take is really more around the idea of adherence to the inclement alliance with the law"*. There will be no renaming of the committee; the committee will cease to exist. Some of the issues of the committee will continue within the framework of other committees. We will add a working group to do the work on certain issues, so that we adhere to Title IX. We have come up with well-being and retention as the working title of the group to look at the overall experience of faculty and the impact that affects student experience as well as retention. The new committee can serve as a conduit for really pulling together where the resources are, across campus to address different types of problems.

Christina proposed that in order to involve collaboration among different members of executive committee with university administration. we should intersperse the two groups during our meeting so that we are not divided on one side of the table with the other group on the other side. Name tags may be involved with this initiative.

New Business – Review of College Chairs

Christina Wassenaar covered three points on this topic:

- 1.) The ExComm would like to know how often department chairs are reviewed. The university policy mandates a review of chairs every five years. There has been some discussion about helping chairs with training or professional development so that chairs are well-versed in activities such as evaluation of faculty. We have seen that there are a lot of inconsistencies about how the job is performed among the various colleges in following university guidelines.
- 2.) The Faculty Senate would be interested in putting together small working groups with ILC on some of the issues that we identify on the faculty side of the experience and help with some of the topics such as curriculum development. What is needed is something more than an orientation of new chairs to the job, which is more of a Human Resources responsibility. But rather something more on the line of best practices or professional development relating to the evaluation of faculty or coaching faculty, as well as implementing university policies.
- 3.) When evaluations of chairs are made by the faculty members, what is done with the information? What kind of feedback is given to the chairs? Some faculty members have never had the opportunity to be a part of the five-year review. We understand what is outlined in the University Handbook, but it seems more like theory of what should be done, rather what is done in reality.

Bottomline-- There is inconsistency about how chairs conduct the process of faculty evaluation, and it's across campus.

New Business –Presentation on R1 Faculty Survey from last spring semester

Bret Webb reported on the initial results of the faculty survey that was conducted early last spring to identify perceptions and attitudes about the potential transition from R2 to R1. There was over 50% response from full-time faculty, but the survey was sent to all faculty which resulted in a less than 50% response overall. The survey had 22 questions, with four-six questions that were quantitative questions which gave some sort of numeric score. Sixteen of the questions were open and responsive questions, to which not all survey takers responded.

Overall, respondents were at least familiar with Carnegie R1 criteria in a general way (n=201) and a smaller subset claimed familiarity with the specific classification metrics (n=57). With exception of impacts to their teaching, more faculty presumed a transition to R1 as having a beneficial impact in many areas (e.g., students, research, department, college, university, community/region). More faculty believe that the University should pursue an R1 designation than not. A large number of respondents (n=240) felt like the University had not kept them informed about the process for

attaining R1 status. Faculty consistently identified the need for clear communication in their responses and do have concerns about potential negative impacts on teaching, undergraduate students, and resources.

New Business –Test Files in Greek Organizations and the University’s Honor Code

Laura Vrana brought the concern that faculty have been hearing that it is commonly known, across campus for years, that a number of the Greek organizations keep test repositories of old, reuse tests, specifically from nursing. This is enabling students and those Greek organizations to have access to information and ace re-used exams repeatedly and throwing off curves and courses and things of that nature. As faculty we are concerned about the integrity and violations of the honor code.

Michael Mitchell addressed this issue. Faculty should change their methodology of giving tests which would lessen the advantage of the use of the test files.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.

Minutes compiled by Vicki Tate, Faculty Senate Secretary.