

Clayton State University Faculty Senate

20 February 2023

ATTENDEES

Senate members: Shakil Akhtar, Augustine Ayuk, Eric Bridges (Chair), Kate Cotter-Reilly, Deborah Gritzmacher, Anthony Hannah, Adam Kubik, Samuel Maddox, Larry Menter, Dennis Miller, Rebecca Morgan, Ken Nguyen, David Plaxco, Stacey Reynolds, Ann Showalter, Kendolyn Smith, Sharon White

Guests: Arianne Adams, Latonia Alexander, Dennis Attick, Shuju Bai, Royal Baxter, Dmitriy Beznosko, Stephen Burnett, Jacob Chacko, Deborah Davis, Everod Davis, Keira, Davis, Romesa Davis, Kitty Deering, Kevin Demmitt, Clint Edmunds, Billy Evans, Antoinette France-Harris, Michelle Furlong, Sonya Gaither, Nichelle Gause, Brian Goldman, Pinar Gurkas, Linda Hain, Nayab Hakim, Feechi Hall, Sara Harwood, Craig Hill, Dwayne Hooks, Jeff Jacobs, Joe Johnson, Chizara Jones, Ebrahim Khosravi, Mary Lamb, Paul Melvin, Antoinette Miller, Keith Miller, Jada Mitchell, Nasser Momayezi, Michelle Nelson, Eugene Ngezem, Francine Norflus, Mario Norman, Adel Novin, Vivian Padin-Irizarry, Cass Parker, Jennifer Parrott, Leon Prieto, Michael Sitvarin, Scott Stegall, Naquilla Thomas, Celeste Walley-Jean, Mark Watson, Carol White, David Williams

ORDER

The Senate chair, Dr. Eric Bridges, called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Georj Lewis described several Georgia legislative bills that have been introduced that are related to higher education. He announced that the capital plan proposal is due to the system office. This proposal includes modifying the request for a new College of Health building to remodeling the existing space. President Lewis listed several departments and campus groups that he had met with and mentioned his plans to meet with more groups and to create office hours for students to speak with him.

Finally, President Lewis described plans for moving forward with the strategic planning (goal for launch in spring 2024) and refined his list of priorities to include undergraduate and graduate enrollment and student success, financial stability (we are anticipating a \$7.7million cut starting this fall for fiscal year 2024), and campus wellness and well-being, which includes SACSCOC reaffirmation in September and stabilizing critical cabinet and interim positions by January 2024.

PROVOST'S REPORT

Interim Provost Dr. Jill Lane announced that Dr. Ashlee Spearman will start as the AVP of Academic Engagement and Student Success; the search for the AVP of Enrollment Management will be relaunched as the finalist accepted a position elsewhere; and the current Director of Financial Aid left and Ta-Mia McGruder will be serving as interim director.

Provost Lane provided an update on enrollment: the university has currently accepted 574 new freshmen for Fall 2023, which is up 403% from the same date last year; transfer acceptances are up 3%; and dual enrollment is up 20% from last year. Financial aid has also been processing requests more quickly than last year. The university is continuing to streamline its processes to increase enrollment. Efforts include: changes to ACCUPLACER requirements and implementation of ACCUPLACER support and training, process and staffing improvements in recruitment and admissions, launch of new direct marketing campaigns, relaunching of the Dream Path initiative, and waiving application fees for the month of March.

Finally, the Student Success Conference is scheduled for Friday, April 28. Dr. Lane planned to send out information to faculty about the conference with her Senate Remarks later in the day.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

1. University Curriculum Committee. Chair Dr. Dmitriy Beznosko summarized the courses that have been reviewed and approved by the committee. These proposals will be sent to Senate for a vote at next meeting. Dr. Beznosko reminded faculty that the UCC needs curriculum proposals at least a week before their upcoming meetings. Next meetings: Fri, Mar 17 @ 12pm.
2. Academic Policy Committee. Chair Dr. Antoinette France-Harris reported that the APC had received comments on its policies for online courses. Most were suggestions to improve clarity. The committee has revised the policy document and plans to send out the revised policy document to Senate for review and approval. For the remainder of the semester, the committee plans to work on optimizing and disseminating its tool to assess student readiness for online courses. Next meeting: Thurs, Mar 16 @ 10am.
3. Faculty Affairs Committee. Chair Dr. Michael Sitvarin reported that the FAC has finished Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) revisions and requests a Senate vote on the proposed revisions to the SEI.
4. Student Affairs Committee. Co-chair Dr. Sam Maddox finalized their student survey and plans to distribute the survey soon. The committee also discussed developing policies for parenting students which could go in the Faculty Handbook. Lastly, the SAC discussed policies on disruptive behavior in the classroom to be mindful of diversity and inclusion issues.

5. Committee for Advancing Retention in Education. Co-chair Dean Celeste Walley-Jean reported that the committee had concluded their work and is drafting a report of their recommendations, which will be shared with the new AVP of Student Success and Engagement and with the Faculty Senate.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion of Changes to Annual Evaluations Policy (section 202) in the Faculty Handbook. SAFE Committee co-chair Dr. Ann Showalter summarized the key changes in the annual evaluations policies including: aligning the annual evaluation criteria more closely with the Promotions and Tenure requirements, adopting a five-point Likert scale to replace the current eight-point scale, inclusion of an appeals process if faculty have concerns about their annual evaluations, and inclusion of performance remediation plans for faculty scoring a 1 or 2 on any category of their evaluation. Co-chair Dr. Mark Watson added that the new policies allow for greater academic unit control of what constitutes student success and how each category of the evaluation is assessed.

The new annual evaluations form which encapsulates many of the policy changes was reviewed. The new student success category will be an overlay category with a simple “meets expectations” or “does not meet expectations” scoring. Student success activities can come from all of the other major categories (teaching, service, and scholarship and professional development), and it is up to each academic unit to define their criteria for qualifying activities. Finally, the summary table shows how the weight factors for different academic positions will be used to calculate the overall evaluation score.

A few minor modifications and clarifications to the policies were discussed including: explicitly stating the maximum possible evaluation score (5 points), adding a layer of review (beyond just the Dean) of academic unit weight factors and criteria, and reviewing the dates for critical deadlines in the annual evaluations policy. These policies will be effective for the next annual evaluation cycle (2023).

2. Update on non-tenure renewal case. The Senate’s investigation of Dr. Michael Sitvarin’s non-renewal case has been put on hold as the entire Senate is under investigation for ethics violations related to claims of violating the Senate bylaws in seeking to investigate this case and for conflicts of interest. Senate Chair Dr. Bridges indicated that its non-renewal investigation would move forward once the Senate has been cleared. Dr. Bridges summarized the section of the Senate’s bylaws that provides exceptions to hearing individual cases when those cases illuminate issues affecting all faculty. He emphasized the Senate’s key priority of protecting all faculty.

Senator Dr. Sam Maddox encouraged all Senators to actively participate in the ethics evaluation and not be obstructionist in the process.

Senator Dr. Ann Showalter read a statement outlining the issues related to the non-renewal investigation. She stated that her relationship to Dr. Sitvarin illuminated how few rights non-tenured faculty have when faced with a non-renewal. She outlined the lack of employee protections provided by Georgia laws when being terminated and summarized the lack of Board of Regents policy protections for non-tenured faculty. Non-tenured faculty are not required to be given reasons for their non-renewal, only administrators and the Board of Regents review non-renewal justifications, and there is no appeals process. Dr. Showalter reminded the Senate that the local and national AAUP chapters have petitioned the university to adopt more faculty-friendly non-renewal policies. Because of upcoming budget cuts which will likely lead to more faculty non-renewals, she stated her hope that the university can do better in how it treats faculty during this process.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21pm.

Minutes recorded by Ann Showalter, Secretary of the Faculty Senate.