Faculty Senate Leadership Retreat  
August 17, 2021  
Agenda  
Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/98185592385  
3:00-6:00

**Procedural Items:**

**Call to order** (3 minutes)
- Valerie Robnolt, President

**Minutes from April 20** (2 minutes)
- Everett Carpenter, Recording Secretary and Treasurer
- Minutes from the May 4th full senate meeting and Minutes from the April 20th leadership meeting were approved without revisions

**Summary University Summer Events** (20 minutes)
- Leadership Executive Committee
- Minutes from the July 8th meeting with new provost were reviewed

**Summary Committee Updates & Goals** (20 minutes)
- Valerie Robnolt, President
- All Faculty Leadership

**Goals for 2021-2022** (90 min)
- All Faculty Leadership

Issues to discuss that may inform our goals:

- **Shared Governance** - what should this look like? I’d like to share our vision of shared governance: When the Faculty Senate is asked to provide recommendations on issues, the decisions of administrators need to reflect our recommendations. If they don’t, we need to know why. We want there to be continual dialogue and collaboration.
- **Impact of COVID-19**
- **Adjunct Issues** – See minutes from Leadership Meeting with Provost Hackett and Gypsy on June 29
- **Evaluate/Revise Modified RCM budget model**
- **Annual Evaluation and P&T Task Force**
- **Evaluations of Deans and Other Administrators**
- **Various Climate and Culture Surveys – Dissemination of Results**
- **Next Steps with regard to FS Anti-racism Statement – Should we have Caste discussion?**
- **Academic Freedom**
• What to do about the Faculty Symposium tentatively scheduled for Friday, Oct. 22 (NOTE: Kim Case will join us at 4:00 for this discussion)

**Faculty Senate Business** (20 min)

Location of meetings
Budget
Format
Guest speakers
• Process for Presentations
• Presence of Administration During Entire Meeting

August 31 Faculty Senate Meeting Agenda
• Deborah Noble-Triplett & Reuban Rodriguez – Student Absence Policy and Pass/Fail Policy
• Aashir Nasim, Cleo Magwaro, & Patrick Noonan – Required non-discrimination training

University Council 2021-2022 membership
1. Valerie Robnolt (Faculty Senate President)
2. Maria Rivera (Faculty Senate Vice President)
3. Nancy Jallo (Faculty Senate Past President)
4. Everett Carpenter (Faculty Senate Member)
• Alternate: Roxanne Spindle (Faculty Senate Member)

Adjourn

**Next Leadership Meeting:** Tuesday, September 21, 2021 – Church Hill Board Room, Larrick Center, 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Minutes:

Artello, Rivera, Robnolt, Karam, Jallo, Goldstein, Rodriguez, Teves, Gaynell, Spindle, Cummins, Street, Coles, Introductions and present

Concerns over the reorganization of different units:
There seems to be an emerging model for reorganizing which started within the school of the arts and is now being applied to the school of medicine. There is a slight difference between the two examples, within SOTA the reorganizing was discussed for several years and did not include input from involved faculty. Within the school of medicine, the dean’s office announced the reorganization during the spring faculty meeting after receiving a report from outside consultants. The dean then formed a faculty committee to make recommendations on the consolidation of five basic science departments into just three. There is considerable concern from the faculty on the committee that the decisions are already made rather than waiting on the faculty recommendations. Faculty in the departments are surprised by the announcement but there is not anything in by-laws which prevent the dean from reorganization. These reorganizations in a way feel like a power grab by the dean’s offices by diluting the voices of the faculty. It seems that many unit by-laws or even the faculty senate by-laws should be restructured to provide additional review of reorganizational decisions and provide a mechanism for faculty within the units to provide input and potentially even approval. The faculty need to be consulted since they have the best understanding of the potential impact on curricular affairs.
Bottomline, faculty should have a voice in reorganization which will impact curriculum and students’ education.

Concerns for the governance committee:
There has been an effort over the past few years where Valerie has been working with Gypsy Denzine in the provost’s office to review by-laws across campus. The governance committee should review this process to see where it is at and what still needs to be done. For example, the by-laws in wilder school, there is not a faculty governance structure which excludes the administrators. This could be an issue that FS should investigation since it is a violation of the FS by-laws. A potential charge for the governance committee this year might be work out the difference between shared governance and faculty governance. There are several areas, like curriculum, which should be the solely faculty purview where shared governance is not appropriate.

Upcoming required training for faculty:
Nasim will be coming to the next faculty senate meeting to talk about the new potentially required training for faculty on non-discrimination practices.

Adjunct affairs:
There was discussion about the current state of the adjuncts. Specially what are administration actions on the recommendations presented last spring. There was also concern expressed about the implementations of some of the new policies like the course cancellation fee. There still needs to be more data collected on what our peers are doing with adjunct hours? And why are we still sticking with the 6 hour limit when there seems to be little reason for it?

Faculty input on policies and procedures:
There was a discussion about the turn around time for faculty input when it is requested from the administration. Currently the norm seems to be very short turnaround times rather than involving faculty early in decision making process. Additionally, when administration which to present information to the FS as a whole, they should provide the powerpoints ahead of time so that the appropriate committee can review them and highlight important issues to the faculty. This would reduce the amount of time that is needed by administration and provide for greater time to discuss the issues and provide recommendations.

Faculty Symposia:
Kim Case come to brainstorm about the faculty symposia, Friday Oct 15th. It was decided to partner with CTLE’s faculty wellness event and include something about inclusive practices and why it goes together with wellness. Right now the event will be virtual but we will circulate a form for senators to voice opinions. We would provide suggestions for possible speakers and if necessary cover the costs of the speaker. The speaker needs to be locked down before September 15th

Administration vacancies:
The ADA coordinator, Chris Tombes left abruptly. This follows several other key administration vacancies announced over the past year. This presented a disturbing trend of key assurance and control offices which are left vacant. There were opinions precented that this could be an issue worth following up with to see what the reason for these assurance people are leaving suddenly.

Dean Evaluations:
There have been several evaluations and surveys taken this past year regarding faculty impressions of administration, climate surveys, and evaluation of various dean’s offices. There were many questions regarding what happened to the data from these surveys and how is it being used. Maybe a goal of the FS would be to push these evaluations as a opportunity for increased transparency and accountability of dean’s offices. Maybe this year work with the university council faculty affairs committee on this matter.

RCM budget model:
There was discussion about having the budget committee engage with Leslie Brown in the budget office to evaluate the model and be able to give input back to provost. The committee could gather information to create an overview of how it works and is working. This would allow the committee to identify issues with the model and help provide recommendations on how to address them.

There was a brief discussion about FS issuing a statement on the vaccine requirement.

It was also decided that rather than have meetings in person with a zoom component, just have them virtually again. As we did last spring with a separate zoom link for committee work.

From Faculty affairs committee:
The committee has collected data for the creation of a position paper for a faculty senate report on annual review and evaluation of faculty. A question was posed about whether a second position paper for recommendation should be made regarding the work from the promotion and tenure taskforce since there report is due and is made up of many administrators. It was thought that any recommendations that were made regarding evaluations should come from the provost’s office to the units to help pressure individual units to adopt the recommendations. Also FS would continue to push for additional faculty awareness of the annual evaluation appeal process. The goal for this year of the committee would be to research the concerns expressed from junior faculty about how annual evaluations are being done, how the P&T taskforce report aligns with expectations, and emphasize to administration that faculty should have a major voice in those policies. Right now, there is concern that the appeal process is not being used maybe because of concerns about retaliation from chair, especially since lots of faculty on med campus are term not tenured.

Email from Nancy:

HI! As I assume the role of Faculty Senate Past President (!)), I want to thank you and express my gratitude for all you have done as Faculty Senators. Your commitment of your time, energy, dedication, passion, sense of responsibility to represent the faculty, as well as open and transparent conversations is incredible and is the core of Faculty Senate. It is these very characteristics that underlie all the conversations that I along with the executive/leadership committee(s) convey to our schools/colleges, Provost and other administrative offices, and President Rao. They may not always agree with us (!!!) but they never doubt our commitment to all things faculty. Thank you.

Over the summer there were some very thoughtful conversations centered around faculty involvement in decision making. First, I am so grateful for you and your comments which promote these thoughtful conversations, reflections, and strategies for improvement. Thank YOU! As we approach the 2021 Academic year, I thought this would be a good opportunity to
summarize and comment as well as share strategies for improvement – feedback is always welcomed!

Disclaimer: I am violating my principle of email – “short and sweet or have an oral conversation” but I didn’t want to miss anyone as some of the FS terms are ending with 2021 academic year.

Shared governance is always on the minds and in the conversations of the FS executive committee (your elected officers) and FS Leadership (elected officers and all chairs/co-chairs of our committees). The question I always pose is “what is shared governance and, most important to me personally, how do we know if we have it….what does it look like?” Without the answer to the second part, it is hard to determine the outcome – do we have shared governance?

I thought it might be helpful to center this important discussion around the definition the FS leadership has used in our discussions. Shared governance can be defined and operationalized as the following: FS will provide input and recommendations for major issues facing the VCU faculty. If the FS recommendations are not reflected in the outcome, the rationale for decision making is warranted. Ideally, we encourage continual dialogue to solve the problem and modify or provide additional evidence for the value of the FS recommendations.

In all honesty, within the spirit of collaboration and continued dialogue we usually meet the initial goal (provide recommendations with solid evidence to support them) but don’t always achieve the second goal (if recommendations not incorporated, converse about rationale for decision making). An opportunity for improvement to be sure!!

I thought I would provide two examples of this process and how some of this work is accomplished. The two issues I believe illustrate this process are: 1) distribution of faculty raises and 2) adjunct issue.

As we will remember, Drs. Hackett and Kellerman came to FS meeting asking for our opinion on the distribution of the raises (merit based, across the board, some combination of the 2). We had a great discussion, and as a group supported across the board raises. What is important, is prior to this meeting, the subset of the Executive Committee (Past president, President, and Vice-President) during our monthly meetings with the Provost had continued to express faculty concerns over faculty evaluations during COVID-19. We shared with the Provost and the Provost office, the work that was completed by our Faculty Affairs Sub-committee and University Council Faculty Affairs committee demonstrating the inconsistencies between schools/colleges. This resulted in a joint statement from Drs. Hackett and Kellerma supporting the consideration of COVID-19 during the evaluation process. As additional information was available, I had conversations with Drs. Hackett and Rao about the degree of faculty concern over this issue. I do believe, when there is a collaborative relationship, when someone sends up a “red flag” it adds to the strength of the concern. As we know, that ended with a one-time across the board raise. We believed this was the right thing to do and provided evidence to support our view.

The second issue is the adjunct concern. As this was a recent event, I will not review the background. This was a perfect example of gathering evidence, drafting recommendations, and then open, honest and transparent conversations within the Faculty Senate to develop recommendations for the Provost office. Recommendations were made/edited, supported by Faculty Senate and shared with the Provost office. The timing was less than ideal as it was the end of the Spring semester, administrative changes were occurring, other University decisions
were made, as well as identification of human resource and state guidelines that added to the complexity of this issue and impacted our recommendations. The newly created faculty employment category for the 2021-2022 academic year called Fixed Annual Contract (FAC) Faculty was less than ideal (!) and presented another set of issues. I believe this issue illustrates the first shared governance component (FS will provide input and recommendations for major issues facing the VCU faculty) but falls short of the second component (return to FS for continual dialogue to solve the problem and modify or provide additional evidence for the value of the FS recommendations). This will require all of our vigilance as we move forward and develop strategies for improvement in all things shared governance. Valerie, as the new FS President, will do a TERRIFIC job!

I also want to thank the Executive Committee (Scott, Valerie, Maria, Everett) and FS Committee chairs (Maria Teves, Neno Russell, Kristine Artello, Susan Bodnar-Deren, Sarah Jane Brubaker, Gaynell Sherrod, Ashley Brewer, Scott Street, Carmen Rodriguez, Pat Cummins, Chris Saladino, Roxanne Spindle, Allison Gregory). All the “behind the scenes” work that is done to accomplish Faculty Senate work is due to these individuals.

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone, nancy