

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting
May 15, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
MCOB 265
MINUTES

Present (In-house): Adams, Baughn, Black, Brower, Davidson, S. Davis, Dzwonkowski, Ellzie, Godang, Hauff, Henning, Hudson, Khan, McDonald, Miguad, Ní Chadhain, Pavelescu, Pfleeger, Rabideau, Richardson, Robertson, Shea, Streeter, Tate, Ter Horst, Thompson, Turnipseed, VandeWaa, Walker, Webb.

Present (Zoom): Cutchen, C. Holliday, N. Holliday, Marass, McMullan, Merritt, Miller, Wassenaar.

Excused: Abeynanda, Bates, Bessette, Brock, Bunch, T. Davis, Donaldson, Ferguson, Fleck, Getch, J. Huang, Kilgo, Lin, Meola, Vrana.

Unexcused: Borchert, Coronado, Gavrilita, Y. Huang, Raczkowski, Sehgal, Shaw, Singh, Stenson, Swoffard, Thomas, Williams.

Guests: Jim Berscheidt, Nick Lawkis, Tracy Cole.

I. Preliminary Business

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 pm with VP Bret Webb presiding. Quorum was met.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for the April 17th meeting was approved.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda for the May 15th meeting was approved

Guest Speakers:

- *Jim Berscheidt (VP, Marketing & Communications)*—talked about the USA brand refresh
 - When he started the job in Sept. 2022, he did an audit of the job to find out what was working and what needed to be remodeled and what needed to be jettisoned, and what needed to be started.

- The current brand “We Are South” had been around since 2016. The work of the job is divided up into paid (the work of marketing), owned (the product of marketing) and earned (the stories about the university) media.
 - Hired Simpson Scarborough (national marketing service in higher education) to do a brand survey throughout the southern US and in the Midwest.
 - Last summer started to turn off the old brand, to get ready for the new brand which USA is currently working on to finalize in the near future.
 - Some people consider USA as a regional university, but it is time to start thinking of us as a national university, as U.S. News does.
 - Telling the faculty story better, from teaching to research, will be incorporated into the plan for the new refresh.
 - When the plan is ready to go, it will be presented to the university community through townhall meetings, probably during the fall semester.
 - The plan will be utilized in our recruitment plan for new students.
 - Things that will not be changed are: the USA mark, the primary colors (red, white & blue), though there will be some utilization of changes with the secondary and tertiary colors.
 - Auxiliary products, such a power point templates and graphics for social media accounts will be available; Academic Computing will assist in helping departments update their web pages.
- *Nick Lawkis (VP, Governmental Relations)*
 - Works as a lobbyist for the University by 1) developing and maintaining relationships with Federal, State and Local levels; 2) advocating for the passage of legislation positively impacting the University, USA Health and the University community, while also opposing legislation the negatively impact the same groups.
 - During the 2024 Alabama Regular Legislative Session, 843 bill were introduced (265 bills were tracked by USA Governmental Relations, with 20-30 of them were actively engaged by GR) and 324 bills enacted (but not necessarily signed by the governor).
 - Use of Advocacy: Either the Grass Roots vs Grass Tops approach. Grass Roots tackles issues from the bottom up (will of the people) while Grass Tops approach goes to the people at the top of the issue to solve the problem.
 - Went through a long list of legislative bills that were of interest to the university or its community, most of which did not survive the term.
 - Question about the support for Higher Education Day? It seemed to have receive less support since COVID. Should/can the faculty be more involved in traveling to Montgomery?
 - Leadership South was mentioned as a program allowing faculty to learn about other departments within and outside of the university. It is a 9-month program with a limited number of participants (approx. 10 people, who are not

- necessarily faculty) and is allocated to different divisions within the university. Information about program is distributed annually to VPs and Deans only, which is probably why most faculty do not know about it. If interested you would need to contact you dean and request to be nominated for the program. The purpose of the program is to “unsilo” your understanding of how the university works and how it fits within the community.
- Question about how much of the university is earmarked to specific areas within the university? Some are defined by legislation while others are earmarked at the university level, within the general budget in the university. This fiscal year the O&M budget for the university received a 6.39% increase, which is a little over \$9 million. Of that amount, \$3 million goes to Medical, which leaves \$6 million for the main campus. Anything salary-related has to come out of O&M; you cannot earmark funds for salaries.
 - Peter Sussman would be a better source on how the budget works, so it would be best to have him come to speak before the senate and answer our questions.

II. Old Business

- Faculty Senate President’s Report:
 - Peter Susman (Chief Administrative Officer) and Margaret Sullivan (VP, Development & Alumni Relations) have been invited to be our guests for the August plenary meeting to talk about the \$500 million capital campaign.
 - Standing FS committee assignments for the coming year have basically been completed, though there may still be some changes due to recent resignations. Christina Wassenaar and Bret Webb will be meeting with the committee chairs over the summer to discuss the plans the committees have for activities/accomplishment during the upcoming year.
 - At the last meeting of the President’s Council, we ask Dr. Kent and Pres. Bonner to start again documenting the turnover rates for faculty and why they are leaving the university. We requested that they start doing exit interviews again to gather this information. They indicated that the administration is willing to start doing this. Wassenaar and Webb will also work with John Elliot (VP for Human Resources) to put together a process for doing this.
 - The FS Secretary (V.Tate) will be sending out email reminders the Monday before all Plenary meetings which will include the agenda for the meeting, the draft minutes for the previous plenary meeting, the President’s Report, any committee reports received, and any documentation needed for review in the business portion of the meeting. All will be sent out ahead of time so the senators have time to review the materials before the start of the plenary session.
- Proposed procedures for adding a second ombudsperson to the Faculty Senate Bylaws was discussed.

- The proposed revision of policy to the USA Faculty Handbook (passed by the Faculty Senate in February) regarding adding a second ombudsperson is currently before the Council of Academic Deans (CAD). The proposed procedures under discussion in this meeting would put in place the procedures for the Faculty Senate to follow once the changes to the Faculty Handbook are accepted by CAD.
- The procedures would broaden the pool of potential ombudsperson by involving the entire faculty in the nominating of candidates for the position.
- This procedures state that the Faculty Senate will select three finalists from the nominees submitted, which will be given to the University President from which he will choose the new ombudsperson.
- The motion to approve the new procedures for the Faculty Senate Bylaws was approved by a vote of: 35 approved, 0 not approved, and 1 abstention.
- The current ombudsperson is Dr. Jeanne Maes (MCOB). For more information about the responsibilities of the University Ombudsperson is available by a link on the Faculty Senate web page under “Faculty Resources.” Or see:
<https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/academicaffairs/resources/facom/buds424.pdf>

III. Committee Reports

- Academic Development & Mentoring Committee: No report.
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee: No report.
- Environmental Quality & Sustainability Committee: No report.
- Evaluation Committee: No report.
- Faculty Salary & Benefits Committee: No report.
- Research & Creative Activities Committee: No report.
- Teaching, Learning, & Technology Committee: No report.
- University Planning Committee: No report.
- University Policies & Handbook Committee:
 - There have been some problems, especially in the Arts & Sciences, with faculty that have been awarded with external fellowships. From the university’s perspective (VP for Research), they are not involved with the applications for a lot of these fellowships because they are awarded to individuals, and not to the institution.
 - Between the Chair of Handbook Committee (Ni Chadhain) and the Chair of Research & Creative Activities (Migaud), they will draft a letter outlining the process where faculty would be getting all of the approvals they need before their applications to out. If they are then awarded the fellowship, the University has made a commitment to making it work for everyone.
 - There will be a plan in place ahead of time to cover the faculty member’s responsibilities while they are away.

- To get an idea of how widespread this problem is, Dr. Ni Chadhain will be sharing with the caucus leaders a short four-question survey to be sent out to entire college faculty in their respective colleges.
- Anyone who is on an University Committee, or chair of a FS Committee or Caucus Leader that wishes to file a report to be share with the Faculty Senate should go to the FS web site <https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/fsenate/> and on the right-hand column, under the heading “Committee Reporting Forms” and submit your report using the assigned link.

IV. Caucus Leaders Reports:

- No reports

V. University Committees Reports:

- No reports

VI. New Business

- Faculty networking platforms for research: “Finding Funding with Pivot”
 - You can connect with opportunities and other people on campus that are doing research by using Pivot. See: <https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/research/rdl/funding-opportunities/finding-funding.html>
 - There is another one called scholars@usa See: <https://scholars.proquest.com/gallery/USA>
 - Most faculty should already have a profile on here, if you have ever had any kind of reported scholarly activity. Otherwise, contact Matthew Reichert.
- Replacement of the Chair of the Academic Development & Mentoring Committee
 - We need to find a replacement for Seema Singh who was recently elected the Chair of the Mentoring Committee since she will be leaving the university, effective in July.
 - We have two people interested in the position. They will need to submit an email of their interest to one of the officers of the Executive Committee. A questionnaire will be given to them and the Executive Committee will decide.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:01 pm

Submitted by V. Tate