

University Faculty Senate
Wednesday, December 13, 2017

The University Faculty met from 8:00-9:30am on Wednesday, December, 13, 2017. Present in Medford were Senate President Jeswald Salacuse, Senators Fulton Gonzalez, Eulogio Guzman, Jeffrey Hopwood, Robert Jacob, Vida Johnson, Anne Mahoney, Will Masters, Mitch McVey, Lynne Pepall, Pearl Robinson, Lee Sillin, Chris Swan and Roger Tobin, Provost David Harris, Vice-Provost Kevin Dunn, and Melissa Stevenson and Lisa Bloom as support staff. Present in Boston were Senators Boris Bacanurschi, John Castellot, Brent Cochran, Roger Galburt, Nirupa Matthan, and Roman Schumann, in Grafton was Senator Melissa Mazan and via Webex was Senator Janet Forrester.

President Jeswald Salacuse called the meeting to order. First on the agenda was the approval of the minutes from the meeting of the Senate of November 8, 2017. A correction was proposed to reflect that the vote to “allow two or three schools to develop the Masters Degree in Sustainable Water Management (SWM) via their own internal approvals process, then others may come on board in future years; meanwhile, an official interdisciplinary program approval process will be developed and implemented” was not unanimous. The senate accepted the November 8, 2017 minutes with that one correction.

President Salacuse then asked the chairs of the Senate committees to give an update on their work since the last full senate meeting.

John Castellot reported that the committee on nominations had nothing to report during this meeting. Melissa Mazan requested that someone replace her as the Faculty Senate representative to the Bridging Differences working group, as she was unable to make the meetings. . David Harris agreed to accept two nominations to the working group and John Castellot as Chair of the nominating committee offered to take on the selection of the two names.

Chris Swan reported that the committee on faculty affairs has had two meetings thus far. The topics that were covered were the ombudsperson/office and tenure and revocation of tenure. The committee members had a very good discussion on how to move forward with recommendations for an ombudsperson that they will bring forward to the Senate. They discussed scale, organization and the selection and training of such a person. Additionally, a grievance policy will be discussed and evaluated by the faculty affairs committee but they have not started the discussion yet. They are considering seeking outside counsel for how grievance is handled at the different schools and may bring in people that are very knowledgeable on the process. Brent Cochran offered to assist the faculty affairs committee in their work since the Sackler School is currently developing their own grievance committee rules now.

The committee on budget and planning and development had no report since Larry Weiss was absent from the meeting due to surgery.

Nirupa Matthan reported that the committee on research and scholarship had their first meeting following the last full Senate meeting and made a plan to meet monthly going forward. Their goals are to identify problems related to research, review and recommend changes to university policies that affect the university's research infrastructure and review the research and scholarship priorities of the university. As a first order of business, the committee sent a survey to the senate to gauge if research support is an issue across the university and received a high response rate of eighty-six percent. The committee has only reviewed the aggregate data thus far and found no widespread dissatisfaction with pre- and post awards. However, thirty percent of respondents said that they or a colleague had a grant submitted late, with errors, or had a grant denied because of lack of support by the university. They will review the data they collected more closely to see if these issues are school-specific or if it suggests a more university-wide issue. With regards to university infrastructure, the RAS system will be investigated and feedback will be provided, though the committee acknowledges that the decision to have RAS as a university system predated the formation of the senate. With regards to interdisciplinary research, the committee stated that even though most research at the university is funded by individual researchers, there may be other models to investigate that can foster interdisciplinary research. Vice Provost of Research Simin Meydani is enthusiastic about engaging with the committee on these items. David Harris commented that surveys have been sent to faculty on all campuses regarding research within the past two years and that the committee will have good success working with both Simin Meydani and Associate Vice Provost for Research and Development Zoya Davis-Hamilton because there is a lot of data to mine. Pearl Robinson commended the committee for the work they have already done.

Melissa Mazan reported on the activities of the educational affairs and policy committee. They are currently trying to coordinate schedules so that they can meet to discuss the College of Special Studies.

The senate then moved into a discussion of the role of senators in serving on university committees. Roger Tobin, who serves on an Arts & Sciences committee on student life explained that there is a move afoot to revise student policies such as academic integrity and residential life. Some of these issues will overlap with other policies in other schools and he advised the Dean of Office of Student Affairs in Arts, Sciences and Engineering that they should coordinate with the senate's educational affairs and policy committee because issues like free speech/controversial speakers, drug and alcohol policies and academic integrity are ones that cross schools.

Lynne Pepall reported that an issue came up with Arts & Sciences faculty regarding their consultation on the replacement product for TRUNK. She asked if the educational affairs and policy committee should have been consulted on the change. David Harris stated that this is yet another good reason to have the Senate in place; David Kahle invites faculty to sit on his technology committees but once those faculty representatives are somehow linked to or selected by the Faculty Senate, there will be a greater involvement and coordination. Will Masters stated that he is a member of David Kahle's RAS committee and agreed that there should be a formal way to report back to the Senate on the work done on these committees.

Vida Johnson requested that the senate be provided with a current list of university-wide committees and task forces that faculty sit on and Lynne Pepall said that she could resend the “standing committees” document she created because it has the list she collected with the help of Dawn Terkla’s team at the end of it. The document will be placed on the Faculty Senate TRUNK site and it will also be posted to the new Faculty Senate website.

President Salacuse reported that the executive committee of the senate met and discussed an attendance policy for senate meetings. The recommendation is that the dean of each respective school be notified if there are attendance issues with one of its senators. Senators commented that the term “excused absence” may need more definition. Some senators felt that the policy sounded punitive from the top down. Members of the executive committee stated that the intent of the policy is not to be punitive but rather to have clear guidelines and expectations of senators who have been elected to represent their respective schools, which is hard to do if there are repeated, unexcused absences. The policy as stated would be put into effect going forward because meeting dates and times for the Senate were selected after elections happened, so those senators with prior teaching and clinical obligations had no way of knowing in advance that they would have scheduling conflicts when they went up for election. The senators agreed that it would be a good idea to ask those planning to be absent to report in and give their reason in advance so that the senate can keep a record of excused absences. It was suggested that the language should state that senators who are unable to attend shall notify a member of the executive committee of their planned absence and the reason for their absence, with some exceptions because practicing clinicians are not always going to be able to do so if they are called into a surgery or medical emergency. The goal is for the faculty governance structure at each school to be alerted if there are attendance issues on the part of their senators so that they can decide how to handle it. President Salacuse stated that based on these suggestions the executive committee will revise the resolution and resubmit it for adoption by the full senate.

President Salacuse then asked the senators what their mechanisms are for reporting the activity of the senate back to their schools. Chris Swan provides an oral report at the Engineering faculty meetings, and while Lynne Pepall and Vida Johnson do the same at the School of Arts & Sciences meetings, those meetings aren’t often well attended. Senators suggested that the new faculty senate website could be a good vehicle for providing updates to the wider faculty on senate meetings. At the medical and Sackler schools, John Castellot and Brent Cochran take advantage of Chris Swan’s written summary that he creates each month, and Eulogio Guzman also reported that he writes a small summary to share with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Dean Nancy Bauer and their faculty. The Friedman School senators use a written summary to provide to their faculty and do a presentation at their faculty meetings. At the Cummings School it is more difficult to report back to the faculty as whole because there are multiple department meetings. They would appreciate being able to rely on a link from the senate website that provides summaries of the senate meetings so that they can send the link along to their departments for distribution. Rogert Galburt from the dental school agreed that a comprehensive summary of the meeting would be beneficial to share with their

faculty, who do not regularly meet as a whole body. President Salacuse also commented that his membership on the academic council affords him the opportunity to report directly to the deans on what has been going on with the Senate.

Brent Cochran and Melissa Mazan then gave an update on their work building out the new faculty senate website, which is now live at facultysenate.tufts.edu. Brent thanked Allie Clifford from the provost's office for doing most of the work on the website and thanked David Harris for helping the senate to obtain a URL that exists on its own, as opposed to an offshoot of the provost's office website. The goal was to get a website up and running quickly and this is still a work in progress. Updates can be sent to Melissa Stevenson in the provost's office, who will work with Allie to continuously update the website. Future updates include: creating a link to this site in other places on the Tufts webpage; sending out an announcement to the wider community that the website is live; creating content for the homepage that emphasizes important features of the work we are doing; creating an archive of approved minutes; sharing agenda items from previous meetings; creating a link to the senate bylaws, providing a full list of the senate subcommittees and their membership, and a link or comment section for faculty to be able to share their ideas and comments with the senate.

President Salacuse then asked for feedback on the process for setting standing meeting times and days for the upcoming year. Senators commented that it would be more practical to set an official date and time for all years going forward, so that when elections happen in the future all senators will know in advance what they are committing to. Many senators commented that they find the 8am start time difficult but it was the time range selected as most favorable when a survey was sent out prior to setting this past year's schedule. A new survey will be sent out to determine the best times for the senate to meet in upcoming years. It was also suggested that a 6:00pm option should be included in the survey.

The senate then engaged in a discussion of priorities for the upcoming year. One such priority would be to ensure that faculty have channels to communicate directly with the senate, and one way to do so would be to inform them of the progress the senate has made in their first semester and to communicate that the senate is always available to hear the concerns of the faculty. There is still some work to be done on how the senate sets its priorities and the mechanism by which the subcommittees submit their ideas for consideration as senate priorities. Additionally, the senate needs to work out their relationship with the executive committees of each of the schools, where an individual school's faculty may be working on an issue that may have an impact on faculty at other schools and thus can be referred to the senate for further investigation.

Some senators suggested that the senate play a more proactive rather than reactive role in the upcoming year, recognizing that it takes some time to get fully functioning in that manner. It is likely that senate priorities and ideas will percolate up from the subcommittees to the senate and the senate will have to decide how to prioritize the issues brought to them either by subcommittees, individual faculty member suggestions, or by executive committees at any of the schools. One initiative that several senators suggested should have come through the

senate for review was the change to the way programs and degrees are approved in the provost's office. This is a conversation that faculty would have been very interested in being a part of. Provost David Harris and Associate Provost Kevin Dunn acknowledged that ideally faculty would have been involved in the conversations but the work predated the formation of the senate. Going forward the senate will be involved in such conversations.

Provost Harris commented that he does not want all senate business to come from the administration but there are certain issues that he deals with that could really benefit from senate involvement, such as university budgets. At a high level the senate should consider ways in which the university can remain financially viable in the future. It would be helpful to work out a process or a committee that connects the senate and the administration on topics such as these.

A clarification was made regarding the process by which issues can be brought to the senate from the school level. President Salacuse suggested that issues can be brought by senators directly to the executive committee, who will determine which items become priorities at subsequent senate meetings. Some senators liked the idea of having a regular standing report of the executive committee that is shared with the senate detailing all of the issues that were brought to them and providing some insight into how those items were prioritized.

There were some technical glitches during the meeting due to the way that the Webex software prioritizes conversations at different locations. The Provost offered to discuss these technology issues with David Kahle and President Salacuse commented that the university will have to spend money to improve technology in order for the senate meetings to operate successfully via remote methods on all three campuses. Melissa Mazan noted that the technology does not help people outside of Medford to feel connected and as truly a part of the meeting the way that it could if the technology worked better or if the university invested in a system that is more capable of doing so.

The senate meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Mazan
Secretary of the Faculty Senate