**FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES**

**North Carolina A&T State University**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Tuesday, November 24, 2020**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Dr. Julius Harp, Chair Presiding**

**Senate Members Present:** Mohd Anwar,Stephen Bollinger, Dong Yang Deng, Zachary Denton, Nicole Dobbins, Yewanda Fasina, Galen Foresman, Julius Harp, Evelyn Hoover, Sherrell House, Karen Jackson, Hyung Nam Kim, James Kribs, Yu-Tung Kuo, Luba Kurkalova, Minyong Lee, Nicole McCoy, Matthew McCullough, Kimberly McNeil, Ahmed Megri, Shona Morgan, Hyoshin Park, William Randle, Ioannis Raptis, Dave Schall, Amy Schwartzott, Kalynda Smith, Shon Smith, Evelyn Sowells-Boone, Hong Wang, James Wood, Osei Yeboah.

**Departments Not Represented:**  Biology, English, Journalism and Mass Communication, Nanoengineering, Physics, Social Work and Sociology

The meeting was called to order by Chair Julius Harp at 3:05 pm.

**Approval of the October Faculty Senate Minutes**

It was properly moved and seconded to approve the October minutes. Senators unanimously approved the minutes.

**New Programs and Curricula Committee Dr. Galen Foresman**

The committee met via email this month to discuss one packet for the Department of History and Political Sciences. They proposed 18 undergraduate course changes, 9 new undergraduate courses, and 3 undergraduate curriculum changes. The packet was reviewed and approved by the committee.

* Dr. Randle asked if any of the courses were General Education courses? Dr. Foresman said that he needed to confirm but said that if any General Education courses were in the packet, they would have been a number change.

Dr. Randle made a motion to approve the packets as presented; it was properly seconded. The packets were approved by senators, with 26 in favor, 1 abstaining.

**Academic Calendar Committee Dr. Galen Foresman**

No report

**Educational Policy Committee Dr. Zachary Denton**

The Office Hours Policy has moved to the Provost’s Office. Dr. Luster-Teasley has been in contact with Legal. She will work with Dr. Denton as this moves forward and he will keep the Senate updated.

**COVID-19 Q&A. Dr. Padonda Webb, Interim Executive Director of the Student Health Center**

**Mr. Andrew Perkins, Associate Vice Chancellor of Facilities**

**Ms. Christina Brogdon, Vice Chancellor of Human Resources**

*Dr. Webb* has read through previous faculty concerns related to COVID-19 and began her presentation with some information to respond to some of them. Key points:

* Contact tracing
  + Tracing is now being done by the State Health Department and Guilford County Health Department. The Student Health Center used to coordinate this, but it became too much to manage. If people in the A&T community test positive at locations in Guilford County, the university now how more access to the information.
  + The university is following CDC guidelines for contact tracing. The technical definition of “close contact,” would be if a COVID-positive person were closer than 6 feet to others.
* Dashboard updates
  + The dashboard is now updated M/W/F. It reports the number of tests, number of positive cases, and the occurrence and location of clusters.
  + The university has identified 6 clusters in 6 locations and has conducted 11,139 cases as of today.
* Spring operations
  + The university will utilize new wastewater surveillance testing.
  + The university has partnered with Quest Diagnostics to provide all students who will be moving back to campus in January with an at-home test they are required to take before re-entry.
  + Testing, screening and outreach will continue at the Health Center.
  + The principles of “wear, wait, and wash” continue to be best practices for campus safety.

*Mr. Perkins* continued the discussion with some information about facilities.

* He and Dr. Webb have been meeting to develop Spring 2021 policy to ensure that our protocols match CDC guidelines. To this end:
  + There are ample PPE supplies to last through May, including sanitizer stands, wipes stands, masks (over a million disposable, some reusable). All on-campus students were given a packet of 5 reusable masks before going home for the holidays.
  + Every building and room across campus will be cleaned and sanitized according to CDC and EPA guidelines before returning in Spring.
  + Signage will be replaced throughout campus.
  + Classroom configurations to ensure social distancing will be reinforced.
  + Three hundred air purifiers have been purchased to place in conference rooms and classrooms. They have HEPA filters to wash/scrub the air.

*Question and Answer Portion*

* Dr. Randle asked about the university’s *positivity rating*. He also asked if there is a level set that would prompt the halting of university services.
  + Dr. Webb said that - as of today - we are at 5.4% (overall since July), but have been as high as 11% (a week or so after homecoming). We tend to follow patterns seen in the state. We have averaged between 6% - 11% since August/September.
  + Dr. Webb also said that no specific % level has been set to make a determination on halting operations. They consider the capacity left in residence hall space used for quarantines and the amount of support services available. Previous determinations to halt sit-down dining services were made after consideration of the positivity rating.
  + Dr. Randle asked how is information about positivity ratings being communicated?
    - Dr. Webb said details are shared through university communications.
* Dr. Harp asked for more information on how the *wastewater measurements* will be taken.
  + Dr. Webb said that preliminary collections will be obtained this semester to establish a baseline at 12 locations across campus. Next year, as wastewater is collected, test results will be scaled using metrics developed by several researchers on our campus (Mr. Perkins shared that these researchers have been contracted to assist). If testing suggests higher levels of COVID-19, Student Health will go to that location for widespread testing.
* Dr. Harp asked if A&T will have the COVID-19 *vaccine* in the Health Center?
  + Dr. Webb said that once the vaccine is approved, there is a plan to make it available through the Student Health Center
* Dr. Smith asked Dr. Webb about the *recommendations she is providing to administration about reopening*. He has heard that there are discussions about bringing more people back to campus in January.
  + Dr. Webb said that all Spring 2021 recommendations are based on CDC guidelines. Mr. Perkins reminded the Senate that there are 6 committees that work together in COVID planning and response; all reopening recommendations have been considered by all of these committees. Recommendations are posed through the university’s COVID-19 Spring 2021 reopening site: https://www.ncat.edu/coronavirus/spring-2021/index.php
  + Mr. Perkins and Dr. Webb (and others) serve on the Health and Wellness committee that meets every afternoon at 4:45PM to discuss issues and concerns, how to improve, and what needs cleaning.
    - In terms of cleaning, they are proactive. Facilities waits to do the heavy lifting and extensive cleaning in the overnight hours and uses recommendations from the committee to guide efforts.
    - The committee closely monitors NC numbers, as well as numbers in the locations where our students are returning to campus from too.
  + Ms. Brogdon said there is a system-wide “Return to Campus” meeting that takes place weekly to discuss reopening and CDC recommendations. They relate information to campus officials as needed. She said the committee monitors numbers closely because things can change rapidly.
  + Dr. Webb said that the administration has been very responsive to any committee concerns.
  + Ms. Brogdon shared that a temporary COVID response person has been hired and will be functional by January. This point person will be a great resource for faculty who have questions.
* Dr. Morgan asked for clarification about *contract tracing* of students who test positive. If students in a face-to-face class test positive, does it not automatically trigger tracing and notification of the faculty and other classmates?
  + Dr. Webb said that all students who test positive have an interview to establish patterns of behavior prior to testing positive. According to CDC guidelines, positive individuals would have to be within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more before contact tracing would be required. A class may not be contacted if masks were worn and if social distancing is maintained. She also said notification of indirect contacts of those who tested positive this semester would be a lot to manage - and would possibly contribute to a climate of hysteria.
    - Dr. Morgan asked if this explanation could be added online.
  + As a follow-up, Dr. Dobbins asked if instructors are ever contacted as part of the assessment/interview? Students may not fully remember the setting and class movement?
    - Dr. Webb said that instructors are not part of the process if students indicated they were socially distanced. If students reported that they were working close together (which shouldn’t happen) they would then follow up through contact tracing.
  + As another follow-up, Dr. Anwar asked if the CDC has any published recommendations about who should be questioned to get an accurate account of events for contact tracing?
    - Dr. Webb, though she understands faculty concerns, said that we are bound by privacy laws. Faculty won’t be directly contacted about a positive case. However, if students test positive, they should have notes to be provided to the instructor.
      * Dr. Kurkalova said that students do not necessarily provide faculty with any notes. Given the hybrid situation, students can choose to attend face-to-face or virtually and change this at any time. Faculty may legitimately not know if a student has tested positive if they just decided to change their mode of attendance.
  + Dr. Kurkalova shared that she gives a break every 45 minutes in her class. Students drink water without masks, which could indirectly create exposure, but students may not report that. She said that she is concerned that relying on students is dangerous.
    - Dr. Webb said that exposure risk in that described scenario is low. She reminded us that we are exposed to the virus potentially everywhere, everyday. She said that she understands faculty concerns about not knowing, but have to respect privacy. If direct contact occurs, faculty would be contacted. In addition, if campus trends suggests that something needs reporting, it is.
  + In the chat, Dr. Foresman said that faculty could be asked about their class without telling them which student tested positive. Dr. Randle agreed and said that he would prefer to know, particularly to reinforce vigilance.
* Dr. Raptis asked about *NC A&T numbers*.
  + Dr. Webb said that approximately 500 cumulative cases (since July 1, 2020) have been reported to health center.
  + Dr. Harp followed up to ask if our numbers are similar to other UNC system schools?
    - Dr. Webb said our cases and positivity rating are much lower than 90% of other schools in the system.
* Dr. Randle reiterated previous concerns about *transparency*. The Chancellor’s memo about the change in dining services should have included the positivity rating, to explain what precipitated the change. He said that the numbers encourage more campus engagement and vigilance.
  + Dr. Webb said that the positivity rate isn’t currently shared on the COVID dashboard, but it can be calculated from numbers provided. She will talk to Communications about reporting the positivity rate automatically.
  + Dr. Webb also said that she understands faculty frustration to try to find common ground within the parameters of the law. She wants to keep us safe and make us feel comfortable. She encouraged the Senate to identify someone(s) who can work with her to find common ground for this issue.
* Dr. Smith asked if the increased purchase in *PPE* was done to match resumption of normal activities, or reduced activities in Spring 2021?
  + Mr. Perkins said that they bought the PPE with no real idea about what the load would be. He said we have far more than we need because we didn’t really know what the situation would be.
* Dr. Smith asked for more information about the *filters* being installed in some rooms on campus.
  + Dr. Perkins said that all of the filters have been cleaned and sanitized; however, some systems cannot be changed to CDC HEPA Filters (i.e. if the system is older).
* Dr. Bollinger asked a question to HR about *protocols we should follow in reporting of positive cases*. He said that an employee in his building tested positive and the person shared their results with him. The Dean approached him to ask why this person was not working. Dr. Bollinger asked what/if he could or is supposed to share?
  + Ms. Brogdon said that we cannot disclose medical information to others. The only thing that can be said: *This person can’t return to work for 14 days due to a health issue.* We can’t identify a specific reason or cause or share personal information. We can send in a request through our building representative for cleaning if we know that someone has tested positive, but we can’t identify a person’s medical information.
* Dr. Raptis asked if the university had access to s*oftware that would track testing and contact tracing* to reveal hot spots.
  + Dr. Webb said they cannot track whereabouts and generally just listen to students reports. There is an app that students can use, though it isn’t widely used.
  + To follow up, Dr. Anwar asked if the information about contact tracing is shared with decision makers?
    - Mr. Perkins said that all information is shared among committees and groups working on COVID response. They are proactive and aggressive.
    - Ms. Brogdon shared that they’ve identified clusters through the use of data and tracing/tracking.
  + Dr. Anwar said that faculty simply want aggregate information.
* Dr. Dobbins asked *what to do if student shares that they have tested positive*. Would like for the message to be communicated to chairs and deans.
  + Ms. Brogdon said that we should encourage them to stay in place, and report the positive to the Student Health Center. We can contact facilities for extra cleaning but we cannot disclose anything about the student to others.
  + As a follow-up, Dr. Randle said that students who contact us may have a range of symptoms. If the student has limited symptoms, should they be able to attend class? Are they well enough to do work?
    - Ms. Brogdon said that we can ask if they have acute symptoms, can they attend class, can they complete work? We can follow up with changes to the schedule as needed.
* Dr. Kurkalova said CDC guidance doesn’t specify masks in their definition of close contact that would require contact tracing. The CDC recommends only 6 feet of distance, suggesting that the only way a class shouldn’t be contacted (if a student tests positive) is if space is maintained. If students are closer than 6 feet – mask or no mask – and someone tests positive, the rest of the class should be notified. She said that she is happy to serve on a future committee working on this important faculty concern.
* Dr. Harp said that Senate is very concerned about health and wellness and thanked the speakers. It is obvious that everyone is working hard and we appreciate their efforts. We may invite these speakers back at a later time if there is faculty interest.

**Nominating Committee Dr. Shon Smith**

Dr. Smith shared that his group is still in the process of completing elections for the Hearing and Reconsideration and Grievance Committees. The Provost reinstated last year’s committees due to the urgency of grievances in the pipeline this year. Therefore, the elections taking place now will be directed toward filling the positions for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Dr. Harp also shared that the Executive committee will meet with Attorney Cobrand on December 15 to work on language of policies involved in faculty grievance. This is a good step toward more faculty involvement.

**Handbook Committee Dr. Evelyn Hoover**

No report.

**Welfare Committee Dr. Bill Randle**

The committee did not meet in October, though ideas were shared via email. They plan to bring forth a NTTF resolution that focuses on promotion and compensation (in January). There is a goal to establish a NTTF standing committee and Dr. Randle is curious to know if this might require a Constitution change? Dr. Harp said that we have previously talked about creating an ad hoc subcommittee, though Dr. Randle thinks that a permanent standing committee would institutionalize our support of NTTF.

They are also drafting some ideas related to faculty health and wellness, such as an institutional recommendation to pause administrative emails on evenings, weekends and holidays. The committee is working to identify pressing issues and he would like input on the best way to address concerns to the administration.

**Handbook Committee Dr. Evelyn Hoover**

No report.

**Constitution Committee Dr. Scott Harrison**

No report

**SGA Presentation Courtney Baskerville, SGA VP of Internal Affairs**

Ms. Baskerville began by stating her appreciation for being able to come and interact with the faculty. Often, students do not take faculty concerns into account, so the opportunity to hear faculty concerns is enlightening.

She shared an informal list of the major student concerns:

* Trouble during group projects during the pandemic. Contacting each other has been difficult.
* Some students feel they are not receiving as thorough advice and communication during advising and registration. SGA encouraged students to get in contact with their advisors earlier, but many students would like to see some guidelines to frame their expectations.
* Concern about course meeting times and assignments. Some professors teaching asynchronously have designated meeting times for their courses that conflict with other courses for which students are registered. Students also want to know if professors are allowed to assign work after Thanksgiving; she is aware that items can be due, but is unsure if new work can be assigned.
  + Dr. Harp and Dr. Foresman said that assignments and deadlines might vary depending on the class, and that this depends on what was in the syllabus at the beginning of the semester. Some faculty may also assign extra work to be considered for grade improvement.

Dr. Foresman said that students should know who to talk to resolve issues. He reminded her of the chain of communication, starting with the faculty then moving to the department chair, Associate Dean, etc.

* Ms. Baskerville said that SGA routinely talks to students about how to talk with professors and the appropriate chain of communication to follow for concerns. She said this will be reiterated to students.

Ms. Baskerville then asked the group if there were any faculty concerns she might relay to the students?

* Dr. Dobbins said that with Spring’s three modes of course delivery, it is going to be helpful for students to understand how the level of interaction might differ. This semester, a class section may have been posted for asynchronous classes to supplement learning – this shouldn’t have been required, but the recording should have been accessed. She said there are communication issues on the part of the student as well. It is important that students understand the new demands of their study time. It is especially important now to thoroughly read the textbook, review the powerpoints and any posted instructional content.
  + Ms. Baskerville said that they can communicate this to students in full body meetings.
* Dr. Dobbins also said students need to understand email response times. Students should not expect all professors to respond to emails at all hours of the day.
  + Ms. Baskerville shared that student accountability has been a focus for SGA. SGA wants to advocate for the students but also encourage accountability.
* Dr. Foresman asked if students are feeling safe on campus or if there were any pressing COVID-related concerns? He said the Faculty Senate would like to help SGA if there is a way to contribute and help students.
  + Ms. Baskerville said that students generally feel safe on campus and believe the university is doing its best to ensure health. At UNC system meetings with other student leaders, she said that A&T appears to be in much better shape than other institutions.
  + SGA is currently trying to identify emergency funds to support students. They have met with some state officials on this topic.
  + She is concerned that many students are not retaining course information and many are just looking for a grade.
  + SGA is preparing information to share with students about the Spring 2021 semester opening. This will include information about housing, testing, safety on campus, and learning.
* Dr. Harp asked what are students thoughts about the long classes?
  + Ms. Baskerville shared that the COST student senators attended a recent college meeting to request more breaks during the long class sessions. Breaks help with student focus.
* Dr. Kurkalova shared that students do not typically submit student evaluations. Do they talk about this? How can faculty get feedback?
  + Ms. Baskerville said that SGA worked with administration last year in the redesign of the evaluation instrument. They encourage students to complete evaluations, but most students do not believe the evaluations do anything. Students are not likely to fill them out if they cannot see the outcome. She believes that professors could possibly share what the evaluations are for or how they are used to encourage more participation.
* Dr. Randle shared that we are going to move to an electronic degree auditing system for advising. He believes this might help with uniformity of advising and communication of information to students.
  + Ms. Baskerville will bring that back to the e-board.
* Dr. McCoy asked if students use GradesFirst, which is what she uses for advising. She said that students do not see the announcements and wondered if her advising emails are lost amongst the student alerts.
  + Ms. Baskerville said that students do not generally know what GradesFirst is for, and that emails sent through the system do not look like a direct email from a professor.
* Dr. Raptis asked what students expect in terms of advising. Do students want faculty to select the courses for them or do they want ownership of their course selection?
  + Ms. Baskerville said that students do not have uniform expectations. She believes that the curriculum guide is the basis for advisement and would like to see advisors thoroughly review the guide with students. Beyond that, it would be helpful for advisors to simply review course selections with students to make sure that no mistakes are made. Students may also need help with electives.
* Dr. Kurkalova said that it is apparent that students might not be reading syllabi. She said that she understands that the template isn’t particularly readable. Was SGA consulted about the syllabus redesign?
  + She said no, but if they had been, they would have said it was too many words. She suggested that faculty consider color coding (or drawing attention to in some other way) content that is specific to their class.
  + Dr. Randle encouraged her go back to the Provost or Vice-Provost to try to have involvement in the syllabus redesign.
    - Dr. Smith said that ideally this should be brought up in a meeting between administration, faculty, and students.
    - Ms. Baskerville will initiate the conversation by reaching out to administration and Dr. Harp.
  + Dr. Kurkalova said that her departmental faculty had recommended placing a link directly in the syllabus for all of the university policies. This would allow the syllabus to focus only on the class-specific content.
* Ms. Baskerville said that the Sophomore Class President is interested in addressing what she believes are too few mental health days in Spring 2021.
  + Though the mental health days aren’t specifically for faculty, Dr. Harp shared that UNC System suggested 4 mental health days for Spring.
  + Dr. Randle wondered if the designation of only 2 days was done to ensure sufficient instructional hours and asked if the Academic Calendar Committee had been consulted about this?
    - Dr. Foresman said these issues haven’t gone through the committee. He said that he thinks administration does not want to designate official days to reduce the likelihood of student travel.
    - Ms. Baskerville said that, though this was understandable, students will create their own mental health days and will travel no matter what is set by the university. She also believes the mental health days, if done correctly, could help to prevent faculty and student burnout. She will include this topic as a point of discussion with administration.

**Other Business**

Dr. Kurkalova shared concern from her department about student evaluations. Faculty are reporting averages from really small response rates (i.e based on 1-2 responses).

**Statement from Chair Dr. Julius Harp**

The Executive Committee minutes were shared via email. Dr. Harp then wished everyone well for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25PM

Dr. Elizabeth Newcomb Hopfer

Secretary