**FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES**

**North Carolina A&T State University**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Tuesday, March 23, 2021**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Dr. Julius Harp, Chair Presiding**

**Senate Members Present:** Soonak An, Stephen Bollinger, Dong Yang Deng, Zachary Denton, Sherri Drye, Yewanda Fasina, Galen Foresman, Julius Harp, Scott Harrison, Evelyn Hoover, Karen Jackson, Yahya Kamalipour, Abebe Kebede, Hyung Nam Kim, James Kribs, Dhananjay Kumar, Yu-Tung Kuo, Minyong Lee, Ahmed Megri, Nicole McCoy, Matthew McCullough, Shona Morgan, Cephas Naanwaab, Hyoshin Park, William Randle, Ioannis Raptis, Kaushik Roy, Amy Schwartzott, Kalynda Smith, Shon Smith, Evelyn Sowells-Boone, James Wood, Omar Woodham

**Departments Not Represented:**  Agribusiness, Applied Economics and Agriscience Education; Educator Preparation; English; Family and Consumer Sciences; Nanoengineering

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Galen Foresman at 3:05 pm.

**Approval of the Special Called Senate Minutes (3/2/21)**

It was properly moved (by Dr. Smith) to approve the special called minutes. Senators unanimously approved the minutes.

**Approval of the February Faculty Senate Minutes**

It was properly moved (by Dr. Randle) to approve the February minutes. Senators unanimously approved the minutes.

**Open Floor**

Dr. Raptis shared some concerns about hiring international graduate students. The application process for international graduate students appears to be stuck in our Office of International Affairs and this office is not responsive to recent inquiries. In talking with long-time A&T faculty, he believes there may have been some recent changes in these offices that have created these roadblocks. The roadblocks are causing delays and negative impacts to students and research projects.

* Dr. Foresman will follow up on this to obtain some answers and encourages others who have similar issues to let him know.

Dr. Kebede shared that the COST is creating a new peer evaluation of teaching instrument. This is an effort to combine previous instruments used in the two former colleges that existed prior to reorganization. He wonders if this needs to be reviewed by the Senate?

* Dr. Harrison said that the committee charged with this task was selected by administrators. There are also other issues with the process.
* Dr. Denton said that their college has not had a discussion about whether peer teaching evaluations are even needed. He had heard that someone was hired by OSPIE to evaluate the quality of developed evaluations, but the college has not sought assistance from OSPIE.
  + Dr. Foresman said he thought that peer evaluation of teaching was a requirement, but it may be a college-level requirement.
* Dr. Foresman said that any evaluation instrument that faculty will be using for RPT/PTR needs to be reviewed/voted on by the Senate. He is unsure of the process to be used for documentation. This is something that will require Senate follow up.
  + Dr. Cobb asked for clarification – any instrument related to RPT/PTR created by a department or college should go through the Senate?
    - Dr. Foresman responded that the Senate review/approval is perfunctory if department and college levels involve adequate faculty review. Senate review ensures that appropriate processes are followed.
    - Dr. Randle said that given the faculty-driven nature of RPT, any document used for evaluation should be faculty-driven and based in academic departments.

In a related topic, Dr. Harrison said that many RPT standards being used across departments are outdated and can be difficult to use for review. He believes they should be part of a review process to ensure excellence.

* Dr. Foresman agrees; there is lack of clarity in details. He also shared that no new forms have been created since the reorganization in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. When new colleges were created, there should have been effort to revise and reform these instruments, but in many cases, they have not.

Dr. Randle shared his concerns about the proposed change in the timing of the evaluation cycle used in the CAES. There is a proposal, though no rationale provided, to change the cycle from April-March to a calendar year. This could place faculty at an advantage or disadvantage depending on the cycle.

* Dr. Woodham said that the COBE changed to an annual cycle about 3 years ago. They report on previous year but have evaluations in March or April. He recommended that the CAES make adjustments with the reporting time period for the next cycle to ensure that faculty data is not lost.
  + Dr. Randle asked if their change was brought forth to the Senate, but Dr. Woodham is unsure.

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

The committee met on March, 9 2021 and reviewed 6 packets: Electrical and Computer Engineering, English, Educator Preparation, 2 from Family and Consumer Sciences, and College of Engineering.

* The College of Engineering has submitted approximately 200 proposed undergraduate course changes, mostly related to prerequisites (many are changes to C- as the threshold). These only affect courses within Engineering. Dr. Foresman reiterated that a change to a curriculum guide does not mean that associated changes to individual courses are made. Individual course changes must go through separately; that is the reason for these Engineering course changes.
* Dr. Wood made a motion to approve the course changes presented and Dr. Hoover seconded. The motion passed with 1 abstention, 0 oppositions, and 27 in favor.

Dr. Foresman reminded senators that there is one more committee meeting for the semester. He also reminded senators that any prerequisites should also be listed in course descriptions.

Dr. Hoover asked what should be done if there are errors in the bulletin (i.e. are departments required to go through the full process again to correct typographical errors)?

* Dr. Foresman said if the packet has been approved, the department chair can follow up with Dr. James to fix things not entered correctly.
* Dr. Luster Teasley added that if packets are approved and not correct in the Bulletin, the Chairs have a chance to update the bulletin each summer. The Chairs submit their edits each July.

Dr. An asked about a proposed new course for Social/Social Work.

* Dr. Foresman said he has received a change for SOCI 203, but this is not the course Dr. An is referencing.
* Dr. Hoover said it has been reviewed by the college and will move forward to Dr. Foresman soon.

**Faculty Welfare Committee Dr. Bill Randle**

The committee met this month to discuss several items, though today’s presentation to senators will focus on the request to delay RPT/PTR for everyone for 1 additional year. The committee has written a recommendation that would essentially mean that individuals going up last year would have a delay of 2 years, while everyone else would have a delay of 1 year. The committee included 13 justifications for the delay and demonstrated that over 250 colleges and universities have instituted delays. Many of these are our peer and aspirational institutions. Dr. Randle shared this recommendation via email and senators now have an opportunity to provide comments.

* Dr. Harrison shared in the chat that over 2000 campuses, including community colleges, have announced evaluation delays.
* Dr. Redd said that there should be a delay for everyone. Instituting a full shift would also prevent there being a future huge impact to evaluation on RPT/PTR committees.
* Dr. McCoy agreed.
* Dr. Foresman said that if pass/fail grading has been fine for multiple semesters, a delay for RPT/PTR is reasonable.
* Dr. Morgan wondered if there is any issue about those who already had one delay getting another.
* Dr. Schwartzott and Dr. An asked if faculty should have a choice about whether or not to take the delay considering their different needs.
  + Dr. Foresman said that this is not an effort to force individuals to wait if they already meet requirements and want to submit their application.
* Dr. Kebede agreed that there should be a global 1-year delay for RPT and PTR, but if people choose not to do the delay, they should be able to proceed with their applications. The language should be very clear
* Dr. Redd reminded senators that faculty can always go up for review early, so this wordsmithing may not be necessary.
* Suggested wording: Faculty members who choose to be evaluated should be allowed to do so.
* Dr. Smith asked if there had been any discussion or dialogue about 2-4 year impacts on revenue due to COVID?
  + Dr. Foresman said he has not heard anything about budget shortfalls, and our enrollment has been good. In addition, many of our students are out of state (20%), which is not affected by state funds.
  + Dr. Harp shared that applications are high and the university is expecting continued growth.
* Dr. Morgan asked if there are extensions/delays at our newly approved peer institutions? She listed these schools in the chat. She thinks it would add to the argument if we can identify peer institutions that also have extensions.
  + Dr. Harrison asked where this list came from and Dr. McCoy shared that it was from a previous Senate meeting with the Chancellor. Dr. Newcomb Hopfer will share the Chancellor’s presentation with peer institutions listed.
  + Dr. Randle said he can comb through the list in more detail to add to the list.

Dr. Randle called for a vote on this to move forward. Dr. Foresman moved and Dr. Denton seconded to send this recommendation to administration. 100% of senators present (29) voted to approve the motion.

**Academic Calendar Committee Dr. Galen Foresman**

The committee met yesterday to review the Fall 2021 calendar. They checked to make sure that events, breaks, etc. align with a general fall semester. The committee noted no problems. They also looked at the academic calendars for the next few years to ensure that summers were long enough for research faculty to receive their full months’ compensation. To provide clarity, Dr. Foresman plans to confirm the contractual beginning and end dates for academic year employment.

**Educational Policy Committee Dr. Zachary Denton**

Dr. Denton is sharing a policy that was requested through the QEP process. As the team studied student performance across Math classes, it was discovered that students were missing classes to attend mandatory events for other classes. Requiring students to attend events outside of the normally scheduled class time has implications for other courses. As a result, many other schools have created policies to address this. The committee’s proposed policy specifies that faculty cannot mandate student participation outside of regularly scheduled class time. Jobs were deliberately not mentioned in the language; instead, the committee focused on language covering activities that could be verified through a student’s on-campus schedule. This policy was not created to discourage extracurricular events, but to ask faculty to be mindful. The draft policy is shown below:

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Dr. Denton solicited comments from senators.

* Dr. Redd wonders if we should clarify third line – “then the faculty must provide an alternative assignment.” Specifically, it is the faculty member assigning the extracurricular activity that must provide the alternate assignment.
  + Dr. Randle suggested that we add the word “member” behind “faculty” to make it singular.
* Dr. Randle asked what happens when an administrator assigns extracurricular activities that conflict with courses?
  + Dr. Denton said there is another push for a policy that addresses this from the administration side. He believes this will be on the agenda for an upcoming meeting.
* Dr. Kebebe shared his concerns that some students are attending professional conferences and missing multiple days of class. This is affecting the learning environment.
  + Dr. Denton said that this policy does not address that particular issue, though a future policy could.
* Dr. Drye asked if there needs to be language clarifying the kind of makeup assignment that should be created (i.e. that it needs to be somewhat equivalent to what students would experience in the extra-curricular activity)?
  + Dr. Denton worries that having too much specificity here could infringe on academic freedom.
* Dr. Foresman asked if it is ok for extracurricular activities to be assigned for a grade? This brought up some discussion about the word extra-curricular in the first sentence. Curricular events can occur outside of class (such that they align with the course of study but do not take place during the scheduled class time).
  + Dr. Drye suggested that we remove extra-curricular from the first sentence.
* Dr. Randle asked for clarification about where this proposed policy would go from here?
  + If the Senate is in favor, it would move to Dr. Luster-Teasley and then legal to get it properly formatted before going to the Provost.
    - Dr. Redd said he is worried about giving this to the Provost without seeing the final product. He wants to vote on the final product.
    - Dr. Denton said he works with legal to make sure the intent stays the same. If legal recommends a major change, Dr. Denton would alert the Senate. He also offered to bring it back to the Senate after it goes through legal.
    - Dr. Harrison strongly supported Dr. Redd’s point to ratify the final form of policies following legal’s input.
* Dr. Foresman asked if faculty can just exempt students rather than have an alternate assignment?
  + Dr. Denton said faculty can do what they want (i.e. exempt their grade on the assignment).
* Dr. Harp asked Dr. Denton what is needed from the Senate at this point?
  + Ideally, Dr. Denton would like a motion to vote on moving this forward in the process – with the promise to bring back from legal. Dr. Foresman made the motion, and Dr. Randle seconded. The motion passed, with 23 in favor, 2 opposed, and 3 abstaining.

Dr. Denton then stated that the committee next plans to address the syllabus. If there are specific complaints, send them to Dr. Denton.

* Dr. Kebede asked to clarify the definition of office vs. student hours.
  + Dr. Denton said they are the same thing; the Provost thought it would be clearer to students if they are called student hours.
* Dr. Smith asked if we can complain about the process used to distribute the template – specifically, the fact that it comes out too close to the beginning of the semester?
  + Yes, Dr. Denton welcomes those comments as well.
* Dr. Harrison noted typos in the syllabus template.
* Dr. Hoover said there is no date of revision on the template.

Dr. McCoy asked if the office hours policy will be approved by Fall 2021?

* Denton said it is with the Provost.

**Nominating Committee Dr. Shon Smith**

Nominations are open in the Faculty Senate for the following:

* Vice-Chair
* Secretary

Nominations will close on March 31, 2021 and can be sent to Dr. Smith, @ sdsmith5@ncat.edu

The election process will take place electronically and voting will begin on April 5 and close on April 10, 2021.

Dr. Randle asked if we had any guidelines about how to conduct an electronic vote. What circumstances qualify for an electronic vote?

* Dr. Harp said that these policies extend from the faculty handbook.
* Dr. Newcomb Hopfer shared that April 2020 Senate elections were held electronically due to the pandemic. The elections went smoothly, with the only oversight requiring a confirmation that each department only had one vote counted. However, this does not address the issue of which type of circumstances would qualify for an electronic vote.

Dr. Foresman asked if the April 5-10 election period was specified so that we can get Faculty Assembly delegates decided? The other elections do not have to be done by that date.

* Yes, any Faculty Assembly delegate changes have to be sent to the Assembly before our next Senate meeting in April.
  + Dr. Harp said he believes that all delegate positions are filled.
  + Dr. Foresman said we usually vote on Vice-Chair, Secretary and Faculty Assembly delegates every two years in April. Since the Faculty Assembly positions are filled, there is no rush to vote.

The Senate was unanimously in favor (26 senators present) of proceeding with an electronic vote. Dr. Smith will coordinate the electronic vote and send the link and reminders to senators.

Dr. Foresman reminded the group that senators and alternates should be nominated and elected by department faculty. Individuals serving as senators should be tenure track or tenured and should be faculty for at least two years prior to serving.

**Handbook Committee Dr. Evelyn Hoover**

The committee has met and has an agenda.

**Human Resources Presentation Kristin Leak, Benefits Manager**

**Jeannete Foulks, Benefits Counselor**

**Lissa Cheek, Sr. Benefits Counselors**

**Brandon Aber – CAPTRUST**

This was an invited presentation to discuss the retirement selection process at NC A&T, first mentioned as an issue in the March 2021 special called Senate meeting.

Brandon Aber began the presentation with information from CAPTRUST, a financial advisor team that provides resources for all employees. His presentation will be shared with senators and he hopes that we will forward the information to all employees. Highlights from his presentation:

* The UNC System is the plan sponsor and CAPTRUST is the independent investment advisor, monitoring investments and providing advice. TIAA and Fidelity are the Plan recordkeepers (reconciles accounts, provides access to account information, handles transactions and provides education and advice).
* CAPTRUST does not oversee the state retirement plan or TSERS. However, they can still provide advice to faculty about retirement.
* Employees have 60 days after hire to make their retirement election and it is irreversible.
  + TSERS is a defined benefit plan.
  + CAPTRUST runs the Optional Retirement plan (ORP)
* UNC also offers supplemental plans
  + CAPTRUST – UNC 403(b) and UNC 457(b)
* NC State Sponsored Supplemental Plans
  + State 401(k) and State 457 Deferred Comp
  + Similar to the UNC plans
* Employees can refer to the 2021 Decision Guide for more information about supplemental plans. Ms. Foulks will share.
* Employees, at any time, can ask CAPTRUST to run a retirement blueprint. TIA and Fidelity also have similar blueprints they can run.
* There are many webinars to access through Fidelity, NC Retirement plans. Look at the HR Benefits website and reach out to HR for more information.
* Contacts
  + Brandon Aber – [Brandon.Aber@captrust.com](mailto:Brandon.Aber@captrust.com); 919.278.9604

Dr. Raptis asked if faculty hired on and after 2019 can change between the two mandatory programs (i.e. switching between TSERS and ORP)?

* Mr. Aber said the choice is irrevocable. There are a limited number of reasons in which someone is able to elect a change.
* Kristin Leak encouraged Dr. Raptis to contact her for follow-up.
* Lissa Cheek offered information in the chat, stating that individuals would only have the option to select the alternative ORP as their mandatory retirement election if they were hired in a position that did not offer the ORP at time of hire; or if the individual does leave the Agency, withdraw their contributions from the prior retirement plan. At the point, the option of electing the ORP plan or vice versa would be available at the time of rehire.
  + Dr. Harrison: When was ORP first offered for us? Kristin Leak responded that it was first offered in January 1972.
    - Dr. Harrison shared the following link in the chat, but is unsure how this affects EHRA: <https://hr.unc.edu/benefits/plans/retirement/optional/>

Dr. Harrison asked whether TSERS or ORP perform better?

* Ms. Leak said that they field this question every orientation and cannot offer recommendations. Ms. Foulks said they both are good plans and Dr. Randle concurred.
  + One website on the choice is at: <https://www.advisingacademics.com/blog/new-unc-faculty-dont-choose-the-wrong-mandatory-retirement-plan-tsers-vs> and <https://www.tiaa.org/public/plancalculator/unc>
  + Mr. Aber said that faculty can also consider supplemental plans with TSERS. This will give faculty more flexibility. Ms. Leak said it is never too late to add a supplemental plan. She will share resources with the Executive Committee.

**Constitution Committee Dr. Scott Harrison**

Dr. Harrison emailed the following committee update:

Good afternoon. There have not been any recent meetings of the Constitution Committee.

There are two comments for members of the Constitution Committee (Drs. Kebede, Julii, House, Rhinehardt, and Shon Smith) and also consideration by the full Faculty Senate.

#1. Thanks to Dr. Robert Cobb and Dr. Shon Smith for participating in conversation with the Constitution Committee Chair this past November.

#2. A topic for potential upcoming consideration by the Constitution Committee relates to how to further guide interactions with academic units regarding issues of being in sync and keeping faith with what is prescribed by the Senate Constitution and Faculty Handbook.

This includes scheduling of elections as well as promoting legitimate and expected involvements of faculty on faculty matters. Are there ways to better address these issues in the current Senate Constitution?

* As relates to elections, senators and alternate senators should have been elected by now. Hearing and Reconsideration Committees and Grievance Committees are likewise to be elected on a regular schedule.
* Examples of legitimate and expected involvements of faculty on faculty matters include, for example, office hours, syllabi formats, and RPT and PTR processes and procedures, and expectations for all faculty to be having as regards an atmosphere of inclusive, respectful discussion and voting on faculty matters.

It is for these reasons that an upcoming Constitution Committee meeting will be called during a standard time when all committee members are expected to be generally be available (a Tuesday afternoon at 3 pm).

**Statement from Chair Dr. Julius Harp**

The Chancellor has asked the Senate to develop our own ideas about shared governance. We do not have any policies to provide detail. Dr. Harp has requested some financial support for 1-2 people to concentrate on developing a policy with the ultimate goal of integrating perspectives on shared governance with students, staff, and faculty. If there is any suggestion about what to put in this policy, please share.

He and Dr. Foresman will follow up with the Provost about the Office Hours Policy, with effort to resolve this by April.

They also talked with Chancellor about Fall 2021 scheduling. There is a committee being developed that needs Senate input. The Senate will compile information to move forward to the committee. He will share details when he knows more. The push is to move to face-to-face classes for Fall 2021, but it is not definite. Faculty have the option to petition depending on circumstances.

**Other Business**

Dr. Kebede asked if the Senate passed a resolution on the hate crimes against Asian Americans?

* The Faculty Senate offered a portion/comments to go into a full statement toward the Faculty Assembly.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30PM.

Dr. Elizabeth Newcomb Hopfer

Secretary