

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 28, 2020, MEETING OF THE A&S FACULTY ASSEMBLY

Dr. David Schultz, Chair, called the Assembly to order at 2:06 PM. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams with 194 persons in attendance virtually, thus constituting a quorum.

Dr. Schultz announced that current parliamentarian, Prof. Elaine Wise, is retiring effective October 1. Therefore, the Assembly must elect a new parliamentarian. One faculty member has volunteered, but nominations may be submitted. The parliamentarian position is open to all faculty. The Assembly also needs to fill its secretary position. Nominations for either position may be sent to Dr. Dwain Pruitt or Dr. Schultz.

Dr. Schultz relayed that Dean Owen is working to create an ad-hoc committee to address inconsistencies in the College's by-laws and standing rules. Changes to the by-laws require Board approval, while the Faculty Assembly approved changes to the standing rules. Since these changes are interrelated, the ad-hoc committee will review the College's governing documents now rather than making piecemeal changes. The committee will be composed of two members faculty from each division (one term and one tenure/tenure-track), as nominated by department chairs; two staff members, as nominated by the A&S Staff Association; Dr. Pruitt as the Dean's office liaison; and the Faculty Assembly's officers.

Dr. Schultz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Faculty Assembly's April 17, 2020, meeting. The vote was taken by a combination of the raised hand function in MS Teams and spoken votes. The minutes were approved without amendment.

The Chair recognized Dean Owen. Dr. Owen reported that development of the Cardinal Anti-Racist Agenda is proceeding quickly under CODRE's direction via a committee of more than 100 persons. The committee has a 9/1 deadline to present recommendations to President Bendapudi. Dean Owen shared that Fall enrollment looks good, with overall University enrollment higher than last year. A&S' graduate enrollment is stable, while undergraduate enrollment is down approximately 200 students. He is unsure how the College's lower enrollment will impact budgets since total enrollment is up by approximately 300 students. Spring is the big question at this point, so the focus is to ensure students have a good educational experience during Fall 2020 so that they enroll for Spring 2021. Since the University is tuition-driven, a drop in enrollment will translate to a drop in budgets.

Regarding COVID-19, the decision to require mandatory testing was driven by other ACC schools' experiences. On-campus testing at those institutions appeared to show a large spike in positive results, but the data were not necessarily sound. Mandatory testing ends September 4, but testing will be available throughout the semester. Flu shots will not be mandatory, but will be strongly encouraged and offered free on campus again this year. More information will be available in the next month. There have been conflicting reports regarding masks in the classroom. Dean Owen clarified that faculty are permitted not to wear masks if they are able to stand at least six feet away from students at all times.

The A&S budget office has identified funds to start a staff professional development fund. The funds will be used for trainings, conferences, upskilling, etc. Taleia Willis is working on developing an application process. More information will be coming in the next month.

The Dean stated faculty and staff need to adapt to current realities while striving to provide stability for students and for their colleagues in the College. Faculty were encouraged to resolve problems as many student-related issues and problems at the ground level as possible. The dean concluded his general remarks by thanking everyone for their tireless commitment to educating our students and to College operations.

Dean Owen opened the floor for questions.

Several questions were raised regarding Spring course modalities. The Dean recognized the urgency, but said the administration needs more data about what faculty and students want. Regarding classroom technology, only the specific classrooms scheduled for an upgrade will be fitted with hybrid course technology and this will be completed in October. The shipment of lavalier microphones for faculty was delayed. The microphones will not arrive for several more weeks. Any additional classroom tech questions should be directed to Daniel Brian.

Dr. Susan Ryan addressed tenure clock concerns raised by faculty whose research and/or creative activities were disrupted by COVID-19 shutdowns. Dr. Ryan stated that probationary faculty currently have the option to extend their tenure clocks by one year due to COVID. She indicated that she prefers continuing the current extensions to changing the way in which certain fields (like the performing arts) are evaluated, but this determination will come from Central. When asked if faculty may receive additional AWP credit for developing and teaching hybrid courses, Dr. Ryan replied affirmatively, adding that an additional 5% in teaching would be reasonable. Unfortunately, this is not an option for PTLs, so the College is open to suggestions. On a related note, faculty will not be permitted to change hybrid courses to wholly online courses now that the semester has begun. If the course of the pandemic changes, this will be revisited. Dean Owen stated that students can be held accountable for coursework as long as faculty recognize that they must be flexible in cases of student illness or quarantine. Dr. David Brown addressed the issue of GTA workload, saying that there is a lot of variability in how they are being used and that there is no across-the-board policy.

A faculty member asked question whether the departmental Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ad-hoc committees' work will be coordinated on the College level. The Dean hopes this will happen. Dr. Cherie Dawson-Edwards will start as Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on October 1 and will handle these issues. A&S' new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion standing committee to help with that work.

Numerous questions and comments were raised regarding the efficacy of using Microsoft Teams, Blackboard or Zoom. Several faculty reported having difficulties getting support for MS Teams, with some being forced to change platforms for hybrid courses. Dean Owen stated that IT reports that Zoom has been unresponsive to requests about the purchase of an institutional

account. When questioned about whether departments may purchase their own Zoom accounts for hosting public events, the Dean replied that the University and College are already invested in MS Teams, which can be used to host public events. He states he will reach out in regards to getting more Teams support.

On the budget, the University is still closing out last fiscal year. That process should be completed by mid-September. The current plan is to review budget decisions for the current fiscal year in December. The decision on whether to reinstate cut benefits will depend on enrollment and possible state budget cuts. The Dean said the 5% contingency fund money is set aside within the A&S budget, but Central will determine how it will be used in January and he does not expect we will receive it. Some departments (ex. History) have no money in their current budgets for the rest of the semester and are not sure how to cover supplies, etc, in the short term. The Dean asked to speak to those UBMs offline to discuss.

When asked to relay any good news, Dean Owen said A&S has so far avoided layoffs and long-term furloughs and has been able to offer a full range of courses to students.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.