

Faculty Senate Executive Committee Report for November 2021
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Faculty Senate Vice Chair, Chair of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (XC) met on October 20 and 27, 2021, and minutes will be duly available once approved at a future meeting. Both meetings were in the University Club Board Room with the option of joining by Teams.

October 20, 2021

President Bendapudi and Provost Gonzalez visited the XC for a discussion about matters of mutual interest. The XC was briefed on enrollment and related budgetary issues and informed that a committee will form this semester to develop a strategy to deal with the looming 2025 'enrollment cliff' caused by a decrease in the number of traditional college age students. The XC was also briefed on the developing plans for mandatory vaccinations of UofL employees and contractors to be required by federal regulation, developing strategies for ensuring compliance with mandatory testing, and other pandemic-related issues. Michael Cunningham (AAUP liaison to the XC) inquired about the process by which the Faculty Accountability Policy was developed and perceived deficiencies regarding due process, the procedures laid out, and the lack of faculty approval. President Bendapudi and Provost Gonzalez reiterated the position that the policy was an administrative one and requires no formal faculty approval but that extensive input had been sought, some of which resulted in modifications of the policy. Provost Gonzalez stated that she foresaw a need to invoke the policy only very rarely.

Additional points that were briefly discussed included plans to encourage more participation in undergraduate research and other experiential learning, clarification of what matters of academic policy require an affirmative vote by the Faculty Senate under Redbook (discussion will continue), and an inquiry about the rationale for the dropping of the suit against former President Ramsey (President Bendapudi is seeking guidance on what she can and cannot reveal). President Bendapudi also briefed the XC on the recent sexual assault at The Retreat (an affiliated housing property) and communications about it; confidential information cannot be revealed in this report or the minutes.

President Bendapudi requested the help of the XC and Faculty Senate to improve faculty morale, and a more extensive discussion with Provost Gonzalez followed. She urged the XC to consider what the Faculty Senate can do to bolster morale. Provost Gonzalez also confirmed that UofL will not be retroactively restoring the lost salary and retirement contributions suffered by the faculty in 2020 in response to the pandemic fiscal crisis; those funds contributed to the eventual budget surplus that was used to fund the recent cost-of-living adjustment and \$1,000 bonus. The additional 1% cost-of-living adjustment projected for January and a pool for merit raises following the upcoming annual evaluations both depend strongly on enrollment in the winter term and spring semester.

Further discussion on the points raised were continued by the XC after the departure of the president and provost.

SGA representative Meza, Staff Senate representative Brown, and Senate Chair Schultz made reports, the description of which will be duly provided in the minutes.

Discussion of the UofL representation on the Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leaders (COSFL; a group under the aegis of Committee on Postsecondary Education) resulted in an endorsement of the longstanding practice of having the Senate represented by the Chair, the Vice Chair, and another senator, currently Senator Trucios-Haynes, who is president of COSFL; an AAUP representative also serves on COSFL. A substitute was sought for Senate Vice Chair Mueller on the new, combined Covid Committee, which meets at a time in conflict with his teaching schedule.[†]

Details of standing committee reports will be provided in the minutes.

[†]Senator Harris volunteered and will represent the Senate (along with Chair Schultz) for the remainder of the fall semester.

October 27, 2021

The XC met in the University Club Board Room with the option of joining by Teams.

The reports by the representatives of SGA, the Staff Senate, and the Senate Chair will be described in the minutes. AAUP liaison Cunningham expressed continued concern over the adoption of the Faculty Accountability Policy and announced his scheduled presentation on the topic to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on October 29 and the plans for an AAUP-led protest by faculty. The issues of concern to AAUP and countervailing points were expressed, as was concern by XC members over what they considered misleading statements in AAUP communications on the subject.

A continuation of the discussion on XC/Senate actions that could bolster faculty morale coalesced around events that would provide more regular information from the Senate to the faculty at large and opportunities for informal faculty social interactions.

The XC also discussed what information to request in order to gauge the accuracy of a general sense that the number of administrators and their budgeted salaries has been growing faster than the faculty. The request will be made to make further investigation on the validity of the perception.

Details of the standing committee reports will be included in the minutes, but there seems little point in reiterating them here because they will likely be contained in the reports of those same groups to the full Faculty Senate.