

Faculty Senate Meeting

When: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 – 3:30pm
Where: Zoom @ <https://fit.zoom.us/j/94892149337>

Minutes

Senators Present: Faculty Senate President Brian Lail (CES), Faculty Senate Secretary Aaron Welters (MTH), Margaret Wallace (Aeronautics), Vipuil Kishore (BCES), Nasri Nesnas (BCES), David Wilder (BA), Gordan Patterson (SAC), Jessica Wildman (PSY), Tolga Turgut (Aeronautics), Don Platt (APSS), Suzanne Kozaitis (Library), Amitabh Nag (APSS), Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MTH), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Razvan Rusovici (APSS), Patrick Converse (PSY), Angel Otero (Business Online), Debbie Lelekis (SAC), Luis Otero (CES), Mehmet Kaya (BCES), Joo Young Park (MTH), Kevin Burke (SAC), Marius Silaghi (CES), Kim Sloman (Scott/BA), Kenia Nunes (BCES), Pallav Ray (OEMS), Ersoy Subasi (Aeronautics), Nasheen Nur (CES), Angela Tenga (SAC)

Senators Absent: Abram Walton (Business), Francisco Yumiceva (APSS), Julie Costopoulos (PSY), Troy Nguyen (MCE), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Steven Rivet (Business), Hamid Najafi (MCE), Charles Bryant (Business)

Proxies: Geoffrey Swain for Ronnal Reichard (OEMS), Suzanne Odom (Library)

Other Attendees: Nancy Garmer, Suzanne Odom, Rob van Woesik, Mary Bonhomme. Munevver Subasi, Rudolf Wehmschulte, Jessica Ickes, Penny Vassar, Marco Carvalho, Tristan Fiedler, Roberto Peverati, Chelsea Stripling, Nick Daher, Andy Knight, Vicky Knerly, Raymond Bonhomme, Nick Addante, Joy Patterson

(Secretary's Note: The time stamps (xx:yy:zz) in these minutes refer to the xx hours, yy minutes, zz seconds into the zoom recording of the meeting the event occurred. The recording can be found on the faculty senate webpage. These time stamps are intended to help find a particular event in the recording.)

Call to Order

(00:00:00) Pres. Lail called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. The minutes from the Dec. 7 meeting were not read and delayed for approval until they become available in written form (as previously, since Feb. 2020, the video recordings of the meetings have been used in lieu of the written minutes).

Guest Speakers

Marco Carvalho, Ph. D. – Executive Vice President and Provost, Florida Tech

Summary: Dr. Carvalho gave an update on enrollment and the financial health of the university as well as a description of the pandemic plan for academics in the spring semester.

(00:01:31) Started the year in a good position, did not anticipate the situation with Omicron (variant of Covid-19), we have been tracking it through the holidays and continue to. Will talk about the next phase for the spring including some of the plans for the things anticipated and what have for changes already in place. Then will talk about plans for investments in developments underway, based on some efforts prior to stabilize some of the finances of the university. Before this I will highlight a couple of very good things happening right now that we put into place.

(00:02:52) The student support center is ready thanks to Dr. Subasi and several others. You are invited to visit the nice facility. It's a much better space to support our students which all part of an effort that combines a number of initiatives to help increase the success of our students and continue the trends we've been having in terms of improving our metrics. We have significantly improved our graduation rates, our enrollments are getting better, and we're focusing on continuing on that to provide the support that we can to early students so they can succeed.

(00:04:00) In regards to the COVID situation, Omicron has been a concern we've had. Although having increasing cases in both student and staff, the good news is it is not as disruptive. We continue to support the same kinds of accommodations as before when there is a request for faculty to be accommodated for health reasons. For the students, however, we do want to bring them on campus and we want to make sure that they start to come back to a normalized experience, to the extent that we can. The plan is to retain the same safety procedures we had in place regarding the use of masks in closed environments, both in dorms and classrooms, but to allow students to go back to the classroom and if they do become sick to allow them to isolate place by that meaning they stay in the dorms. Because the isolation period is much shorter, the idea is that there will be more flexibility by the faculty to accommodate that. Classes continue to be recorded. We are ready to accommodate a transition for remote access if students need longer term accommodations, which as before will be setup by the student through the dean of students. We are prepared to move things remotely if the situation calls for it. We are still allowing some of the travel and travel is obviously controlled by travel restrictions. If faculty needs to travel for a conference that's allowed, but they have to go through he has to go through approval and requirements for the location and the conference which has to be forwarded to us. We still not having events on campus, other than isolated in small numbers and those follow the same process, as before. We are still enforcing the same restrictions before regarding masks.

(00:10:27) Brian Lail asked the question coming from some faculty on the availability of masks, in particular, on the N95 masks. Is there any possibility that that some supply of in 95 can be obtained and made available here?

(00:11:33) Marco Carvalho response was the issue with the N95 masks is not a cost matter issue. The problem is that there are conflicting restrictions. We have strict

restrictions from OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) that require if we provide N95 to any staff or faculty or even student workers, these have a series of steps that go with those, otherwise you could be fined. As such we have hesitated in handing out those particular types of masks. We are trying to strike a balance as best we can. We are absolutely willing to provide the masks that the faculty feel more comfortable with which are not in violation of OSHA constraints. Unfortunately, N95 masks are so we cannot provide those as they expose the university to those fines now. And that means that you, for example in your lab, you should not purchase them and offer them to students or others. And if you see anyone handing out N95 masks on an institutional basis, please alert us because this is a potential fine for the university and is not a small one.

(00:15:38) Marco Carvalho mentions that some of our federal grant mandates require the whole institution is fully vaccinated and the definition of vaccination is nuanced and can differ greatly from state rules. We have to balance things as best we can. Brian Lail asks Dr. Carvalho to elaborate on that. Dr. Carvalho says that we have own brand of umbrella rules that were put into place when mandates came in. Some have been and are being challenged in court, some halted, some came back into effect and halted again. Currently we are counting on some of the bigger universities fighting those battles in federal courts and so on. We are only going to consider implementing those rules once everyone else starts to do it as then we have to do so. However, there are specific contracts that are more recent and those were some with NASA, some with the Department of Defense organizations which actually came laying out a specific rule for that one contract. And those for you to accept the contract, you have to accept that everybody working under that contract was fully vaccinated we have a few of those that happen after the ruling came up with a new President and those we have to handle with care. I've been working with the office of research. We identify these projects, we talk with the faculty, we make sure that the faculty, students or anybody being paid out of those contracts are fully vaccinated, we keep the vaccination records, and we continually monitor them, because if we're audited in those particular contract, we have to ensure that we follow the rule. Theoretically, this big umbrella rule for everybody under federal contract vaccinated would have come into effect in January 18, but it's still up in the air.

(00:21:28) Marco Carvalho talks about the other efforts going on for the last year and a half. We continue working on a number of different areas that can be improved. These efforts, combined with some of the investments that we made in marketing and changes in enrollment management and the way we're operating, are allowing us to increase enrollment at least at the undergraduate level in contrary to many trends. So we can create a little bit of a gap between our expenses and balance our budget to allow breathing room that the university needs to operate. The president has been working very closely with myself and financial office in several ways to move forward to ensure a path of stability to allow ourselves the opportunity to invest in the university. One of the first steps we're doing right now is to try to resolve the issues that are associated with the salary equity. We started a process, a few months ago on the staff to try to make an equity adjustment for the staff especially in the lower end of the pay scale. Starting in

the spring, the goal is to move with an equity plan for both the faculty, GSAs, and student workers. I will be working with the senate and groups of faculty on that process, so we can try to put an equity plan together which is feasible/achievable for us and that helps bring the university to the levels we need. Keep in mind that we are doing this while we are still restructuring, making changes and alignments across the university, so that we can put our resources in the areas we want to invest more heavily in such as the growth of the faculty, the equity, and the students. Over the next few weeks we are hiring for several open faculty positions. We are also trying to finalize issues with promotions. In addition, you have seen some of the infrastructure improvements that have been happening with the buildings. We are trying to get in place the student wellness center, which Dr. McCay has been working with the board to finalize the approvals, so we can implement facilities for the students which addresses one of the main concerns we have currently, namely, mental health and well-being of the students.

(00:27:39) Brian Lail asks a question requiring equity and overall salary adjustments. Given the nature of recent years with the cost of living jumping up, being one of the biggest in the last 10-13 years, would it be something to consider to just have an across the board adjustment alongside the other equity or other adjustments?

(00:28:40) Marco Carvalho addresses Dr. Lail's question. He says yes its definitely possible and it all comes down to a matter of resources. It's a single pool of resources we have. We can collectively make a decision to say we're going to compensate the overall university population. But equity is different so this is one issue and that is another issue in which it is the university baseline that is off. So one possibility will be to say we are going to make an adjustment on the university baseline and then have a slower adjustment on equity to be able to catch up on our resources. I'd be happy to discuss this with the president, if this is the will of the majority. I will bring this issue to the table, to look at the options, and will report back to you so you can share this with the faculty.

(00:30:54) Brian Lail asks a question in behalf of someone, regarding a different topic, regarding some recent changes in the lacrosse coaching staff based on the concern of a negative impact to students and on the coaching staff too. Could you comment on the decision?

(00:31:39) Marco Carvalho responds with sure. As you know that athletics does not report under me, so I have limited visibility on that. However, I do know of this case and I can assure you that it is very, very rare that these decisions take place without full consideration of the facts and the implications they have. Many times when these decisions happen they are administrative decisions, they are internal personal matters, they are internal HR files and internal issues that are pertinent to the employee and their supervisors. By in large, people are very diligent and very careful to do the right thing. Sometimes these this cannot be discussed or disseminated. But it is a balance between what is considered to be the best for the university and the students. I don't think I can go any further than that, but I can say that this is not something that is done lightly or a responsible. In relieving the stress and concerns of our students and help them in the

best way we can and if students reach out to you saying that they need any type of assistant, by all means, I mean we should be able to help them, and you know, make sure that they are comfortable and support.

(00:34:39) Brian Lail asks another question regarding equity. Is the plan for equity raises already known, you know, is there a formula that's in place and who is working on developing the details of the plan?

(00:35:03) Marco Carvalho responds. The plan is not known and not in place, the plan is to be developed, as I mentioned my intention is to start working on this plan as soon as I get through the next few weeks working on promotion related issues. As soon as those things get out of the way, my intention is to start developing the plan and the function with the collaboration of both academic administration and faculty, as open and transparent as we can with the understanding that we are not going to be able to address all things at once we're going to have to prioritize and we're going to have to take small steps.

(00:37:27) Nakin Suksawang, from the welfare committee on the faculty senate, asks the question: What is the view in on our role as faculty senate in this plan, whether it's equity for faculty or student and graduate student all that stuff?

(00:38:01) Marco Carvalho responds. I see the participation of the Faculty in coordination with a faculty administration. Important roles for faculty to be played for the equity plans for both faculty, GSAs, and student workers, but not staff compensation. I don't anticipate or expect that the Senate will necessarily as unit be the one involved, I would hope the Senate will be promoting the engagement of faculty in different groups to look into different areas, and this is where we can work together. So my intention is to reach out to the Senate. I think that their role will be much more to ensure that the right faculty members, not necessarily just faculty senate members, are participating with the administration in the different groups are looking to those things.

(00:43:49) Brian Lail asks a question that came in: Any information provided yet about the newly approved strategic plan?

(00:44:01) Marco Carvalho responds. Yes, Dr. McCay is the owner of the plan at the moment, he is summarizing and compiling a version for distribution with the intention to have it this spring, but I don't have the specific dates. I assure you that his intention is to bring that to the Faculty as soon as he has a version that he's ready for distribution.

(00:46:22) This conversation with Marco Carvalho ends.

Jessica Ickes – Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness,
Florida Tech

Summary: J. Ickes discussed the recently released summary of reports of the Student and Staff/Faculty Surveys.

(00:46:23) Brian Lail introduces Jessica Ickes. He mentions that she agreed to join us and give us an overview of the purpose and process behind the surveys as well as to field some questions.

(00:47:57) Jessica Ickes says she will talk about the survey data, the assessments, and accreditation. She starts with little background about the surveys and says that Dr. Carvalho had disseminated both the summaries, as well as the overview of the data so that you could see the data for each of the questions that was asked, in both the student survey and the staff and administrative survey. It is pretty common for institutions to do these surveys at regular intervals and that FIT will likely do this every two years going forward. It aims to serve two purposes, outside of general institutional improvement. The real goal of it was to get that kind of broad based feedback on some of those questions that we needed information on in preparation to kind of build that data set for SACS (which will visit us in 2025). We are looking at all of the things that they asked us to do, so we're making sure we're doing them not only doing them but we're doing them well. And we're putting some of these things into make sure that we have all the right information that they'll need at the time. Additionally, SACS requires that the administrative units be assessing their effectiveness, learning about areas of improvement, and making improvements where needed. So had everyone include survey questions that they wanted answered as part of their assessment plans and their effectiveness processes. Hence got this longer more comprehensive instrument that would not only answer the SACS questions, but would help those individual units answer and gather data that they need for their administrative effectiveness plans, so that they can use that to develop different improvement plans moving forward into the next term.

Regarding the summaries overall, she was rather pleased by them looking at the data. Nationally, two areas for students will pop up regularly: parking and wi-fi. If those are the two things rising to the top for students for least satisfaction, then it tends to give you a sense that things are going reasonably well on campus. You can see from the data that overall students were very satisfied with their academic experiences with the classroom experiences and generally seem to be supported, both in terms of their academic support, as well as their social support.

(00:53:41) Tristan Fiedler asks the question to Jessica: What would you say is the number one or number two action item that faculty should take to heart?

(00:53:59) Jessica Ickes responds. I would hesitate to make a recommendation on that because really where the the most value in this lies in that the individual units that have a lot of influence in these areas, to look at the relevant questions and to see how their units can contribute to improving those different areas.

(00:55:54) Brian Lail has some questions/concerns/observations on behalf of some of the faculty in the senate. One was questioning collapsing faculty and staff into a single

report with the concern being that merging those two might lead to more likely misrepresented data, particularly, summarized data that's an overview. Another one was it would be considered valuable to have access to more of the comments, because the comments were based on more consensus, is that correct?

(00:56:56) Jessica Ickes responds: ``responses.”

(00:56:58) Brian Lail continues. Then in the specific context of some of the summary description, the qualitative summary, there are a couple of instances where majority of faculty indicated that promotion and tenure processes are fair and the reason this is being brought up is that majority is being questioned because in the data it's about a third that are in the categories of strongly or somewhat agree and the observation was what if this was stated that only one-third agree?

(00:58:10) Jessica Ickes responds. The reason that the summaries and the overall results were reported together is because it was administered as one instrument. We do have the ability to filter and drill down into some of the questions so, if there are groups, as they are kind of working through these results for their improvement processes that would like to see a breakout between faculty and staff on a question, we do have the ability to do so, but because it was administered kind of holistically to get that broader sense for the administrative assessment purposes and for SACS we did keep it presented that way.

You're absolutely right in terms of how questions can be summarized and worded. The reason why we provided all of the individual results is, though, that there was that kind of overall sense of a survey that pen a brief executive summary. But then anybody wanted to see the data had that transparency to go and be able to look at each of those question items.

In terms of the comments typically we summarize them for almost all surveys in aggregate in that way, and we do that for a couple reasons and with a particular approach to it, we look to indicate, is it a comment that is around a particular theme, and is it directional rate is it a positive or a negative comment. And then we aggregated, and the reason that we do, that is because sometimes the comments and are very specifically directed towards people and things and have tones that that wouldn't be kind to share broadly and you hate to sort of nitpick which comments you share, which is why we aggregate those and to give a sense of kind of the magnitude of that comment because in some instances, people can write things very positively and negatively in a really strong way that represents one opinion and what we're trying to do is give a sense, particularly for the areas that are working on their administrative improvement and for our SACS purposes of kind of the overall state of the institution.

(01:02:05) Brian Lail asks a question that came up: Have you received a final report as to the fifth year review, and if so, what was the final outcomes?

(01:02:15) Jessica Ickes responds. Off campus instructional site visit has gone through and pass through the board. We've gotten feedback on our fifth year and that moved through the process as well and they've asked for follow up information on two areas

which we're providing to them April 1st that will go before them in the June meeting, and those are related to additional materials they were interested in around our physical facilities and they asked for additional information on how the academic units are using assessment to improve their academic programs, and so a number of the units were working on gathering that information in the Fall and helping us to summarize that so we'll have a final outcome on that in July.

(01:07:52) Brian Lail asks a questions that came up: Is it possible to make more of the comments public in the name of transparency and allow for an independent review of the data by faculty? On the question of a third agreed versus the majority agreed: The agreed side and the disagree side were very close to one another, just a couple points different, but that was characterized as majority, this is being questioned whether you can call it a majority.

(01:08:55) Marco Carvalho responds to the latter question: The purpose of the executive summary is to provide a perspective. Now you have the data to make that assessment that is not the document that summarizes it. I don't think the perspective is necessarily in any way inaccurate is a perspective that is backed up by the number but the actual number is there to be evaluated and to be considered by the those that want to look into this and there is nothing wrong with that at all. Please keep in mind that the whole purpose of this is to be able to try to represent things that we can address.

(01:11:54) Jessica Ickes responds to the question. The goal of it is to look at across the board at where those strengths are that we need to commit to, both our students and faculty and staff, and where are those areas for improvement and where we want to change those those ratios and percentages and say we'd really like to see that shift more in this direction, or that direction, moving forward, are we really want to see more engagement.

(01:12:59) This conversation with Jessica Ickes ends and she steps out as does Marco Carvalho.

Old Business (01:13:12)

Committee Reports:

1. Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee: Senator Nasri Nesnas said there is nothing to report.
2. Academic Policies Committee: Senator Vipuil Kishore had to leave, but he notified Brian Lail that there is nothing to report.
3. Administrative Policies Committee: Senator Razvan Rusovici said that I just wanted to let you know that i'm going to ask for your permission to distribute the

list of all administrators that was forwarded to me and asked to get each individual Senator to modify that list, according to the current situation, of their department and program level. This is an effort to make sure we have everything current and accurate. Brian Lail said yes let's go ahead with this.

4. Excellence Awards Committee: Senator Julie Costopoulos notified Brian Lail she would not be available to comment at that moment. Brian Lail reminded everyone that there has been an email regarding the nomination process for the faculty excellence awards, please refer to your email for all the details. But let me remind you of the deadline for the dossiers and recommendation letters, and that is by 5pm on Friday, February 11 so just keep that deadline in mind if you're nominating or being nominated or providing recommendation letters, etc.
5. Scholarship Committee: Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie said there is nothing to report.
6. Technology, Resources, And Infrastructure (TRI) Committee: Senator Marius Silaghi said there is nothing to report.
7. Welfare Committee: Senator Nakin Suksawang said based on Dr. Carvalho's answer, the proactive approach would be for him to come up with a chart table and do a comparison against other universities, show the faculty senate, and then send it to Dr. Carvalho.

President's Report:

(01:17:07) Pres. Brian Lail reported that in the Executive Committee meeting last week, we discuss this issue of cost of living and raises, whether there merit raises, cost of living adjustment, and equity, the broad picture of all that. And the Executive Committee, with Nakin being the chair of the Welfare Committee, developed the idea that we might launch an initiative, led by the welfare committee, to do what he kinda of mentioned earlier to investigate and assess the cost of living, cost of living adjustments, and the impact on Florida tech faculty in the context of academia. How do we compare with other places and to start this as something that the Welfare Committee would be the resource for that in finding and keeping the best sources of data so the faculty senate is well informed. As we know there are efforts to develop the best plan moving forward for either equity or across the board COLA adjustment, or whatever it may be, we would be well positioned to participate and contribute something helpful. I think it would be a good move to have the Senate collectively endorse that initiative through a poll. To say, look we've got no support we won't do it or we've got really good support, and so the Senate wants to make sure we're proactive regarding this topic and proactive about presenting what the findings are in a collegial and collaborative way, but also an effective way.

There was a question about what this would include? B. Lail answered saying the first thought was focused on cost of living and COLA (cost of living adjustment) that has not been issued of late. But I think the welfare committee per view includes all of the

range, including equity, merit, and others. We are opened to directions, if you have recommendations on how you would like to direct this. The other part of this answer is we would also need new members in this committee as this is an important topic.

B. Lail then launched the following poll to measure the support for this:

(01:21:18) ***Poll taken to measure support for the Faculty Welfare Initiative***

The faculty senate voted on the question: **Should the Welfare Committee initiate an assessment of cost of living, COLA, and the impact on Florida Tech faculty?**

Outcome of the Vote (Majority supports initiative)

96% of Votes: Yes, I endorse.

0% of Votes: No, I do not endorse.

4% of Votes: Abstain

(01:22:36) Mehmet Kaya asked a question regarding the cost of living. Will the welfare committee look into how much the cost of living has changed or in general? What is it going to be based on?

(01:23:12) Brian Lail responded that there are federal resources that provide the standard metrics for cost of living and the starting point was the Bureau of Labor statistics page.

(01:24:09) Mehmet Kaya responded that with that's more knowledgeable, but inflation has gone up.

(01:24:17) Nakin Suksawang responded that he is likely to approach it from inflation along with cost of living.

(01:27:17) Brian Lail expressed gratitude to Nakin Suksawang for taking this initiative and being proactive to getting this underway as he just started his role in the chair of this committee.

New Business

Faculty welfare initiative which is contained in the president's report.

Adjournment

(01:28:04) The meeting was adjourned at 4:58pm.

Respectively submitted,

Aaron Welters, Faculty Senate Secretary