

## **Faculty Senate Meeting**

When: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 – 3:30pm

Where: Zoom @ <https://fit.zoom.us/j/95744544218>

### **Minutes**

**Senators Present:** Faculty Senate President Tolga Turgut (Aeronautics), Faculty Senate Secretary Aaron Welters (MTH), Nasri Nesnas (BCES), Abram Walton (COB), Jordan Poole (Aeronautics), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), William Bowman (LIB), Kenia Nunes (BCES), Pallav Ray (OEMS), Patrick Converse (PSY), Gordan Patterson (SAC), Ersoy Subasi (Aeronautics), Julie Costopoulos (PSY), Brian Lail (CES), Jessica Wildman (PSY), Vipuil Kishore (BCES), Charles Bryant (Business), Luis Otero (CES), Mehmet Kaya (BCES), Joo Young Park (MTH), Manasvi Lingam (APSS), Steven Rivet (Business), Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MTH), Csaba Palotai (APSS), David Wilder (BA), Kenia Nunes (BCES)

**Senators Absent:** Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Angela Tenga (SAC), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Kevin Burke (SAC), Don Platt (APSS), Nasheen Nur (CES), Razvan Rusovici (APSS)

**Proxies:** None

**Other Attendees:** Marco Carvalho, Nancy Garmer, Penny Vassar, Vicky Knerly, Melissa Borgen, Rian Mehta, Nick Daher, Paula do Vale Pereira, Josko Zec, Tristan Fiedler, Karen Kim Guisbert

### **Call to Order**

Pres. Turgut called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. The minutes from the Nov. 1 meeting were approved and recordings of the meeting were acknowledged.

### **Update on faculty and academic related issues as we are ending the Fall 2022 semester by EVP, Provost & COO Dr. Marco Carvalho**

Pres. Turgut begins by reminding everyone that Dr. Carvalho announced the news in the Sept. Faculty Senate meeting this semester of the 4% faculty salary raise adjustment. Today, Dr. Carvalho will also give further explanation on the good news sent out last Sunday regarding the increase in the merit pool from 3% to 4% along with a one-time payment equal to 1.5% current salary due to merit raises being aligned to be reflected by the summer months. This one-time payment will be made on Dec. 16, 2022 so that it will be of maximum benefit to employees and their families during the holidays. (At this point Pres. Turgut yields the floor to Dr. Carvalho.)

Dr. Carvalho begins by mentioning that he, the interim President King, the CFO, and others have just finished the SACSCOC annual meeting in Atlanta, GA. He says that it was a very productive meeting and they basically went through all the steps necessary for our reaccreditation. The good news is the state of the University in general is very strong in terms of our preparations for the accreditation requirements. So, we are very confident that things are well aligned and its very nice to see how ahead we are in comparison to other places, this is thanks to you all and he sincerely thanks us for that.

Next, he says he will give a bit of an update on our demographics. This information was provided by the board at a recent meeting. There has been a transition at Florida Tech in the last year. We have now achieved a higher population of graduate students then undergraduate students with 55% of students now in graduate programs. This has not been the case for a long time. This is due in the most part to some programs in behavior analysis and some great expansions there. It is not a concern in the sense the

population is changing. It is basically a “distortion” caused by that expansion. But it is something we must pay attention to, it matters, and we are tracking that very, very closely.

When you look at the Fall demographics, 38% of our students are from Florida. This has happened due to a couple of years ago we started having some difficulties with COVID and changes in policy with our international population was obviously highly affected by that. Florida Tech used to be in a position with about 30% of our students in the incoming class being international students, which is very high, and there are many benefits to that because the discount rate is different for tuition. Based on the changes, we made the choice to make a change in the demographics, so we had an active campaign to try increase the presence of Florida Tech in Florida and in our local communities and build that reputation. There are two purposes behind that. One of them is that we needed a shift in the population of students to compensate for the decrease of internationals. There was very little indication that a changing strategy in our traditional markets in the northeast would yield that kind of change. Hence, we figured that we could tap into the Florida population and tap into the local population a little more aggressively, and it worked. That was one of the purposes of that strategy. That was one of the purposes of that strategy.

The other purpose is that we want to work more long term to try to build the reputation of the university with the local community. We are very privileged to live where we live since most of our local people are working in companies which they travel all over the world such as defense contractors. If they carry that presence and that understanding of Florida Tech as their main university and their proud of it, then this will yield benefits. But of course, that return on this is in the long term, yet initially we have a great return as we have seen. We have actually increased our Florida population 38%, 7% international.

One of the important elements he would like to point out is that were four issues identified during the last year, which have been presented to the board, and have been started to be handled by the academic team. All these issues deal with students. The first issue is associated with retention. Our first-year retention has observed a gap of 5% this first year and that was presented. As you may recall, we have made great progress in our six-year graduation rate. It was around 60% and we have managed to bring it up to 67% which is good, and we are trying to improve on that. But that number is bound by the first-year retention which was in the 80's and it dropped to 75 this year. There are many potential reasons for that which we are exploring what this could be. A lot of it could be associated with the fact that a number of these students were the ones affected by COVID, not medically, but by the fact that they were remote. The second potential reason is that some of the measures that we put into place to mitigate the COVID situation, such we basically stopped suspending students and started to provide some level of tolerance, for example, no credit pass/fail. These options we put in place do have a cost, and we may be seeing a bit of that cost. This was one of the issues that was identified and we're working actively with several faculty members to try to mitigate that.

The second issue was our yield, which is basically a measurement that indicates the number of people that you accepted into a program and the number that actually came in (the ratio of the two). It is reasonable that the higher the yield the higher is the attractiveness of the university (regarding the students wanting to go such as their first choice). If the yield is lower than you have an indication that it wasn't a first choice, or there were problems between the time that person was accepted, and the person came in. Those problems could be operational. We couldn't contact the student on time. They could be difficulties getting housing or a financial package. All these things effect yield. Our yield is fairly low. Our average yield is about 8% right now. This is something we have to address. We have identified some items related to procedures that can change how fast we enroll these students. For first year advising when they receive for the students, there are several things that they are waiting to confirm before students are enrolled such as validation of exams. If we can accelerate that process, we can improve. There are steps we are taking on this second issue of yield.

The third issue we have been trying to address is the faculty. We have been making all the efforts we can to hire the faculty and to basically replace our personnel in all different areas. We got close, but not quite there yet, and we are below the faculty numbers we wanted to achieve. But we did hire 49 faculty members, which is a huge number when you compare it to the total number of 300 faculty members across the University now. This growth and expansion bring several other challenges and a

number of things we're trying to address. There are very active searches going on. But we have been successful in hiring very, very talented faculty, and he encourages all of us to look at your colleagues and look at your own performances and see how we're doing. We're doing very, very well on that front.

Another important item we have been addressing is the review of policies that is associated with some of the requirements for accreditation. The very reason for this meeting (referring to the SACs meeting in Atlanta, GA) is we are preparing ourselves with the information to ensure all those things are in place, and there are very important things that need to be resolved. For example, there is the need for updated CVs. There are things that we must maintain and have on file for an accreditation requirement. And we're going through the process of having this data collected and the policies put into place. There are some policies that he considers extremely important to address that are not directly associated with accreditation, such as maternity leave: how are these things considered, how can they be addressed properly and supported by the institution. There is a group reviewing over 450 policies and trying to reconcile some of these. These things are ongoing right now.

The last item (before talking about merit) is that we have been going through this process of restructuring some of the administrative roles, and that's becoming a whole lot more efficient and less costly for the institution which allows us to divert resources elsewhere. We are going through a transition and there are always potential changes. But through this process he is very proud of the fact that if you look at some of the fundamental changes we did collectively as a university for the past three years and through the pandemic, we are a much, much better university in the way we operate and conduct ourselves.

There is still an obvious very big issue still (actually a few he says but this is a big one), namely, the pay scale. We realize the University is catching up to a pay scale, to be competitive, and that happens at multiple levels. If you look within your discipline, and with your peer institutions you can ask how are we comparing and how competitive are we? In some we are and some we are not, there is a lot of way to go and a lot of work to do as it is not simple. There are complexities of even identifying your peers. There are groups in the board that are involved in just trying to do that. Hence, we are trying to address that important issue. There are also some disparities within the faculty population that happens through salary compression that happens for a number of reasons. There are also issues to address our immediate losses to ensure that we are at least recovering from of the losses we have and we have to be able to operate in the short term. We have managed to get the faculty salary adjustment of 4% increase a few months ago to do some compensation. Now we're having a little bit of a higher merit pool to be able to allow for this realignment of the reviews and compensate for some of those distortions. We are able to get at least one-time support for the holidays for the faculty. He believes going forward what we really have to be able to do is ensure that we maintain our gains. The problem is that every time you propose anything related to salaries for faculty or staff, it ties back to student enrollment numbers. We are very dependent on enrollment because of the way our University is set up. This is something we are trying to mitigate. But for now, that the case which means that one of the biggest challenges we have is that we are always operating on projections, it very difficult for us to make a very strong argument that all indicators based on projected enrollment for the Fall is that we should and can afford this investment. He is very hopeful that as we move these evaluations to the beginning of Spring, then we can commit the salary by the time we can have the better projections in enrollment and this becomes a little stronger when we can have multi-year budget projection, which is something we are working on right now. We are doing this with an interim CFO and an interim President which has challenges because they are themselves learning the ropes and they are getting to understand some of those things, and we're trying to get those issues mitigated.

He fully understands there is a long way to go. He recognizes we have issues to address with the compensation side, both in terms of maintaining the gains, but also to reserve resources, to address both the equity internal and the competitiveness of our salaries. They tried at this time to do the 4% increase and the one-time holiday payment, to separate some funds for the Spring to able to start the equity process. The problem right now is that we don't have strong enough projections to be confident of that number so that is why they cannot at this point. But they can say at this point there is full support and

intention by himself, the CFO, and from the President to look for the opportunity to do that in the Spring. But we need to gain better confidence in the numbers going forward. (At this point Dr. Carvalho yields the floor to the Senate for questions.)

Pres. Turgut begins by thanking Dr. Carvalho and opens the floor to questions.

Pres. Tolga Turgut asks a question on behalf of the faculty. Are there any developments with respect to the COLA resolution that we had approved prior to his Faculty President term during the last Senate meeting in April of last year, which was conveyed to the Board of Trustees? (He also mentions he did this question as a follow-up to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and their reply was ``We are considering it and we need more time.’’)

Dr. Carvalho responds. He can speak to that in the sense that the request was sent to the Board and has been discussed a couple of times. One of the real challenges when we talk about an indexed COLA is that we are not a line item in a State budget, for example, that gets adjusted. We are absolutely dependent on what we collect in terms of tuition, and what we generate in terms of research and other support. And so as much as we would like to have the ability to always index any particular loss that comes through inflation or anything else and be able to compensate for that, but it's not realistic to be able to do that because the revenue that supports that is not automatically indexed by that in any way. He mentions though, as a personal belief, that he is in full support of finding ways to index the faculty gains and that he wholeheartedly believes it is the best investment you can make believing that investment of faculty compensation is much more cost-effective than on the infrastructure side, because you can compensate from that. His main point is that we must be able to tie those things to the generation of the revenue. The reason he says this is that sometimes you will find, maybe from him or from others, a position against an index COLA. It's not because that is a disinterest in indexing the gains with the losses, but it's because the revenues that can allow you to do this are in no way indexed that way. In terms of the response from the Board, they are aware of that request and have not yet responded.

Pres. Tolga Turgut asks for further information about the recently formed Diversity Council as diversity is very important subject for all institutions of higher education.

Dr. Carvalho responds. This is something that is important not only for the survival of the institution, but it's a matter of moral value and a moral problem. He thinks it is something that is fundamentally important to any of us. This process started almost two years ago, and he asked both Dr. Mine Subasi and Dr. Vanessa Edkins at the time to coordinate an effort to help us put together some sort of coordinated initiative that brought together all the different efforts that were happening on campus, to bring them under the same umbrella. You gain a lot more power to get things done because you can get multiple groups, faculty, staff, students, etc. and request/require changes and initiatives that gain a lot more support than from individual groups trying to do the same. The initiative of the University Council was to try to facilitate the process and channel the initiatives of all these different groups to support them and to allow them to share their thoughts and come back with coordinated requests. It's a completely open group. It was selected by the group themselves that they elected the people to participate. The notion of inclusion is not just in the mission but is part of the very nature of the committee, and he would like to ensure that everybody has a chance to be involved and participate to the extent they can. Ultimately, he would like to see this becoming second nature and a regular way we do business and operate, part of who we are. It will take a while for us to get there and we will be having the insights of these different groups. There are three of us including himself, Dr. Mine Subasi and Dr. Vanessa Edkins, participating on this fellowship training for diversity and learning quite a lot. And helping to provide some of these frameworks. We are not necessarily addressing the issue, but our role is to try to facilitate as much as we can the groups that can bring insights on how we can improve our presence there. Please any of you that would like to get involved, please do.

Pres. Tolga Turgut thanks Dr. Carvalho and the Dr. Carvalho thanks the Faculty Senate for the opportunity to speak.

## **Old Business**

### *Committee Reports:*

1. Excellence Awards Committee: Senator Julie Costopoulos said that they have sent out the announcement, so she encourages the senators to remind all your faculty that we are going to be collecting applications, they come with a cash award, and they should apply, and that they are actively trying to recruit a member for the committee from engineering.
2. Academic Policies Committee: Senator Vipuil Kishore said there is nothing to report.
3. Scholarship Committee: Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie said nothing to report.
4. Welfare Committee: Senator Nakin Suksawang said nothing to report, but they are looking for members and if you have any concern regarding welfare, to please send him an email and they will work on it.
5. Administrative Policies Committee: Senator Mehmet Kaya said that as the new committee chair, he is in the process of creating a committee and anyone interested in serving in this committee is welcomed with a diverse committee being a goal. With the committee formed they will create a strategy and be proactive.
6. Technology, Resources, and Infrastructure (TRI) Committee: Nothing was discussed as this committee needs to elect a chair.

### *President's Report:*

(39:04) President Tolga Turgut begins by saying as you heard partially from our Provost, Dr. Carvalho, I have been in dialogue with interim President King, on the importance of faculty resources & compensation and its immediate impact on the rankings for FIT especially our average faculty compensation hovering below the peer ranked universities. He emphasized the importance of considering the equity adjustment for the faculty very soon. Of course, this all depends on the budget situation and the planning for the next few years. We need to basically bring the lower paid faculty more to the median as soon as the financial situation permits. He also followed up, to Dr. Carvalho as well, about the COLA resolution sent last April, and he kindly requested from Mr. King to follow up with the Board of Trustees as well with respect to an official reply to that resolution sent about COLA. Then he followed up on the Clement Center being free of charge for the full-time faculty and Mr. King told me he would get back to us. With respect to the President search activities, it is still ongoing and he would like to refer everyone, who would like to follow up what is happening officially, to the webpage of the Office of the President (Dr. Turgut shows on his shared screen that they have a timeline on that page) on the section on the Presidential search which has a timeline and the leadership profile. He reminds the faculty that he is a member of the Search Committee, but that all of them have signed a confidentiality letters so that he is not able to discuss any details about the search. He remembered based on the discussions in our October meeting that there was a lack of female faculty in the Search Advisory Committee. This is being addressed as Senate recently elected a new female AFTC member, Dr. Linxia Gu. She has been recommended by President Turgut to the Board of Trustees to be included in the representation of the faculty in the Search Advisory Committee. On a side note, he reminded that the Academic Affairs

Committee chair of the Board of Trustees is a female faculty member and her name is Dr. Svafa Gronfeldt.

*Discussion on standing committee list of members and nominations for open chairmanships (TRI and Academic Policies):*

President Turgut begins by saying he has been strongly advocating on strengthening the committees that we have and adding more members to our standing committees. He would also like to share that on our Senate webpage we need to fill in this section on the committees and members on those committees to keep it as current as possible with the help of himself and the Faculty Senate Secretary Dr. Aaron Welters. This way we can be open and transparent to everyone to see who is active on the committees and which of the standing committees included sitting Senators besides their chairs who are also senators anyway. Per our constitution, we also need each committee to have one Senator who is a member. All the other members on the committees can be from the faculty without being a Senator. Then Dr. Turgut called on the Committee Chairpersons to send that info (i.e. list of members on each committee) to us so that Faculty Senate webpage can be updated and remain current. You will also find the current Senator on the webpages as well and the Senate minutes and recordings.

Finally, we still have two committees, namely, TRI (Technology, Resource, and Infrastructure) and Academic Policies, for which the nominations for chairmanships are still open and he will keep them opened until they are filled until the end of February.

*AFTC Charter revision (2<sup>nd</sup> version recommended by the AFTC):*

President Turgut says next up is the AFTC (Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee) Charter Revision which he sent out and shared with everyone last Friday. The AFTC made a revision to the AFTC Charter with the purpose of improving its functionality and to promote a more impartial charter that guides them. They have made this as a recommendation to the Faculty Senate and we began discussing them and debating on it since Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>. In the aftermath of our last Senate meeting on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, he has channeled/conveyed the discussions and suggestions to the AFTC members. Additionally, they took the time to watch the Faculty Senate meeting recordings of our last meeting and as a result have made a second revision and sent it to us which he is sharing (Dr. Turgut shows on his shared screen the document with the changes highlighted).

The plan is in our next meeting in January, is he would like to put this to a vote because it will have been 90 days since we started this discussion and it is very important that all the faculty are aware and informed of all these changes. He would also like to put it in the record that he would like to thank the AFTC for being responsive considering all the suggestions coming from the faculty members.

President Turgut asks for any questions or comments from the faculty of which there were none.

## **New Business**

*Discussion on Faculty Senate's role in achieving a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive faculty in conjunction with the recently established University Diversity Council:*

President Turgut introduces this new order of business and says it was very good that we had Dr. Carvalho speaking first to inform us about the university wide Diversity Council, which has been recently established. This suggestion for new business was made by Senator Patterson and Dr. Turgut yields the floor to him to discuss it further.

Senator Gordan Patterson says the motivation for this is there are certain issues concerning equity, inclusion, and diversity that are particularly central to our role as stakeholders in the University. There are

at least three areas in the appointment of new faculty, in professional development of faculty, and identifying what are the best classroom practices. Some of the issues that Provost Carvalho identified are ones which are not just unique to our institution.

Right now, if you go to our AAUW website (<https://www.aauw.org/>) you will discover that the majority of non-tenure track professors at universities are women. At the same time, if you look at the number of women that are on the tenure track and are tenured is 44% of the population, and at the level of tenured full professors only 36% are women. If you look at the field of engineering, only 15% of tenured full professors are women.

These numbers point to a role that we as faculty have in the recruitment and promotion of faculty members, whether they be women, persons of color, or people of different gender identities. Thus, he thought it important that we as faculty take our place at the table, particularly concerning those issues in which the faculty do have a leadership function.

There are lots of ways to do that. In the College of Psychology, three years ago they started a committee to address these issues and have attempted in faculty meetings to make ourselves more attentive to these questions. He thought that the Faculty Senate might want to have an oversight in that process so that the advances and steps taken in different schools could be shared.

President Turgut thanks Senator Patterson and asks the question was Dr. Carvalho's further explanation helpful?

Senator Gordan Patterson responds that of course it was helpful and entirely agree, but if you go to the website for the Diversity Council it says explicitly that its function is to provide guidance to executive leadership. He sees this in a sense as a different mission than the role that the faculty members play in the recruitment process of looking through resumes, reading application letters, in looking at the way in which we strengthen candidates that are rising to promotion. Those things are uniquely faculty matters. I think that the Faculty Senate has an important voice in that conversation.

President Turgut thanks Senator Patterson and asks if there are any thoughts on this issue by other Senators or faculty?

Nancy Garmer shares the webpage link to the Diversity Council (<https://www.fit.edu/provost/university-diversity-council/>).

Nancy Garmer from the library says she is also the program coordinator for QEP for the cultural competency certificate, and she wanted to bring that up in relation to Dr. Patterson's topic about DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion). Although cultural competency as mostly an international initiative in 2015, we have kind of switched the scope to include all the DEI for students as well so that it is more able-bodied, neurodiverse, gender identity, and things like that. Thus, a big focus of QEP now is DEI as well. And so, she wanted to make sure that all the faculty are really aware of the certificate and should be encouraging it. Most colleges have some courses that qualify for this certificate and they also have three student employees who go to classes to talk about that with students. It is important to know that institutional support would be valuable for the University as a whole, since QEP is part of our SACSCOC accreditation.

*Discussion on term limits for senators, committee chairs and senate officers:*

President Turgut begins discussing the next new business on term limits for Senators and it is directly related to spirit of equity and inclusion among the faculty ranks for our Faculty Senate. He says that in his vision statement when he was elected, he discussed the term limits for the Faculty Senate as well as some of it he shared in the General Assembly of this year (2022). His objective with that is to have more diverse inclusive representation in the Faculty Senate. The Senate must be reflective of all the voices

among the 300 full-time faculty not only of the well-established faculty who have been at our institution for so many years just like Dr. Patterson was saying. You know we always learn from new voices, new ideas, fresh energy and we need to reflect that in our Faculty Senate as well. Having a blend of well-established faculty with new incoming faculty represented in the Faculty Senate would bring help this. He sees serving in the Senate as an honor and privilege. And we must provide this opportunity to all the faculty and in order to assure this, he thinks limiting the terms for Senators, Committee chairs, and Senate officers by two terms would be an idea to consider.

He gives an example that we had in the October meeting of the new faculty coming from Aerospace and asking questions about the profile of the President. He admires that courage. Because courage is contagious, and we want to promote the culture of people being able to come freely and discuss new ideas here. The term limits would promote more rotation among the faculty in the Senate, as well as the other academic committees, and lead to a more educated, more productive and versatile faculty population. We should also encourage and promote elections within our departments/colleges. Serving at the Faculty Senate must be viewed as a desirable service to our institution and not a chore. If this is achieved then we can have more competitive elections at every level beginning with the senator elections in our Colleges. Then this would be followed by more competitive elections at every level within the senate such as standing committee chairmanships and officer elections such as Secretary and the Senate President.

President Turgut opens the floor for discussion about this and the term limits for the faculty. He says that currently Senators are being elected for three years per term. His proposal is to have a term limit of two terms for senators (term duration is three years), committee chairs (term duration is two years) and senate officers (secretary and president whose term durations are one year).

(There are no other comments or questions.)

President Tolga Turgut asks for a motion to adjourn.

Senator William Bowman responds. Motion to adjourn.

Senator Mehmet Kaya responds. I second the motion.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

Respectively submitted,

Aaron Welters, Faculty Senate Secretary