

Faculty Senate Meeting

When: Tuesday, February 1, 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), Pallav Ray (OEMS), Steven Rivet (Business), Gary Zarillo (OEMS), Hamid Najafi (MCE), Abram Walton (Business), Charles Bryant (Business), Marius Silaghi (CES), Jessica Wildman (PSY), Debbie Lelekis (SAC), Patrick Converse (PSY), Suzanne Odom (Library), Gordan Patterson (SAC), Tolga Turgut (Aeronautics), Nasheen Nur (CES), Suzanne Kozaitis (Library), Nasri Nesnas (BCES), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Kevin Burke (SAC), Julie Costopoulos (PSY), Margaret Wallace (Aeronautics), Ersoy Subasi (Aeronautics), Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MTH), Luis Otero (CES), Razvan Rusovici (APSS), Joo Young Park (MTH), Mehmet Kaya (BCES), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Angela Tenga (SAC), Kim Sloman (Scott/BA), Amitabh Nag (APSS), David Wilder (BA),

Senators Absent: Vipuil Kishore (BCES), Angel Otero (Business Online), Don Platt (APSS), Francisco Yumiceva (APSS), Kenia Nunes (BCES), Troy Nguyen (MCE)

Proxies: Suzanne Odom (Library) for Ashley Alicea (Library)

Other Attendees: Tristan Fiedler, Mary Bonhomme, Korhan Oyman, Raymond Bonhomme, Nancy Garmer, Vicky Knerly, Roberto Peverati, Jian Du, Rudolf Wehmschulte, Ashley Alicea, Penny Vassar, Gary Burns, Elizabeth Dopira, Eric Perlman, Nick Daher, Heidi Hatfield Edwards, Rick Addante

(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 Jan. 11 meeting were read and approved.

Old Business (00:01:39)

Committee Reports:

1. Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee: Senator Nasri Nesnas said the committee met and reviewed some of the language of the charter and noted that there are two statements that restrict the membership on the AFTC by requiring

one of them to be a senator and, moreover, requiring the chair be a senator. This limiting in many ways and its already restrictive given you have to be a tenured faculty to be on the committee. The committee supports a healthier rotation on the committee. These two statements will be reviewed in this faculty senate meeting with Pres. Lail having this on the agenda today.

2. Academic Policies Committee: Senator Vipuil Kishore was not there, but Pres. Lail said that he was not aware of any current announcements.
3. Administrative Policies Committee: Senator Razvan Rusovici said he will distribute a list of the administrators to the general faculty and asks to please make any changes.
4. Excellence Awards Committee: Senator Julie Costopoulos gave a reminder that the dossiers are due Feb. 11, 2022 by 5pm and emailed to her.
5. Scholarship Committee: Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie said they requested a list of the students eligible for this scholarship and received that from all four of the colleges. There are some records that need to be fixed. And he is looking forward to finalizing that list. Then he will generate a short list and contact these students to proceed further.

Pres. Lail said that Dr. Subasi has indicated the plan for the Honors convocation is going to be in person on April 14, 2022. Sen. Nezamoddini-Kachouie said that he will have the names by then.

6. Technology, Resources, and Infrastructure (TRI) Committee: Senator Marius Silaghi said that the committee had a meeting on Jan. 26, 2022. They now have a member from each unit. There were a couple of WiFi issues on campus and the main idea now is to redesign and upgrade to fiber to each building. But there are supply chain troubles due to the pandemic and so they won't get their routes until 2023. This is a real problem touching us. The actual failure on campus last week was due to the cooling system of load balancers which eventually propagated to the whole campus.

The set of instruction videos from summer that are being rerecorded, some of them are already available on the IT website and they are also going to be distributed on the faculty distribution list. More will be coming.

The last topic is the IT has offered to help with various services in the last meetings like implementing the new evaluation system that the senators voted on implementing and acknowledgement emails that some faculty have requested. Problem is they have a four time reduction in personnel to help solve/implement faculty requests, software changes, fixing bugs then they did one-two years ago. This creates a huge backlog and makes it difficult to prioritize and get things done. For implementation of teaching related topics like flag flipping acknowledgements, they are controlled in terms of priority by the register so we would have to tell the register what our priorities are and then they will schedule with the IT to do the tasks.

About the new evaluation system, Dr. Carvahlo has told them for now to refrain from implementing it until he's going to give them the green light. This semester evaluation system will be like the previous semesters evaluation system.

Senator Nezamoddini-Kachouie asked the question to Senator Silaghi: About one-two years ago you were trying to get statistics and see whether you have the support to purchase a university license of overleaf, did they purchase this license? No, but they did purchase a certain amount of them and they are available by request from faculty, if you need one contact Dr. Meyer.

Pres. Lail asked the questions to Senator Silaghi: How confident are we that the problems of last week are corrected; we had two big outages on Tuesday and Friday, were they related? Senator Silaghi responded that he is not aware about the causes of the one on Friday as it was after their meeting. They are, as mentioned, trying to upgrade the infrastructure, but the routers will not be coming until 2023. These routers cause problem for which there is no fix right now by the manufacturers and these routers are going to reboot randomly from time to time and they cannot be replaced without changing the overall system. They have been moved to less important areas of campus. Company that makes them promises they are working on them, but they currently don't have a fix.

7. Welfare Committee: Senator Nakin Suksawang will share what they have come up with the senate and as suggested by Pres. Lail, they do this later in "new business" of this meeting.

President's Report:

(00:15:35) Pres. Brian Lail reported that there are two items he will comment on.

The first is in regards to the faculty and staff survey results discussed in last faculty senate meeting. He received a few subsequent inquiries by faculty and he had time to go back over the data himself. He wanted to point out things he particularly observed. First, the survey summary results indicated three areas the FIT can improve: salary and raises, increase staffing, and improve communication. He noticed one of the questions being an important topic and he wanted to bring this to the attention of the faculty senate. Question 21, the third question under that (aka Q21/3) which only faculty could respond, the topic was "Faculty have opportunities to participate in university decision making/governance." The results are: those who agree = 34%; those that neither/nor agree or disagree = 22%; those that disagree = 44%.

Pres. Lail considers this a topic of "shared governance." It raises questions: 1. Do we have a common vision of shared governance here at FIT (and even across academy)? Generally, this concept/term refers to structures and processes, that a university and stakeholders in general (administration, governing boards, faculty, staff, students), might be able to participate in the development of policies and decision making all that shape the university. Due to academia's mission, the role of faculty in that is of paramount importance. He says that he expresses this as his opinion.

He also always likes to remind himself of what FIT has already recognized and documented. If you go back to the preamble in the handbook, to the FIT constitution and by-laws of academic faculty senate it has this statement: “No less than his predecessors, the modern institution of higher learning, is a guardian and interpreter of intellectual tradition. It is on the confidence integrity and devotion of its faculty professional ideals that university must depend for success.” To him this tells him that for a long time now this statement has been there, that for a long time the university has recognized the importance of the faculty’s role. And so, it means that question and that response to the question, should be elevated in importance.

He is not here to represent his own view, so that is why he is putting this under the President’s Report as he is stating his own opinion. But he wants to plant the seed and see if others have a shared view or an opposing view, it’s all fine.

His suggestion is that improving shared governance should be included in that summary list that FIT can improve. It’s a standalone question so it doesn’t fit the description of a theme, for example. But it is such an important standalone topic that he would personally see it in that summary list. He would also note that, in his opinion, shared governance directly couples with the other three areas (i.e., that FIT can improve on: salary and raises, increase staffing, and improve communication) and is integral in the improvement of those other three areas. It is a foundational mechanism that will lead to inherently improve them.

(00:21:23) Pres. Lail opens the floor for comments.

Eric Perlman responds: He wants to echo that comment. Over the last five years, it is something that we the faculty has attempted to improve, with a lot of time and effort. It’s why we’ve worked so hard on the tenure process. Unfortunately, it’s why a number of us are not terribly satisfied with this, he was one of those who responded very strongly in that vein. He thinks it’s extremely important that the faculty actually be listened to and the faculty have a share in decision making at all levels. And if we don’t this is directly counter to all that we’ve worked for and what the mission of the university is.

Pres. Lail response: I agree. I would be willing to bring to the floor a resolution to make a statement in regards to this shared governance, if this is viewed as something of value. It’s not about control, it’s about participation.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: To have shared governance faculty need to have a little more information about the budget and allocations, broadly speaking. This could help, for instance, long term planning on the health of the institution in order to help contribute.

Pres. Lail response: These are very important points and speaks to the scope of the topic. If you go out and read different universities vision of shared governance, you get some good perspective, to see what is common, and see what the range is. For example, administrative hiring all the way up to the President, you know, often has a very thorough and formal process, including faculty in the actual search committees.

Senator Gary Zarillo responds: Does the faculty senate ever have a look at the Annual IRS 990 which is public domain (overall financial state/health of the university; pretty good information there)? In the public domain, it is about a year or two behind.

Pres. Lail response: This is an excellent point. He thinks that the biggest limitation to this is that they are one-two years behind. But it helps us get a sense of understanding decisions.

Eric Perlman responds: One of the things we were given the opportunity to do in that survey, was to express specific ideas or opinions and I noticed that the report lack those completely. And I think that it would be valuable for us, as a body, for us a faculty to have access to those and perhaps make reference to some of those thoughts in our own reaction to the survey and in our recommendations to the administration.

Pres. Lail response: This request has come up from others, so this is not the first time that's been mentioned. He's concerned that we may be losing valuable information by just not having access to some of that. We can help the university more by understanding the concerns that people have. The approach might be to find themes amongst those comments. But he also warns that there are things that might not fall into a theme that could be most impactful. I am sharing this, I am already making inquiries about what additional data/information/comments that can be shared. He doesn't have answer to this right now which is the reason its not an agenda item, but its in progress and he will follow up on it.

(00:31:51) Pres. Lail brings up one more item on the ``President's Report" related to safety on campus. He is obliged to preface this by pointing out that, while we cannot discuss some of the events of recent weeks that have occurred on campus due to ongoing investigations, we would like to acknowledge two things. One is the overall mental health concerns and struggles that have been heightened through the pandemic and it is well noted here on campus among students in particular. On top of this, we've had some events that have raised safety concerns, and a number of faculty have received comments from students expressing concern about safety. Thus, we acknowledge right now that these issues exist. The university will need to be proactive about helping the students to be able to respond to these concerns.

New Business (00:33:39)

Proposed modification to the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) description.

Pres. Lail explains that this description was recently approved to go into the handbook because it had gone missing for years since it was originally approved in 2019. Since that had been put in place, we've had ongoing reviews of all these documents and policies. In fact, the AFTC committee role includes an annual review of the whole tenure system, making recommendations that would be endorsed by the senate on all the policies and procedures related to tenure. The other big part of that role is that it is the committee that hears and makes recommendations on faculty appeals related to the tenure process. He cannot stress enough how important the AFTC committee is.

The proposal documentation was shared already along with the senate minutes (from last meeting) and the agenda (Pres. Lail shares his screen which shows the proposal documentation). The two sentences are to ease the constraint of certain roles

must be senators and there are two sentences that are proposed to be stricken in this regards. Sentence one: At least one of the members of the AFTC must be a Faculty Senator. Sentence two: The chairperson must be a Faculty Senator.

This is a logistical constraint which will avoid some of the basic limitations as these must be tenured members and so the size of the Senate and the number of tenured faculty can be a problem. But more than that, to do the role its not necessary to have those constraints (in reference to the two sentences to be stricken). Pres. Lail defers to Senator Nasri Nesnas to make some comments.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: These restrictions, make it hard, for instance, when the AFTC would like to elect a new chair if there's only one Senator amongst them and this this restriction would mean that that person, by default, is the Chair. This doesn't need to be the case, and moving forward if going to be rotations and things like that. Its too restrictive for this. Hence, this is why the two sentences are proposed to be eliminated.

Eric Perlman responds: He wants to speak in favor of this, from the perspective of somebody who has been on the promotions tenure committee now for six years (he also chaired it for one year). Many programs and many departments try to share the load in terms of service like on AFTC and the promotion tenure committees and Faculty Senate, etc. Those are rather significant time commitments and its actually quite rare for somebody to be AFTC or UCFT as well as senate.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: Agreed especially if you want to review things thoroughly and do the job in the best possible manner.

Its important to point out that while they don't need to be Senators, they can be Senators, i.e., it will NOT exclude Senators.

Pres. Lail responds: He wants to remind us of the context in which these changes occur. This is a piece of the Faculty handbook (FHB), this description, and, as such, when a proposal to modify any policy or any portion of that handbook, it is initially assessed. There is a procedure, namely, FHB 1.6, which outlines this procedure. In this case though we also have the Provost office is made aware. We are at this point now where we bring it to the Senate floor for endorsement.

My question for today would be, whether we need to delay this to vote later or if this is one of those changes that that prior to the meeting today there was sufficient time to move forward now to vote?

(00:42:11) Pres. Lail asks for a motion that we vote on this today. Senator Nakin Suksawang motions that we vote on it today and Senator Julie Costopoulos seconds that motion.

(00:42:46) Pres. Lail launches the poll for approving (Yes), disapproving (No), or abstain on the Proposed modification to the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) description.

(00:43:39) Poll results: 29 – Yes; 1 – No; 1 – Abstain

(00:43:47) Pres. Lail says we will go ahead with the rest of the approval process now.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: As I mentioned earlier, there's another statement and I don't know if you want to allude to it now and then maybe, at least for discussion, so that if we need to vote on it will be prepared for next meeting.

Pres. Lail responds: Shares the document again (i.e., the proposed modification to the AFTC description) to indicate what Nasri and Pres. Lail are referring to. The yellow highlighting is the statement ``The Chief Academic Officer or the Chief Academic Officer's representative and other members of the faculty or administration appointed by the Chief Academic Officer or the AFTC chair will be nonvoting members." This has been identified as a potential sentence to remove or modify, but we are not going to vote on that now. Because it has never been utilized yet and it has been agreed upon by the AFTC by a vote that it be removed, also Dr. Carvalho has expressed his support of it being eliminated. Probably by the next senate meeting we can vote to strike that sentence as well.

Faculty Equity Pay. (00:47:47)

Pres. Lail explains that this goes back to the initiative that we talked about (in this meeting under old business) being conducted by the Faculty Welfare Committee being led by Senator Nakin Suksawang. Hence, defers to him to get us an update and open discussion on this topic.

(00:49:39) Senator Nakin Suksawang begins with a small presentation from the committee which includes Kevin Burke and Jim Brenner. He hopes to expand the membership so they can work on more details of these things.

Two issues at stake/looking at: Cost of living adjustment (COLA); Equity Increase and Merit Raise. There are discussions on whether to separate these or not, whether to just focus on one. The first issue needs to be addressed as cost of living goes/inflation goes up we need to make sure we are not losing money/salary not decreasing in this sense and so even if we do get raises at 1-2% or around that it is nowhere near the inflation rates/cost of living changes in Melbourne right now. The second issue deals with equality of pay such as between new hires and current faculty or between faculty in the same departments such as if you have been here for 20 years, the market changes.

Why COLA? (i) Inflation rate has risen approx. 7x within a year from 1.4% in Jan. 2021 to around 7% now. (ii) Home prices in Brevard County is up 17.8% year-over-year. (iii) Due to the pandemic, unforeseen negative impacts on teaching and research since Fall 2020. (iv) Additional work including implementing new COVID policy in labs, teaching via ZOOM, and accommodating online students. (v) Within the last 2 years, the faculty members have not received any COLA.

Many universities around here receive some amount of COLA pay from year to year ranging from 1-3%. We don't get this here at FIT. So with the 7% inflation this has a big impact on us.

The faculty senate recommends that the university provide COLA to the faculty at a rate of 4.7% to match the rate provided by the Florida Department of Revenue. That we send letter to the administration explaining this.

(00:56:08) The floor is open for discussion on all this.

Senator Abram Walton responds: They had a discussion on this in the College of Business. He see the point on being conservative on the 4.7%. However, since COLA has been removed for the last couple of years, so the discussion in his college has been we should seek to replace them (referring to all the lost years of COLA raises) as we are actually behind.

He suggests based on the discussions within his college that you show the administration the range of all the rates that have gone up along with the lack of COLA that we have received over the past few years, that 4.7% doesn't even keep up and won't replace that which has been lost.

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: Yes, I agree with you. We need to come up with what that range should be. If you have any suggestions to please send them (the committee) an email. We can draft a letter and circulate it through the Senate on what we have to present. Remember this is suggestion.

Senator Abram Walton responds: But if you look back at the last meeting discussion with Dr. Carvalho about the actual raises vs the one big raise for all faculty, the argument could be made, that has been made in his college, is your probably only going to get one dip in the well. Then lets not forget that we didn't get COLA for the last few years and several years of no raises.

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: They should just budget it. If the budget for next year isn't done yet they could budget this in. We have record enrollment and if we get all these students to come we will be extremely profitable.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: Why hasn't there been a discussion of raising tuition? Of if there has been, what do we know about the raise in tuition? Does our rate match the market?

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: It goes back to shared governance, if we don't know the budget and all we know is that other schools raise tuition then we are at a catch 22 as we are a private institution so prices increase enrollment decreases. Also public schools are cheaper to begin with. Our policy should be just to get our raises in the budget for next year and have administration balance it out.

Senator Kevin Burke responds: There are two parts to this that Nakin shared. We know that the administration is looking into the equity pay as they are also concerned about our rankings and how that data is reported. Perhaps there is a way to deal with all this both equity and compression of pay that would also be good for rankings. Approaching this as a joint solution might also help our cause to convince the administration to look in to this.

(01:02:50) Senator Nakin Suksawang goes back to the presentation.

Why Equity Increase and Merit Raise? (i) Institution-wide salary raises has not kept pace with the market for new hires. This results in new faculty hires having higher salaries than faculty with more years of service in the same unit. (ii) Salary compression will affect the average salaries reported for each rank in the Chronicle of Higher Education, which could potentially be viewed as stagnation of wages. (iii) Faculty compensation accounts for 7% in the most recent US News formula for determining university ranking.

Potential solutions: (a) Equity raise models; (b) transparent salary model with well-defined minimum and maximum salary for each unit; (c) other metrics besides the

annual review for merit raise; (d) FIT old formula for equity increase from Cecilia Knoll's presidency in 2004-2005; (e) other possible formulas.

(01:08:48) The floor opens for discussion on this.

Senator Abram Walton responds: A number of us have been doing the hiring over the last year. He points out that a less obvious thing here is that you don't want to make any assumptions about the equity or how you think the administration views it. Because they had a position that had a \$25,000 drop in pay. Hence, money doesn't always go up on a newly hired position. So he would like to submit to you a reconsideration of the idea of trying to smash together the equity raise with a COLA. Overcomplicate things and you risk getting neither.

Senator Aaron Welters responds: if I recall from the last meeting with the guest speaker, Provost Carvalho was actually very open to approaching this problem where you would split the COLA from the equity, and if the Faculty were behind the COLA first and later on rolling out the equity over time, he was good with that. So if we want to split them up, I think that's within the administration's view of what would be fine.

Pres. Lail responds: In the past, equity process was not applied across the institution at one time, it was done by units getting equity pay adjusted and then moved around. Its conceivable that some people could get equity raises and others don't.

Thank you Nakin and the rest of the committee for all that you have done. Faculty pay and raises is often part of shared governance at many universities. What kind of timeline do you think this needs to reach a conclusion on a recommendation?

(01:13:17) Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: If we do decide to do this separately, then the COLA could draft something for the faculty senate to vote on by next meeting. As far as equity increase, it could be added in and use the 2004-2005 formula previously and make a recommendation based on this. Certainly we could draft something up for next time.

Senator Nasri Nesnas responds: Regarding this formula is it multiplied by your salary?

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: No, he thinks its multiplied against your (merit) raise.

Senator Aaron Welters responds: I think that if we look back to when was the last time we had a cost of living adjustment it's probably been quite a bit of time and then you combine it with the recent cost of living. The cost of living has gone up significantly in the last like two years right, so I think the priorities to be fair to everybody is that we really want to start the process we should start with COLA. Also, given how the COLA could happen faster than the equity raises, based on the last meeting discussion with Dr. Carvalho, and they're separate too, so I think cola would be a better starting point to help everyone out to make things more affordable in their lives quicker and equity could be worked on with a little bit more time.

Senator Tolga Turgut responds: There is still ongoing work at the provost office with respect, and Dr. Carvalho mentioned this, to the equity issue. And by approaching this problem with one step at a time approach via the COLA, which we didn't get for at least three or four years now, can be a faster fix. And with respect to equity issue, it's not a one size fits all we have different colleges, different income levels, so we can throw in anything but would we be able to recommend something concrete is the issue.

The short term fix is we come up with the COLA. We don't want to approach this as a complex problem, if we do it may take too long.

Also, we mentioned Dr. Knoll here, may she rest in peace. She passed away, so thank you to her efforts in the past as well.

Pres. Lail responds: I tend to agree with your assessment as well.

Eric Perlman responds: Just a reminder that COLA and equity increases have rather different purposes, and so he agrees with the comments that have been made. We should not be all that conservative with our goals for the COLA increase. Because the cost of living has gone up quite significantly.

(01:21:55) Rick responds: Thank you guys for raising this and to put a human face to the junior faculty side of the impact that these kind of effects can have. He was hired in March 2020, I was told by the hiring Dean, and the VP of HR that our CAP for relocation is \$5,000 and I moved out from California, which was probably cost eight \$8K-9K and this was \$4K out of pocket. Then when I asked that it be fronted by FIT before moving here, I was told I would have to be reimbursed. That was a good chunk of a down payment that I was looking to make on a first home in about March-May 2020 which has now risen to about 30%. Housing prices have moved up from about \$250K to \$450K now and we are basically boxed out as junior faculty. And these things that you are talking about have major substantive impacts. I am grateful for that being discussed by all of you.

Also when I asked our Dean at the time for why we/I were left out of the merit raises that everyone got last year, he said that Dr. Carvalho didn't want to do it for new faculty. So we didn't even get the merit raise from last year.

If we want to follow through with our branding and commercials of the space coast university for the future, we should follow through with that. This is the message to share with the broader administration.

Pres. Lail responds: Thank you for that and I understand this is a real need.

Right now, an interim goal would be to formulate this up in a way that could be move forward for consideration at the next meeting a proposal.

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: What I would ask for is anybody whose present with data and with real information to send that. We should add that we also lost matching of the 403b for one year to why we need COLA with a compound interest.

Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie responds: He wanted to clarify based on his understanding. That we would separate and not tie together COLA and equity/merit raises. Two separate plans submitted at the same time and in the same letter. Since we don't want just a short fix. We also don't want to make the model so complicated.

Senator Nakin Suksawang responds: We can certainly do this.

Pres. Lail responds: I don't think we know if there is a different model being considered by the administration currently. Equity has been in the discussion and last time we heard there didn't seem to be a specific model identified. I think that a recommendation that doesn't include details of the model in a timely fashion is more important.

Senator Aaron Welters responds: On the data you might include suggestions that make a more compelling argument for the COLA. For instance, the difference between social security cost of living increases and what is happening at the Federal vs. the

state level in Florida. Are there any of our peer universities, especially in Florida, that have already given COLA based on inflation?

Nakin and his team have done a great job.

Pres. Lail responds: Thank you indeed!

Adjournment

(01:36:26) The meeting was adjourned at 5:06pm.

Respectively submitted,

Aaron Welters, Faculty Senate Secretary