Faculty Senate Meeting

When: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 – 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), Ersoy Subasi (Aeronautics), Jordan Poole (Aeronautics), Charles Bryant (Business), Steven Rivet (COB), Abram Walton (COB), Angel Otero (Business Online), Don Platt (APSS), Razvan Rusovici (APSS), Manasvi Lingam (APSS), Csaba Palotai (APSS), Kenia Nunes (BCES), Mehmet Kaya (BCES), Vipuil Kishore (BCES), Nasri Nesnas (BCES), Nasheen Nur (CES), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Joo Young Park (MTH), Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MTH), Pallav Ray (OEMS), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Kevin Burke (SAC), Angela Tenga (SAC), David Wilder (BA), Patrick Converse (PSY), Jessica Wildman (PSY), Julie Costopoulos (PSY), William Bowman (LIB)

Senators Absent: Gary Zarillo (OEMS), Luis Otero (CES), Brian Lail (CES), Gordon Patterson (SAC), Hamidreza Najafi (MCE)

Proxies: None

Other Attendees: Marco Carvalho, Darby Proctor, Nancy Garmer, Tristan Fiedler, Rudolf Wehmschulte, Penny Vassar, Raymond Bonhomme, Catherine Talbot, Mary Bonhomme, Kastro Hamed, Nick Daher

Call to Order

Pres. Turgut called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. The minutes from the Jan. 11 meeting were approved and recordings of the meeting were acknowledged.

<u>Update</u> on faculty and academic related issues as we began the Spring-2023 by <u>EVP</u>, Provost, & COO Dr. Marco Carvalho

Dr. Carvalho begins by saying that he would like to give a bit of an update and some insights on what is going on at the beginning of this term. As you'll recall, some of the main concerns we've had on the academic side are dealing with variations in trends on our enrollment and our retentions. All our indicators for enrollment continue to be positive including this spring and this spring enrollment is better than the last spring. Our projections for the fall are trending in a good direction. Overall, I think that the university continues to do a good job in trying to attract students. We have identified four important issues that we have been addressing. Three of those affect enrollment to a great extent and those are primarily associated with first year retention. Our graduation rates have gone up to 67% (and staying there) from 60% three years ago which is a good improvement. But these numbers are likely to be impacted. We have noticed a decline in our first year retention last fall and chances are you'll see it happen again this fall. We have been looking very carefully at those numbers. A lot of it goes back to the level of

preparation that our new students coming to the university are being affected by the COVID effects. These have been presented and posted, as well as being described in the media. It is not affecting just our university and, in particular, it is affecting our retention numbers. As a reference, we were at about 80% and now at 75%, we used to have a buffer in the sense that if you were doing at 80% first year retention then by the end of 6 years your graduating 67% so that you lose 12-13% of students along the way. If you now drop 80% to 75%, if you have the same success rate you are going to drop your graduation rate. This is going to affect your rankings. The issues that we're observing now have implications. What are the steps we're taking to address this? I've been working with the specific programs that affect retention primarily and a lot of this not surprisingly will be related to math and calculus classes. And we have been trying put some of the resources to higher instructors directly related to students that are struggling to try to support the current students. We're also revisiting some of our advising models to try to provide more personalized support to the students. The students coming to our university require a whole lot more support both in terms of their academic preparation, but also their emotional and psychological readiness. So we are modifying the way we're providing support to allow students to be assigned to an advisor from day one which will be with the student all the way through graduation. This modification was discussed with the Deans and Administration, and we have agreed that this is something we need to do, not only to address some of these issues we are seeing now, but also in anticipation, that these issues will compound with the change in demographics that we're anticipating for 2025-2026. We know that there is a changing demographics coming that will reduce enrollment. There are two issues that will compound themselves in three years from now. We are trying to put the resources ahead now try to prepare the university to be ready at that point.

Another problem that we're trying to improve is our yield. Even though our enrollment is increasing, we still have a relatively low yield. If you compare the university to our peers, we have an average about 8%, which is fairly low. We can improve that in a number of ways. A lot of the perspective that the university has for the incoming students affects you. The fact that you're the first, second, or third choice is directly related to yield. But there are very practical things we can do, and how quickly we enable the students to register, how quickly we recognize and transfer their credits, that also affects yield, because once the student is accepted and is here, if our onboarding process takes longer, that creates greater opportunity for the students to give up and go elsewhere. So we're also trying to provide some improvements on that front. We continue with the marketing improvements that will be coming up with the new campaign, to try to improve the branding and try to retain the students a little more.

Another aspect that I've been in discussion with the interim President and a few others, has been in the issues with salary and equity. Those are different metrics and those are different issues. There we have a concern about how the overall faculty is compensated which is something fundamentally relevant to rankings and the success of the operations of the university. This is the core engine of the university. So some of those changes we've been mitigating with some of the recent raises and we have another merit raise in the process now. But we do recognize that there is a need for an equity adjustment. This has been discussed with the President and the CFO. We're starting that process, even though a lot of these functions are in anticipation with the

arrival of the new administration, those we are not waiting for. We are starting those now and we hope to have some proposals coming up for this budget cycle this term. The budgets will be approved by the board by the end of the next meeting which will be in June, which means before that we hope that these plans will be able to be implemented and boarded into the budget. Now bear in mind that those corrections that happen will not be instantaneously. It's a plan and it will be a multi-step plan. I don't have the plan, this is something that Interim CFO is working on which he is giving his input and support. I will obviously be including the senate and others to participate in this process as it gets going, but the actual implementation is likely to be a few years to make this adjustment. There are two levels of the adjustment. One is the baseline, to make it overall more competitive and which varies between different areas. The other are the disparities within the different positions that can happen due to variations in terms of hiring, which we find and we try to correct and adjust them. So these efforts are on the way and I believe that we may be able to have updates for you before the end of the fiscal year by June. That is the approval time. This means that the decision has to be done a little before and I hope that we'll have updates for you.

We continue with the hiring process for faculty. Our faculty population, we are trying to recover as there has been a lot of turnover. Several positions are still ongoing with a target we had of close to 20 more positions across the board and some of them are coming to me for approval, are approved, and they're being set now as part of the new Budget Review. As we close this process, when we recoup the positions of faculty, we hope to be able to enter the planning mode which will come with the new administration as well. We recoup are baseline, we adjust the salaries, and then you can put together a more strategic growth plan such as which areas you are going to expand in, how you're going to expand, etc. We are not there yet. We're still playing catch up and trying to build the population back up, build the areas back up, and put the salaries adjusted. We are making progress, but not as fast as we would like it to be.

We are not going into the details about the Presidential search, but as you know we're now in the process of talking with the candidates and many of these decisions and many of these plans, we'll be presented, discussed, and included with the finding of that person that is selected. By the time that happens, which means that by the beginning of the execution of their term, which will be July 1st. They will already be briefed and they will already be included in a lot of those discussions which will also include the process for the replacement or position for the provost. The new provost assuming in July 1st, I don't have a plan for yet because this is something that will be included as part of those discussions when the new President is selected, and we anticipate this will happen with enough time before July that we allow for this conversations.

We are going through our promotion cycle, so the university committees are in their final phase, I hope to receive their recommendation within the next 2 weeks, and we should be able to close and complete this process by the timeline this year. We have modified the merit cycles, so that all the merit cycles of the university are now aligned. This means the merits now always become effective in the beginning of the next fiscal year, which is either July 1st or August, depending if your 12 or 9 months. This was a necessary change because this process aligns with the budget cycle.

Now speaking about our financial health, we continue with another budget surplus this year hopefully we will surpass the projected surplus, and I think that speaks to the efforts and the success we've been making. If you look at the actually projections provided by the CFO for the future budgets, they show red ink in the next few years. But that reason why is that our systems of record maintain a number of open positions which are not actually open which distort the budget projecting greater expense than you actually have. We are aware of that and during this month we will be working with the administration to close and eliminate these disparities in our systems which will align our budget to hopefully maintain the same level of surplus that we have. It is very important reason that we need to maintain some level of surplus even though we're a nonprofit. There are implications of financial ratings that are affected by that. We have our ratings at the lowest level now and we are working to try to elevate that for sustained financial health and you have to sustain that. The new administration will also be tasked with both a strategic and a master facilities plan that will include projections for the facilities which include the dormitories, academic buildings, laboratories, and other things being developed as one of the priority tasks. (Provost Carvalho ends is update).

Julie Costopoulos asks a question of the Provost but begins thanking Dr. Carvalho and Dr. Subasi for their help in the move for the psychology department. When do you think we can expect a master plan that would reunite psychology from being all over campus to maybe once place and home for students?

Dr. Carvalho responds, there is an urgency for that plan with at least three big goals. One of them is the academic functions which includes both psychology as a very important one, because we recognize that the school and the college itself is being fragmented and put in many different locations and we appreciate the sacrifice you're going through. But this is one of the priorities. We also recognize the need to bring the College of Business to the main campus which will be part of that plan as well and the third big component is housing which is in a very bad situation. I do anticipate that we are going to enter this term and there will be a year of preparation for execution of the plan. The consensus now is that the plan will be executed by consultants. Externally they will bring a company that actually knows how to execute and build those functions. All the conversations I've had so far recognized that there is not much expertise among us to put together a comprehensive plan for the institution, but we will be assisting. My anticipation is that you will start seeing the execution of those initiatives, the academic buildings, housing, and the school transfers, probably within a year from the arrival of the new President, which means you should be looking into 2024 for that. If this involves a new building being constructed say for psychology, then you're talking 2-2.5 years. But it doesn't necessarily mean it will be that way. But this is the timeline that has been discussed.

Dr. Turgut relays the following from Senator Vipuil Kishore to Provost Carvalho. Can we get more information about the requirements for the graduate students to register for thesis dissertation credits in the summer semester? There is some concern among the faculty who don't have funds to support their PhD students and so the student is unable

to continue working on projects in the labs or using the libraries, generally not being able to use resources in the summer term unless they are considered as full-time students.

Provost Carvalho responds. The idea is that if the student is not registered for the summer then during that time they are not considered a student although still part of the program. In that time there are liability issues associated with that which have limited our willingness to allow access to laboratories and other things for the person that is not under a given contract with the university. This has been the practice because of those concerns. I think it is time that we look into this and we revisit what options we have to be able to create some type of alignment with the students that maintains them associated with the university. I would be extremely supportive of that. To have real solutions we would need to look at the legal liabilities and the responsibilities, to see if we can consider them as students. There are issues that require legal review and requires a deep analysis of the implications, but I hear the concern and I think that what should be appropriate is for us together with the Faculty Senate to indicate two or three people that will have an interest in exploring this issue. I can get a couple of people from the administration and then we see with the legal counsel. I think the way to look at this issue because of the implications is that something may not be done quickly for the master students. But perhaps it will be more appropriate for us to take a look at the immediate solutions for the current PhD students to see if there is something the university can do, although not committing to this now.

Senator Kishore from academic policy committee responds. He wonders why this rule is in place and in many institutions the way they addressed this issue was: if the student comes back as a fulltime student in the fall semester then they are considered as a continuing fulltime student even if they don't register for the summer semester. I've had PhD students take the whole semester off because they are not able to register and I didn't have a grant to support them. Hence, it hurts not only the student, but also the faculty in terms of not having progress since summer is a semester where you could expect higher productivity. That's why I wanted to see if there is anything we could do by considering them as a continued student, provided they register for fulltime in the fall semester.

Provost Carvalho responds. Yes and I believe that will be possible if we look at the implications of that. For example, we have to make sure the students actually show up in the next semester, and are on campus during the summer doing some activities. I would suggest that we get together, and we try to identify a short term solution that avoids us significantly changing policy until we have the time to get together with the right parties, to understand how we can change those policies correctly.

Dr. Turgut responds. Maybe as a starting point in the interim, certain binding commitments for the summer can be done like if the student puts in a deposit, makes a statement of objectives and plan for studies over the summer, in order to cover the liability issues.

Provost Carvalho responds. I think your right. But there could be less intrusive ways to achieve the same goal by saying, if you're going to make that commitment then there is a way the university can wave or support or something the tuition so that we can maintain the operation without necessarily creating the burden that the student have to pay for this and not have the resources. We may be able to find a mechanism by which, within the current policies, we can allow the students to stay and be considered students during the summer. This is not a permanent solutions, but a temporary one.

We are looking here for a way that they can do the work, be on campus, and participate without having to register – this is what we would like to achieve. But right now, you cannot do that. You absolutely can get a waiver for the summer registration, but you cannot be on campus doing anything, which is not the solution. A more expedient temporary solution is for us to find a way to allow them to register at either no cost or at a cost that is not allocated to them.

Dr. Turgut asks Provost Carvalho to say a few clarifying words about the mentorship for the undergraduate advising shifting from being carried out by the faculty doing the academic advising entirely or partially.

Provost Carvalho responds. Yes it is meant to be a support to the faculty. It's not meant to eliminate the faculty out of the loop. What we really want to be able to do is have the first year advising that receives the student, brings the student into campus and then they hand the student over to the faculty advisor towards the end of the first year. There are a couple issues. One of the problems is that students are needing more dedicated support because the way they were prepared, that this is the COVID generation going forward. The other issue is that this group they try to register their students as a population and try to help them all. We are proposing something different. If someone that knows the curriculum and knows what the student is supposed to be doing when the students register at the beginning of the term, then they are assigned to mentor one of these staff advisors. This person (mentor) will basically help the students register and monitor this student, to look at their grades, to proactively reach out to the student if they need help and follows them through to the end. They will help with this every time there is a need for academic advice and beyond that they will still reach out to the faculty. Just to say that no student gets left behind. They have a group they are responsible for and they take care of them, they get to know them. They will be able to go to the faculty member and say, e.g., there is a student that is having problems, and to help mentor them. They will be able to do registration and flip flags, they will provide all the standard advising that today faculty do as long as they are following the directions that is provided by the colleges via guidelines and criteria. This way the advisors will be able to alleviate the work of the faculty on the 80% of student they are advising so that the 20% that need the extra help can get focused on. Dr. Turgut followed up with the question that if the mentors flip advising flags similar to students' academic advisors, would that not cause problems or confusion? Dr. Carvalho responded by saying if there are issues at the beginning it can be fine tuned and corrected during the first year by the feedback of the faculty.

Dr. Turgut thanked Provost Carvalho for his time and participation to the faculty senate meeting and Provost Carvalho left the meeting.

Old Business

Committee Reports:

- Excellence Awards Committee: Senator Julie Costopoulos says she would like to remind everyone to encourage your faculty to nominate themselves. The applications are due Friday by 5pm and we're already get some applications and that is very exciting.
- 2. Academic Policies Committee: Senator Vipuil Kishore said he has nothing else to add except that which will be discussed under new business.
- Scholarship Committee: Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie said he is compiling the list for Senate Scholarship and in a week or two he will have a short list.
- 4. Welfare Committee: Senator Nakin Suksawang said he had nothing to report.
- 5. Administrative Policies Committee: Senator Mehmet Kaya said that he has some members now for the committee with some of them new, but he'll give updates maybe by next meeting.
- 6. Technology, Resources, and Infrastructure (TRI) Committee: Nothing was discussed as this committee needs to elect a chair.

President's Report:

President Tolga Turgut begins by saying the Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting took place at the end of January, and Provost Carvalho just gave some details. I attended the academic affairs meeting and the full board meeting during those two days. In that meeting he thanked the Board of Trustees for approving the Clement center being free for the faculty and staff. He thanked the Board of Trustees on everyone's behalf and also thanked Provost Carvalho and Interim President King for their support. During that meeting he found out that the current academic committee chair of the Board of Trustees, which is Dr. Svafa Gronfeldt, is unfortunately stepping down from the board after serving for several years, she has been very supportive in bringing the faculty perspective in various matters especially with the transition after the former President left, and during the acting Presidency stage, and also formation of the President's Search Committee and the work of the President Search Committee. She was the only one with the academic background and terminal degree at the Board of Trustees. He has made the remark to the Board of Trustees that this will be a loss and it was a valuable perspective she was providing. And that it would be good to see more academic backgrounded trustees in our board like other universities. We have around 30 trustees and only one had an academic background. His remarks went into the

minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting. He also mentioned that he reminded the Board of Trustees about the fact that we are still waiting on an official response on the COLA resolution that we passed in April of last year. The board is very busy with the new president search, to get the right person at the right time in the right position, and then work on the master plan for the campus, and then review the strategic plan, because the previous strategic plan was supposed to be made for five years, but was only used for two years. There is a lot of work for the new incoming permanent president.

A quick update on the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee. He was informed by the committee that they recently held their elections and a new chair, Dr. Rob Van Woesik was elected.

The other update is on the President Search. Five presidential candidates began visiting campus now. You can follow the entire process outlined under the office of the president webpage. There were 112 applications and now we are down to five candidates which are listed there. They are all well-qualified per the presidential profile. The finalists are touring the campus, beginning as of yesterday. First they meet with the Search Advisory Committee which includes several faculty. They also meet with the Board of Trustees and then an open forum for the campus community from 6:30-8pm in the Hartley room and via zoom. Then they will send out a link for a survey for your input to this event. The complied survey data will go back to the Search Committee including himself. This website (office of the president) is a good source to keep updated about the developments on the President Search.

The entire process began last April, with the selection of the search firm that was followed by the interim President Search, and now we are at the stage of the finalists. In those meetings I always try to reflect the perspective of all the faculty, and I try to reflect it openly and as strongly as possible to the Board of Trustees.

Reminder about to the department and colleges about Senator elections:

President Turgut, as the next item on the agenda, reminds the department and colleges to prepare to hold their Senator elections for those senators those three year terms are coming up soon. The names of the new Senators from the Department's colleges are strongly encouraged to be received by the Faculty Senate at the beginning weeks of March. That's the preferred and encouraged date, because that will make the record keeping more accurate, and also will provide opportunity to those new cycle of senators to volunteer and be active in the committees as chairperson or run for Senate officer elections in April. For example, technology, resource and infrastructure. It's currently without a chair and the Faculty Excellence committee is up for reelection, and the academic policies as well.

Discussion on term limit for Senators:

President Turgut, as the next item on the agenda, reminds the Senate that we've began discussing the topic on term limits for Senators for the last couple meetings. The Powerpoint presentation, of four or five slides, is on where we are, where the need is coming from, how other institutions are approaching this situation, and what is

proposed. He will share these slides with the faculty after. Nothing is going to be voted on at this point. We're just having discussions today.

What is the current situation for senators? Our current policy, as defined in our by-laws, article one, section one states: the members of the faculty voting by academic unit for their individual representatives shall elect members of the Faculty Senate for a three year term. There is no limit for number of terms. Senate officers, they are defined as the Senate President and the Secretary, and they are elected for one year terms. There is no limit for a number of terms. For standing committee chairs, they are elected for two-year terms. This is defined via a resolution passed from the Senate in 2018, and if no re-election is called, they continue to serve until a re-election is called and conducted. There is no limit for number of terms.

Why the need? Number one, Senate should promote more opportunity to be more inclusive to any full-time faculty including the newest hires who are willing to serve in the Senate. Number two, Senate should reflect more diverse voices, a good balance of experience, which is needed for institutional memory, and the need for new ideas and renewed energy. Number three, no term limits create bottlenecks for running for a Senate seat for some faculty. Number four, term limits in the Senate will also help with rotations in other committees as well, and thus a more knowledgeable, versatile faculty force.

What are other institutions doing? According to my research, many universities have term limits, and some have breaks between each term to allow and promote more rotation among the faculty. Most of them have a total number of years to serve and common range of capping. The years served in the Senate is six to nine years total. Note that some University senator terms are two years, whereas ours is three, some other institutions are three, and I also saw a few with four year terms. All universities, public or private, strive to find ways to be more inclusive, promote rotation and maintain a healthy balance of experience with new and dynamic energy.

What is proposed? Number 1: Senators, committee chairs, and Senate officers, which are President and Secretary to have a maximum of two terms to serve by elections. These two terms can be served consecutively, excluding the Senate officers. Number 2: No Senator will be permitted to serve on the Senate for more than six consecutive years, except to fulfill the position of immediate past Senate President. Number 3: No person may serve as a Senate officer consecutively. The only exception to this is for President elect who serves one year in that role, and then assumes the responsibility of the Senate Presidency with the adjournment of the last regular Senate meeting scheduled for the first week of April. Number 4: Senators, elected as officers to the Senate, are exempt from two consecutive term limits until they no longer hold an officer position at that point the Senators may serve out anytime remaining on their current terms, and then are subject to ineligibility. Number 5: No person may serve in the Senate more than aggregate of 9 years.

(President Turgut opens the floor for discussion)

Senator Costopoulos asks: How this might affect things if you don't have enough faculty for these rotations, would it work.

President Turgut responds. He said the he did ask a couple (two) deans and they would like this rotation, they support it. And his experience shows that it can work yes. Senator Poole (who is a new faculty and a new senator at the same time) comments that she does like the concept of bringing in new fresh faces. By being a senator as a new full-time faculty she comments that it is a good opportunity for her to learn the institution from the perspective of the senate and contribute. She says that she has talked to a couple of people in her department about their thoughts and concerns about term limits and all its impacts. From what she is hearing it seems like not having a cap on time is what they may be interested in, but also having because we're a smaller department we don't have quite as many people to rotate in and out, but we do seem to have plenty of people that have interest like I was totally interested when I was offered the opportunity. I actually feel like being put in this position right away, gave me a better perspective on the inner workings of the University itself, coming in as a new person I've learned in the past year an abundance of information that I don't think I would have normally found out had I been just a faculty. I want to go talk to a few more people and see everyone's perspective, but I do agree that, having some kind of set limits with our terms may be a good idea. Maybe more like I do a couple of terms, and then have a break, and then come back and maybe try and get some fresh faces.

Senator Costopoulos asks for clarification: When discussing the term limits in the School of Psychology, is it six years total and you cannot come back to the Senate or is it six years and then you must take one term off?

President Turgut responds. A maximum of nine years in your career. Two full terms is six years and if you run as Senate President or Secretary, you get an extension.

Senator Nezamoddini-Kachouie comments that in his department there is both support and concerns about this. Overall, a good number of people support the rotation, to have new people be nominated for Senate, to have fresh blood and ideas. The main concern is the cumulative knowledge, experience, and memory in the Senate could vanish at once if this goes through and approved by the Senate. Basically, the most important thing is the implementation of this should have a good balance of senior and junior senators to make sure that the cumulative knowledge and memory will be maintained.

President Turgut says that the idea is to have a good balance of experienced faculty and new faculty serve together in the senate. Thus, we become more dynamic. He also points out that he will share the power point that he just discussed with the senators and the faculty so that everyone can discuss it in their departments/colleges further until the next Senate meeting in March. The plan in March meeting is to vote on this issue which has been under discussion since December 2022.

New Business

President Turgut brings up the following piece of new business.

Discussion of the requirement for graduate students to register for thesis/dissertation credits in the summer semesters with the concern students unable to continue working on projects in labs during summer sessions due to not having funds to support them

He mentions that we have already partially discussed it with Provost Carvalho in the beginning of this meeting as brought up by Senator Kishore. And he turns the floor over to Senator Kishore.

Senator Kishore he says he already brought his point up and shared his thoughts earlier in the meeting, but asks if anyone has any further thoughts to add on that topic which I think many of us can relate to in terms of losing or not losing, but having grad students, take the summer off, due to not being able to register for credits and the mandate that is there in the policy that you have to continue to register in the summer for you to be able to use the University's resources. The efforts from the Academic Policies committee is to see if we can make some changes. But hearing Dr. Carvalho, it seems that there is at least an initial direction that can be made in a very short term basis, starting from this summer hopefully, and then later, we could look at how it would go about actually changing the policy itself. Anyone who has any additional points to add to this we would welcome that.

President Turgut responds that he also wanted to support Senator Kishore's idea of bringing this forward and go with the short-term fix as early as possible, and at least start with the PhD students and then we can tackle the rest later, because I suspect there's going to be a lot of legal and liability issues here, especially with the international students.

(There was no more input from the rest of the Senate on this.)

Tolga Turgut asks for a motion to adjourn.

Senator Julie Costopoulos responds. Motion to adjourn.

Senator Vipuil Kishore responds. I second the motion.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Respectively submitted,

Aaron Welters, Faculty Senate Secretary