Faculty Senate Meeting
Tuesday, January 2, 2025, 3:30PM

Senators Present: Felix Delmonte (MCE), David Wilder (SOBA), Shawn Scott (COA), Matt Taylor (COA), Adam Aboueid (COA), Tim Muth (COB), Charles Bryant (COB), Angel Otero (COB), Ratan Jha (APSS), Csaba Palotai (APSS), Melissa Borgen (BES), Mehmet Kaya (BES), Chris Bashur (CCE), Alan Brown (CCE), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Tom Marcinkowski (MSE), William Arrasmith (MSE), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Adam Prinkey (MSE), Gary Zarillo (OEMS), Robert Weaver (OEMS), Robert Joel Deacon (SAC), Anna Muenchrath (SAC), William Bowman (Library), Jessica Wildman (SOP), Marshall Jones (SOP), Wanfa Zhang (SAC)

Proxies: None

Senators Absent: Marcus Hohlmann (APSS), Madhur Tiwari (APSS), Siddhartha Bhattacharyya (EECS), Georgio Anagnostopoulos (EECS), Thomas Eskridge (EECS), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Yanek Mieczkowski (SAC), Amanda Thayer (SOP)

Other attendees: John Nicklow (President), John Z. Kiss (Provost), Nasri Nesnas (CCE), Kaylee Erdos (Library), Lisa Steelman (SOP), Jason Martin (Library), Penny Vassar (COB), Gary Burns (SOP), Rudi Wehmschulte (CCE), Hamid Najafi (MCE), Toufiq Reza (CCE)

Call to Order

Open Forum/Q&A with University Leadership
President Nicklow
- The Disclosure of Interest Form which came from the Ad Hoc Committee on Policy and Compliance is complete and will be implemented at the start of the next academic year. They are now at work on a copyright policy and will then turn to an IP/Patent policy. President Nicklow believes in incentivizing faculty patents, but there are issues surrounding the involvement of students. This will be brought to the Faculty Senate for comment. The last item will be the Faculty Handbook, but this will be done together with the Faculty Senate in the future.
- We will be receiving emails concerning changes to the performance evaluations, turning them into merit review evaluations. Three task forces (one for faculty, one for staff, and one for administrators) worked on redesigning the performance reviews. We are moving from a calendar year review to a fiscal year review. Historically, salary increases have happened on July 1, which pertained to a review of the previous calendar year's performance. Now, reviews will begin in the fall and finish before the end of the calendar year, and any merit increases will occur on January 1. The salary increase will be for the prior academic year. This creates a gap between July 1, 2026 and the end of December when no raises are issued. To remedy this, a lump sum payment will be provided to faculty. This lump sum will be the percentage raise approved by the board multiplied by faculty's half-year salary. It will be a one-time payment (will not increase base pay). Base pay will be raised by whatever amount is decided based on the merit performance review on January 1. Responding to a question about the utility of switching the timeline, President Nicklow said the benefits of this timeline is to align the performance time with

the academic calendar, which also aligns with our fiscal calendar, which has some financial benefits.

- The courts have upheld the $100,000 fee for an H1B visa. This will be appealed, but this means that we continue to be unable to hire candidates that require sponsorship for an H1B visa.
- Question from Nasri Nesnas about how to report publications if the evaluations are no longer by calendar year. President Nicklow suggests reporting it wherever it is most useful but not counting it twice.
- Question from Sen. Muenchrath about how this change in timeline will affect contract renewals for non-tenure track faculty. President Nicklow says that these are faculty evaluations and contract renewals are two separate processes and that contract renewals will not be affected and go out at the end of the spring semester as usual.
- Question from Sen. Arrasmith about whether we are going to be evaluated in the spring term. The answer is that, no, faculty will not be evaluated in the spring.
- Sen. Weaver brought up some questions from faculty in his department. One question was about whether there is a plan to implement two workstations for faculty (one for teaching and one for research). President Nicklow says he has not heard of this plan. The other question is concerning the three-day TA training. Students used to get compensated for this, but they are no longer receiving compensation. President Nicklow says he will look into this, because students should be compensated for that.
- Sen. Bashur asked if the H1B visa fee is for new visas or transfers. President Nicklow says that his understanding is that this applies only to new H1B visa applicants who have not held a visa in the US in the past.

Provost Kiss
- Updates on the Dean Searches
  - There were four finalists on campus for the COES Dean search. Provost Kiss is hoping to have an announcement about this in the next ten days.
  - There are four finalists for the COPLA Dean search, who are coming to campus in the final week of January. Provost Kiss encourages faculty to attend and provide feedback.

David McMahan, presenting on the People of Excellence Subcommittee

- The strategic plan has four pillars, one of which is the people of excellence pillar. There are two tactics and four sub-tactics, which will be addressed in this presentation (see the slides appended to these minutes for more information).
- The first KPI (key performance indicator) deals with increased retention rates of students. It looks like progress is being made. The second KPI deals with increased retention of faculty and staff. There were no prior metrics to inform the committee of past retention rates so it is hard to tell if this is being met.
- The first tactic is to develop a comprehensive, digital directory to maximize access and information sharing for students and employees. The goal is for users to find information they need quickly. If you find an area of the website that doesn't return the information you expect, this should be brought to the attention of the People of Excellence Subcommittee.

- Tactic 1.2 is to increase student and employee support and engagement, which is being done through the Engage platform, which communicates the events and activities that are available. The Committee is now moving to monitoring engagement with on-campus events through attendance QR codes.
- Tactic 1.3 is to redesign budgets per college to include annual, external professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff. It turns out there is enough budget to support this, but it is not always clear how these funds are being distributed. A model is being explored where there is a chain of funding for professional development that begins with chairs and deans and then continues on to the provost's office until the opportunity is funded.
  - Sen. Marcinkowski suggested a book on *Models of Professional Development* on different ways of thinking about professional development, some of which require less money and more time. The question is whether the committee has discussed alternative models of support for professional development.
- Tactic 1.4 was to implement an employee code of conduct and 360-degree performance review. The code of conduct was implemented earlier this year. The performance reviews have been implemented at the administrator level and are being expanded to other groups.
- Tactic 1.5 was the climate survey, which was administered. There was concern that people could be identified based on their responses about their identity. Tracking identity is important, because the goal of the climate survey is to figure out which groups do not feel belonging on campus.
- Tactic 2.1 was conducting a transparent salary compensation analysis for faculty and staff. This was already shared with faculty. It has been harder to conduct a similar analysis for staff.
- Tactic 2.2 on deploying an early alert system for students to assess early struggles has been achieved. The academic advisors have helped with this.

<u>Approval of Minutes</u>
The December 2, 2026, minutes were approved.

<u>Reports</u>
President - Sen. Wildman
- The copyright policy will be circulated with the Senate
- Question from Nasri Nesnas about the status of the evaluation changes. Since these changes impact faculty, it seems like faculty should have been part of a discussion. Sen. Wildman said that she was part of the committee as a representative from COPLA, but that she does not know where the change originated. Nasri Nesnas voiced concern about the lack of transparency during the time the committee was working on this change. Sen. Jones says that this is indicative of a larger problem, which is that the Senate has not set down exactly what needs to be brought to the Senate. It is unclear what the rules are surrounding our shared governance. Although it could be said that the Senate moves slowly, we could build a structure where if we get notice, we seize on the opportunity to engage in shared governance. There are concerns and issues surrounding transparency and processes to engage the faculty. Sen. Muth says that President Nicklow has been talking for a long time about moving to merit raises, so that shouldn't be a surprise. Sen. Weaver responds that the issue isn't the fact of merit pay, but rather the complication of

changing the timeline. Sen. Arrasmith said he would like to see the compelling reasons for changing the timeline that President Nicklow mentioned and said that this change seemed to come as a surprise to the Senate after it was already being implemented and despite the fact that it greatly impacts faculty. Sen. Weaver said that he was surprised to hear that faculty are not being evaluated in the spring, as he was preparing his department's evaluations. Sen. Wildman said that despite being on the committee she was not aware of that either and thought that this was coming to the Senate for feedback before implementation. Sen. Muenchrath said that under shared governance as defined by the AAUP (American Association of University Professors), Florida Tech should have written guidelines for how shared policy works. Since those policies don't exist, shared governance relies on the discretion of the administration to consult faculty and take its feedback into account. It is the faculty senate's job to create the guidelines for shared governance so that we aren't continuously surprised by new policies put into effect by the administration. Sen. Kaya asked about the content of the evaluation process (as opposed to just the timeline), and how this information is going to be communicated to the Senate. Sen. Wildman says that she will bring these concerns back to the committee but was under the impression that changes are still ongoing and that these can still be brought to the Senate. Sen. Marcinkowski responded to the idea of shared governance. There have been many instances where small, hand-picked committees of faculty are used in lieu of the consultation of the faculty senate as a body, or where faculty consultation has been bypassed altogether. The question of how we operationalize shared governance is really fundamental to how we operate as a Senate. At some point, it would behoove us to create a working group or task force to look at AAUP guidelines, to look at comparable institutions, and to try to figure out what shared governance should mean for us. If it can be used when it's convenient and ignored when it's not, then that's not shared governance and it's not serving the interests of faculty. Sen. Muenchrath mentioned that the current guidelines for creating academic policies do not mention the faculty senate and upon questioning, the Provost's office indicated that the faculty was consulted at their discretion. Sen. Arrasmith asks if this is something we can be proactive on, and whether the Senate's policy committee can work on written guidelines about how shared governance should work. Sen. Arrasmith made the motion to have the administrative policies committee take up a policy on shared governance. Sen. Weaver seconded the motion. Sen. Jones asked what a timeline would look like. The motion was amended to include that the goal for a policy would be the end of the 2026 Spring term. Sen. Kaya asked for faculty interested in participating in this discussion to contact him. Nasri Nesnas asked whether there will still be an opportunity to discuss the timelines for evaluations. Sen. Wildman says that there will be and that she will communicate the feedback. The motion passed.

Secretary - Sen. Muenchrath: nothing to report
Academic Policies - Sen. Jones: nothing to report
Administrative Policies - Sen. Kaya: nothing to report
Faculty Excellence - Sen. Wilder
- The deadline for nominations is Friday, February 6th, 2026.
Scholarships - Sen. Brown
- The committee has requested a list of eligible students from the registrar's office.
TRI - Sen. Bowman

- The committee met with CIO Scott Ferguson in December. There had been a report that AirPlay/AirDrop had been disabled. People can now request that it be turned back on on a case-by-case basis. There should be a communication about this forthcoming.
- IT is looking to implement a new VPN solution.
- IT is still looking for a solution to ensuring that faculty have the software they need in place in their classrooms before the start of the semester.
- There were several individual problems that were addressed. Scott Ferguson emphasized that if you put in a ticket and are not satisfied with the response, you can contact him directly. The TRI Committee is also available to help.

Welfare - Sen. Arrasmith
- The committee had been looking into an issue with wealth management, but it turned out not to be a problem.
- The committee is currently concerned with sabbatical leave. Sen. Arrasmith will meet with the Provost soon and will bring the results back to the Senate.

Old Business
- Voted on Motion to revise bylaws regarding April elections (Amendment to Article II, Section 2: Officers, see Appendix)
  - The motion passed.

New Business
- Sen. Brown made a motion to nominate Sen. Hohlmann as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Research. There were no other nominations. There was some question about how to vote for the chair of an ad hoc committee, which was resolved.
  - The motion passed.

Open Forum/Discussion
- Sen. Bashur asked a question of the TRI Committee: what is the status of the workstations in the classrooms at the moment? Sen. Arrasmith said that there is no new solution in place so presumably whatever IT had been doing, they did again. IT's plan for the future is to get information about what classes need what software and what classes are in what classrooms.
- Nasri Nesnas asked about the AirDrop/AirPlay function. Sen. Bowman answered that it was disabled with regard to workstations and smartboards, and that this did not affect personal devices.
- Sen. Muenchrath indicated that a faculty-wide email has just gone out announcing the changes in the evaluation process, which seems to indicate that the time for the Senate to be involved in this process has passed. Sen. Wildman says that she'll still pass along our feedback to the committee.
- Sen. Weaver returned to the faculty member who was told that research software can't be loaded onto teaching stations, whereas President Nicklow did not know about this policy, which reinforces that it is hard for us to know how to intervene in these issues to help faculty. Sen. Bowman said that he can bring this question up with IT at his next meeting.

Announcements/Reminders

1. The following standing committee chairs are up for election (or re-election) in **March 2026.** Please make nominations now through February:
   a. Administrative Policies (Fall 26-28)
   b. Scholarship Committee (Fall 26-28)
2. The following Senate Officers will be up for election in **April 2026.** Please make nominations now through March:
   a. President-Elect (FY26-27, President AY27-28)
   b. Secretary (AY26-27)
3. The Faculty Senate handbook with all AY24-25 changes made is available on the Senate website. If there are any corrections or revisions needed, please bring those to our Administrative Policies Committee Chair, Dr. Mehmet Kaya, at mkaya@fit.edu.

Adjournment

Appendix
Proposed Amendment to Article II, Section 2: Officers

The officers of the senate shall be elected at the regular meeting held in April of each year. In the case that the elections are not completed at the regular meeting held in April for any cause, the presiding officer shall call a special meeting prior to the end of April in order to complete elections. This special meeting will act as an extension of the original April meeting, and as such, will be presided over by the retiring president. The retiring officers shall serve at the regular April meeting and any special meeting(s) needed to complete elections. The incoming officers shall assume their respective offices on adjournment of the April meeting(s). The retiring president shall give the Faculty Senate report at the annual meeting of the academic faculty.

Elections of officers shall be by a simple majority vote. In the case of the withdrawal of an officer other than the president by resignation or other cause, the senate should elect a successor for the unexpired term at the next regular meeting. In the case of the withdrawal of the president, the president-elect shall serve the president's unexpired term as well as the normal term as their president's successor.

~~The retiring officers shall serve at the April meeting, and the retiring president shall give the Faculty Senate report at the annual meeting of the academic faculty. The incoming officers shall assume their respective offices on adjournment of the April meeting.~~

People of Excellence Pillar

Florida Tech will empower and champion our students, faculty, and staff, propelling them to attain unparalleled success at their highest potential.

Progress on Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators	Progress to Date
KPI 1 Increase retention rate and graduation rate of IPEDS cohort, New Transfer, New Master's, and New Doctoral students.	Partially Met. IPEDS retention rate increased from 75.70% to 79.75%; however, the 6-year graduation rate dropped from 65.18% (fall 2017 cohort) to 61.82% (fall 2018 cohort). New Transfer retention rate increased from 64.78% to 66.19% and the 6-year graduation rate increased from 28.47% (fall 2017 cohort) to 31.91% (fall 2018 cohort). New Masters's retention rate increased from 75.29% to 79.08% and the 4-year graduation rate increased from 78.08% (fall 2019 cohort) to 79.48% (fall 2020 cohort). New Doctoral retention rate increased from 76.84% to 84.44%; however, the 8-year graduation rate decreased from 66.94% (fall 2015 cohort) to 58.25% (fall 2016 cohort).
KPI 2 Increase the faculty and staff retention rates.	Not Met/Data Not Available Developed a measurable definition for *Employee Retention Rate* and *Employee Turnover Rate* . Submitted a ticket to Workday to create a standard report to extract Employee Retention Rate and *Employee Turnover Rate* .

Outcome 1: Remove barriers and increase access to knowledge, education, and professional development opportunities for the Florida Tech community.

Tactics for Outcome 1	Subtactics for Outcome 1	Standing/Targets
Tactic 1.1 Develop a comprehensive, digital directory to maximize access and information sharing for students and employees.	**1.1.A** -Web Content Management System (FIT.EDU Search Function)	Engage Andy McIlwraith in a dialogue about how to develop naming conventions, use feedback for individual algorhythm adjustments or other strategies
	1.1.B - Web Directory (e.g., department, role, personnel [office, phone, etc.])	Identify positions, roles, offices that need to be included in directory and develop framework. Identify responsible parties and cycle for keeping directory up-to-date. Flesh out directory. Go live via Intranet.

Tactics for Outcome 1	Subtactics for Outcome 1	Standing/Targets
Tactic 1.2 Increase student and employee support and engagement opportunities to address academic, physical, and emotional wellness.	**1.2.A** - Student Support and Engagement Opportunities	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., conduct semesterly audit of activities and engagement levels and evaluate effectiveness of interventions.
	1.2.B - Employee Support and Engagement Opportunities	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., conduct semesterly audit of activities and engagement levels and evaluate effectiveness of interventions.
Tactic 1.3 Redesign budgets per college to include annual, external professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff.	**1.3.A** - Budget Design for External Professional Development	Initial tactic addressed through funding need identification. Need to confirm funding in next budget cycle, develop guidance, forms, etc. conveying how application of funds will be evaluated and what expectations attach to the provision of funding (e.g., community poster session, lunch and learn, etc.)
Tactics for Outcome 1	Subtactics for Outcome 1	Standing/Targets
Tactic 1.4 Create an employee code of conduct followed by implementation of annual check ins and a 360-performance review with each employee to create a collaborative culture of feedback and growth.	**1.4.A** - Employee Code of Conduct	Tactical objective met.
	1.4.B - 360° - Performance Review	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., annual expansion of review groups and continued assessment of tools and feedback utilization rubrics, etc.).
Tactic 1.5 Administer bi-annual climate surveys, a student readiness assessment, and exit interviews to identify barriers for students, faculty, and staff.	**1.5.A** - Campus Climate Survey	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., cyclical administration of climate survey and address of identified growth opportunities). Also look to expansion of primary sub-tactics to evaluate exit interview potentials.

Outcome 2: Recruit and retain an excellent, diverse university community and support them to become internationally recognized scholars and leaders.

Tactics for Outcome 2	Subtactics for Outcome 2	Standing/Targets
Tactic 2.1 Conduct a transparent salary compensation analysis for faculty and staff and make necessary changes to be more competitive in hiring of employees.	**2.1.A** - Faculty Salary Compensation Analysis	Clear progress underway to achievement of analysis, but need to identify how the data can effectively be made transparent and what milestones should be recommended for leadership consideration.
	2.1.B - Staff Salary Compensation Analysis	Clear progress underway to achievement of analysis, but need to identify how the data can effectively be made transparent and what milestones should be recommended for leadership consideration.
Tactic 2.2 Deploy an early alert system for students to accurately assess early academic struggles and financially at-risk students and implement best practices to ensure sustained student success.	**2.2.A** - Deploy early alert system to identify at-risk students and apply interventions to ensure student success.	Tactical objective met.
	2.2.B - Evaluate early alert interventions for effectiveness and adjust strategy for following sesmesters.	Tactic met - shift to assessment of where academic advisors' direct connection to students has allowed for an evolution of the early-alert team from direct intervention to data identification and conveyance to front-line personnel.

Tactics for Outcome 2	Subtactics for Outcome 2	Standing/Targets
Tactic 2.3 Develop and sustain a mentorship program for students, faculty, and staff interested in additional support and growth opportunities.	**2.3.A** - Student Mentorship Program	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., annual expansion of participants, evaluation of training, and impact, etc.).
	2.3.B - Faculty Mentorship Program	Continued need to identify mentorship programs beyond tenure track guidance to lend to connection and inculcation of sense of belonging.
	2.3.C - Staff Mentorship Program	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., annual expansion of participants, evaluation of interventions, and impact, etc.).
Tactic 2.3 Develop and sustain a mentorship program for students, faculty, and staff interested in additional support and growth opportunities.	**2.3.D** - New Employee Mentorship Program	Tactical objective met. Transition to continuous improvement objective (e.g., annual expansion of participants, evaluation of interventions, and impact, etc.).
Tactic 2.4 Provide management and training courses to increase quality of teaching, student readiness, and soft skills.	**2.4.A** - Quality of Teaching	Tactical objective met.