

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

When: Tuesday, November 1, 2022 – 3:30pm
Where: Zoom @ <https://fit.zoom.us/j/95744544218>

Senators Present: Faculty Senate President Tolga Turgut (Aeronautics), Faculty Senate Secretary Aaron Welters (MTH), Jordan Poole (Aeronautics), David Wilder (BA), Steven Rivet (Business), Brian Lail (CES), Angel Otero (Business Online), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Nasri Nesnas (BCES), Ersoy Subasi (Aeronautics), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Mehmet Kaya (BCES), Pallav Ray (OEMS), Kevin Burke (SAC), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Gordan Patterson (SAC), Jessica Wildman (PSY), Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MTH), William Bowman (LIB), Don Platt (APSS), Charles Bryant (Business), Julie Costopoulos (PSY), Manasvi Lingam (APSS), Abram Walton (COB), Patrick Converse (PSY), Angela Tenga (SAC), Joo Young Park (MTH), Nasheen Nur (CES), Kenia Nunes (BCES), Razvan Rusovici (APSS)

Senators Absent: Luis Otero (CES), Hamid Najafi (MCE), Eric Perlman (as Proxy for Csaba Palotai) (APSS), Gary Zarillo (OEMS)

Proxies: James Brenner (BCES) for Vipuil Kishore (BCES)

Other Attendees: Suzanne Odom, Penny Vassar, Michael Jenkins, Roberto Peverati, Nick Daher

Call to Order

Pres. Turgut called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. The minutes from the Oct. 4 meeting were approved and recordings of the meeting were acknowledged.

Old Business

Committee Reports:

1. Academic Policies Committee: Senator Vipuil Kishore has a proxy, but Pres. Turgut conveyed his message of nothing to report.
2. Welfare Committee: Senator Nakin Suksawang said nothing to report. In regard to the old business below on *Discussion on the importance of committees & response to open calls/chair elections*, he had this to say. We are really interested in adding more members for to this committee as we don't have that many currently. They meet about once a month. The purpose of the committee is to contribute to anything that deals with faculty welfare. Recently, for instance, they were involved in suggesting moving the Spring break (to align with Brevard School districts Spring break) and initiated preliminary work for faculty equity adjustment. Being a member of the Welfare committee is not that difficult. With

the new administration we need to focus on contributing to the work needed for faculty equity adjustment.

3. Scholarship Committee: Senator Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie said nothing to report.
4. Excellence Awards Committee: Senator Julie Costopoulos said we are recruiting a member from COES on the engineering side, but that is all to report.
5. Administrative Policies Committee: Senator Razvan Rusovici said that there are a couple of members in this committee, but we need to step up especially right now with the potential transitioning taking place. One of the things we tried in the past, which we never got it to the point where we want to be with it, was the review for the administration. We conducted our first survey, and it was relatively well received by the faculty. It was performed in conjunction with a member of the administration. I do believe that we have to redo this again as we went through some changes (in regards to when the first survey was done) and a lot of events international that happened. They should get back on track. He is working to get a structure of the organization. Given the changes, we may not capture all the administrators, and as they are relatively new in the process. Nevertheless, we have a structure in place and the administrators need to be evaluated.

Pres. Turgut makes a point of clarification and a reminder from the last meeting. For the last six years Dr. Rusovici has been serving on the administrative policies committee. According to the April 2022 meeting recording, he said we need a replacement for his committee. Moreover, there was a resolution passed in the Faculty Senate in Jan. 2018 which requires us to hold elections for each committee chairmanship role. There have been nominations open that includes four committees, and we have two committee nominees running for chairmanship today.

6. Technology, Resources, and Infrastructure (TRI) Committee: Nothing was discussed as this committee needs to elect a chair.

President's Report:

President Tolga Turgut began by saying that officially the President's search has begun a couple of weeks ago. At our last meeting which the AGB search firm attended we had a very fruitful discussion. I was really happy to see one of our new faculty having the courage to ask key questions to the AGB search firm with respect to the President profile draft and other faculty as well asking questions. I think we have made a lot of input. The early indications, according to the Board of Trustees meeting, is that there is a lot of interest for the position of Florida Tech Presidency.

You can always follow the developments via the page of the "Office of the President" in our university website. There is a section on the left side (of the web site)

which is about the President's search. There is information about the timeline and all the details that they have covered so far.

In the Board of Trustees meeting there was some statistical data shared which is useful for everyone to be informed. If need be, he is thinking of inviting the Provost to a future meeting to give more information. Here are some highlights. The total enrollment at the university, at the moment, is around approximately 9500 including online students. This year's incoming class was 944 students. The undergrad campus student figure is 3190. We have 1303 graduate students on campus. International student numbers are coming down a bit due to COVID and some VISA restrictions and quarantine restrictions over the past couple of years in some countries. We currently have approximately 300 full-time faculty and the goal is to get up to 315 in the very near future. Our US News ranking is still 202.

In this meeting he had the opportunity to bring up a couple of issues. Pres. Turgut discussed and reiterated during the Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting once again the importance of faculty resources, and compensation, and its immediate impact on the US News rankings for FIT. Recall, he said in the General Faculty assembly that one of the leading weightages under the US News ranking is faculty resources, and compensation. He reiterated this in the BOT meeting especially that our average faculty compensation is hovering below the peer-ranking universities. Our peer rankings ones are those ranked around 190-220. He emphasized the importance of considering the equity adjustment for the faculty very soon because we need to bring the lower paid faculty more to the median as soon as the financial situation permits. He made the remarks that at the end of the day, faculty are the revenue generators of any higher education institute and great faculty attract great students. He further discussed the importance of small but caring gestures towards the faculty, such as making the Clemente center (the gym and the pool area) free of charge to the full-time faculty as it would send a strong message that the upper management cares about the faculty at a time when mental health is coming forefront. Healthy minds are always found in healthy bodies.

Tolga Turgut asked if there were any questions. As there were none he moved on to the next order of business.

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) COES member election

The voting tally results for election held is below:

Dr. Linxia Gu as a new AFTC member for the vacant COES seat:

Total votes: 29

Yes: **23**

No: **1**

Abstain: **5**

Discussion on the importance of committees & response to open calls/chair elections

President Tolga Turgut begins by saying we have four committee chairmanships vacant at the moment which have to have elections. We have two of them with candidate

nominees at the moment: Dr. Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie to continue as Chair of Scholarship Committee for another term and Dr. Mehmet Kaya as the next Administrative Policies Committee Chair. Before we hold elections for these, he will give the floor to the current committee chairs. But first he begins by saying that the committee chairs also sit on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee which steers the topics of the Faculty Senate Meetings (in some universities this is called the Steering Committee). It's a very important job and we have to hold elections every two years according to our resolutions passed in January 2018. It is important also with respect to the "service" in our loads and in our promotion, and it can easily be included in our load forms or as part of promotion, which also can include being on the committees as members. Some faculty may not be aware of the activities of those committees. Any full-time faculty member is capable of being a Senator, committee chair, and Faculty Senate President. Each committee has to be chaired by a sitting Senator and each committee must have one other sitting Senator, and the other members can be full time faculty that are not Senators.

He then calls on each current committee chair to describe their activities, how many members they have in general, and how much workload is required, how many hours they need to work overall within a semester or a month, etc.

Julie Costopoulos, Chair of the Faculty Excellence Committee, says you've probably heard of us by the awards given every year. We have representation from each college with two representatives from COES. The Fall semester we just do announcing and requesting of applications and being sure that we have funds for part of the award. But we get busy in February. As soon as the applications are received, we safeguard the process by making sure the description, the categories, and the scoring process is safe and fair and equitable across the colleges. Then we all independently score and then get together to discuss and understand each applicant's accomplishments within the context of that field. That's why representation is important. It is not a heavy workload and is a really uplifting process and really exciting to see everyone's success. I very much enjoy it. We're looking for one member from the engineering side of COES.

President Tolga Turgut says we have heard from Nakin Suksawang and Razvan Rusovici (during old Business in Committee reports at this meeting) and we move on.

Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie, Chair of Scholarship Committee, says we create a short list of students from different colleges for the scholarship based on performance in terms of academic excellence. Then we ask them to submit a personal statement. We review the personal statement which can include an explanation of their academic work, curriculum work, comments on their financial situation. After the review process we have a second short list. We then contact those students to see if they are eligible, since they should not receive any other funding. Based on rotation, it will be awarded to students from different colleges. It is rewarding work since you are trying to identify students who not only performed well academically, but may have hardships or where funding could help them continue with their good performance. The demanding time is in the Spring semester. It takes several days to ask for the lists, to go through

the lists, and usually the lists are incomplete. We have to go back and forward to make sure that we really get the desired information to start contacting them. It can be frustrating as students can be not responsive and have to try contacting them several times even though they potentially could be given money from the scholarship. That part is pretty disappointing. Overall though it is a rewarding process.

President Tolga Turgut next launches the polls. The voting tally results for election held is below:

Dr. Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie to continue as Chair of Scholarship Committee for another term:

Total votes: 28

Yes: **25**

No: **1**

Abstain: **2**

Dr. Mehmet Kaya as the next Administrative Policies Committee Chair?

Total votes: 26

Yes: **20**

No: **2**

Abstain: **4**

AFTC Charter Revision

President Tolga Turgut says that as you know, we discussed the AFTC Charter Revision during the last Senate meeting and everyone was asked to take it back to their faculty in their departments and colleges and get as much feedback as possible so we can have an open discussion. This is not a resolution yet and we are following our policies and procedures. What is happening is that, the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) in accordance with their charter are making a recommendation to the Senate and it's being discussed. Why do we need a revision? Well, last year we discussed this issue during the November 2021 meeting and ended up doing a minor revision in the February 2022 Faculty Senate meeting with the caveats to revisit it as needed again. That was a part of the discussions. Now the AFTC members felt that there is a big need to revise it so that it can function better to its original intentions. It has been almost four years since it was established. Now we have enough experience to make it function better for the best interest of the faculty and our institution. The goal is to promote more impartiality, more objectiveness as much as possible. As you know the Faculty Senate is a legislative body, this is the platform where we discuss, debate on changes to the faculty handbook. That makes this platform the highest legislative body for the faculty. With this charter revision, it is still intact. Faculty Senate will always be endorsing the recommendation policy changes with respect to the AFTC and this means we will still be directly involved on the policy side. However, the AFTC members agree among themselves that it should be distant from the Administration and Senate when it comes to its daily functions and crucial activities. As you all know may

confidential issues are discussed in AFTC during its activities which must be respected as confidential. During the October meeting Pres. Turgut got the recommendation from the Senate that he should reach out to the AFTC members and invite them to this meeting, and he did that, but they sent him the following statement to be shared: "The AFTC prefers not to attend the Senate meeting in Nov. 2022. The revised text of the AFTC charter is an attempt to: a) clarify any past ambiguities about the AFTC charter; b) ensure that the AFTC is an impartial committee that better serves all faculty. If the Senate disagrees with any of the wording of the revised AFTC charter then the Senate can make suggestions to the AFTC. The AFTC welcomes and will consider editorial suggestions." The AFTC is comprised of all members from all four colleges so they like to receive it as a compiled format as suggestions and then to discuss it among themselves. He then opens the floor for discussions.

Brian Lail says he has a few thoughts on this that he would like to share. First, the prohibition of Senators from being AFTC members, what is the problem being corrected by prohibiting Senators from being AFTC members? What's motivating that? And if it is a perceived conflict of interest, he would like to know why the other blatant forms of conflict of interest haven't been identified, that is, we do have other committees that are completely involved, that carry out, in fact, the process of promotion and tenure review, and then that is what process might be appealed to the AFTC and so any member of the College Level Committee, promotion and tenure committee at any college, or the University committee should be recognized as not being allowed as an AFTC member cause that would definitely be a direct conflict of interest.

Second, a concern was raised to him by another faculty member. The sentence at the end of the first paragraph says that the AFTC is a stand-alone committee that reports to the University President and Provost. As was said though, there is an effort to put it in the middle and isolate it from both sides (administration on one side and senate on the other). But the reporting channel is only to the administration so its weighted on one side. He would suggest that the AFTC as a committee and given the weight of their role, that it be accountable to the faculty, in fact, primarily if not solely to the faculty. One thing that might be considered is that some form of reporting so that the Senate and through the Senate the faculty can be more aware of the way the committee is operating. He thinks it is standard practice at a lot of places to have a semester report or the likes (while taking into account the need for confidentiality).

Also, the policy needs to have a precise listing of procedures when an appeal comes to the AFTC. What is their process? That is part of the transparency, so that all faculty are aware, if they are considering an appeal. Also a few key items like how often the committee will meet, that the committee will interview all parties in the grievance, the committee defines the steps of the vote that describes the outcome. There needs to be a skeleton framework for a process and he does not think we have a process.

Tolga Turgut says that currently we have the internal college committees for promotion and tenure. On top of that, we have the University Committee on Faculty, Promotion, and Tenure (CFPT). Then we have the University teaching track promotion committee. The AFTC comes as a final stop line to issues in this regard. Originally, the AFTC was to check compliance issues, and if there are any discrimination issues or

non-compliance issues, then that would be the role of the AFTC. By the way the charter was not entirely followed in the last three years which is one of the reasons why the AFTC members are trying to address those after the experience under their belts.

Julie Costopoulos asks the following question. The AFTC and grievance committee's makes recommendations to upper administration, but that is not the same thing as reporting to?

Tolga Turgut responds that yes in the current charter the AFTC reports to the Senate which is not possible 100% because of confidentiality issues and that is why in practice they have been reporting to the Chief Academic officer, the Provost, and so they are revising it so they report to the Provost. We can suggest that they report to the Provost and informs the Senate as Brian Lail was saying.

Julie Costopoulos responds that the wording suggest that they work for and serve the person who's already making the decisions which would be the Chief Academic Officer and the President, whereas making recommendations to or to that effect is different than reporting to mean that they are responsible to the Chief Academic Officer which could look like a conflict of interest.

Nakin Suksawang says I recall that the AFTC was indeed in charge of reviewing all these processes. But even at that time it was debatable if that was the right move. The problem is the AFTC is the last step in the grievance process and it would work on procedural. Originally there was nothing on that. This means the grievance from faculty can only be based on procedural. Another issue that was raised from a faculty member in his department is, on the last paragraph of the new revised version it says, if during their term an AFTC member is promoted to an administrative position within their unit, they will recuse themselves from any appeal involving members of their department or academic unit. Why do they have to recuse? Why can't they be replaced?

Mehmet Kaya says that the grievance could be made to the Ombudsman Committee, do we have one right now?

Razvan Rusovici responds that we do not have one right now. He has asked the Associate Provost for an Ombudsman and he did not receive a reply. He believes that a new hiree was made. Maybe you can rectify this issue as chair in your committee?

Mehmet Kaya responds that he can work with the administration on that.

Pallav Ray says that he thinks in the AFTC document it mentions that the AFTC will review policies for the exceptional expedited tenure review, however, this bring two issues. First, it seems there is no mention of this is in the COES promotion and tenure document so there is no mention of the criteria. Do we need to include the criteria there in the promotion committee also if we support this AFTC document? Second, there is no mention of the exceptional expedited tenure review for promotion from associate professor to full professor?

Tolga Turgut responds that he thinks this is all wording that can be added. This can be suggested as a revision to our AFTC committee.

Tolga Turgut says that a comment from private chat came to his attention and it says that he thinks the Provost does not make decisions on promotion or tenure related issues. These decisions are made in their corresponding committees. So when the AFTC reports to the Provost or President, they would not be reporting to the decision makers. The AFTC reviews the process for consistency and fairness. They don't evaluate the faculty, but the process implemented by the respective tenure and promotion committees.

Tolga Turgut says that a question came his way, is there a distinction between Standalone Committee and Standing Committee of the Senate? Please elaborate on the former term. He says that in writing the AFTC is not a standing committee of the Senate although it has been acting as such even though it's not in the charter. It is not a standing committee. It has been reporting under the Faculty Senate, but it's not included in its charter. Standalone means for the AFTC that on their daily activities they are free to discuss any confidential issues, when it comes to their reporting in their proposed charter, they are proposing they report to the Provost and President.

Brian Lail says another concern he didn't mention to get this in the recording if revisited by the AFTC committee if they are considering these ideas, the change of having the voting for members within each college. He recognizes the need to have the vote be from members of that respective college, but he's not sure what the intent is in terms of how that voting process will be carried out under this new policy statement. It says the faculty within each college will have the opportunity to vote for their respective AFTC members and inform the Senate of the outcome of the vote in writing. Who would oversee that? Once it goes to a college that seems like the Dean's office would oversee? And that sort of counter to the original discussion that led this to be clearly in the Senate, that is, the nature of the AFTC is that it is faculty driven, faculty sourced and separate from any part of the process that that committee would be taking appeals from. What is that process? Who is overseeing it?

Tolga Turgut responds that he doesn't think that the intention is that it would be run by the college dean, but the entire faculty within that college. It can be further clarified, and we can make it as a suggestion so that they can clarify it.

Nasri Nesnas says he wants to share some of the same concerns that Brian Lail had that Nasri and his faculty in his program are trying to understand. What is the conflict of interest that would manifest if a Senator would serve on AFTC? Is the AFTC going to make a statement or address these concerns before we moved forward?

James Brenner says one of the things that we haven't talked about yet is whether or not appeals from the AFTC would be going to a faculty senate grievance committee.

He was wondering whether it makes sense for the Senate Executive Committee to have one person on the AFTC?

New Business

Clemente center membership to be free for the full-time faculty:

Tolga Turgut says that he mentioned earlier in his President's report, which he brought up at the Board of Trustees meeting, about waiving the Clemente center membership fees for full-time faculty. He chose to bring it up as some faculty brought it as an issue to him. The current membership fee is \$185+tax. We are only around 300 full-time faculty and it is a good opportunity to promote good health and for faculty to engage with students as well. Students have that included in their tuition.

Tolga Turgut asks for a motion to adjourn.

Senator Mehmet Kaya responds. Motion to adjourn.

Julie Costopoulos responds. I second the motion.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43pm.

Respectively submitted,

Aaron Welters, Faculty Senate Secretary