

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting
January 15, 2025- MCOB- 3:00-5:00 p.m.
MINUTES

Present (In-house): Abeynanda, Gayan; Adams, Jamie; Baughn, Christina; Black, Michael; Brock, Casey; Brower, Greg; Cole, Tracy; Cutchen, William; Davidson, Clay; Davis, Sara; Donaldson, Amanda; Ellzie, Joel; Godang, Romulus; Hauff, Caitlyn; Holliday, Nicolette; Hudson, Geoffrey; Khan, Zoya; Merritt, Brandy; Migaud, Marie; Miller, Jennifer; Minton, Bonnie; Ní Chadhain, Sinéad; O'Connor, Tracy; Pavelescu, Andrei; Pfleeger, Jenna; Rabideau, Brooks; Richardson, Joe; Robertson, Justin; Salvitti Fermin, Mariarita; Shaw, Christy; Shea, Allyson; Stenson, Alexandra; Streeter, Donna; Swofford, Jim; ter Horst, Eleanor; Thomas, Rebecca; Thompson, Christina, Turnipseed, David; Vrana, Laura, Walker, Sean; Wassenaar, Christina; Webb, Bret, Wu, Kuan-Sheng

Present (Zoom): Bates, Robin, Borchert, Glen, Coronado, Yun; Ferguson, Susan; Gavrilita, Christina; Holliday, Candice; Huang, Jingshuan; Huang, Ying; Lin, Mike; Marass, Ashley; McDonald, Tyler; Meola, David; Pancione, Kirsten

Excused: Bunch, Jaclyn; Davis, Tara; Dzwonkowski, Brian; Getch, Yvette; Raczkowski, Christopher;

Unexcused: Fleck, Lorie; Henning, Paul; Kilgo, William A.; Sehgal, Mukul; Williams, Ashley;

Guests: Scyphers, Steven; Selwyn; Candice; Chambers, Michael, Kelley, Buck; Dasgupta, Santanu

I. Preliminary Business:

The meeting was called to order with President Christina Wassenaar presiding. Quorum was met.

Approval of Minutes: unanimously approved by all who were present at the time (44 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain)

Approval of Agenda: unanimously approved by all who were present at the time (44 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain)

Guest Speakers:

Sustainability:

Steven Scyphers presented the sustainability initiative at South, emphasizing its integration into research, teaching, and community involvement. Sustainability was defined in the context of the University's mission. Steven highlighted the historical efforts of the Sustainability Committee, which has been active since 2011 and recently expanded to include more student and faculty representation as well as an external advisory council to strengthen partnerships with local sustainability leaders. The initiative aims to align with student interests and community needs, with a focus on improving sustainability metrics in curriculum and research.

Steven's presentation included the ASHE sustainability assessment framework, which consists of 110 measures, with preliminary data gathered for ~95. AI tools are being utilized to analyze course descriptions and research activities, although challenges with data consistency were noted. Plans for Earth Day activities and sustainability awards were shared, along with a call for faculty collaboration and student engagement in sustainability efforts. The conversation also explored the intersection of sustainability with various academic disciplines, emphasizing the relevance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a guiding framework.

Facilities:

Chief Facilities Management Officer, Buck Kelley then addressed significant issues regarding aging elevators in the Humanities building, which are currently non-operational and will take a minimum of ten months to replace. A total of 13 buildings have been identified for priority modernization due to the age and type of elevators. The impact of elevator outages on services like cleaning and vending was also discussed. Buck pointed out that Maintenance should be called to help move heavy materials.

Updates on the College of Medicine construction projects indicated that the team is on track, with plans to recover lost time and ensure safety (e.g., air quality and asbestos removal) during the construction process. The old Medical School building will be torn down and likely initially turned into parking to stabilize the site. Of note was the timing for the final set of foundation pilings to be placed, which was scheduled to start in February.

President's Report:

The President's Report was provided in writing prior to the meeting. In addition, updates were given on how Dr. Kent lauded effective communication among caucus leaders and that she mentioned to the deans that more consistent sharing of information between administration and faculty is needed.

Furthermore Christina Wassenaar (FS President) updated us on the date for graduation being set for May 9 and no longer spread out over two days.

Ongoing discussions about the non-tenure track professor of instruction policy was mentioned, emphasizing that Susan Gordon Hickey completed another version of the associated document, including two areas that she thought needed discussion. Further details were not yet available for this plenary meeting.

That Julie Estis who was in Institutional Effectiveness will be taking over for Angela Coleman to lead entire group for Institutional Research was reiterated. Because Julie is going to follow the same process that Dr. Coleman for the strategic planning process, the faculty senate will present the strategic plan priorities draft on February 5th. The draft will consist of a list of priorities and of colleges with exemplary faculty-focused priorities.

In relation to "Faculty Huddles" the conversation highlighted the need to adjust the scheduling of faculty huddles to twice a month, with suggestions to include different days to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, the idea of identifying a potential faculty coffee lounge space on campus for this purpose was proposed, aiming to create a casual space for faculty to gather without needing to travel off-campus.

At a later stage, the FS President's yearly State of the University Report to the administration was discussed with potential assistance from Sean Walker and consultation of previous reports possibly archived by Beth Shepard.

II. Old Business:

Ombudsperson Policy Passed: Sinéad Ní Chadhain (Chair, University Policies & Handbook Committee) discussed revisions to the ombudsperson policy, which now allows for the appointment of two ombudspersons with staggered terms. The compromise for selection of ombudspersons reached with the administration involves the faculty senate identifying three names from which the President may choose one; if none on the list meet with the President's approval, the FS will provide a new list. The committee voted to approve the policy for the handbook, with no objections raised, 46 yes votes (all but one senator in attendance at that time), zero no votes, and one abstention.

III. Committee Reports:

Faculty Salary & Benefits Committee: Andrei Pavelescu (Chair) noted movement concerning pay-equity for part-time/ adjunct faculty and on efforts going into the inversion and compression analysis. Another salary survey is expected.

Sustainability & Environmental Quality Committee: David Turnipseed (Chair) reported on movement towards the creation of more lactation rooms. Discussion centered on the need for information dissemination regarding the location of these rooms on each campus. The Title IX office does have a list of currently-existing rooms.

Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee: Laura Vrana (Chair) note that on the docket are ideas related to teaching and the R1 transition; a listening session on the subject is planned. The Committee will also work on following up on the survey previously sent to caucus leaders regarding uncompensated teaching-related labor.

University Planning & Development Committee: Sean Walker (Chair) stated that the end of year party is in planning stages for April 16th. Ballots for FS Awards will be sent out.

University Policies & Handbook Committee: Report submitted in writing.

Well-Being & Retention ad hoc Committee: Donna Streeter (Co-Chair) reported on an initial Co-Chairs meeting that identified two major priorities for the Committee: Priority 1, development of a comprehensive framework to enhance faculty well-being (e.g., mental health first aid, stress management & resiliency training, and affinity groups that discuss stresses that are unique to faculty). Priority 2, faculty community building (e.g., coffee rooms or lunches).

All other committees stated that they had nothing to report at this time.

IV. Caucus Leaders Reports:

Arts & Sciences: Eleanor ter Horst (caucus leader) said that a faculty forum with the Dean is in the works for mid-February.

Allied Health: Casey Brock (caucus leader) talked about festivities for the College's 50th anniversary and mentioned that the College has hired a consultant to work on revamping its strategic plan (mission, vision, goals).

Computing: Clay Davidson (caucus leader) and Michael Black noted that their Master's in Cyber Security program already ranks 7th in the nation this year (its first year in its current form).

Education & Professional Studies: Caitlyn Hauff (caucus leader) conducted two faculty assemblies last semester and reported the results of those faculty assemblies to the Dean before winter break. As a result, the Dean is now crafting a survey to send to the faculty to solicit feedback on a number of the issues presented (e.g., wellness, work-life balance, loads, tenure and promotion, and recruitment expectations). The survey will be delivered to the faculty through the Faculty Senate/Faculty Council CEPS representatives and will hopefully steer changes for the upcoming semester and beyond.

Engineering: Bret Webb (caucus leader) reported that the College has a new Dean and caucus meetings are forthcoming.

Libraries: report submitted in writing. In addition, Tracy Cole (caucus leader) reminded the Senate that the library's transformative agreements help cover article processing charges (APCs) for open access publishing. All faculty members affiliated with South can utilize these agreements. The library is actively working to expand the list of participating journals. Faculty are urged to reach out to Tracy with any questions.

Nursing: report submitted in writing. In addition, Rebecca Thomas (caucus leader) mentioned ongoing discussions in the caucus about uncompensated teaching efforts and the recent receipt of a spreadsheet from the chairs that shows how teaching load is determined. Particularly the lack of appropriate evaluation of course preparation (e.g., hospital onboarding, Canvas site creation, clinical groups) was stressed. The potential of modeling with possible assistance by Andrei Pavelescu was touched upon.

Simulation: Robin Bates (caucus leader) reported a smooth start after kick off for the program on January 6. Over 100 nurse practitioners from all over the country have already come through during the first few weeks of the semesters. Director, Angie Davis, was part of a poster presentation at a national, international simulation conference in Orlando this January.

V. University Committees Reports:

Safety committee: Tornado drills will be an annual event. Mass casualty drill is planned for the spring semester. Fire drills and building inspections will start in February. Sustainability is on the Committee's radar (e.g., charging station for e-scooters) as are safety guidelines related to e-scooter use on campus.

VI. New Business:

The possibility for holding Faculty Senate Plenary Meetings off campus on occasion to foster greater community with off-main-campus as well as main-campus senate participants is in the planning phase, with Glen Borchert (Caucus Leader, Medicine) taking the lead.

It was suggested that the Fresh Company Food should be encouraged to advertise its promotions and discounts more broadly.

Adjourned:

Document prepared by Alexandra C. Stenson (FS secretary) with assistance from AI summary and transcript tools.