

Senate Steering Committee Minutes

October 7, 2021

3 p.m.

Tigert 226

Present: David C. Bloom, Joe Glover, Kent Fuchs, Amanda Phalin, Sarah Lynne, Taylor Rose, Nancy Paton, Laurie Bialosky, Cassandra Farley, Sean Trainor, Keith Rambo, Richard Scholtz, Juan Nino, Jason Byrd, Keith Diem, Keith Rambo, Sylvain Doré, Ashley Ghiaseddin, and Rick Stepp.

Call to Order

David C. Bloom, Chair

- The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Chair Bloom.

Approve

David C. Bloom, Chair

- [August 27, 2021 Emergency Meeting Minutes](#)

- [September 2, 2021 Meeting Minutes](#)

- Both minutes were approved.

Reports

• **Chair's Report**

David C. Bloom, Chair

- Chair Bloom reviewed background information pertaining to the proposed COVID-19 no confidence resolution.

- A Faculty Senate Town Hall to discuss academic freedom and additional protection for faculty is being planned.

- National attention has been drawn to the need to protect faculty tenure. Many higher education institutions are grappling with this issue as it comes under increasing scrutiny. In being proactive, the UF Faculty Senate will examine and approve a post tenure review process. A special task force will inventory UF's post tenure review process, which can vary across campus. Please contact Chair Bloom to volunteer or nominate a colleague who would be interested in and available to contribute to the task force.

- The [Center for Instructional Technology and Training \(CITT\)](#) is offering a new, free UF service which allows faculty to have their courses (Canvas sites, materials, syllabus, etc.) reviewed for accessibility. Improvement recommendations will be provided as detailed below:

Course Accessibility Consultations Available

Are you interested in improving your Canvas course's accessibility score? The [CITT](#) is excited to offer a new service to assist instructors in learning how to remediate course files to make them more accessible. Remediating enhances the usability of the course materials for all learners. Using the Ally tool in Canvas, instructional support assistants will provide an overview of accessibility concerns within the course, evaluate what content to remediate, and work with instructors to improve the overall course accessibility score. Throughout the consultation, the instructional support assistants will model remediation techniques for content in Canvas, Word or Google documents, PowerPoint presentations or Google Slides, spreadsheets, videos, and PDFs.

To get started, [submit an Accessibility Consultation request](#) to the Center for Instructional Technology and Training.

• **President's Report**

Kent Fuchs, President

- The university is working through implementation options pertaining to President Biden's executive order for mandatory COVID-19 vaccines for federal contract employees. UF has a significant amount of federal contracts and funding could be at risk if there is non-

compliance with the directive given to federal contractors related to COVID-19 measures. President Fuchs is speaking with state officials about what is at stake for the university in the event of non-compliance with federal orders which are contrary to state directives.

- Clarification was requested of President Fuchs regarding last month's President's Report at Faculty Senate, specifically that some faculty have leveled criticism against state officials, and there is concern that "faculty self-censorship was being suggested in the report." President Fuchs addressed the concern by relaying that: while all individuals have the opportunity to disagree individually, there is a distinction between individual expressions and acts of an official university body (such as the UF Faculty Senate); thoughtful care should be taken in identifying end goals and what actions will best help achieve them; for example, House and Senate leaders, and the Governor have been very clear about their position on mask mandates and a statement of policy disagreement is very distinctive from a statement that there is no confidence in such leaders; while maintaining an open communication channel is vital, a no confidence statement will seriously fracture this relationship, while simultaneously not effecting positive end results in establishing a campus mask mandate.

- Further faculty concern was shared with President Fuchs that: possibly a majority of faculty do not believe in the state leadership and there is worry about the perception that faculty are being asked to refrain from action; what others think of the university and the state is a genuine concern; there is worry from many faculty about placing university leadership in an untenable position if a no confidence vote succeeds and 'opposition' word choice is critical. President Fuchs reiterated that the university does not inhibit individuals from speaking freely, and that there is a distinct and separate role and voice for official institutional bodies, such as the Faculty Senate.

- The Steering Committee agreed that it would like to examine how faculty can best bring issues forward to Faculty Senate, including attention to procedures for calling special meetings and placing items on the agenda of such meetings that are conflicted in the Faculty Senate Bylaws and the University of Florida Constitution. The University Constitution & Regulations Committee (UCRC) sub-committee met this morning to examine this issue.

- It was also noted that the federal law will effect federal contracts but not grant awards.

- The Steering Committee discussed Faculty Senate's commitment to open and shared governance and encourages voting participation of all Faculty Senators, who should contact the Faculty Senate Office with any specific voting or participation inquiries.

- **Provost's Report**

Joe Glover, Provost

- There is some interest by Florida legislative leaders in addressing tenure, as seems to be a current national trend. Efforts are being made to offer tools to achieve a constructive outcome. There is now an active discussion of this topic by the SUS, Provost, Advisory Councils of Faculty Senates (ACFS), and administrative leadership.

- Concerns and perceptions related to tenure and faculty productivity may be best addressed by a post tenure review system, which needs to be strengthened throughout the SUS. This would aid the legislature conversation and would be helpful for UF. Faculty Senate is key to the ongoing process of identifying ways in which post tenure review can specifically be implemented. The SUS and ACFS Chairs have viewed some of the ongoing draft language.

- Some draft provisions discussed included remediations in the event of an unsatisfactory post tenure review. Appropriate action which could be taken could be wide ranging and could perhaps include professional advising, progressive discipline, etc.

- SUS leaders will make clear that the success of the university system rests on the tenure system.

- There was an inquiry about consideration for UF to provide resources on the HR side to celebrate the new announcement that children's vaccines are expected to be approved soon. This could include allowing parent employees to take a day off to vaccinate their child or to

care for children who may experience vaccine side effects; or to make Albert/Alberta swag available to encourage and celebrate vaccination.

- The Steering Committee further discussed central tenants of academic freedom, including what it is and how it is interpreted. A faculty discussion/education framework may begin with establishing a definition and an interpretation. Law School Dean Laura Rosenberg will review what exists for faculty in the law and which parts of the First Amendment rights apply.
- Following an inquiry about the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) search, it was relayed that UF is currently considering two possible candidates.

Update on Recent Federal and State Requirements Related to Undue Foreign Influence

Cassandra Farley, Director of Research Integrity

- There was focus in the previous legislative session on stemming undue foreign influence on the resources and intellectual property of Florida's higher education institutions and corporations. [HB 7017](#) was passed in June by the Florida legislature and became effective July 1, 2021. Another legislative clause, related to state research institution requirements for foreign travel approval, monitoring, and reporting, becomes effective January 1, 2022. Director Farley will provide an overview to Faculty Senate of the university's implementation of this legislation and how it relates to UF rules and procedures. A task force, chaired by VP of Research, David Norton, is focused on minimizing the impact on campus so that the new rules do not inhibit diversity initiatives, the hiring of international employees or students, or other essential university business functions. The presentation will inform faculty of essential program rollout details.
- There was an inquiry about the review process for international students. The Office of Research advises faculty and staff to please continue with currently used university processes in the student environment; faculty's primary concern should remain recruiting the best students. Communication regarding the roll-out will continue and efforts are being made to continue improvement in the turn-around time during this transition period.

Driving Thought Leadership to Promote You and Advance the University's Reputation

Nancy Paton, VP of Strategic Communications & Marketing

- VP Paton's Faculty Senate presentation will focus on the role which her organization plays in partnering with faculty to advance both the faculty and university on state and international levels. Ways in which the Office of Strategic Communications & Marketing can assist faculty in advancing their stories of impact across various platforms will be shared. VP Paton will share contact information, a list of key communication channels, and demonstrable examples of how her office can help with research and partnership opportunities to maximize impact.

[BOT Regulations](#)

Taylor Rose, Sr. Counsel
Office of General Counsel

- The University Constitution & Regulations Committee (UCRC) has reviewed and lit these [proposed BOT regulations](#). UCRC Chair Charlene Luke will present these regulations and the lights to Faculty Senate.
- Efforts are being made to place regulations and policies in one online location which is more intuitive, searchable, and navigable online.
- A request was made to consider clarifying on the website that when a policy overlaps a number of areas/offices of the university, notations could be made regarding which cabinet members or administrative leaders are approvers, and which are associated administrative approvers for a regulation.

[Faculty Titles Resolution \(Revised\)](#)

Sean Trainor, Chair of Compensation & Equity Committee

- A faculty titles resolution was considered as an Information Item at a Fall 2020 Faculty Senate meeting. This resolution was revised based on recently obtained survey data and continued committee meeting discussions. Dr. Trainor shared a consolidated report breaking down survey results and recommendations. The committee discussed the amendments made at the September 30th Compensation and Equity Committee meeting to increase clarifications. The committee advocates that this resolution move forward as an official title change as opposed to a working title change, with a Fall 2022 deadline for change implementation. It was noted that an impact on permanent resident or citizenship application processes could be adversely affected if a job title change is implemented during that process.
- Job security and pay issues related to this resolution were also briefly discussed.
- A motion to approve this resolution carried unanimously and will remain on the Senate Information Item agenda this month.

COVID Resolution

David C. Bloom, Chair

Sarah Lynne, Welfare Council Chair

- [Welfare Council Resolution](#)
- [August 26, 2021 Faculty Senate Resolution](#)
- [Submitted No Confidence Resolution](#)
- Chair Bloom provided an overview of the various COVID resolutions and the resolution process. This included the original COVID resolution that was passed by the faculty senate on August 26, and the No Confidence Resolution presented by Mark Hostetler. The later resolution has been vetted by the Steering Committee and twice by the Welfare Council.
- The last Welfare Council meeting was attended by council members, interested faculty, and Faculty Senate administrative liaisons. Factual inaccuracies in the original resolution were addressed, however concerns remained including that no new remedy is proposed in the no confidence resolution. Concern also remain regarding passing multiple Faculty Senate resolutions which could be duplicitous and water down the original COVID-19 resolution passed by the SUS and the UF Faculty Senate in August. At the meeting it was established why this resolution would come forward and council tried to resolve the following outstanding issues: 1. Correct inaccuracies. 2. Simplify 3. Provide an opportunity for faculty to discuss this on the Senate floor and to represent those voices.
- It was noted that the second whereas clause may no longer be valid.
- The Steering Committee discussed bringing the no confidence resolution forward as an Information Item.
- The need to ensure the opportunity for open faculty discussion while balancing serious reservations with the resolution was discussed. Chair Bloom proposed that these two items be separated, and that the committee take two votes: one to consider advancing the resolution as an Information Item so that it could be thoroughly discussed, the other vote to gauge the Steering Committee's support of the resolution itself.
- A motion to move the [Welfare Council Resolution](#) as an Information Item on the October 21 Senate agenda carried (with one opposed).
- Separately, does this committee support the resolution's content? The Steering Committee agreed that clarification should be made between its agreement to bring the resolution to the Senate floor and providing a resolution endorsement.
- Differences between personal and professional feelings about the resolution and accurately representing faculty constituents were shared.
- A motion to endorse the contents of the [Welfare Council Resolution](#) failed unanimously.
- Chair Bloom and Welfare Council Chair Sarah Lynne will present the proposed resolution and

background information to Faculty Senate as an Information Item.

- Current and potential voting technology and processes used for Faculty Senate votes were discussed. A written ballot continues to be available at every Faculty Senate and committee/council meeting.

Council Reports

Welfare Council

Sarah Lynne

- At its last meeting, council reviewed the proposed COVID-19 no confidence resolution with an eye toward correcting any factual errors. It also discussed which speakers could visit council to help update the IDEA document, particularly to address any progress which may have been made over the past summer and fall, and to identify which items need more immediate attention.

Academic Policy Council

Richard Scholtz

- Council discussed the ad hoc committee proposed for post-tenure review and has been in touch with the University Information Technology Committee to inquire about generating a syllabi template to reduce faculty workload and any redundancy when posting syllabi in multiple locations.

Research and Scholarship Council

Jason Byrd

- The University Library Committee Chair and Perry Collins, Copyright and Educational Resources Librarian shared [The Author Rights Policy](#) at the September meeting. The Academic Policy Council for their October 28th meeting to obtain their input.

- Electronic Lab Notebooks (ELN) has been a council topic since 2016 and is not going to be funded campus wide as an Enterprise solution. The availability of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act money for such an initiative has not materialized so ELN's may be funded independently by labs or research groups. Council discussed ELN solutions, features and topics it could help address, such as NIH compliance. A link can be shared for those interested in The RSpace Ecosystem: <https://www.researchspace.com/#case-studies>. Research Space (RSpace) is an electronic research notebook (ERN) solution with data management setup features and a demonstration has been proposed to be held later this month.

- Council discussed IACUC issues which need to be addressed, including Inconsistent IACUC panel reviews and inspections, belated protocol approvals, and inefficient mandatory post-approval monitoring visits. EH&S issues which also need attention include slow biosafety approval times, an inefficient e-inventory system, lab inspection inconsistencies, and excessive burdens on Investigators. Council will invite speakers to address these issues and a working group will be organized to discuss concerns and provide recommendations for review.

Budget Council

Ashley Ghiaseddin

- Council met last month to set the academic year's agenda. In October, VP of Human Resources, Jodi Gentry, and Director of Benefits, Shannon Edwards, will discuss the State University System Optional Retirement Program (ORP) contributions. Council is interested in hearing about ways to strengthen and improve this program and consult on how to unify faculty voice on this issue. The College of Medicine Faculty Council is currently organizing a working group and will share information with Faculty Senate and its HR liaisons.

Approve [October 21, 2021 Faculty Senate Agenda](#)

David C. Bloom, Chair

- The agenda was unanimously approved as amended to remove the word 'revised' from the Faculty Titles Resolution Information Item and it was agreed to keep the agenda items in its current order.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

David C. Bloom, Chair