

April 24, 2023

Faculty Senate Meeting with President Oldham

Via TEAMS

In attendance: President Maxwell, Secretary Killman, Past-President Luna, President-elect Allen Senators Reames, Loftis, Scott Smith, Comer, Turner, Park, Manginelli, Mullen, Liu, Isbell, Fennewald, Meadows, Weathers, Hutson, Lee, Upole, Craven, Smith-Andrews, Null, Hajdik, Winkle, Langford, Alley, O'Connor, Mills, Hermann-Turner, Pickering, Sisk, Hasan, Ojo, Rand, Brachey, Crockett, Adams, Troy Smith, Fornehed, Howard, Rajabali, Shipley

Guests: President Oldham, Lee Wray

Absent: Senators Swartling, Burch, Allcott, Frye, Duncan, Spears, Witcher, Canfield, Ding

Call to Order: 3:35 pm by Senate President Maxwell for a brief business meeting before President Oldham joined.

Motion to approve minutes of Nov 21, 28, Jan 22, Feb 6, Feb 27, March 6, March 27, and April 10, seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

Senators raised some questions about policies and Policy Central to be carried into the next business year.

President Maxwell welcomed President Oldham and Chief Ray to the meeting and turned the meeting over.

Question:

What is the timeline for potential change/reorganization of the Office of Planning and Finance?

Answer:

There is no timeline. We are in a holding pattern considering how we can do it financially. This will be a costly reorganization. Supportive in principle. The compensation study is my focus right now.

Question:

It was previously suggested that HR could be moved out from under planning and finance, is that still an option?

Answer:

It is part of the same subject. That is a possibility. It's not ideal to have them report directly to the President. My priority is to get through the compensation study.

Question:

It was mentioned that 3% would go to raises and 2% would be held back, is that still the plan?

Answer:

The board approved 3 of the 5% salary pool distributed July 1st. Hold the remaining 2% until Jan 1st. The compensation study should be in by October. And hope to apply the rest to whatever priorities become apparent at that time.

The board approved a one-time bonus of approximately \$650 effective July for all employees.

Question:

Salary study...further questions...Will the implementation after October come from Mercer or the campus committee?

Answer:

The committee was formed to assist Mercer. Mercer should provide an analysis of compensation and working classifications on campus along with recommendations they chose to make about corrective actions. Their report will be reviewed - look at gaps in salaries by classifications and other that needs to be addressed and try to put a price tag on corrective action along with an initial look at prioritization. We will need to do that kind of analysis. The Faculty Senate can weigh in as well as working with the Board of Trustees. Hope to be able to make a recommendation to the Board by the December meeting.

Question:

Is there a way some of this can be implemented earlier? NSF grant paying grad students \$34K and current admin associates are \$10K lower. Admins are not getting paid fairly. Could it happen in the June compensation? Some of this seems so obvious, why wait?

Answer:

The answer is simple, we risk leaving people out. That's why we put a hold on reclassifications pending completion of the salary study. Must be careful about leaving people out. Made that mistake and do not want to repeat it. Can get more clarity campus-wide. It's only been a few months.

Comment: Agree to disagree. It's been 2 years since that other raise pool was used for surgical improvement of other salaries that are not academic affairs – that was 2020.

Question:

What is the long-term plan of the salary study? If we get a prioritized list...priorities change all the time, so is this something that will be repeated? What's the plan to not have such discrepancies in the future?

Answer:

Hopefully, we will learn things that will better prepare us – have a classification system that's more appropriate and flexible enough to move with changing demands and times. Has not been done in over a decade... workarounds have just piled up. Don't believe it's a one-time fix-it-all, but an ongoing effort over a period to get straightened out.

Question:

Is salary inversion a top priority?

Answer:

Generally, try to pay attention to salary inversion. When that occurs, it needs to be communicated through Academic Affairs so it can be addressed.

Question:

Will this study come up with a target salary for everyone on campus?

Answer:

I don't think that's the vision. They will look at our overall classification system. They will see if those ranges are competitive. We have bigger issues competitively in the support staff positions.

Comment:

Worried it would come back with generalities. The Faculty Salary Equity Committee had for years and used an algorithm that gave target salaries for faculty and it would be easy to implement that again. Afraid this study isn't going to do much.

Answer:

In terms of faculty, we are much better off than staff salaries. Cupa data indicates that faculty salaries are in line with national averages. The Provost has required faculty new hires to be in 90-110% of Cupa for that discipline and rank. Not in bad shape in terms of faculty salaries.

Question:

Why is the campus being pushed to use Teams and not Zoom? Is it security? Cost?

Answer:

Both are available. Teams has become a preferred choice. Maybe because it's part of the Microsoft package.

Comments: "Pushed" in the question is because IT has said Zoom is being phased out.

Other institutions that we work with prefer Zoom. Getting rid of Zoom will cripple joint programs.

We have been told that the number of Zoom Pro accounts is being cut back to the original pre-COVID number or other. Zoom Pro is HIPAA compliant. Off-campus meetings using Teams are not conducive. Host of issues.

Answer:

The Office of Academic Affairs is a better way to solve the issue than through the President's office. If Zoom is what is needed, it should be voiced and prioritized.

Question:

Could we create a better system for visitor parking to give the impression that we want them here? Possibly a QR code?

Answer:

That is a good idea. We have already done that! Outside Derryberry Hall, there is a QR code for visitors to register their vehicle. The system is in place. 2-3 dozen visitor spots between Derryberry and Jere Whitson. VIP visitors get contacted and receive a pass. May not be the best method but we do have something in place.

Question:

What changes are being implanted this summer that we should know about?

Answer:

There is nothing that I am aware of that has not already been discussed. The construction will continue. Peachtree Avenue project will become more active. That should be completed by Christmas.

There is an ongoing search for a VP of Research. Those final interviews will be taking place in May.

Question:

What is your office proactively doing to improve shared governance? How are you bringing stakeholders together? Where do you see room for improvement?

Answer:

Comes down to communication. It's a two-way street. Our time scales are often different. Patience, flexibility, and good communication. That is why I brought the president of the faculty senate into the cabinet. Make sure our committees are working proactively.

Question:

How often are you bringing together your division directors to ensure strong communication?

Answer:

We meet with the cabinet weekly. I will pull together selective members around certain topics. The issue of the IT thing in classrooms never got to the cabinet level. I didn't realize that a decision had been made. I depend on vice presidents and division heads to make sure they are not working in silos. We manage a very complex organization. I am open to what the Senate thinks about how we can improve.

Comment:

We have to go through the department, the college curriculum committees, and the university curriculum committee if we want to change anything in the curriculum because of how it affects all of campus. We were not asked how changing computers would impact us. It passed by academic affairs. Chairs and Deans were like – "What's going on?"

Answer: Clearly, we have work to do for better communication.

Comment:

This is a great example of ITS being under planning and finance. They have a certain license to operate in a vacuum. When it comes to academic technology. Perfect example of what we've been citing as potential problems for a very long time.

Question:

What is the biggest pain point that the cabinet is dealing with and is there a role for the Faculty Senate to help?

Answer:

There are challenges; for the most part, we are addressing them. The biggest one is how to successfully manage enrollment growth. The institution needs to grow. We want to do it in a way that is managed, reasonable, and controlled. Faculty should help weigh in on how to manage successfully.

Comment:

As we grow, it would help for the Provost to loosen restrictions on overloads. The hiring process takes a long time. We can help in a more expedited way.

Question:

What do you think is the biggest pain point for the faculty?

Answer:

What I have heard and understand, is the increased pressure of operating budgets at the departmental level. Still trying to function with insufficient operating budgets. I am trying to put a priority on that.

Question:

As enrollment grows, how do we accommodate that?

Answer:

We are still 1000 students below where we were. We had a 22/1 ratio, now it's 18/1. That is not evenly distributed across campus. We have the capacity for a 20% increase. We are attempting to build a campus to accommodate 15,000 students. It will take a decade to get there. It comes down again to communication to identify the issues as we grow.

Question:

What do you think is the biggest concern of the students?

Answer:

Everything I hear is varied. More often it's life issues. Parking, food service, student activities, library hours.

Comment:

We all need to be mindful of the mental health of students.

Question:

There seems to be a disconnect between Center Stage and the business office. People are not being paid consistently. Can you tell us anything about that?

Answer:

Know nothing about that. The business office doesn't manage Center Stage. Can look into the management of Center Stage. The business office has legal reasons why they follow certain procedures.

Comment:

The planters are blocking the view of the roundabout between the quad and the nursing building.

Answer:

I understand exactly what you are talking about. We will work on it.
Thank you, President Oldham.

The Meeting Adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Christy Killman

Approved: September 18, 2023