

Meeting Minutes, Faculty Senate, full meeting, March 25, 2025

In attendance:

Osasohan Agbonlahor (A), Phoebe Ajibade (A), Jeffrey Alston (S), Ayanna Roxanne Armstrong (S), Jennifer Beasley (S), Stephen Bollinger (S), Trevor Brothers (S), Dewayne Randolph Brown (S), Chantel Simpson Carroll (S), Roymieco Carter (A), Arvind Chandrasekaran (S), Eunho Cho (S), Daphne Cooper, Mike Cundall (S), Robert L Ferguson (S), Yvonne R Ford (S), Tiffany Fuller (S), Corey Graves (S), Scott H. Harrison (S), Tom Jackson, Floyd James, Yuhan Jiang (S), Lizbeth Johnson, Stephanie Kelly (S), Joy Kennedy (S), Roland Leak (S), Blessing Masasi (A), Adam L McClain (S), Ahmed Megri (S), Hyosoo Moon (A), Hamidreza Moradi (S), Cephas Naanwab (A), Letycia Nuñez-Argote (S), Thomas Patterson, Xiuli Qu (A), Bill Randle (S), Craig Rhodes, Cindy Saylor, Dave Schall (S), Nichole Smith, Natasha Spellman (A), Ecaterina Stepaniuc (S), Christina Tupper (S), Pauline Uwakweh (S), Yongjie Wang (A), John Paul Ward (S), Tammy Webb (A), Jeff Wolfgang (S)

(S): Senator

(A): Alternate

Call to order was done by Dr. Scott Harrison at 3:00 pm. Roll call was led by Dr. Tiffany Fuller. There was a link to attendance sent out and a QR Code. The agenda was presented. A motion was made by Stephen Bollinger and seconded by Dr. Cundall for the agenda to be approved. The motion passed unanimously. Drafts of minutes from the January and February 2025 meetings were then presented for feedback and discussion.

Vice Chancellor Information Technology Services and Chief Information Officer Tom Jackson and Associate Vice Chancellor and Deputy Chief Information Officer Lizbeth Johnson were there to present and discuss with faculty IT governance initiatives. A general mission for Information Technology Services is that “we’re here to facilitate.”

Four IT governance committees were described: Infrastructure and Innovation, Academic and Client Technology, Information Security, and Enterprise Applications. The first two committees may be the most relevant to academic affairs.

Students are now being provided access to Microsoft 365 which will enhance opportunities for sharing digital content with students. There may be some further consideration for adding students to the Outlook directory.

Additional steps are being taken to allow for broader options in software updates and configurations on research computing equipment to be more directly initiated by faculty. A new ticketing system is being introduced that will hopefully improve upon the complexity and challenges with the current ticketing system.

Listening sessions from the preceding semester were mentioned and concerns that have been raised were made serious note of. Functionality with information technology in classrooms and computer labs are the majority priorities and realignment of work duties is happening to provide more coverage. Media services staff from other universities are being involved to help further assess problems, and these staff are returning to address identified issues. The equipment replacement cycle is continuing. An expansion in support hours is being pursued along with growing the student technician program, and filling of multiple posted job openings.

Computer images are being prepared for installation onto computers in the fall, and communications from faculty on software needs are requested to happen by April 15. Challenges include updating versions of software and ensuring compatibility across multiple software packages being installed.

Questions included an expressed issue with the Microsoft authenticator app. Further follow-up will be done on this. A faculty member inquired about whether the university would plan to provide campus-wide access to AI tools such as ChatGPT or other broadly used LLM. A question about access to Adobe Suite Applications for students was posed. Adobe Express is available to all. In terms of access to more advanced applications, there are some other ways for access that are available, and there can be further conversations on this with interested faculty. The presentation and discussion with IT services concluded with Vice Chancellor Jackson asking faculty to continue sending in further questions to IT services.

Dr. Harrison then spoke on the effort surrounding dissemination of a Survey on Research and Teaching Needs developed within the Faculty Senate. The level of the response to the survey was positive with more than 100 submissions in the first few days of the survey. A contact list of more than 800 members of the university had been used, along with direct communications with departmental chairs and college deans to help aid in the dissemination of the survey. Members of the faculty senate were asked to help disseminate in person the request to take the survey with their faculty colleagues at their upcoming departmental and college meetings. Dr. Harrison extended special thanks to Dr. Laura Marshall and Dr. Ayanna Armstrong as being some of more than half a dozen faculty members having primary involvement in development and review of the survey. The goal is to have survey responses completed by Monday, April 21. Dr. Alston asked if outcomes of the survey would be made available. Dr. Harrison responded in the affirmative. Dr. Harrison further indicated that all survey responses were anonymous and that there was not any identifying information in the survey. A full release of data collected in the survey was intended.

The next topic for discussion regarded activities within the UNC System Faculty Assembly. Dr. Harrison mentioned the prior year's working groups and the current year's working groups whereby the UNC System Faculty Assembly has partnered with the System Office and other campus representatives on developing regulatory changes. The prior year's groups were the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program (FRIP), Post-Tenure Review, Workload, Rewards & Recognition, Measurement of Teaching Effectiveness, and Professional Track Faculty. This year, groups were involved with Academic Program Review implementation, Making the Case for

Higher Ed & the Liberal Arts, Artificial Intelligence Policy, Faculty Assembly Governance, Role and Usefulness of Microcredentials, and Faculty Leadership Development. It was noted that the Chair of the UNC System Faculty Assembly, Wade Maki, will present at next month's Faculty Senate Meeting. The discussion then moved to a communication, "Memorandum Regarding Federal Contracting Compliance", issued by the UNC System on February 5, 2025. In response to this communication, the Faculty Assembly had then deliberated upon and approved a subsequent resolution in opposition to this memorandum that the "suspension of core and program requirements" indicated in the memorandum was in conflict with the "principle of academic freedom" and, furthermore, in conflict with "the mission of the University of North Carolina and its seventeen constituent institutions to serve the people of our state". Faculty Senates at individual universities within the UNC System have recently been reviewing and voting on whether to support this resolution from the Faculty Assembly. Following discussion, it was motioned and then seconded to support this resolution from the Faculty Assembly, and this motion passed unanimously.

Education policy issues were then discussed.

The uniform tool for teaching effectiveness was mentioned in terms of its general structure, current origination as a provisional instrument, and considerations of scope and workload. It was intended that forums for feedback follow the initial launch of this provisional instrument. The discussion then proceeded to "Simple Syllabus" - a proposed administrative platform that has sparked concern across departments. Multiple faculty spoke with some concern and also with reference to discussions on this happening within their departments. Faculty questioned its implications for being able to adequately specify and manage course syllabi, particularly if either specifications or changes to syllabi would be constrained by the technology or administrative overreach. Faculty expressed a concern about the need for faculty to, in general, be in charge of their course curricula and degree programs. Even if authority-based instantiation of this technology occurs and runs afoul of core considerations of shared governance, could reasoning at least be provided for usage of the tool? It was noted as well however by another faculty member that an experience at another institution indicated that the tool could bring about useful standardization and help ensure meeting of accreditation objectives. It was then suggested that further evaluation and report on adoption of this tool at other institutions appears most relevant. Faculty suggested there be some pause in the adoption of this tool, with some suggesting it may be time for a more specific stance, potentially including a resolution against implementation without greater transparency.

An upcoming meeting happening later in the week with members of the Provost's Office was then mentioned regarding further discussion on the academic minor policy. In the past, it was much more readily achievable to attain an academic minor, but the most recent policy has reduced how students can have course credits apply to both an academic major and an academic minor. A need was mentioned by Dr. Kelly to evaluate whether A&T students were required to take far more classes for the same credentialing (academic minors) than students within the rest of the UNC system. Some initial inspection of academic minors policies at other universities indicated that this may be the case. Dr. Randle mentioned that with the recent

reduction in credit hours for undergraduate degrees to all be 120 credit hours, it seemed counter-intuitive to then inhibit pursuit of academic degree minors. Dr. Harrison spoke of advantages for students in pursuing careers if they had a demonstrated interdisciplinary background potentially reflected in an academic minor, and how the UNC System objective for return on investment (ROI) could be negatively impacted by the current policy. Dr. Schall mentioned an issue with engineering majors that the reduction in credit hours for an undergraduate degree to be 120 credit hours had been impacting the intended training and learning in some of the related degree programs. Dr. Harrison mentioned that he thought the 120 credit hour uniform limit was from the UNC System and that some more extended discussion beyond the university may be needed if that were to be addressed.

Discussion then proceeded to a wellness day proposal. Initial concepts for this proposal had been presented to the Faculty Senate in the prior academic year from the Student Government Association Vice President, with some substantial mention of a pilot program on wellness days at Northeastern University. Dr. Harrison mentioned some current outlook where the university would be having one standard wellness day happening for all each semester, and that there was then deliberation on a second, student-selected wellness day for each semester.

Current formulations on the second, student-selected wellness day was that it would actually be on a per-course basis – where, for instance, a student could miss one class session for one course on one particular day, and then miss another class session for another different course on another different day. It was inquired by a faculty member, in reference to discussions they had been having with multiple colleagues, whether considerations of class attendance and wellness could already be addressed by university counseling and health services.

Dr. Harrison responded that not all considerations of wellness may be an easy-to-recognize and diagnose scenario, and whether some self-agency for students in pursuit of wellness could be part of the consideration. Potential challenges were then described by a faculty member that the policy does not ensure that the student receives professional help if they are having issues with wellness, and would also impair staying current with course material, and that these both are huge concerns. Also, feasibility would be difficult for large course sections where, if each student were to take a free day, and if the policy were to then have all 200 students meet with their professor to make up that material during office hours. It will be therefore essential for the policy language to encourage students to catch up on course content on their own, and then reach out to their professor if they need help.

Faculty then spoke about how there was very strong evidence relating class attendance to success, especially for courses in mathematics. This evidence is very overwhelming, and suggests a need to send a clear message that students need to go to class. The draft policy does not seem to reinforce this. In general, from some discussions that had happened in departments, it was reported that, there was unanimous opposition to the policy. Dr. Harrison mentioned that the policy did provide clarity and some potential for a positive outcome regarding attendance and rigor in learning if, for instance, the more uniform expectation on campus were to just miss a single day as opposed to other more lenient

practices allowing for several unexcused absences to occur without penalty. Dr. Harrison then thanked the faculty for the discussion so far. In particular, as part of expressing their concerns during the Faculty Senate session, numerous faculty described having gone to their department with these and other matters, communicated with their department, and brought back dialogue and general concerns expressed by colleagues in their department. Dr. Harrison mentioned how this strengthens how considerations and positions are overall understood and reviewed within the Faculty Senate.

The discussion proceeded then further on the wellness day proposal. Dr. Graves asked about how encumbered the process would be in terms of tracking and accounting for such a varying range of absences for different students on different days. Dr. Harrison mentioned that university IT had done considerable work in prototyping how a wellness day request could be initiated by the student, and then this information would foreseeably feed into the Qquickly attendance system on Blackboard. Some reservations were expressed by another faculty member about whether Qquickly was to now be the primary, expected tool for attendance tracking. Dr. Cundall asked if this was contributing to an overall greater amount of administrative netting that interfered with general work of instructors. Another faculty member commented that this could be ultimately meddling in how instructors were to generally and directly manage ongoing in their classroom as well as potentially leading to unnecessary complexity.

Other faculty members asked whether the classroom and university environment could not, instead, involve students approaching their instructors for dialogue if there was some issue, and have such situations be addressed on a more case-by-case basis. It was then pointed out that some departments forbid online exams as interfering with teaching contact hours, and it seemed at odds to have that prohibition and then, in such an inconsistent manner, expressly bring about a policy that could lead to many students missing a day of class. Dr. Harrison thanked everyone for their comments and insights, recognized that many faculty felt the policy would be intrusive in different ways in their classrooms, mentioned his involvement in a cross-constituency discussion involving the student government association and the provost's office, and commented that further deliberation appeared warranted. Dr. Harrison indicated that he would be providing further updates on the topic to the Faculty Senate.

Concerns were then presented as arose from some faculty surrounding the professor of practice designation. Human resources has reportedly required there to be a terminal degree (among other considerations) for an instructor to be accorded the title of professor of practice as opposed to lecturer. Within the relevant university policy document, this requirement was not specifically listed, however, in the detailed description for this designation. This is furthermore in contrast to descriptions surrounding research professor, teaching professor and clinical professor which do specifically indicate this requirement. It appears that policy could indeed relate to further consideration of this designation for faculty not having terminal degrees. Discussion then ensued with comments from faculty including Dr. Schall and Dr. Cundall. This recognition could help departments further strengthen ties and involvements with

industrial professionals and offer students valuable insights to include, for instance, training in practical methodologies and technologies.

Concerns arose regarding whatever resolution we may put forward because, while we want to give some real credence to practitioners from industry, attention is still needed regarding our students receiving hallmark characteristics of a college education that do not only devolve upon training for specific industries of the moment. It was then commented that A&T has had some real success in specific training programs for connecting students to industry in coordination with industrial partners. For instance, there are student teams that build vehicles from the ground up, and this is an essential activity for students who would subsequently attain placement in the automotive industry. Industry experience from an involved instructor is imperative for this to occur effectively.

It was mentioned that the way in which a professor of practice designation was described, per policy, spoke primarily about this role with respect to the educational mission of the university (i.e., and not just a substantial background in industrial practice). If this primary role with respect to the educational mission was given consistent and effective consideration, this could help to ensure that instructors who would receive this designation could be foreseeably and specifically vetted regarding their competencies with respect to talent and ability specific to instruction and the university's educational mission. There appeared to be consensus from all that further deliberation and discussion on this would be warranted prior to any foreseeable resolution from the Faculty Senate. It was then suggested by another faculty member that the Faculty Senate work with HR to further consider and discuss the need for this type of professor of practice position.

The meeting then moved to a discussion and commencement of nominations for the positions of Faculty Senate Vice Chair (two-year term, 2025-2027), Faculty Senate Secretary (two-year term, 2025-2027), two Faculty Assembly Delegate positions (two-year terms, 2025-2027) and two Faculty Assembly Alternate positions (two-year terms, 2025-2027). The nomination process was described as proceeding up until next month's Faculty Senate meeting in April. As nominations then began during the meeting, there was a faculty senator nominated for the Faculty Senate Vice Chair position and then two other faculty were nominated for the Faculty Assembly Delegate positions.

As the meeting began to be concluded, Dr. Harrison mentioned an upcoming series of open meetings happening multiple times per week for interested faculty to work, discuss and help to finalize the Handbook Revision. The meeting then fully concluded with a motion to adjourn by Dr. Nunez-Argote that was then seconded by Dr. Randle. The motion passed unanimously.