**Faculty Senate Minutes**

**11/11/2020 Regular Business Meeting 3:00-5:00 pm via ZOOM**

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

**ROLL CALL and APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Approval of Regular Business Meeting Minutes from October 22, 2020**

*Vote was taken with roll call. Minutes Approved.*

**Approval of Overflow Business Meeting Minutes from October 28, 2020**

*Vote was taken with roll call. Minutes Approved.*

* Present:
  + Michael Boatright - present, proxy for Laura Wright who arrived late. Vote - yes
  + Indi Bose - present, proxy for Cheryl Waters-Tormey. Vote - yes
  + Chancellor Kelli Brown - present
  + Kristin Calvert - present, vote - yes
  + Todd Collins - present, vote - yes
  + Heidi Dent - present, vote - yes
  + David De Jong - present, vote - yes
  + Heather Mae Erickson - present, proxy for Ian Jeffress. Vote - yes
  + Mariana Fisher - present, proxy for Garrett Fisher. Vote - yes
  + Enrique Gómez - present, vote - yes
  + Yancey Gulley - present, vote - yes
  + Bora Karayaka - present, proxy for Martin Tanaka. Vote - yes
  + Marco Lam - present, vote - yes
  + Will Lehman - present, vote - yes
  + Niall Michelsen - present, vote - yes
  + Sean Mulholland - present, vote - yes
  + Leigh Odom - present, vote - yes
  + Kadence Otto - present, vote - yes
  + Matthew Rave - present, vote - yes
  + Carrie Rogers - present, vote - yes
  + Roya Scales - present, vote - yes
  + Provost Richard Starnes - present
  + Vicki Szabo - present, vote - yes
  + Elizabeth Tait - present, vote - yes
  + Drew Virtue - present, vote - yes
  + Elizabeth Wark - present, vote - yes
  + Jessica Zellers - present, vote - yes
* Members with Proxies:
  + Cheryl Waters-Tormey
  + Laura Wright
  + Ian Jeffress
  + Garrett Fisher
  + Martin Tanaka

**EXTERNAL REPORTS**

**Chancellor’s Update: Chancellor Kelli Brown**

*We are a week and a half to the end of in-person classes, and the end of semester. A thank you was shared to everyone for all of their hard work.*

**COVID Update**

*The numbers are a challenge concerning Covid. We are not as high as a few weeks ago, but we have had increases from surveillance testing and due to a statewide surge. We are at a 7.5% positivity rate on testing. The goal is to be under 5%. Continue to check the dashboard as it is updated daily.*

**Accolades for WCU**

*Western Carolina University was named as a green college for the 10th year in The Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges: 2021 Edition.*

*Western Carolina University is the recipient of $583,074 in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education for an afterschool program designed to help improve the academic skills of students at Cullowhee Valley School who speak English as another language.*

*Dr. Dave Strahan was recently awarded the Richard “Dick” Lipka Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor that can be awarded by the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group (MLER SIG).*

**Exit testing**

*Exit testing will be available to all students, faculty, and staff before the holidays. Students should register with University Health. Faculty and staff should register through Harris Regional. Be on the lookout for email directions soon.*

*Question from Enrique Gómez: Regarding executive order 3950 and prohibiting of using training with race, sex, etc. for federal contractors. We receive federal government funds. Do we know where this order impacts us?  
Response from Shea Browning: We have reviewed our training we offer on campus, and we do not believe we have violated the executive order. Our funding should not be in question. We do not train in the specific way the executive order was written.   
Provost Richard Starnes reached the same conclusion.*

*Question from Vicki Szabo: She has heard from other faculty about concern over the housing complexes and sizable parties. There is a growing concern. What communications do we have with the local community and what are our strategies to issue corrections, etc.?  
Response: Very early on, Chancellor Brown, Don Tomas (president of Southwestern Community College), and Shelley Carraway (Jackson County Health Director) sent a letter to all apartment complex owners and included educational materials. We wanted to partner and sent the initiatives in August 2020. We have continued conversations with Jackson county as well as local sheriffs. If there is an incident reported, the sheriff’s office will go to it and our public safety department will assist. We can also secure the students 920 number and report it to student conduct. Another idea is to put together a letter to go out that talks about the executive order, violations, and fines, etc. Chancellor Brown regularly sends information to county commissioners and a number of other folks in Jackson county as well.*

**Provost’s Report: Provost Richard Starnes**

**Administrative Searches Update**

*College of Arts and Sciences Dean Search*

A search committee will be established in the next week to move forward on a search for the next College of Arts and Sciences Dean. Details will be forthcoming. We greatly appreciate Dave Kinner stepping in as interim dean and Carmen Huffman for her work as interim associate dean for the last year.

*Hunter Library Dean Search*

Upon the announcement of Dr. Farzaneh Razzaghi’s retirement at the end of the academic year, a search committee will be established in the next week to move forward on a search for the next Dean of Hunter Library. We are thankful to Dr. Razzaghi for her dedication and service to WCU.

**Selection Committee Diversity Training**

WCU faculty and staff now have access to the following search committee diversity and inclusion training modules produced by the Academic Network, Inc.

*Selection Committee Diversity Training*

1. Implementing the Diversity Goals of the Committee
2. Structuring Campus Interviews to Preserve Inclusion
3. The "3/3/5" Method of Candidate Evaluation

*Inclusion Training*

1. Transitioning from Diversity Awareness to Sensitivity
2. Networking with Minority Academic and Professional Organizations
3. Seeing How Stereotypes Impact Campus Relationships

Each of the course modules is approximately 1-hour long and available on the following customized WCU landing page <https://www.theacademicnetwork.net/wcu-page> . This information will also be made available via the Resources for Faculty and Staff page on the Office of the Provost website.

We thank Chancellor Brown for her support of this initiative, and I hope the resources are useful to our collective efforts to achieve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals across the institution.

We are happy to report that, thanks to on-campus open house, initiatives, and free application week, we are only 1% down point in time vs last year with our first-time, fulltime, freshman class.

We are currently in discussion around an initiative for common course numbering. The variations across the system schools and community colleges are preventing transfer students from understanding and easy transition. We think this will work more like an articulation agreement with backend banner changes.

**Staff Senate: Chair Ben Pendry**

“I prepared some remarks for my update today, so thank you and the senate for indulging my reading.

Dear Colleagues, Happy Veterans Day. As the son of Larry US Army, grandson of Ben and James – US ARMY, and grandson of Iris – NAVY WAVES, thank you to those who have served.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide brief remarks on behalf of the Western Carolina University Staff Senate. I would like to also thank my fellow staff senators for joining the meeting today.

To begin, I would like to say thank you to the members of the Faculty Senate for the thankless job you have taken on. Representation is difficult work. Representing the interests of a group as diverse as the Faculty at WCU is tremendously complex. Add to that complexity the uncertainty, anxiety, and all-around unknowns with which we are faced and we arrive at a place of fear and of tough decisions. It is a place that none of us wanted to be in. It is also a place which, in my opinion, relies on the ties that bind us. It is also a place that can, if allowed, exacerbate those things that separate us.

I am so appreciative of the work that you have taken on and I stand firmly in support of you, the Faculty Senate doing everything you believe necessary to fairly represent the interests of your constituents.

Madam chair I would like to address the resolution which will be considered by this body later during this meeting.

I was made aware of the resolution when I received the agenda last week and I immediately started receiving feedback from our Senators. What does this mean? Do they really believe that staff should bear the full burden of these cuts? Is there an exemption for health services staff? campus police? administrative support? facilities? housekeeping?

To borrow a phrase…Aren't we all equal in this? Are some of us more equal than others? Obviously, I didn't have an answer to any of those questions.

I want you to know, Dr. Otto, how appreciative I am of the conversation that you and I had yesterday and your willingness to address the Staff Senate this morning.

Here is what I know.

I know that of the two resolutions which the WCU Staff Senate has passed in the last 2 years, one thanked Alison Morrison-Shetlar for her work through a difficult time. The other was a unanimous vote in opposition to the NC General Assembly specifically treating faculty members differently during the annual raise process. As you'll remember during the last fully passed budget, SHRA staff members were put on a different level than Faculty and EHRA non faculty. Our resolution spoke up for the Faculty.

I know that our organizations are different. I respect and value those differences. We work under different circumstances, a few different rules, and our perspectives as organizations often come through different lenses.

I respect our partnership and our joint commitment to shared governance – the years of service celebration, homecoming floats, community service celebrations, joint partnership on mental health resources, campus forums, and the Culture in Conversation Series. These are examples of when we are at our very best.

The proverbial…Three legged stool…comes to mind…students, faculty, and staff…helping this place we all love stand up.

You are not fairly compensated for your work. Raises have not kept pace with COL, insurance premiums, or expansion of responsibility. But the same applies to the folks out there putting the bulbs in the ground, administering financial aid, setting up the tents for open house, fixing the plumbing and roofs, switching the network servers, cleaning bathrooms and classrooms, managing the audit, securing and distributing PPE, and those we all count on within our colleges and departments for administrative support.

It seems there are two basic approaches to dealing with the difficult season we are headed into. We can separate in factions, each narrowing our view and advocating for our own interest. Or we can stand united, working together, looking for the most innovative and least painful approaches to potential cuts. The Staff Senate has decided on the later and no matter the course of action you take today, we will steadfastly support our faculty colleagues in the critical work of supporting our students and the mission of Western Carolina University.”

*Comment from Vicki Szabo: Administration should consider creation of their own principles to guide budget deliberations.*

**Student Government Association Report: President Dawson Spencer**

* Internal Activities
  + Judicial Branch
    - Meet me on Thursdays at 6:00 pm.
    - The have put all parking tickets on hold until after registration weeks
* Legislative Branch
  + They are hosting a “Whee Talk” in collaboration with OOTD, CAPS, and our Senate committee of Health and Safety.
    - Faculty and Staff Senate invited
  + We also have guest speakers from Dr. Railsback, and the Faculty/Staff Senate invited
* Executive Branch
  + New meeting method
  + Office hours
  + Campus Safety walk November 12th
  + Locked into Leadership: Getting Involved in Campus Organizations Panel [November 4, 2020 – 5-7:30PM]
  + UC Feminine Products
  + Election engagement [2561 votes]
  + Flu Shot Campaign
    - Approx. 180
  + Blood Drive [November 4th and 5th]
  + Appreciation Day for Housekeepers, Dining, etc. [Nov 3 wk]
    - 100+ needed
  + Marketing guidebook
  + RoadSide Clean Up [October 31st 10:00am]
    - We had around 20 catamounts come help and picked up 15 bags of trash between Webster Rd. and Black Hawk Rd.
* Legislative Database
  + - We are having struggles but we are not backing down
  + Website Revamp
    - Started the process with Patrick Hinkle
  + Culture in Conversation
    - Part 3 – Tuesday, November 10, noon – 1 pm: On Sacred Ground---The Cherokee
  + Tuition and Fees Committee has been kicked off
    - We have hosted two student sessions on Nov 3rd and 4th
* External Activities
  + US Census
  + Spring Schedule released
  + Voting Town Hall [October 20th, 6:00pm]
  + Recent acts of racism across the System [UNCC, WCU, UNCA]
  + Provost Search
  + COVID-19 Updates
  + Polling Station on Campus
  + Commencement
* Events
  + - Racial Equity Townhalls
    - Advocacy Plan for 2nd week of November [Mountain Region]
      * Prep mtg the first week of November

**Resolution F20.05 Pass/Fail option**

**Implement an Optional Pass/Fail Grading Accommodation for the Fall 2020**

WHEREAS, a global pandemic caused by COVID - 19 forced Western Carolina University to transition classes to an online and hybrid-based modality along with adjusting all other operations of the university for the Fall 2020 Semester; and,

WHEREAS, the ongoing pandemic and shift in institutional operations inside and outside the classrooms has constrained students academically, financially, physically, and mentally; and,

WHEREAS, students are rightfully concerned for their health along with the health of their loved ones and peers, shifting their focus and taking time away from academic priorities; and,

WHEREAS, it also become apparent through student feedback and surveys that many students are struggling to get in contact with their professors, many classes that were advertised as hybrid have gone completely online, and the lack of face-to-face classes have led to extra hours of students teaching themselves; and,

WHEREAS, the elevated levels of stress that students are having to manage could be relieved by temporarily amending the current grading system used by the university; and,

WHEREAS, transcripts are permanent records and students should have the option to adjust how they wish their grades to be reflected this semester understanding that some students have struggled due to extenuating circumstances surrounding COVID-19, and,

WHEREAS, other institutions in the University of North Carolina system such as UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina University, Appalachian State University, UNC Charlotte, Fayetteville State University and Elizabeth City State University have recognized the need for flexibility with the academic grading system and are allowing a pass/fail grading accommodation; and,

WHEREAS, the Student Government Association believes it would be a disservice to our students to ignore the challenges they have endured all semester that have affected their academic success; and,

Therefore, Be It Resolved That: The Student Government Association of Western Carolina University calls upon the university to implement a pass/fail grading accommodation for the Fall 2020 semester.

*Kadence Otto reminded senators that all they are doing today is discussing whether or not the senate wants to consider the resolution. Discussion will be later in the meeting.*

**Faculty Assembly Report: Reporting Delegate Vicki Szabo**

*The full report is available on SharePoint.*

In response to common course numbering: this week the assembly meets on Friday. They are holding an advocacy session on how to speak to legislatures and board members.

Day in the Life initiative: we are collecting stories from faculty to share with GA, legislatures and the Board of Governors with a goal to focus on salary issues.

**CFC Canvas Update: Eli Collins-Brown**

Visit canvas.wcu.edu for up to date information on the release, timeline, training, and much more.

The pilot is underway with 13 faculty in training and development right now. Students will also get early access. CFC will offer workshops in mid February.

We have 7 months before we are fully on Canvas.

*Question: What about courses from previous semesters?  
Response: We will archive back to 2018 - only migrating spring 2020, fall 2020 spring 2021. There will be a request form available as well.*

**Budget Update: Mike Byers**

Our budget for the current year is equal to what it was last year based on tax revenues from that year. There were some additional one-time funds allocated for enrollment growth and NC Promise buy-down. Normally those allocations would be recurring, but in last year's session they were a one-time number.

We could expect tax revenues to be less. If that happens, the state budget office would ask for all state agencies to figure a way to trim their budget to stay within the revenues we will have. We believe we are in good shape to handle a reversion. We have withheld our one-time funds that we normally would have used in the budget process in the current year. We do have those to lean on if needed.

If we do fall short this year, we would expect to see the legislature in a long session to establish a budget that is smaller than the current budget. We don't know what that might be at this time. The biggest hope is that those one-time funds that were allocated this year, are funds that should already be in our budget. WCU’s highest priorities are to ask for those one-time allocations to be made permanent. It would be 6 million recurring if that happened and would give us something to lean on.

The big deal there is that for the first time in a long time, WCU’s top priorities are perfectly in sync with the UNC system priorities - to get NC Promise funded on a permanent basis as well.

In October we were asked to be part of a budget reduction exercise. We picked an arbitrary number big enough to be uncomfortable, but small enough to wrap our heads around. We asked each division to take that dollar amount and tell us how they would do it. The specifics are held with each division. There is no way any area within the university can come up with a 10% cut without it having an impact on people and positions. This will leave all of us in a position of having done some preparations for this. The exercise helps us become better prepared if we are faced with a permanent cut in the session.

*Question from Kadie Otto: Are you saying permanent for indefinitely?  
Response: It feels like that because we go to the legislative session and allocate funding - we have to grow. They have asked us to estimate and have spelled out how much they will set aside. There is no doubt that they support this program. For obvious reasons over the summer, they were not comfortable making any recurring decisions.*

*Question from Sean Mulholland: What are the thoughts about trying to smooth the reduction over a period of time? Could it be extended over several years? We have seen some schools be more proactive and others not.   
Response: The paper you refer to is talking about UNC Chapel Hill cutting 30 million, but its actual athletics. It has been largely athletics or auxiliaries. Enrollment declined as well, so tuition revenues that support faculty and staff, they've had to make some cuts in other areas. In our case an incremental cut wouldn’t work; we have grown. We get our buydown a year later. I would argue that everyone is operating under budgetary conditions under 2% of what our formula provides for us to operate under.*

*Provost Richard Starnes shared that the 2 year will be written this year and an adjustment will happen next year.*

**Sexual Misconduct Report: Ivy Gibson**

Ivy Gibson, Title IX Coordinator, spoke to the senate about a WRAL report that was aired earlier in the week. She gave background and context about the records that were released to WRAL related to student sexual misconduct violations dating back to 2007. She gave an overview of university programs about sexual misconduct prevention and other efforts the University is pursuing to combat sexual misconduct.

*Question from Laura Wright: Can you speak about the ways the changes to Title IX have impacted our sexual assault reporting?  
Response: When the regulations passed, we were given the opportunity to handle those cases. We now have a process for Title IX cases that fit under it, but for the ones that do not, they are handled through HR processes and student contact processes as well.*

**COUNCIL and COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Academic Policy and Review Council: Chair Roya Scales**

* The council last met on November 3.
* We are working through the non-curricular taskforce report from spring 2019.
* Curriculum review.
* Next meeting is scheduled on December 16, from 3-5.

**Collegial Review Council: Chair Carrie Rogers**

* The council just met prior to this meeting.
* We are looking at the TPR electronic workflow and will be sending out a survey to obtain feedback.
* We are also working on the recommendations for the faculty handbook language regarding DCRDs.

**Faculty Affairs Council: Chair Sean Mulholland**

* The SAI group met on November 2 and are working on collecting student feedback. Next, they will work on clarifying/refining details and the implementation plan.
* The faculty compensation group has not met yet. Sean Mulholland is working with Cory Causby currently.

*Question: Will we have a fall 2021 instrument ready?   
Response: We are in the process of setting a timeline currently.*

**Rules Committee: Chair-Elect Laura Wright**

* The committee will be meeting next Tuesday.
* They are reaching out to subgroups of FAC to establish more permanent groups within the committee structure.

**Senate Report: Chair Kadie Otto**

The Culture in Conversation series has been wonderful. We will be meeting with Staff Senate, Ricardo Nazario-Colon, and Dawson Spencer to discuss what else people would like to hear in the spring. We plan to offer 3 more series.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Resolution Opposing the Inclusion of Faculty Positions in Budget Cuts: Kadie Otto**

Kadie Otto shared that the spirit behind the resolution was for her to protect the faculty in the best way she thought would be reasonable. A number of faculty provided welcoming feedback, and others provided the feedback that this resolution might come across as divisive.

Vicki Szabo shared that had we seen some sort of guiding principles from administration, this conversation may not be happening. Would this be better for the faculty?

Provost Richard Starnes shared some guiding principles for discussion with Kadie last month. Some deans and department heads shared them as well, and they went out to academic affairs. These guidelines are based on the principles that the faculty and staff assembly shared previously. Provost Starnes suggested we develop principles as an institution.

Vicki Szabo shared the following language from the FA and the common SGA / SA / FA letter.

*If budget shortfalls mandate it, then a System-wide prorated plan for salary adjustments, including campus administration, should be considered for a specific time period (e.g., six to twelve months) in order to avoid any terminations, as we are all in this together. This would not apply to any faculty or staff who make less than $50,000 annually.*

*Budget adjustments should be guided by a spirit of fairness and shared sacrifice to protect those who are most vulnerable. Should salary adjustments become necessary, employees with higher earnings should be expected to assume a greater share of the burden.*

*Budget adjustments should be prioritized to protect the academic core and student success mission of our institutions. Cost-cutting should focus initially on programs, activities, and administrative positions that are non-essential to the academic mission and should seek to protect faculty and critical student support staff.*

David de Jong shared that he strongly agrees with Vicki Szabo and feels that we’ve all been thrown into a situation with little information or reassurances, which is not good for fostering a more collaborative approach. The refrain of “this is just an exercise” is not comforting nor convincing.

Carrie Rogers shared that conversations at department levels are using language that needs to be carefully relayed. These are real people. Personally, she is for a consensus/common statement.

*Heather Mae Erickson: Are we putting faculty searches on hold right now?   
Response: We have not done this yet; we are waiting to see how this goes. Right now we are not staffed to teach the number of students we have. Everything is going forward up to this point. We are holding off on new positions and some distinguished professor positions as well. We will watch GA very closely. Departments would not lose a position; we don't want to create a situation where a failed search loses a line. We will try to balance interests. At this point we only anticipate pauses on existing lines that aren't filled.*

*Laura Wright: If Richard goes back to redo the guiding principles, does that mean we will go back and reimagine the 10% cut exercise to align with the principles?  
Response: We won’t go back and change the exercise. It is a notional percentage we have placed upon ourselves. Changes to guiding principles will not adjust that. The principles have embraced the spirit of the document the assembly groups developed.*

A suggestion was made to table this resolution until after more direct guidelines were made.

Ben Pendry shared that the staff senate would be willing to collaborate and work with the faculty senate and administration in the task.

Mike Byers shared that the exercise is not due until the end of February.

*Further discussion proceeded.*

The resolution was shared out via email and reads as follows:

**Resolution Opposing the Inclusion of Faculty1 Positions2 in Budget Cuts**

WHEREAS, WCU’s mission is to “create learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research, service, and engagement…;”3

WHEREAS, WCU’s #1 Core Value and Guiding Principle is “excellence, scholarship, teaching, and learning;”4

WHEREAS, WCU’s # 1 Strategic Direction is “academic excellence” wherein, “[WCU] commit[s] to providing [its] students with a 21st century rigorous curriculum that is composed of intellectual, creative, cultural, and personal outcomes necessary to advance and excel”; 5

WHEREAS, WCU’s # 1 GOAL is to “deliver high-quality academic programs…to fulfill the educational needs of the State and region…”;6

WHEREAS, WCU’s # 5 Strategic Direction is “employee excellence” wherein, “[WCU] will continue to attract, retain, and promote outstanding faculty…”;7

WHEREAS, WCU’s # 5 GOAL is to “ensure salary compensation benefits package remains an institutional priority to attract, reward, and retain the highest quality employees”;8

WHEREAS, two-thirds (66%) of tenure/tenure-track faculty salaries are below 50% CUPA, and nearly one-fourth (22%) are below 25% CUPA, and over half (53%) of fixed-term faculty salaries are below 50% CUPA, and more than a quarter (27%) are below 25% CUPA; 9 and,

WHEREAS, faculty have not received a meaningful State raise in over a decade.10

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate opposes the inclusion of faculty11 positions12 in any budget cuts.

1 “Faculty” include tenured, tenure-track, fixed-term, and instructors.   
2 “Positions” include occupied, vacant, and new lines, and monies/reserve monies therein.   
3 WCU Mission Statement, available at https://www.wcu.edu/discover/about/mission-vision.aspx   
4 Ibid at 3, “Our Core Values and Guiding Principles”   
5 WCU 2020 Plan, “2020 Vision: Focusing on our Future,” available at https://www.wcu.edu/discover/about/wcu-2020-plan/index.aspx   
6 Ibid., Goal 1.1   
7 Ibid.   
8 Ibid., Goal 5.1   
9 Faculty Salary Summary Information (as of October 1, 2020).   
10 WCU Salary Guidelines and Historical Allocations, Historical Legislative Increase Allocations, at slide 9, available at https://www.wcu.edu/\_images/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/FacultyForum3.pdf#search=faculty%20salary %20floor. See also Laura Wright, NC School Teachers Aren’t the Only Ones Struggling. UNC Faculty Are Also Enduring Low Pay, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, Feb. 16, 2020, available at https://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/article240298601.html (“[T]he US inflation calculator shows a whopping 20.1% increase in inflation/cost of living from 2009-2019…since faculty have received no real cost of living adjustments during that time, UNC system faculty have actually experienced a pay cut of well over 20% during the past decade”) at para. 2.   
11 Ibid at 1   
12 Ibid at 2

*Elizabeth Wark motioned to table the resolution in hopes to create a more collaborative statement, utilizing guiding principles to minimize any effects of a budget reduction on the educational priorities and outcomes of the institution. We should absolutely be working with the staff senate.*

*David de Jong seconded.*

*Further discussion proceeded and it was decided to continue the conversations in the scheduled overflow meeting next week.*

**MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

Heather Mae Erickson motioned to adjourn. Leigh Odom seconded.

No objections.  
Meeting Adjourned.