

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Minutes of the Faculty Senate**  
September 28, 2021  
3:00 p.m.

**Regular Meeting No. 4 of the 68th Session: Zoom Webinar September 28, 2021**

**Present:** RaJade M. Berry-James, Chair of the Faculty; Maria Collins, Associate Chair of the Faculty; Hans Kellner, Immediate Past Chair; Carolyn Bird, Parliamentarian; Senators: Ange-van Heugten, Auerbach, Autry, Bass-Freeman, Bernhard, Blessing, Carrier, DePerno, Duggins, Edmisten, Erdim, Gerard, Ghosh, Hakovirta, Hergeth, Jacob, Kirby, Koch, Kuzma, Kuznetsov, Lunardi, McGowan, Morant, Narayan, Nicholas-Walker, Reiskind, Riehn, Robinson, Stallmann, Taylor, Vincent, Williams, Yoon, Zagacki

**Absent:** Allen, Tourino

**Guests:** Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Dr. Julie Casani, Student Health Services Director and Medical Director

**1. Call to Order and Announcements - RaJade M. Berry-James, Chair of the Faculty**

Chair Berry-James called the fourth meeting of the sixty-eighth session of the NC State Faculty Senate to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Berry-James asked Associate Chair Collins to conduct the roll call.

Chair Berry-James called for a motion to accept the agenda. The motion was properly moved and seconded and the agenda was unanimously approved.

**Announcements:**

Dr. Sarah Carrier is the new Chair of the Faculty Grievance and Non Reappointment Committee. Dr. Patrick Rand, former chair of the Faculty Grievance and Non Reappointment Committee, was thanked for his service.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. The Office of Information Technology is sponsoring numerous campus activities to increase awareness and prevention of security threats. Brad Reeves is a member of the WolfPack Security and Private Research Lab.

**2. Approval of the Minutes - Maria Collins, Associate Chair of the Faculty**

Associate Chair Collins called for a motion to approve the minutes for Regular Meeting No. 2 and Regular Meeting No. 3 of the 68th Session. A motion was made and properly seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**3. Chair's Remarks - RaJade M. Berry-James, Chair of the Faculty**

Chair Berry-James reported that Dr. Joy Gaston, Senior Advisor for Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Program Coordinator and Professor of Higher Education, delivered a powerful keynote address on the importance of including diverse populations and perspectives to developing innovative solutions around complex problems.

Chair Berry-James also reported that she spent time with panelists on different stages of the Faculty Tenure Career path. In addition to sharing insight on research, teaching and engagement, the panelists also talked about collaboration and networking in breakout sessions. Chair Berry-James thanked the Research and Leadership Academy moderators for inviting her and the other panelists to talk about grant writing, collaboration, life balance, publishing and building your reputation.

Chair Berry-James continued by acknowledging Laura Kroeger, Research Operations Program Manager in the Office of Research and Innovation, for hosting a great webinar and teaching new skills and Zoom etiquette.

- 4. Provost's Remarks and Q&A - Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost**  
Provost Arden reported to the Faculty Senate that campus-wide vaccination rates were 79% at the end of September; staff are 75% vaccinated and faculty are 93% vaccinated. COVID numbers remain low; positive numbers from surveillance are below 1% and are frequently below ½ percent.

Provost Arden continued by reporting on the two dean searches that are ongoing: the College of Education and the College of Veterinary Medicine, chaired by Dean McGahn and Dean Hinks respectively.

Provost Arden also reported on two recently appointed committees. The first being the 2021 University RPT Committee, chaired by Christopher Rolland, Physics Department; members will serve a two year term. The second, newly appointed committee is the Honorary Degree Committee, which Provost Arden chairs. Provost Arden encourages the Faculty Senate to make appropriate nominations, particularly for candidates who would double as a commencement speaker.

### **Questions and Discussion**

Senator Kuznetsov: Senator Kuznetsov expressed concern about hiring procedures of tenure track faculty. He observed that over the past 22 years, there has been a gradual taking away of faculty rights and faculty importance on hiring.

Provost Arden responded that the university hires a lot of faculty. Over the past 10 years the university has hired over 500 tenure track faculty. In the vast majority of cases, when faculty are hired into a department there is a departmental vote among departmental voting faculty and a separate vote for tenure. Provost Arden disagreed with Senator Kuznetsov's statement in regards to there being a rampant disenfranchisement among the faculty across the university. Provost Arden stated he would like specific examples where this has occurred.

- 5. Classroom Contact Tracing - Dr. Julie Casani, Student Health Services Director and Medical Director**

In this presentation, Dr. Casani explained the Classroom Contact Tracing Program. This program is an adjunct to the individual contact tracing program where people who have tested positive are contacted in addition to any close contacts. They are monitored daily via telephone calls and questionnaires about symptoms. Positive cases are given referrals for testing and advice on next steps.

The goals of the Classroom Contact Tracing Program include

- a. beginning contact tracing from classroom contacts
- b. notifying instructors if they didn't know already
- c. identifying clusters and transmission early in order to provide flexible measures to respond to cases
- d. performing classroom COVID surveillance
- e. reinforcing testing and protective measures in the classroom.

Dr. Casani stated that she hears of positive cases through six or seven different sources: students self-report, people upload their results, and WolfTRAKS, to name a few. A list is generated and from the list Dr. Casani begins the classroom contact tracing.

Dr. Casani continued by stating that she now has super user access for SIS and can pull down a wide variety of rosters. Initially, given the complexity of the systems they were working with, there were missteps and delays that have since been improved upon. Now instructors are frequently informed in less than six hours of knowing that someone tested positive.

Between the dates of August 19 - September 26, 2021, the university worked with 504 students and 2,257 classes; 746 broad messages were sent before September 12, 2021 and 400 focused messages were sent to close contacts.

Dr. Casani shared a graph of the positive rates in classes. The graph showed that there is not a lot of difference between a baseline rate and the subsequent rate. Huge gaps are not shown, which means classrooms are relatively safe. If there were significant transmission in the classroom, the gaps between the blue and yellow lines on the graph would be enormous. Dr. Casani went on to say that it has a lot to do with the baseline vaccination coverage and also a lot to do with wearing masks.

The majority of undergraduate students and graduate students, regardless of their housing status, are exempt either due to vaccination status or recent infection. About 7500 students are required to be tested, and there is a 5% non-compliance rate among those students. There is also a subgroup who lives in university housing or Greek Village housing where a significant proportion are vaccinated and are exempt from testing.

There is a 48% noncompliance rate among staff and faculty who are required to receive COVID testing; 8,961 are exempt. The vaccination rates are lower among the non degree students. Dr. Casani suspects that if Covaxin were authorized by the WHO, the vaccination rate would be well over 80%.

Dr. Casani added that Student Health has the ability to test for the flu and COVID, but it is a specific test that's clinically indicated. Student Health is being very aggressive with the flu vaccine campaign and have already started giving the flu vaccines; there are 7,000 flu vaccine doses. Dr. Casani mentioned that HR is also offering flu vaccines.

There are two ways to get a flu vaccine through Student Health: make an appointment at the pharmacy or via a walk-in clinic that's close to your workplace.

## Questions and Discussion

*Senator Robinson:* I hugely admire your diligence and effort. I worry, however, that a one person staff for classroom contact tracing works only when cases are low. What happens if we get a surge at the start of the spring semester? Is this approach sustainable under a higher caseload?

Dr. Casani responded that it is probably not sustainable the way it is currently structured. Student Health is overwhelmed right now with vaccines of all sorts. They are currently doing flu vaccines, COVID vaccines, and rabies vaccines. One of the things that has been extremely valuable is the collaboration with faculty. Faculty have been more comfortable about sending messages out and working with Student Health.

*Senator Auerbach:* With Delta and the knowledge of aerosol transmission, it would seem that the definition of close contact is outmoded, particularly in windowless and ventilation challenged classrooms.

Dr. Casani responded that this is a concern, which has been presented to the State Health Department. There's more data that is still needed. Even though some classes moved to hybrid, the university did not see something the second week. I believe that a person's ability to be infected depends on a lot of variables other than just it's in the air. It has a lot to do with personal immunity, susceptibility at the time, prior infections, and vaccine status.

*Associate Chair Collins* shared other questions received from guests. What is the selection criteria for the courses that were chosen for the graph? Can you explain again what the high yellow peaks were in the graph?

Dr. Casani answered that the selection criteria included classes that had more than one case. The blue line is the first week of positive rates and the second line is for those that were positive their second week. The yellow lines are the change in cumulative rates.

*Senator Duggins:* Can the vaccination rates by college be added to the dashboard?

Dr. Casani was not able to address this question about the dashboard since she does not manage the dashboard.

*Senator Duggins:* Are we accounting for how many students are actually showing up? In a class that has remote options, I would not expect to see higher transmission rates if only a third of the classes are showing up in person. So if we're using a denominator based on census data of how many students are in the class, I think we might be vastly undercutting what the rate is.

Dr. Casani agreed and stated that most of the classes, for the first three weeks, were not moving largely online. As we move through, the data will be different.

There are only a small handful of classes that are seeing cases every single week. Those would be the ones indicating some of the things you are talking about, where the

denominator would change but the frequency of seeing that class on my list would increase.

Chair Berry-James asked a question on behalf of a guest: Is the University planning to offer COVID booster shots for individuals who are eligible?

Dr. Casani answered that booster shots are available by appointment through Protect the Pack.

*Senator Riehn:* Do you have any indication whether football games or similar activities have led to increased transmission of the virus?

Dr. Casani responded that there has not been any major surges after football games.

Associate Chair Collins on behalf of a guest: What is the mechanism for communicating which faculty and staff are required to be tested? Is this still being tracked by the Pack Ready sheet?

Dr. Casani responded that as far as she knows, it is.

*Senator Carrier:* Why is the newly approved vaccine you mentioned of relevance, and why will it impact vaccination rates?

Dr. Casani responded that Covaxin is not a newly approved vaccine and has not been authorized by WHO. If it were to get authorized, then all of the people who were vaccinated with Covaxin would count towards the numbers as being fully vaccinated. It would add to our fully vaccinated population.

*Senator Williams:* I'm wondering about the campus sites that are carrying the flu vaccine and whether or not the senior strength will be available at those sites.

Dr. Casani responded that she was not sure.

Question from guest: Will there be a Moderna booster available on campus soon?

Dr. Casani answered that as soon as Moderna is authorized for a booster, then the university will make that available. The same goes for the J&J vaccine.

## **6. Old and New Business**

- a. Report from the Academic Policy Committee in respect to CUE recommendations, US-DEI - Paul Williams

Senator Williams reported that there has been a proposal from CUE to change the US diversity requirements to the US diversity, equity and inclusion requirements. Two issues that the Academic Policy Committee has identified are the issue that involves the content of the decision and if it is a change in GED requirements. Also, there is the issue of the process for how this decision is made. The committee invited Darby Orcutt to the next meeting on October 5th. Daneka Scott will attend the October 19th committee meeting.

*Senator Auerbach:* Do you think you can find out all of the facts and come to a conclusion before it all becomes a fait accompli?

Senator Williams responded that he is doubtful because the proposal will be voted on on October 8th. The committee will push hard to postpone any final decision until members have had a chance to provide input, otherwise it's done.

*Senator Morant:* I serve on CUE, and we were given a charge at the beginning of the year from Brett Smith to review the USD category objectives. There were a few opportunities for things to go back to the colleges, so each college curriculum committee had the opportunity to review their proposals and discuss them with faculty. At the end of last semester, we voted on several of the proposals. The decision to no longer make it a co-requisite and the decision to have it stand at three hours has been voted on and passed. The document that most recently went out from Darby Orcutt was a review of the actual wording of those three objectives that came out of CHASS. Since it was not a big change, it was voted to send them forward for additional tweaking. I would say that the initial conversation around the requirement was more of a continued conversation. Brett came in and gave the charge to move that conversation forward and to make some progress.

*Senator McGowan:* Over the course of a year, the committee involved every single college, worked on this document, and came up with what we believed the recommendation should be. We then sent the document forward to the provost in an advisory capacity.

b. Graduate Rights and Responsibilities - Eileen Taylor

Senator Taylor shared a link to the GRR that the Graduate Affairs Committee worked on last year. The committee is working to develop a uniform document that all graduate students have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities and also that faculty have a shared understanding of what graduate students are expected to do.

Senator Taylor asks senators to review the document and provide feedback via the link that she shared.

*Senator Bird:* Can the Graduate Students Rights document be shared out in Departments?

Senator Taylor responded that it can be shared.

Chair Berry-Jams asked Marc Hoit to explain more about the IT Risk Committee and how the faculty senate can help. Marc explained that he needs faculty perspectives on technology use. It does not necessarily need to be a faculty senator.

**7. Issues of Concern - Chair Berry-James**

Faculty Issues of Concern can be submitted at any time to a senator or to [faculty\\_senate@ncsu.edu](mailto:faculty_senate@ncsu.edu). Minutes from each Faculty Senate committee are posted on the Faculty Senate website so progress on issues/discussions can be monitored by all.

Chair Berry-James also noted that it has been a pleasure working with Nikki Cofield as the temporary executive assistant. Nikki is very organized and committed to the work that we all care about.

**8. Adjourn**

Chair Berry-James asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made and properly seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.