

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Regular Meeting No. 6 of the 69th Session
November 15, 2022
3:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting No. 6 of the 69th Session: Hybrid Meeting

November 15, 2022

Present: Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty; Maria Collins, Associate Chair of the Faculty; Senators Auerbach, Bernhard, Blessing, Carrier, DePerno, Edwards, Friend, Ghosh, Hakovirta, Hergeth, Jacob, Koch, Kuznetsov, Lee, Lunardi, Marchant, Morant, Narayan, Phukan, T. Robinson, W. Robinson, Roland, Scalise, Stallmann, Taveirne, Tourino, Verhallen, and Zagacki

Absent: Parliamentarian Bird; Senators Allen, Ange-van Heugten, Breen, Edmisten, and Reiskind

Guests: Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Devesh Hariharan, Graduate Student Association President; McKenzy Heavlin, Student Body President; Chazzlyn Jackson, Chair of the Department on Mental Health Intervention for Student Government

1. Call to Order and Announcements - *Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty*

Chair McGowan called the 6th meeting of the sixty-ninth session of the NC State Faculty Senate to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chair McGowan made the following announcements:

- The Staff Senate is hosting a toy drive through December 13, 2022. Collection boxes are located in buildings throughout the campus; please consider donating a new, unwrapped toy if you are able.
- The Counseling Center has developed a Faculty Toolkit to provide faculty and other instructors with additional resources, creative ideas, and best practices for supporting mental health on campus. Senators were emailed the link to access the toolkit earlier this afternoon.

2. Approval of the Minutes, Regular Meeting No. 5 of the 69th Session, November 1, 2022 - *Maria Collins, Associate Chair of the Faculty*

Associate Chair Collins called for a motion to approve the minutes for Regular Meeting No. 5 of the 69th Session Faculty Senate held on November 1, 2022. A motion was made and properly seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Chair's Remarks - Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty

Chair McGowan gave the following remarks:

“Today we revisit the topic of student success, with a particular focus on student mental health and well-being. We will discuss this topic in two parts. Today, we hear directly from the students themselves. In the spring semester, we will hear from university leaders about current resources to support student well-being, as well as plans for new resources and initiatives that result from the recently convened NC State Student Mental Health Task Force. I have so much to say about this topic, but I don't want to take too much time away from the students. I am fortunate to serve on the Task Force, and I invite any faculty who have suggestions or concerns to email me at faculty_senate@ncsu.edu.”

Chair McGowan went on to say, “This semester, our campus has experienced an unusually high number of student suicides. I have heard frustration from several faculty members about lack of communication from the university when these deaths occur. I know the student body shares this frustration. There are many factors that impact the breadth of communication in the wake of a student death, particularly a suspected suicide. The student's family needs to be notified and may request privacy. There are also research-based guidelines for communication about death by suicide to reduce the risk of suicide contagion. The University is not limiting communication to hide information from the community; they are trying to follow best practices in an incredibly difficult situation. Given that research regarding best practices is ever evolving, I encourage our administration to evaluate communication practices to ensure they are still in alignment. I would also encourage greater transparency about those practices to the campus community.”

4. Provost's Remarks and Q&A

Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Provost Arden provided the following leadership announcements and updates:

- 5-Year Leadership Review of Dean Peter Harries - Dean Harries gave an overview seminar on November 14, 2022; Provost Arden completed the in-person meetings with specific groups and employees of the Graduate School. A survey link will be sent to employees and those who regularly interact with, or advise the Graduate School and other campus leaders.
- On Monday, November 14, 2022, Provost Arden charged the search committee for the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Steve Lommel, Dean and Director of NC Agricultural Research, is chair.
- On Friday, November 18, 2022, Provost Arden will charge the committee in the search for the Dean of the College of Engineering; Ruben Carbonnel, Director of Director of the William R. Kenan, Jr. Institute for Engineering, Technology, & Science, is chair.
- On Thursday, November 17, 2022 Provost Arden will charge the search committee for the Dean of the College of Sciences; Kate Meurs, Dean of Veterinary Medicine, is chair.

- The finalists for the Director for the Institute of Emerging Issues have been approved. Interviews of the finalists will be held the weeks of December 5, 2022 and December 12, 2022.

Provost Arden also announced two new task forces:

- The Black Faculty Retention and Success Task Force is in response to the loss of several prominent black faculty from campus this year. Vice President Doneka Scott and Assistant Vice Provost Jai Jackson are co-chairs. The task force has been asked to return their results and recommendations by April 1, 2023.
- The Student Mental Health Task Force is co-chaired by Dr. Lisa Zapata, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor of DASA and Dr. Helen Chen, Senior Vice Provost for Instructional Programs. Feedback is expected by January 30, 2023.

Question and Discussion

Q: How much are the services of the search firm Buftkin Baker, costing the university?

A: Provost Arden responded that he didn't have the exact number at the time, but Buftkin Baker did give the university a discount for the three dean searches.

Q: The executive search firm hired for the three dean searches also has predominantly white employees with only two employees of color listed online. If we seek leaders who are diverse, how can we be confident that they will yield us a diverse pool, if they cannot hire, promote people of color themselves?

A: The leads on this search are one white male and one African American male. We specifically ask questions for diversity. I am very comfortable that Buftkin Baker is aggressive at pursuing a diverse applicant pool.

Q: In regards to the task force to retain Black faculty, many of the members on the committee are currently Black faculty at NC State University. Have arrangements been made to lighten other parts of their workload to compensate for the fact that they are putting huge efforts into the task force?

A: In general, we do not make allowance for faculty activity spent on search committees, task forces, etc. No individual on the committee has raised that issue.

5. Student Success: Mental Health and Wellness

Devesh Hariharan, Graduate Student Association President

McKenzy Heavlin, Student Body President

Chazzlyn Jackson, Chair of the Department on Mental Health Intervention for Student Government

Devesh Harihan, McKenzy Heavlin and Chazzlyn Jackson visited the Faculty Senate to talk about student mental health and well-being from the student perspective.

Question and Discussion

Q: What conversations on this issue have taken place at the student level?

A: Students are having conversations but I don't think they process or give themselves space to grieve and process the weight of it; they are focused on solutions. The first few days after a student's death, there were a lot of conversations about the lack of transparency from the University.

Students are looking to leadership to help them figure out what their role is in the process of healing. They aren't sure of the protocol of student deaths.

Q: What resources do students think exist and what resources do they think will be beneficial to create?

A: Wellness days seem to be targeted to students who take a lot of classes and have a lot of homework. Graduate students don't typically fall into that category and wellness days don't make a difference in their regular life. Having resources that let students take time off so they can decompress and encouraging students to do so, would be helpful.

Students have voiced that they would like to see wellness days included on the academic calendar ahead of time. With regards to the mental health resources, there are resources available so how do we increase the awareness and accessibility for students?

Making sure that faculty have the resources to be able to know where to direct students that are having a hard time, would be helpful.

Q: What do students wish faculty understood about student mental health?

A: Student mental health is tied to academics, i.e faculty and courses, so when you start adding on other stressors about what's going on with family, vehicle issues, etc, it just piles on and creates a breeding ground for terrible mental health. Having a good relationship with a faculty member who is understanding helps immensely.

In times like these, where student deaths have occurred often, faculty should think about changing the environment and culture of the classroom. Devoting a few minutes before class to ask students, as a whole, how they are feeling might help professors and teaching assistants notice patterns.

On another note, I see a pattern of students equating extensions or course pivots to failure, which is a terrible stigma. Some students would rather suffer in silence than to ask for

extensions. There should be a balance of letting the students know that it's okay to ask for an extension or any type of help in general.

Most Phd students and faculty are not trained to be mentors and to recognize when someone is asking for help. Being able to empathize would be very useful to most students.

Chair McGowan: NC State has a resource for anyone who notices a pattern of the student that you are concerned about, you may submit a report by Googling "NC State CARES". After you submit a report, a trained mental health professional will decide on next steps.

Q: In regards to interactions with faculty and course policy, are there additional examples that can positively affect a student's sense of belonging, well being, and mental health?

A: Having a personal relationship with my personal advisor has proven really helpful. If faculty understood that students have other stressors in their life that are related to academics that would be something to take into account.

Flexibility helps a lot. Also, it would help if professors would include all major assignments on the syllabus in the beginning so there's not a surprise later. If students can plan for the academic stress, they will make it through the things that increase the stress. Building in checkpoints so students are able to see they are falling behind will help them make a plan to get back on track.

Q: What's driving students who feel disconnected and hopeless to feel that way?

A: I don't think faculty understand the age group being affected. Our younger undergrads are learning to interact in person again, where their last two in-person experiences were in completely different settings. High school. So, when you add that to having to learn to interact, in person, in college, during a pandemic, plus the many other overlapping stressors, these have a huge impact on a person's life.

Students who do reach out to a faculty member sometimes are not given the proper resources or the faculty member doesn't have the time to talk to them. Once that happens, it can quickly escalate into the student thinking that since one person didn't want to help them, then the entire community won't help. Day to day interactions can help break that down.

The stressors for graduate students are financial, the imposter syndrome, and just being in graduate school. What would help is for students to know that this is not the end; faculty and advisors do care.

Q: What can the institution do to build community?

A: Transparency and awareness would help. Students get anxious because they don't know what to do and wonder why they only hear about certain issues via social media.

6. Old and New Business

- a. Update on DEIB Special Select Committee - *Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty*
Chair McGowan provided the following update:

“The call for faculty to serve on this committee is still open! Motivated by the university’s strategic plan, the committee will address how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging work, across all realms of faculty responsibility, can be more formally recognized during faculty appointment and evaluation. I do want to make clear that the goal of this initiative is **not** to require that all faculty engage in DEIB work; rather it is to appropriately recognize high-quality work by faculty who choose to engage in it. The committee will serve during the next calendar year; presenting a report to the Provost around December 2023. Any recommendations made by the committee will be stronger if they are based on a broad representation of faculty voices. As such, faculty members of all ranks and tracks and departmental or college-level administrators whose appointments focus on DEIB are invited to apply for committee membership. A draft charge and link to apply were emailed to all full-time faculty on October 24th with a reminder sent this morning. The call for participation will be open until November 30, 2022; please consider applying and encouraging your colleagues to apply. Additional questions can be sent to faculty_senate@ncsu.edu.”

b. Standing Committee Updates

i. Personnel Policy Committee

Senator Walter Robinson provided the following report. IOC (2022-05) was raised by Prof. David Gereneux, who served as Chair of a Grievance Panel in the spring of 2022. Prof. Genereux attended the November 18, 2022, meeting of the Personnel Policy Committee (PPC) and presented his concerns regarding the present NC State grievance [Policy 05.25.01](#) and [REG 05.25.04](#). Prof. Genereux expressed his concern that the NC State policies are tilted in favor of the respondent. He has prepared [a detailed analysis](#), in which he compares NC State’s policies with the University of North Carolina system grievance policy and with those at peer institutions. This comparison exposes examples of NC State’s rigidity, and raises four substantive issues:

- 1) The narrower scope of grievable issues at NC State in comparison with the UNC system.
- 2) The unrealistically short window for filing grievances at NC State - namely the 60 day window here is shorter than at other universities
- 3) The role of NC State General Counsel in grievance hearings, typically advocating (in effect) for the respondent (and thus against the grievant). It should be noted that the grievant does not have legal counsel present at these hearings.

4) The burden of proof placed on the grievant to present documentable evidence of bullying or harassment in order for a grievance to proceed.

In general, he argues that to deny a grievance based upon a legal “technicality” is fundamentally unfair to the grievant.

It is important for the university and for faculty that the grievance process be viewed as fair and impartial. This is important for sustaining the university’s vision as a “diverse, equitable and inclusive community.” The grievance policy is intended to “to provide an *internal* university process for the *good faith* resolution of employment-related faculty issues.” We note that if the internal process is not seen to operate in good faith, grievants are likely to eschew it in favor of litigation, at significant costs to both them *and* the university. Thus, the faculty *and* the administration have a significant shared interest in a grievance process that is fair and is perceived as such.

Acting on the recommendation of Senior Vice Provost, Dr. Katharine Stewart, the PPC wishes to recommend to Provost Arden the creation of a working group to consider revisions to the NC State grievance process and policy. Our recommendation will include suggestions for the membership of the working group, which should include former Faculty Grievance Panel Chairs, Faculty Grievance Committee Chairs (Prof. Sarah Carrier, also a member of the PPC, is currently in this role), administrators and faculty.

As this is a weighty matter, we seek the approval of the Senate in order to proceed.

A motion was made and properly seconded. The floor was opened for discussion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

The Personnel Policy committee will prepare a formal document to send to the provost.

7. Issues of Concern (IOCs)

Faculty Issues of Concern can be submitted at any time to a senator or to the Office of the Faculty Senate via email at Faculty_Senate@ncsu.edu

8. Adjourn at 4:52 p.m.

Chair McGowan asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made and properly seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.