

NC STATE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the General Faculty Meeting
February 21, 2023
3:00 PM

- 1. Call to Order and Announcements** - *Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty*
The Spring General Faculty Meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chair McGowan announced that elections for the Faculty Senate, Hearing Committee, and Non Reappointment Committees will take place soon. Interested candidates should send their name and bio to faculty_senate@ncsu.edu by March 3, 2023.

- 2. Approval of the Minutes, September 20, 2022 General Faculty Meeting** - *Maria Collins, Associate Chair of the Faculty*

The minutes from the September 20, 2022 General Faculty Meeting were presented and approved.

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

- 4. Chancellor's Remarks and Q&A** - *Randy Woodson, Chancellor*

Chancellor Woodson announced that Chancellor Doneka Scott has created a task force to examine and improve the mental health support for students, faculty, and staff at NC State University. Initially expected in January, the report was delayed to ensure thorough stakeholder consultation and comprehensive research. Now publicly available, the report includes current practices and future recommendations, calling for shared governance to implement the proposed changes.

In other news, the Board of Governors' Committee on Governance has endorsed Policy 300.5.1, which involves political activities of employees. The proposed amendment to this policy, designed to protect the First Amendment rights of all university community members, aims to prevent compelling speech, specifically in scenarios where opinions on socially or politically relevant topics may be solicited.

Chancellor Randy Woodson warned that the proposed amendment to Policy 300.5.1 may significantly impact the university's application process for students and faculty. However, detailed guidelines from the System Office are not expected should this pass.

On a positive note, a faculty member, Rodolphe Barrangou, a professor in food bio-processing and nutrition sciences, and one of the early co-inventors of the CRISPR genome editing technology, will be inducted into the National Hall of Fame of Inventors. He will be the fifth active faculty from NC State to receive this honor. Additionally, three faculty members have been elected as Fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science: Jaqueline Hughes-Oliver, professor of

statistics; Sindee Simon, Distinguished Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering; and De-Yu Xie, professor of plant and microbial biology.

In terms of governance, the Chancellor reminded that NC State is part of a unified system of higher education, unique to states like North Carolina, New York, and Florida. All members of the Board of Governors and trustees are elected through the General Assembly, and they have authority over promotion, tenure, buildings, and property among other things. Despite this structure, the management of the institution remains with the faculty, staff, and leadership, following a shared governance model to ensure open lines of communication.

The Chancellor emphasized the faculty's control over the curriculum as an integral part of shared governance. Further discussions on this topic will continue.

Provost's Remarks and Q&A - *Katharine Stewart, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs*

Katharine Stewart provided several key updates during the meeting:

- The recent Reappointment, Promotion, or Tenure (RPT) season was a success with 162 faculty going through the process. Letters regarding reappointments will be sent out soon, followed by those for promotion and tenure in April.
- Information sessions are being planned for faculty members who will be participating in the next RPT season. These sessions will also benefit individuals reviewing dossiers. The in-person session will be on March 8 at Cox Hall and the Zoom webinar on March 24.
- A five-year leadership review of Dean Peter Harries of the Graduate School was completed by Provost Arden, who met with Dean Harries and the graduate school employees afterward.
- There are ongoing dean searches for several colleges, including Agriculture and Life Sciences, Engineering, and Sciences. Interviews for the College of Engineering candidates on February 20th.
- The search for a new Vice Provost for Global Engagement was initiated. The position will be posted early next week.
- Katharine then concluded her segment and handed it back to the chair for further discussion and questions.

5. Shared Governance: The Good and Bad about Faculty Participation in Institutional Governance

Chair McGowan led a panel discussion on Shared Governance, covering its significance and challenges from both the faculty and administration's perspectives.

She began by emphasizing the importance of understanding terminology around governance, explaining that "shared governance" reflects the continuum of decisional authority between faculty and administration.

Utilizing a graphic from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), based on a 2021 survey, she presented the balance of authority in various university decisions. For instance, courses and curriculum decisions are typically faculty-driven, while broader institutional decisions tend to be administratively dominated.

She acknowledged that certain decisions benefit from an administrative perspective due to factors such as context experience and faculty time constraints.

Opportunities for shared governance are found at all levels within the institution, from university-wide bodies like the Faculty Senate to departmental committees and faculty meetings.

She continued by stating that shared governance, academic freedom, and tenure are three pillars of faculty autonomy, all of which contribute to the unique environment in faculty careers.

Chair McGowan continued the discussion by highlighting the threats to faculty autonomy, such as misunderstandings and criticism of tenure and academic freedom from those unfamiliar with higher education operations. She cautioned that such threats could lead to the downfall of shared governance, emphasizing its role as a defense for academic freedom, tenure, and faculty autonomy. While shared governance doesn't guarantee faculty preferences in every decision, it assures their meaningful participation in critical decisions, warning that relinquishing this voice could result in its total loss.

In response to faculty frustrations with shared governance, Chair McGowan presented examples of its positive impact. One such example is the recent Faculty Senate's recommendation against requiring documentation for class absences in light of a student mental health crisis.

Through shared governance, faculty were able to express their concerns about increased workloads and the potential for violating student privacy, leading to further discussion and consideration by the Academic Policy Subcommittee. Chair McGowan concluded by referring to past successful examples of shared governance, such as the revision of the University regulation on professional faculty ranks and appointments in February 2020, demonstrating its effective role in shaping university policies and regulations.

She continued her address on shared governance, emphasizing its significant influence on shaping university policies and decisions through numerous examples. She first highlighted the revised university regulation on professional faculty ranks and appointments. This regulation, which changed the terminology from 'non-tenure track' to 'professional track,' saw faculty playing a key role in its formulation. It also clarified the expectations and rights of professional track faculty, including the newly codified right to vote on departmental colleague promotions.

McGowan then turned to the shift from the 'Statement of Mutual Expectations' to the 'Statement of Faculty Responsibilities.' This important transition was the result of a task force's observations, noting the previous document's inconsistencies and misuse in faculty Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure (RPT) decisions.

Highlighting the role of committees in shared governance, she referenced the University Course and Curriculum Committee and the Council on Undergraduate Education, both of which are responsible for reviewing undergraduate courses and curricular actions for the university.

In addition, McGowan cited the controversial revision of the U.S. Diversity requirement of the General Education Program (GEP). She underscored that despite the diverse opinions and perspectives among the faculty, their discussions, contributions, and recommendations played a vital role in refining policies and driving institutional improvement.

Despite extolling shared governance's benefits, McGowan acknowledged the existence of its challenges and stressed the need for an honest conversation on these issues. Concluding her address, she handed the conversation over to Madhusudan Katti, an associate professor in Forestry and Environmental Resources, who is a member of the NC State's American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter. Katti introduced himself and his position, and disclosed his involvement with the Senate and the current review of his RPT file. Katti, after expressing his appreciation for the insights on the governance model at NC State shared by Chancellor Woodson and Chair McGowan, confessed that he too was grappling with understanding how governance functioned within the system. Having spent over six years at NC State, he found comfort in knowing that even the Chancellor took time to grasp the governance model.

Before arriving at NC State, Katti served as a faculty member in the California State University system, specifically on the Fresno State campus. He noted that despite the system's size, spanning 23 campuses, its governance model was considerably different from that of NC State, largely due to differing labor and other laws in California.

In his experience, the California system granted greater power to faculty, not only in governance but also in personnel domains. The faculty voice was more influential at both campus and statewide levels. A significant reason for this balance of power was California's allowance for unionizing and collective bargaining, leading to a strong faculty union within the Cal State system and a collective bargaining agreement that governed many work processes.

Katti explained that the shift to NC State was a significant change in terms of how governance worked, noting that the academic senate and committees within the California system had a more direct involvement in policy creation. During his time in the executive committee of the Faculty Senate, he worked with various committees that drafted policies regarding faculty appointments, tenure, evaluations, and others. These policies were drafted by the faculty within the framework of institutional governance. Even though the Senate's role was advisory, these policies carried weight, giving faculty a more significant stake in creating policies that directly influenced their work.

Katti pointed out that the governance model at NC State was quite different from what he had experienced before. He also acknowledged that he was representing the relatively young NC State chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which only formed in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This was his first experience with faculty acting collectively towards shared interests at NC State.

He encouraged others to consider the cultural differences he'd experienced at Fresno State, and how that contrasted with the faculty culture at NC State. He challenged faculty to reflect on their level of investment in governance and shared goals.

Reminding the audience that the AAUP has been a long-standing advocate for shared governance, Katti mentioned that the organization has released statements on shared governance going back many years. These domains of shared governance were reflected in the survey they conducted.

Katti asked the audience to consider the challenges of shared governance both on their own campus and more broadly at universities like theirs. He noted that while the new policy supposedly protects free

speech, it restricts discussion on certain politically sensitive topics. The irony, he pointed out, is that the policy does not clearly define these topics, which stifles the free exchange of ideas.

Katti then touched on the broader political climate in which universities operate, which often challenges the autonomy and freedom of universities. He hinted at the situation in Florida, potentially referring to controversial educational policies or incidents. He also expressed concern about similar developments in North Carolina due to the political climate.

Acknowledging the strain of the pandemic on everyone in the university, from students to faculty to administrators, Katti emphasized that it was a challenging time to consider institutional governance. This was particularly true given that many were dealing with personal health and family concerns.

Turning his attention to specific challenges pertaining to faculty and the system in North Carolina, Katti referenced the state's governance model. The Board of Governors, he pointed out, is politically appointed and often promotes policies mandated by the state government.

Katti referred to the news coming from the University of North Carolina (UNC) about challenges related to program creation, areas he believed should be under more faculty control than administrative.

Reflecting on the governance model of their campus and the University of North Carolina system, he expressed concern about the serious challenges it faces, particularly given the political appointments and policies.

Despite these challenges, Katti encouraged the audience to view the situation as a shared fight. He emphasized the importance of the university leadership, faculty, and even the Chancellor working together to preserve their shared values. This included protecting elements like the undergraduate curriculum and addressing concerns about politically-charged words entering the lexicon without a proper understanding of their academic context.

Katti described a sense of solidarity, a sentiment that they were all in this together. However, he also acknowledged the reality of the faculty's largely advisory role within the academic senate. He mentioned recent monthly meetings started by the Chancellor with the Faculty Senate and student governance chairs as a positive development, but emphasized that the role of faculty, students, and staff was largely advisory.

In his view, the limited role for faculty might challenge their participation. He ended on a sobering note, referring to national reports that indicate faculty across universities are feeling disengaged from their institutions. Katti elaborated on the sense of disconnect between the faculty and the university, stating that faculty feel unrepresented and that their best interests are not being considered, particularly in the face of political pressures. This has led to faculty disengagement and even departures from academia.

Katti identified this feeling of disempowerment, or lack of control over their professional careers, as a significant challenge. He argued that merely having an advisory role did not suffice. To encourage more faculty involvement, he suggested that faculty should feel that their input makes a difference in how policies are formed and implemented.

He acknowledged that faculty might not wish to be involved in every aspect of university operations, but emphasized that there were areas that affected faculty directly or indirectly, as well as areas that affected students, where faculty should have a greater voice.

However, he identified time as a significant constraint for faculty, with many overcommitted to various tasks. Furthermore, he pointed out that university evaluation models do not give much weight to participation in governance activities. This lack of recognition for serving in a governance role was, according to Katti, a serious problem.

He also raised the issue of statewide political culture and rules that inhibit collective action and the formation of unions. This had, in his view, made it more difficult for him to find a sense of solidarity and connection with other faculty members. Instead, he found the environment more individualistic, with everyone primarily focused on advancing their own careers.

Madhusudan Katti raises concerns about the state of faculty governance in the current university system. According to him, faculty often feel isolated and powerless within the structure, causing many to focus more on their individual career advancement rather than collaborative governance activities. This individualistic approach may cause friction as it inhibits the articulation and pursuit of shared objectives. The existing political climate and regulations also discourage faculty unions and collective actions, further contributing to a less cooperative culture.

At the department level, the lack of faculty influence in governance decisions, such as the election of department chairs, amplifies this sense of disempowerment. The top-down approach to governance tends to create a disconnect between faculty and university actions, particularly when dealing with significant issues such as mental health crises. The absence of clear communication and transparency can lead to frustrations among the faculty, who often feel sidelined in decision-making processes.

Katti underscores the critical need to enable faculty to become more invested and participatory in the governance of the institution. This would involve cultivating a culture of shared governance, greater transparency, and inclusivity, even amidst a political climate that may discourage such participation. This, according to Katti, is essential for the overall growth and improvement of the institution.

6. 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 Faculty_Senate@ncsu.edu.

7. Adjourn

Chair McGowan adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.