

NC STATE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Regular Meeting No. 6 of the 70th Session
November 28, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting No. 6 of the 70th Session Faculty Senate Chambers November 28, 2023

Present: Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty; Chris DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty; Carolyn Bird, Parliamentarian; Senators Bell, Blank, Breen, Burke, Daley, DavDiaconeasa, Drake, Edmisten, Edwards, Hou, Hyman, Jasper, Kedrowicz, Lee, Morant, Narayan, Phukan, Reiskind, Robinson, Roland, Taveirne, Tourino, Verhallen, Zagacki

Guests: Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Bradley Davis, Faculty and Staff Ombuds; Amy Orders, Emergency Preparedness and Strategic Initiatives

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

Chair McGowan called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

Chair McGowan then went on to provide the announcements:

- The Office of Faculty Excellence is interested in learning about faculty experiences, perspectives, and requests about supporting student mental health. Faculty can participate in-person or a virtual focus group; there is also an online form to submit feedback. For more information, visit <https://go.ncsu.edu/faculty-well-being/>.

2. Approval of the Minutes, Regular Meeting No. 5 of the 70th Session, November 14, 2023
- Christopher DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty

Associate Chair DePerno called for a motion to approve the minutes of the fifth meeting of the 70th Session NC State Faculty Senate. A motion and second were made and the minutes were approved.

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

Chair McGowan made the following remarks.

Today is the final Faculty Senate meeting of the Fall semester. The majority of the meeting will be spent hearing from each other, with updates from University Standing Committees and Senate subcommittees. These committees address a lot of important university business, and participation on them is one way the Faculty Senate supports shared governance. As such, it's valuable for the entire Senate to hear updates and have the opportunity to ask questions.

Chair McGowan provided a brief update about the senate's continued discussions on faculty well being. "These are all complex issues without an easy solution. However, I am committed to making concrete progress. For next steps, my plan is to select a process, such as travel or purchasing, which were frequently mentioned as being frustrating in the survey, to examine. This will be a project for the spring semester, and I will be looking for your input as we progress."

4. Provost's Remarks and Q&A - Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Provost Arden acknowledged the closure of Poe Hall was a significant topic of discussion and provided the following observations regarding it. It was noted that although there had been health concerns raised for some time, the university moved quickly to conduct testing in the building when preliminary results came back positive for PCBs. Closing down the 6-story academic building and relocating hundreds of people was a substantial undertaking. The decision to vacate the building was made as a precautionary measure, even though all the data and answers were not available at that time. The university is in the process of contracting with building environmental specialists and working with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to confirm results, identify the source, explore remediation options, and understand any implications.

Provost Arden emphasized the importance of obtaining accurate data and developing a course of action. The possibility of on-campus instruction in the spring was discussed, but it was uncertain due to the complexity of the situation and remediation efforts. He went on to express a commitment to working quickly and appropriately and pledged to provide updates as more information becomes available.

5. Poe Hall Closing - Amy Orders, Senior Director, Emergency Preparedness and Strategic Initiatives

Dr. Orders began by reiterating the closure of Poe Hall and the reasons behind it, emphasizing the need for comprehensive sampling and understanding of the situation. Poe Hall was described as a complex building with unique architecture and HVAC systems embedded within the concrete, making the testing and mitigation process complex.

Preparations were made for academic continuity for the spring semester due to the uncertainty of the timeline for reopening Poe Hall. Several actions were taken, including relocating the Psychoeducational Clinic and identifying alternative spaces on Centennial Campus and main campus for the College of Education.

Registration and Records worked on rescheduling final exams that were previously scheduled at Poe Hall. Efforts were made to repurpose rooms, find research spaces, and provide office spaces for faculty to ensure the academic mission could continue.

Research continuity and the security of research materials were highlighted as priorities, with collaboration with the Office of Research and Innovation. Measures were being taken to secure data, licenses, and research artifacts during the relocation process. The importance of protecting research materials and artifacts was emphasized, and specific requests would be addressed through one-on-one consultation with the Office of Research and Innovation. Dr. Orders expressed confidence in the partnership with the Office of Research and Innovation based on previous experiences during the COVID pandemic.

Dr. Orders went on to explain that an internal environmental assessment was conducted, including the analysis of samples collected in October and November, testing for asbestos, RCR 8 (heavy metals), and PCBs. Preliminary testing showed the presence of PCBs, which raised concerns and warranted further investigation. The complex HVAC infrastructure within Poe Hall required in-depth examination. The university is working with outside consultants and experts to gather more information and data to determine next steps.

Individuals who need to access Poe Hall to retrieve items for the semester can coordinate with the facilities team.

Individuals with health concerns were encouraged to use personal resources or campus help for support. The Faculty and Staff Assistance Program and State Health Plan are both resources.

Trust in the university's proactive approach and the commitment to gathering accurate data and information were highlighted. It was emphasized that the university was working diligently to achieve a better understanding of the situation and to ensure academic and research continuity. The process involved engaging external partners and subject matter experts and planning for continuity in the spring semester if necessary. The importance of having concrete information from experts in the coming weeks was emphasized.

Dr. Amy Orders addresses questions and concerns about the preliminary testing results and the exposure timeline. Here are the key points:

- The exposure timeline to PCBs was first identified during the recent round of testing in the fall. This was the first time PCBs were detected in Poe Hall.
- Different types and scopes of environmental testing have been conducted over the years, but this round of testing specifically identified PCBs as a concern.
- There have been no previous instances where similar levels of testing resulted in concerns about PCBs.
- The focus now is on understanding the specifics of the PCB contamination, including the type of PCBs, associated health risks, and the potential duration of exposure.
- The university is waiting for more detailed information and recommendations from external experts before determining the necessary steps, including cleaning procedures.
- Dr. Orders emphasized the importance of caution and awaiting expert guidance before making decisions regarding cleaning or mitigation.
- The specific PCB testing in Poe Hall was initiated after a request from a faculty member was received for environmental testing and indoor air quality assessment.
- Faculty members had suggested that PCBs might be a concern based on their research and data mining.
- Currently, the university is reviewing all buildings constructed or renovated between the 1950s and 1970s to assess whether similar issues might exist in other locations.
- Testing protocols can vary depending on the purpose, such as construction projects, water quality, or environmental contaminants. The appropriate test is chosen based on the specific need.
- The initial testing provided a broad overview of the potential presence of PCBs, but given the complexity and various types of PCBs, further expert-driven testing is required to provide specific details and recommendations.
- An outside party with expertise in environmental contaminants will be engaged for more detailed and specific testing.
- Faculty members had suggested testing for PCBs due to concerns about a potential cancer cluster in the building. The university has reached out to employees in Poe Hall to inquire about cancer diagnoses, and employees were invited to provide confidential information. There was a discussion about the systemic nature of reaching out to employees to gather information related to cancer diagnoses.
- There is a desire among faculty and the university community for more information, even if it's preliminary, to address confusion and distrust.
- Faculty members expressed the need for transparency in sharing information about the presence of contaminants and their concentrations, even with caveats and limitations.
- Questions were raised about the university's efforts to communicate with alumni who may have studied in Poe Hall over the years.
- A suggestion was made to establish a process for faculty to communicate anonymously or confidentially about concerns or information related to their work environments. The

importance of addressing the fear of retribution among faculty members who wish to speak up was highlighted.

6. Ombuds Charter - Bradley Davis, Faculty and Staff Ombuds

Mr. Davis discussed the update to the Faculty and Staff Ombuds Charter (<https://facultyombuds.ncsu.edu/charter/>). He explained the importance of the charter as a guiding document for the role of the ombuds and outlined the four guiding principles of ombuds work: independence, confidentiality, impartiality, and informality.

Bradley Davis emphasized the confidentiality of his role, stating that he follows confidentiality to the extent possible unless there is an immediate threat or harm to minors, which would require a breach of confidentiality. He also clarified that he is not a decision-maker and does not have the authority to change policies but can report trends and concerns in the aggregate.

He encouraged faculty and staff to schedule meetings with him if they have conflicts or concerns and explained that meetings can be conducted in person, by phone, or virtually. He provided information on how to schedule appointments through email or the website calendar.

Mr. Davis addressed a question about the extent of confidentiality in his role as the Faculty and Staff Ombuds. He explained that confidentiality is upheld to the fullest extent possible, but there are exceptions, such as in cases of immediate threats or harm to minors. He also mentioned that email communications might not be the most secure method for discussing sensitive matters due to public records requests.

7. University Standing Committee Updates

a. Admissions Committee, Dennis Davis

Senator Davis reported that the committee met three times and discussed the student appeal process for continuation of undergraduate students. There is a proposal to modify the committee's charge to create a new committee specifically for handling appeals, as they often occur during the summer and involve intersecting issues with student services and mental health services.

b. Athletics Committee, Christopher Roland

Senator Roland reported the Athletics Committee discussed changes in the landscape of college athletics, including pending lawsuits. These changes are expected to impact college athletics in various ways.

c. Committee on Undergraduate Education, Gary Blank

Senator Blank reported that the committee meets every two weeks, but may not meet if there is a lack of agenda items to consider. The committee discussed general education requirements and the general education program. One challenge discussed was the requirement of 5 credits for interdisciplinary perspectives when no 2-credit or 1-credit courses are offered.

d. Courses and Curricula Committee, Mihai Diaconeasa

Senator Diaconeasa reported that the UCCC has been discussing ways to streamline the approval process for courses and curricula changes, especially for minor changes. They are also looking at different options for scheduling meetings.

e. Evaluation of Teaching Committee, James Scalise

No report

f. Honorary Degree Committee, Herle McGowan

Chair McGowan reported that the committee has not met yet but is in the process of scheduling a meeting. Two honorary degrees will be conferred at the fall ceremony.

g. International Programs Committee, Dennis Daley

Senator Daley reported that the International Programs Committee is a large committee that advises on international programs at the university. They have had two meetings and plan to meet with the International Operations Council in the future.

h. Library Committee, Nilakshi Phukan

No report.

i. Lifelong Faculty Involvement Committee, Michael Hyman

Senator Hyman reported that the committee discussed mentoring processes for retired or soon-to-be retired faculty and explored an app called Cronus for connecting like-minded individuals. They also reviewed a document on retirement tips for NC State faculty and discussed ways to support faculty in the transition to retirement.

j. Registration, Records, & Calendar Committee, Jason Hou

Senator Hou reported that the committee discussed potential registration policy updates, including seat reservations for certain courses and ways to improve course information visibility for students. They also considered scheduling wellness days on specific weekdays to enhance student engagement.

k. Speakers and Lecturers Committee, Harriett Edwards

Senator Edwards reported that the committee focuses on inviting guest speakers to campus. They have been strategizing ways to increase attendance at speaker events, including collaborating with departments, improving communication, and exploring partnerships with other organizations that bring speakers to campus.

l. University Housing Committee, Jeong Dae Lee

Senator Lee reported that University Housing manages a large number of residential buildings and housing units on campus. The committee has discussed technical improvements, accessibility enhancements, and the establishment of a dedicated mail center to streamline online package delivery. They also addressed housing costs and proposed a rate increase for the fiscal year 2025.

8. Faculty Senate Standing Committee Updates

a. Academic Policy Committee

Senator Tourino provided a brief update, stating that they had reviewed an Issue of Concern (IOC) related to posthumous degree conferral. They agreed with the IOC and suggested that the policy move forward to the next level. More meetings are expected in the spring.

b. Personnel Policy Committee

Senator Robinson reported that the committee discussed several issues, including a proposal to change the language of “strive to exceed” in the Statement of Faculty Responsibilities (SFR). There was also a discussion about the timing of reappointment for lecturers and individual appointments, with a suggestion that this could be addressed by the ombuds. They reviewed changes in policy regarding faculty and teaching professional track faculty.

Senator Robinson shared a memo, highlighting changes to make language in the SFR more inclusive, remove “strive to exceed” language, and emphasize rules and standards for promotion. There was a suggestion that units should revisit their rules.

There was a vote of support to send the memo forward. The purpose of the vote was to show that the matter had been carefully considered by the Personnel Policy Committee and that the committee had the support of the full Senate behind their recommendation.

c. Resources and Environment Committee

Senator Edmisten reported that the committee discussed issues of concern related to an active shooter, building maintenance, as well as WiFi concerns. The committee proposed writing a memo regarding the active shooter and building maintenance. WiFi concerns included radiation issues, which were addressed with expert input (Rob Hayes, Amy Orders and Marc Hoit). A computer use policy update was mentioned, pending discussion at a future full Faculty Senate meeting.

d. Governance, Communications, and Recruitment Committee (GOCORE)

Senator Morant reported that the committee conducted a survey to understand the time commitment of faculty senators. Survey results indicated that compensation and resource allocation were important incentives for faculty senators. Discussion included possible incentives, such as course release, research allowances, and stipends. The committee plans to make recommendations based on the survey results. There were comments from faculty members questioning the value of faculty senators’ roles, which may need to be addressed.

9. Old and New Business

None.

10. 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 [online](#) or via email at Faculty_Senate@ncsu.edu

11. Adjourn

Chair McGowan adjourned the meeting at 4:53 PM.