

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Minutes of the Faculty Senate**  
**Regular Meeting No. 11 of the 70th Session**  
March 19, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

**Present:** Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty; Chris DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty; Carolyn Bird, Parliamentarian; Senators Ange-van Heugten, Bell, Blank, Breen, Daley, Davis, Diaconeasa, Drake, Edmisten, Edwards, Hajbabaie, Hajibabai, Hyman, Jasper, Kedrowicz, Lee, Morant, Mullins, Narayan, Phukan, Reiskind, Robinson, Taveirne, Tourino, Verhallen, Zagacki

**Guests:** Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Jackie Cerda-Smith, Founder and President of the Student Parent Association; April Fogelman, Chair of the Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching

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

Chair McGowan called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and shared three announcements.

The African American Cultural Center and NC State University Libraries are hosting the Black Research Symposium Lite on March 27, 2024. Faculty can register to mentor participating students. To learn more or register, google "black research symposium ncsu."

Multicultural Student Affairs, the Native American Student Association, and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society will host the Annual NC State Powwow at noon on March 30 at Miller Field. All are welcome to join the celebration. There is a small cost to attend: \$2 with an NC State ID or \$5 General Admission. To learn more, google "pow wow ncsu."

Faculty are invited to provide feedback on the Student Code of Conduct, which is being reviewed by the Office of Student Conduct. A link to a form for providing feedback as well as information on several feedback sessions will be emailed to senators and faculty.

**2. Approval of the Minutes, Regular Meeting No. 10 of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session, February 20, 2024 - Christopher DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty**

Associate Chair DePerno asked if there were any corrections or adjustments for the minutes. A correction was proposed by Senator Warren, specifically on page 3, regarding the outlined proposal for a 4.5% increase in partner fees across the board for all employees, students, and departments for each of the next two fiscal years. The phrase "for each of" was added for clarity. Following this correction, a motion to approve the amended minutes was made, seconded, and passed with all in favor and no opposition.

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

Chair McGowan announced that the Chancellor and Provost will host a Zoom webinar to discuss Poe Hall. This session aims to provide updates on progress, timelines, and health hazard evaluations concerning Poe Hall. Two epidemiologists will participate to offer additional context and information regarding public health, specifically addressing the roles various agencies play in understanding potential connections among cancer diagnoses. This information, initially shared with Poe Hall occupants, is accessible on the Poe Hall updates website. The webinar is scheduled for Monday, March 25, 2024 at 10:30 AM.

Additionally, McGowan announced a new initiative aimed at strengthening connections between the various senates on campus to amplify their voices on relevant issues. A joint meeting between the faculty and staff senates is scheduled for Monday, April 1st, from 3 to 5 PM, focusing on HR issues of interest to both groups. The meeting will take place in Sas Hall, Room 1102, with refreshments available beforehand. Attendees have been asked to indicate their availability and whether they will attend in person or virtually. This meeting will replace the usual Faculty Senate meeting scheduled for April 2nd, with a detailed agenda to be sent out a week in advance.

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

Provost Warwick Arden's remarks covered several key announcements and updates:

**Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Sessions:** The final general information session for RPT is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30th, from 3:00 to 4:30 PM in Riddick Hall Room 450.

**COACHE Survey:** The survey of faculty satisfaction, administered by Harvard's Graduate School of Education, remains open until April 1st. Participation is encouraged to aid in longitudinal data collection.

**UNC System Employment Engagement Survey:** Open from March 25th to April 8th for all permanent full-time faculty and staff, conducted by Modern Think, an independent research and consulting firm. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

**Leadership Searches and Reviews:** Updates on various leadership positions, including the search for the Senior Vice Provost of Faculty Excellence and the 5-year leadership reviews of several key positions. Notably, both Dean Frank Buckless and Senior Vice Provost Greg Raschke received excellent reviews and will continue in their roles.

**Poe Hall Update:** An informational webinar is scheduled for Monday, March 25th, featuring state epidemiologists to discuss health and safety evaluations related to Poe Hall.

**Campus-Wide Emergency Communications Drill:** Scheduled for Thursday, March 8th, to test the Wolf Alert system and other emergency management communication methods. The drill aims to familiarize new students and employees with the university's emergency management systems and will last approximately 5 minutes.

#### **5. Statement of Support for Student Parent Childcare Needs - Jackie Cerda-Smith, Founder and President of the Student Parent Association**

Jackie Cerda Smith, a Ph.D. student in Psychology at NC State and the founder and president of the Student Parent Association (SPA), presented on the childcare needs of student parents. The SPA drafted a statement of support for student parent childcare needs, which was shared with the Senate members prior to the meeting. Jackie's presentation aimed to provide an overview of the challenges faced by student parents in finding quality, affordable childcare, and to seek the Senate's endorsement of the SPA's statement.

Jackie shared her personal experience as a student parent, highlighting the significant financial burden of childcare costs, which for her family amounted to nearly double her stipend. She emphasized that her story is not unique and that many student parents struggle with affording childcare. The SPA's goal is to connect, support, and advocate for pregnant and parenting students on campus.

The SPA has received support from various organizations, including the Council on the Status of Women, and is seeking further endorsements to strengthen their advocacy efforts. The statement outlines the problems student parents face in accessing child care resources and proposes short-term and long-term recommendations that could benefit faculty members with children as well.

During the Q&A, a question was raised about the current contracts with childcare vendors and whether the university's partnerships with these vendors come at a cost to the university or if they are based on volume discounts. Jackie explained that Bright Horizons is the only subsidized partnership, which has limited funds. She also mentioned that there is potential for the university to encourage other vendors to offer discounts to student parents, as some vendors have been willing to do so while others have not.

A key point raised was whether the capacity and availability of childcare providers in the area had been explored, highlighting the significant issue of long waitlists for childcare services. Jackie acknowledged that while her conversations with university contacts didn't specifically cover provider capacity, the SPA is aware of the challenges, including the exacerbated impact of COVID-19 on supply and demand for childcare. She mentioned

that one of the benefits of university partnerships with childcare providers could be priority on waitlists, suggesting this as a potential avenue for future improvement.

Following Jackie's presentation and the Q&A session, Chair McGowan transitioned to discussing the Senate's potential endorsement of the SPA's statement of support for student-parent childcare needs. McGowan outlined the typical process for endorsements, which includes a two-meeting rule for resolutions, but also noted that the bylaws allow for waiving a second reading with a two-thirds majority vote, enabling a vote to take place in the current meeting. A motion to waive the second reading was proposed and seconded. With all votes in, the motion to waive the second reading passed unanimously.

Chair McGowan moved to formally vote on endorsing the statement. A motion was made and seconded to endorse the statement, and senators were asked to vote again, this time on the endorsement itself. With all votes in, the motion to endorse the statement of support for student parent childcare needs was passed unanimously.

## **6. ClassEval and the Evaluation of Teaching - April Fogelman, Chair of the Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching**

April Fogelman, chair of the Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching at NC State University, presented on the evaluation of teaching, addressing concerns submitted earlier in the year. The presentation, developed with the committee's help, aimed to cover various topics including general reports on the committee's activities, changes made over the last year, issues of bias in teaching evaluations, feedback from faculty, utilization of ClassEval data, and challenges related to response rates.

Fogelman outlined her role as chair, mainly facilitating discussions and serving on other teaching-related committees. She detailed the committee's charge, which includes advising on matters of teaching evaluation, reviewing the effectiveness of current evaluation techniques, recommending changes, advising on compliance with university policies, reviewing best practices, soliciting information from colleges and departments, suggesting improvements, and consulting with the Faculty Senate's Academic Policy Committee.

Fogelman also discussed the Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching's efforts to review and propose changes to the ClassEval system, aiming for implementation in the fall. The process involved waiting for approval from the Provost's office, during which the committee initiated two projects: one focusing on evidence-based practices within peer institutions and another on developing and deploying focus group protocols with students to gather insights and recommendations.

The Provost's office accepted all proposed changes except one question related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), prompting significant discussion within the committee. The complexity of incorporating DEI into evaluations led to ongoing work, including drafting a letter to the Provost for reconsideration of the DEI question.

Fogelman also mentioned that the committee had been approached by professors seeking advice on ClassEval issues, leading to productive discussions. She encouraged attendees to consult previous annual reports for more detailed information about the committee's activities.

A significant change proposed was renaming ClassEval to "Student Feedback to Improve Instruction," reflecting the intention behind collecting feedback—not just evaluation but using student experiences to refine course delivery and outcomes. Concerns were raised that this might solicit more negative feedback than positive due to the emphasis on improvement; Fogelman said she would take this concern back to the committee for consideration. Fogelman continued to detail the proposed changes to the ClassEval survey questions, emphasizing the committee's intention to update them to reflect modern teaching practices and the evolving educational landscape. The changes were designed to more accurately capture the instructor's role in creating an effective learning environment and their commitment to student learning. Specifically, the modifications aimed to make questions more specific, such as clarifying that instructors should be receptive to scheduling meetings outside the classroom, rather than just being generally available.

The committee proposed replacing "The instructor was an effective teacher" with "The instructor created an effective learning environment." This change was motivated by the belief that the original question placed undue emphasis on a single aspect of teaching effectiveness, which could disproportionately influence evaluations of teaching performance. The new question seeks to provide a more holistic view of the teaching and learning experience by focusing on the creation of an environment conducive to learning.

Fogelman also addressed the committee's recommendation to add a question about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in courses, which was not approved. The committee considered rewording the question to align with the university's strategic plan, which emphasizes DEI. The discussion highlighted the complexity of incorporating DEI into teaching evaluations and the ongoing efforts to find an appropriate way to do so.

The presentation also included a summary of changes to both instructor- and course-related items, with a side-by-side comparison of old and new questions. These changes were approved, except for the DEI question, and are recommended for implementation in the fall. Fogelman noted the importance of communicating these changes to department heads and faculty to prepare for the transition.

Fogelman discussed the proposed changes to course-related questions in the ClassEval survey, aiming to assess the appropriateness of learning materials and assignments rather than their perceived value. The committee also proposed a new question regarding the incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into courses, which was not approved. Fogelman highlighted the importance of this question and the committee's efforts to find a way to include DEI considerations in evaluations.

Fogelman then addressed the issue of declining response rates to ClassEval surveys, suggesting potential reasons such as reminder emails being ignored or sent to spam, and

the overall increase in email requests that both faculty and students face. To combat low response rates, the committee suggested several strategies, including instructors reminding students of the importance of completing the surveys, using class time for survey completion, and explaining the significance of the questions to guide more meaningful feedback.

However, Fogelman noted that policies prohibit offering incentives for survey completion and that student and peer evaluations become part of a faculty member's personnel file. This inclusion in the personnel file means that the evaluations are subject to regulations that limit data sharing to the instructor and their supervisory chain, complicating the discussion around the DEI question and its potential impact on faculty evaluations.

She addressed the issue of bias in class evaluations, acknowledging that evidence shows bias, particularly against people of color and women. She advocated for a more holistic approach to merit and promotion decisions, emphasizing the importance of not relying solely on class evaluations. Fogelman suggested incorporating peer evaluations, using a universal rubric, and allowing faculty to reflect on their teaching with student and peer evaluations in mind. She provided links to articles summarizing topics on bias within class evaluations.

Fogelman also discussed the utilization of ClassEval data across campus, noting that it should not be the sole factor in evaluating teaching effectiveness. She highlighted the importance of considering the context of each class, as various factors can influence ClassEval scores. Fogelman stressed the need for department administration to understand the context of evaluations and for faculty members to explain their ClassEval results, considering issues of bias and response rates.

Concerns were raised about the proposed changes to the class evaluation questions, particularly focusing on the instructor's interest in students' learning and the creation of an effective learning environment. It was pointed out that showing interest in students' learning might not necessarily reflect the outcome of the learning process and could potentially lead to higher scores based on perceived goodwill rather than actual teaching effectiveness. Additionally, there were concerns about the subjectivity of evaluating an effective learning environment, especially when students might not have engaged with certain aspects, such as scheduling meetings outside of class.

April Fogelman acknowledged these concerns, agreeing that some questions might be challenging for students to answer accurately due to the nature of class evaluations. She emphasized the importance of discussing these aspects with students to help them understand the intent behind the questions. The discussion also touched on the possibility of moving away from Likert scale responses to open-ended questions to capture more nuanced student perceptions, although concerns were raised about the feasibility of analyzing open-ended responses, especially in large classes.

The conversation briefly diverged to address whether attendance records in 100-200 level courses are kept in personnel files and their impact on promotions, clarifying that they are not and do not affect promotions.

Concerns were then raised about potential biases in class evaluations, particularly how lower grades might correlate with lower student evaluations, suggesting a possible bias against more challenging courses. April Fogleman acknowledged this issue, noting the difficulty in distinguishing whether low grades were due to challenging material or ineffective teaching. The discussion also touched on how students' appreciation for a course might evolve over time, with initial negative evaluations potentially not reflecting the long-term value of the course. This raised questions about the effectiveness of current evaluation methods in capturing the true impact of teaching, especially when considering faculty promotions and the overall assessment of teaching quality.

The meeting addressed the feasibility of excluding specific questions from class evaluations, especially those that might unfairly disadvantage instructors due to factors beyond their control, such as external noise. It was clarified that while the standard questionnaire cannot be altered, instructors have the option to add additional questions each semester.

Suggestions were made to better communicate with students about the purpose and context of evaluation questions, potentially mitigating some of the biases and misunderstandings. The possibility of focusing evaluations more on aspects within the instructor's control was also discussed, as was the challenge of incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into all courses in a meaningful way.

In closing, suggestions were made to potentially focus the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) question more on aspects of belonging and creating a comfortable learning environment, aligning with mental health and well-being priorities. April Fogelman expressed gratitude for the feedback and the opportunity to engage with faculty, noting that the insights gathered could influence the timeline and nature of proposed changes to the class evaluation process.

## **7. Introduction of Candidates for Chair-elect**

Chair McGowan invited nominations for the position of chair-elect from the floor.

After a pause for potential nominations and clarifying that nominees would be consulted before being placed on the ballot, no nominations were received from the floor. Chair McGowan revealed that there was one candidate, Dr. Christopher DePerno from the College of Natural Resources, who had agreed to run for chair-elect. Dr. Christopher took the opportunity to introduce himself, highlighting his nearly 20 years at NC State in the Department of Forestry, Environmental Resources, and the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology Program. He mentioned his involvement in a Provost fellowship through the Office of Assessment and Accreditation and his belief in and passion for university leadership and shared governance.

Dr. DePerno shared his experience as a one-term senator from 2021 to 2023 and his role as associate chair since 2023, emphasizing the learning and relationships he has developed during his time in the Faculty Senate. He expressed his honor and enjoyment in working with the university leaders and faculty, and his desire to spend the next year

learning from and working with Herle McGowan, with the aim of continuing her work in the following two years.

## **8. Old and New Business**

### **a. Elections**

The elections, set to commence on Thursday, March 21, 2024 will allow eligible faculty to vote for the chair-elect, Faculty Senate candidates, and members of the hearing and grievance committees. The ballots will be personalized for each college or unit, with a two-week voting window. Herle McGowan, the current chair, emphasized the importance of participation in the voting process and mentioned that not all colleges have enough candidates to fill open seats. For colleges with unfilled seats, one-year appointments will be made in consultation with the affected unit's current senators to ensure representation.

### **b. Faculty wellbeing**

Concerns about faculty well-being, particularly regarding inefficient or ineffective processes that increase faculty workload, were addressed. These concerns were highlighted in the fall General Faculty meeting and by faculty outside the Senate, with a focus on research administration services. In response, the Chancellor has charged various offices to appoint task forces to tackle these challenges, emphasizing collaboration between faculty, staff, and administration. The University Research Committee has also expressed interest in working with the Faculty Senate to address these issues.

To gather input on which processes are most challenging for faculty, Senators will receive a survey similar to one completed by the Research Leadership Academy. The survey aims to take about 10 minutes to complete, with responses requested by the following Monday. This effort is part of a broader initiative to improve faculty well-being by addressing administrative challenges.

### **c. NC State Faculty Policy Working Group**

Senior Vice Provost Katherine Stewart provided an update on a working group addressing changes necessitated by recent UNC System policy modifications, particularly focusing on faculty workload policies. The group, comprising Faculty Senate members and department heads, is reviewing draft language and making suggestions, with a compressed timeline for policy approval by the Board of Trustees.

### **d. Employee engagement survey**



The biannual employee engagement survey was discussed, emphasizing its importance in developing action plans to improve faculty and staff well-being. Faculty were encouraged to participate in the survey to help identify key areas of focus and contribute to positive response rates.

**e. Section 400.1 (Policy on Academic Program Planning) of the UNC Policy Manual**

Chair McGowan addressed proposed changes to Section 400.1 of the UNC System policy manual, concerning academic program planning. The changes emphasize program review, both for new and existing programs, with a focus on return on investment as a key metric for program evaluation. Faculty were encouraged to review the proposed changes and provide feedback through a comment tracker document, with the aim of collating feedback from across the UNC System for consideration by the system office.

**9. 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](mailto:Faculty_Senate@ncsu.edu)

**10. Adjourn**

Chair McGowan adjourned the meeting at 4:57 PM.