

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Minutes of the Faculty Senate

February 4, 2025

Regular Meeting No. 9 of the 71st Session Faculty Senate Chambers February 4, 2025

Present: Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty; Christopher DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty; Walter Robinson, Chair-elect; Senators Ange-van Heugten, Breen, Burke, Campbell, Daley, Edmisten, Hajibabai, Hou, Jasper, Lowe Reed, Moore, Paige, Phukan, Taylor, Verhallen, Zaarour

Guests: Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Richard Warr, Associate Dean for Faculty and Research, Poole College of Management

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Herle McGowan. The chair welcomed the faculty senators and provided a brief announcement regarding the deadline for feedback on proposed changes to Chapter VI of the UNC Code. Faculty were reminded to submit feedback by February 7, 2025, either through the provided Google Docs link or via email to the Faculty Senate email address with the subject line "Feedback on Chapter 6".

2. Approval of the Minutes, Regular Meeting No. 8 of the 71st Session, January 21, 2025 - *Christopher DePerno, Associate Chair of the Faculty*

Associate Chair Christopher DePerno introduced the approval of the minutes from Regular Meeting No. 8, held on January 21, 2025. No changes, suggestions, or corrections were noted, and a motion to approve was made and seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

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

Chair Herle McGowan provided several updates on policy revisions and ongoing initiatives. She

began by addressing new university guidance on handling immigration enforcement requests, emphasizing that faculty and staff should not release any information and instead refer inquiries to the Office of General Counsel. Additionally, the Faculty Senate has been invited to collaborate on a survey assessing the effectiveness of wellness days, with faculty encouraged to participate in shaping future policies.

She highlighted the successful implementation of the faculty workload policy, which has been met with full compliance across all campuses. The policy will be used to communicate the value of faculty work to stakeholders, including the General Assembly and the Board of Governors. The discussion then shifted to academic program review and planning, where the system office has provided clearer data metrics for evaluating programs. Feedback on these guidelines is due by February 11.

McGowan also provided an update on the proposed mass gatherings policy, which has evolved from an informal set of guidelines into a formal policy now set for approval by the Board of Governors on February 27. She reassured faculty that NC State had already been proactive in implementing similar policies, meaning the impact on campus would be minimal. However, she noted a key revision that now gives home campuses autonomy to determine disciplinary actions for students cited or arrested at other institutions, rather than automatic enforcement.

A major point of discussion was the ongoing revisions to Chapter 6 of the Code, particularly sections 604 and 605, which deal with faculty rights and program curtailment. Concerns had been raised about language that could allow chancellors to unilaterally eliminate faculty positions, but McGowan clarified that new recommendations would explicitly tie these decisions to a formal academic program review process, ensuring faculty oversight. The Faculty Assembly is compiling feedback, with final recommendations due by February 11.

She then addressed a broader national issue: increasing scrutiny of higher education and academic freedom. She warned that some policymakers view academic freedom as problematic and are pushing for direct political interference in curricula, citing Florida as an example where state laws have led to the removal of certain general education courses. While no such mandate currently exists in North Carolina, she stressed that faculty must be prepared to navigate potential challenges. In response, NC State has tasked the Council on Undergraduate Education with reviewing the university's general education requirements to ensure they

remain relevant while also safeguarding academic freedom.

To conclude, McGowan invited faculty to participate in ongoing conversations about academic freedom at the system level, emphasizing the importance of framing it as a protection not just for faculty, but also for students' right to diverse educational experiences. She also provided a brief update on an ongoing search process, stating that there is a strong candidate pool and that she is optimistic about the results. Throughout her remarks, she encouraged faculty to remain engaged, provide feedback, and be proactive in shaping policies that impact both their work and the broader university community.

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

Provost Arden provided an update on the abatement and deconstruction of Poe Hall, announcing that the university has received authorization and \$8.4 million in funding for the project. The process is now in motion, with a designer and construction manager being selected while third-party cleaners and movers clear out furniture and equipment. The university has worked with the EPA to ensure compliance in the cleaning and removal of items, and faculty and staff have already begun retrieving personal belongings. Additionally, university-owned property is being moved out in parallel with the personal item retrieval process. The College of Education has secured a long-term lease on Centennial Campus to continue operations while the Psychology Department is set to relocate to 111 Lampey Drive. Looking ahead, once Poe Hall is reconstructed, the College of Education will return to a modernized facility, but the entire process could take at least three years.

Arden also addressed the growing impact of recent federal executive orders on higher education. Over the past few weeks, a wave of executive orders and directives has been issued, many targeting DEI initiatives, affirmative action, free speech policies, and funding structures. While these directives do not directly target universities, federal agencies have been instructed to review all programs for compliance, resulting in some inconsistencies in implementation. Some programs at NC State have already received stop-work orders, though the number remains under ten. The uncertainty surrounding these changes is further compounded by discussions of potential restructuring or dismantling of agencies such as the Department of Education, USAID, and the EPA. University leadership, including research and legal teams, is closely monitoring the situation and engaging in ongoing discussions to understand and

mitigate any negative impacts. For now, faculty and staff are advised to continue their federally funded work as usual unless explicitly instructed to stop. Arden acknowledged the complexity and fluidity of the situation, emphasizing that the university will provide clear guidance as soon as more definitive information becomes available.

5. Retirement & Financial Planning - Things All Faculty Should Consider - *Dr. Richard Warr, Associate Dean for Faculty and Research, Poole College of Management*

Dr. Richard Warr, Associate Dean for Faculty and Research at the Poole College of Management, delivered an in-depth presentation on retirement and financial planning for faculty members.

Dr. Warr emphasized the importance of early and strategic retirement planning, detailing various options available to faculty through the university's retirement plans. He discussed different financial vehicles, including 403(b) and 457 plans, and highlighted tax advantages associated with these retirement savings accounts.

A significant portion of the presentation focused on pension options under the North Carolina retirement system. Dr. Warr explained the differences between the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) and the Optional Retirement Program (ORP), guiding faculty on factors to consider when choosing between the two. He stressed the importance of aligning investment strategies with individual retirement goals and provided insights into risk management in financial planning. Warr also discussed strategies for ensuring long-term financial security, including diversified investment portfolios and the benefits of annuities for sustained income post-retirement.

Faculty members asked several questions regarding the flexibility of TSERS versus ORP, the impact of inflation on retirement savings, and the best strategies for minimizing tax burdens in retirement. Dr. Warr provided detailed responses, explaining that while TSERS offers a defined benefit plan, ORP allows for more individualized investment control. He noted that faculty members should consider their career plans and expected length of service when deciding between the two. Additionally, he addressed concerns about Social Security benefits and how they integrate with the university's retirement options.

Another question was raised regarding healthcare coverage in retirement, to which Dr. Warr provided an overview of available options, including long-term care insurance and the potential impact of Medicare on faculty retirees. He advised faculty to periodically reassess their financial plans and work with a financial advisor to make adjustments based on changes in market conditions and personal financial goals.

6. Old and New Business

a. Staff Senate Updates

Charles Hall noted a key change is that, midway through the next faculty chair's term, the Staff Senate will have its first two-year chair. The start of a new term for the faculty chair and staff chair will be offset, with terms overlapping for one year. This setup strengthens collaboration between the Faculty and Staff Senates, ensuring continuity and effectiveness.

The updated bylaws also include governance and grammatical revisions, and once approved, the document will be sent to the Chancellor for signature, taking effect with the next term.

Additionally, there is growing uncertainty among staff regarding their career stability at NC State. Many are concerned about their future at the university. Leaders are encouraged to check in with their staff, even if concerns aren't openly expressed, and provide support to foster a sense of stability.

b. Student Senate Updates - No report.

7. Adjourn - Herle McGowan, Chair of the Faculty

Chair McGowan adjourned the meeting at 4:51 PM.