

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Executive Committee-President's Council
July 15, 2024, 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
MCOB 101
MINUTES

Present for FS Executive Committee: Wassenaar (presiding), Webb, Tate, Streeter, Black, Davidson, Turnipseed (Z), Pavelescu (Z), Miguard, Vrana, Walker (Z), and NiChadhain (Z).

Present for President's Council: Bonner, Kent, Guest, Sullivan, Lawkis, Susman, Chambers, Kelly, Dukes, Erdmann, and Billingsley.

Old Business:

- Update on the status of the Dean of Engineering search
 - A decision has been made and an offer will be extended soon. Hopefully by the end of the week the administration will know who the new Dean will be.
 - There were four great candidates and the feedback was very positive for all.
 - There was one candidate, who currently serves in the provost office at his institution, that would be a good candidate for the Vice President of Research and Economic Development.
 - The search for the position of VPRED was never closed but continues forward. This specific candidate for the Dean's position will be encouraged to consider applying for the VPRED position, if he is not selected for the Dean's position.
 - In the fall the search for the VPRED position will continue.

- Update on the internal policy on faculty equity/compression decisions
 - Andrei and Donna have taken on the faculty senate representation of the committee and have some changed wording suggestions to consider for the *Internal Faculty Compression/Inversion & Equity Analysis*.
 - They would like to add wording to the criteria so that "to be eligible for an inversion/compression salary adjustment, an employee must be actively working (not on leave) and have an average annual faculty evaluation score no lower than half of a standard deviation below the departmental mean (within half of a standard deviation of the departmental mean). [Underlined words indicate new wording.]

- The new wording applies under “Procedure for Determining Eligibility Requirements for ...” to both sections of “Inversion/Compression Adjustment” and “Equity Adjustment.”
- This does not address the situation of salary inflation, whereby new hires come in at a higher base salary, than those who have been at the university for a number of years, without any merit raises.
- The issue that needs to be discussed is merit vs equity. The money for each comes out of different pools of funding, with merit needing the large pool.
- Dr. Kent suggested that Donna and Andrei convene a working group, along with some people across campus who are statisticians or math-savvy to work with Dr. Guest to work on this issue.
- The biggest issue is whether or not there are appropriate funds to do what needs to be done.
- The goal is to have something ready by October.

New Business:

- How does the new regulation for the FLSA “Defining and Delimiting the Exemptions for Executive, Administrative, Professional ... Employees” affect university faculty, specifically research faculty, clinical faculty, and librarians who are NOT considered as primarily teaching faculty.
 - Faculty members are considered exempt from wage & overtime provisions as they are part of the “Professional Employees” category of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
 - Exempt employees need to make above the salary threshold in order to be exempt. Until July 1st, the salary threshold was \$2,975/mo. (or \$35,705 for 12-mo annual). Starting July 1st the salary threshold was raised to \$3,658/mo. (or \$43,888 for 12-mo annual). In Jan. 2025, the threshold will be raised to \$4,888/mo. (or \$58,656 for 12-mo annual). It is the last threshold that may cause a problem for monthly Assistant Faculty.
 - There is an exemption from the salary threshold for “Teachers”. There is a specific definition of who would qualify as a teacher for university faculty. Some categories, such as librarians, research faculty, or clinical faculty would not fall under the definition of “teachers” since their primary job responsibilities do not include teaching.
 - Those non-teaching faculty would lose their exempt status and would revert to non-exempt status and would become hourly wage earners (and would be subject to earning overtime if they need to work over 40-hours/week).
 - Human Resource has already starting looking into the changes for some faculty. A review of their positions which do not meet the new salary threshold would change to non-exempt status, while some would retain their exempt status once their salaries were raised past the threshold. This was done on an individual basis.

- Converting some faculty to non-exempt status will affect work load for themselves and for other faculty. Non-exempt faculty would be unable to take on responsibility for things like monitoring graduate/research students or class load.
- For those faculty that will change to non-exempt status, will they still be considered faculty?
- Request that there should be more training for department chairs on using Watermark software in the evaluation/mentoring process of faculty
 - There has been a question on inconsistencies in how Watermark is used across the campus with different chairs.
 - College of Medicine is just now coming on board on using Watermark and the faculty are having difficulties in what to do and how it should be used.
 - There have been many changes in the positions for chairs and deans since the first use of Digital Measures/Watermark was instituted 15 years ago. So new training/retraining should be considered for helping faculty with the mechanics of inputting data into the systems and for evaluators on using the software effectively on retrieving information.
- The College of Medicine building—the effects of the construction on the university campus
 - There should be limited effect on campus life since most contingencies have already been accounted for. There have been accommodations for deliveries to buildings in the area. There should be no issue with campus outages due to construction. If there are planned outages, they should be done at times when the campus is closed. There will be some nuisance noise but they should not be burdensome.
 - There have been some problems with the traffic circle near the Allied Health Buildings on USA Drive North. Some people are not yielding to circle traffic when they enter the circle. There is more traffic coming into the traffic circle since the entrance by the construction area has been closed.
- Fall Enrollment
 - Some 600 students have been admitted and accepted. Some have signed up for orientation. Some haven't participated in orientation, but have yet to enroll.
 - Everything seems to have been slower than in previous years.
 - FAFSA (Free application for Federal Student Aid) may be a factor.
 - University administration is doing everything possible to get students to enroll.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

Minutes compiled by Vicki Tate, Faculty Senate Secretary