GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APRIL 1, 2020
Electronic Meeting*, 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.


Senators absent: Ali Andalibi, Kenneth Ball, Sonia Ben Ouaghram-Gormley, Jim Bennett, Virginia Blair, Henry Butler, Meagan Call-Cummings, Lloyd Cohen, Rick Davis, Michael Gilmore, Anne Holton, Brett Josephson, Larry Kerschberg, Germaine Louis, Alpaslan Özerdem, Maury Peiperl, Daniel Polsby, Mark Rozell, Donglian Sun, Kun Sun, Rebecca Sutter, S. David Wu, Andy Yao, Masoud Yasai.

Visitors present: Doug McKenna, University Registrar; Janette Muir, Associate Provost for Academic Initiatives and Services.

Note: Due to limitations of tracking and acknowledging presence of every single visitor -- only visitors who spoke at the meeting have been recognized as being in attendance.

I. Call to Order: Chair Shannon Davis called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. She welcomed everyone to the first of three Faculty Senate meetings in the month of April.

II. Approval of the Minutes of February 5, 2020 and February 12, 2020: The minutes of February 5th and February 12th were both approved.

III. Committee Reports
A. Senate Standing Committees
   Executive Committee – Shannon Davis

* WebEx Log In
https://gmudraftminutes04102020.gmu.webex.com/gmu/j.php?MTID=me8b66a314a99d5d15d0f2d6e375f118
Join by phone
+1-415-655-0003 US Toll (access code: 611 089 833)
Join from a video system or application
Dial 611089833@gmu.webex.com

Blackboard Log In
Should we need to use Blackboard Collaborate, Senators are asked to log in to Blackboard and use the Faculty Senate Organization to enter the Collaborate session. Guest (not Senator) access:
https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/b69fb9a6fc27495eab83e3076ededbd9
Chair Davis welcomed our soon-to-be Interim Provost, Mark Ginsberg, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development.

Dean Ginsberg thanked Shannon and expressed hope for everyone’s safety and health.

- Expressed his gratitude to be asked by Interim President Anne Holton to serve in capacity of Interim Provost.
- Conveyed that a national search for Provost will be initiated by incoming President Greg Washington after his arrival.
- He expressed his commitment to help Mason navigate through the challenging times. He believes that Mason is fortunate in that it has extraordinary people who will help manage through these extraordinary challenges. He expressed his pledge to do everything he can to be both communicative and hopefully transformative as we continue to grow the university collaboratively.

Master Planning meeting report (Chair Davis): The group will be working with Mason to complete our master plan. The first meeting – an initial engagement as part of a series of conversations – was held earlier this afternoon and was well attended. A survey will be sent out by email and will be made available on the university’s website for master planning. The university community (broadly defined) is encouraged to participate in that survey and provide feedback. Chair Davis encouraged true engagement and deliberation among the faculty, and all constituents at the University, as we move forward with the creation of the master plan.

Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden
The Academic Policies Committee, in consultation with the administration, proposes we extend the Selective Withdrawal period because of the current emergency.

Emergency Selective Withdrawal Period Extension

Background
Catalog AP 1.5.1 During the Selective Withdrawal period, degree- and non-degree-seeking undergraduate students may withdraw from one or more courses without the dean's approval and at the student's discretion. Students may selectively withdraw from a maximum of three courses during their entire undergraduate career at Mason. The withdrawal period is from the 6th week to the end of the 9th week of the semester. The Spring 2020 Selective Withdrawal period ends on Friday, Apr. 6.

Motion: The selective withdrawal period is extended to the last day of classes, May 11, 2020. Undergraduate students may withdraw from any classes in which they are enrolled in Spring 2020 semester. These withdrawals will not count toward the maximum of 3 courses during their undergraduate career. The notation "XW" will appear on their official transcript.

Notes: Undergraduate students should consult their advisor and Financial aid; withdrawals may have academic and/or financial implications.

Policies related to graduate students will be separately considered by the Graduate Council.
Discussion:

- Will there be a financial penalty for students who withdraw from their current or currently enrolled classes?

  Senator Slayden: The selective withdrawal period ends on Friday, April 6th. This motion would extend the deadline to May 11. There are no additional financial implications for the students.

- Question about the Wiley program, because it ends before May 11th.

  Senator Slayden: The Wiley program is entirely different group of courses that have different academic policies, and it is in the purview of the Graduate Council.

A friendly amendment was proposed to add “currently” to the end of the first sentence so that the amended sentence reads: “The selective withdrawal period is extended to the last day of classes, currently May 11, 2020.”

The amendment was seconded. The Senate voted to approve the amendment.

Amended Motion: The selective withdrawal period is extended to the last day of classes, currently May 11, 2020. Undergraduate students may withdraw from any classes in which they are enrolled in Spring 2020 semester. These withdrawals will not count toward the maximum of 3 courses during their undergraduate career. The notation "XW" will appear on their official transcript.

The motion as amended was approved.

Chair Davis thanked Senator Slayden and the Academic Policies Committee for all their hard work in examining and amending policies to help manage all of the needed changes.

Budget and Resources – no report at this time.

Faculty Matters – no report at this time

Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post

Before the end of the year we will send out a call for nominations for the fall, but nothing to vote on at this point.

Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham

The committee plans to bring a proposal on Ombuds to the April 22nd meeting for discussion.

B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

Faculty Handbook Revision Committee – Suzanne Slayden

Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook – Faculty Senate Meeting – April 1, 2020

The proposed revisions to Sections 2.6 and 3.1 were presented to the Faculty Senate on March 4, 2020. After discussion during the meeting, the committee made one small revision to each

On behalf of the Committee, it is moved

**That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook with no further revisions at this time other than those necessary to correct typographical and grammatical errors.**

[Note: A motion to "refer to the Faculty Handbook Committee with instructions" is in order.]

If the changes are approved by the Faculty Senate, they will be submitted to the Board of Visitors for final approval at its May meeting.

Committee members: Girum Urgessa (VSE), Cynthia Lum (CHSS), Suzanne Slayden (COS)

Senator Slayden: Last month we reported to you the results of our proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook for this year. Mainly it was the revisions/words to the post tenure review section, and since we moved one paragraph from that section into the salary section. We are also including a couple of new notes on salaries in Chapter Three as a result of our discussion in the early part of March with Faculty Senators. We are going to propose a couple of other minor revisions.

One actual big problem that came up was how do we recuse people from serving on the evaluation committee, which is normally the second level promotion and tenure committee, when there’s somebody who is very close to them professionally? The new wording for that is to make a reference to the conflict of interest section: “A committee member may not participate in the evaluation of a faculty member with whom he or she has had a close family, personal, or professional relationship or other conflict of interest of the kind that might reasonably be thought to impair independent and dispassionate judgment (see Section 2.3.1.1), in a reference to a conflict of interest that seems to work right now, and we are hoping it will actually work in practice.

There was another question from a Senator in the very last line of the proposed revisions, followed by a note (highlighted in yellow):

*In the event the faculty member’s employment is terminated in accordance with the procedures of this section, such termination shall be final and Section 2.9.3 shall not apply.*

[Note: Section 2.9.3 is 2.9.3 Termination of Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty Members for Cause. Although unlikely to occur, this statement prevents another “bite of the apple”. The faculty member might think they would not be terminated after undergoing the procedures for Termination for Cause and not terminated under those provisions.*]
If somebody might be terminated under the Post-Tenure Review Section 2.6.2, and then think that somehow it might be advantageous to undergo termination for cause Section 2.93 Termination of Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Term Faculty Members for Cause, and then was not terminated for cause under those provisions, they might think they weren’t terminated at all, but the last line says they are terminated.

And finally in Chapter Three, at the very end, “The salary recommendation, including a justification and the amount of the increase, will be given to the faculty member in writing at the time it is transmitted to the next level.” The two changes were to (1) to include a justification along with a recommendation and (2) transmitted in a timely way; which seems reasonable to be the same as the time that the recommendation is sent to the people who receive it to make the final decisions.

Discussion: A Senator asked about conflict of interest mentioned earlier.

Senator Slayden: Conflict of interest could be positive, could also be a negative. The committee wanted to ensure the language as proposed covered both aspects of conflict of interest. The words “reasonably thought to impair independent and dispassionate judgment” would cover positive and negative influence.

The motion was approved.

Mason Core Committee – Melissa Broeckelman-Post

The Mason Core Committee will review course proposals and resubmissions during our March and April meetings. Instead of having our planned retreat to review faculty and student feedback and assessment during our March meeting, the Mason Core Committee will postpone our retreat until May and will bring recommendations for next steps to the Faculty Senate in Fall 2020.

IV. Unfinished Business

Motion to Change Declaration of Credit/No Credit Date
Brought forward by Senator Danny Menascé

Replace the first paragraph of page 3 on the Emergency Grading Accommodations document:

"For Undergraduates: As of March 25, 2020, Mason will expand the grading categories to include Credit/Non-credit grades for undergraduate students. If Option 1 is chosen, undergraduates will have until at least May 11, 2020 to choose the Credit/Non-credit option for undergraduate courses (100-400 level) they are registered in the Spring 2020 semester. This deadline may be extended by the University if circumstances warrant.”

with the paragraph below:

"For Undergraduates: As of March 25, 2020, Mason will expand the grading categories to include Credit/Non-credit grades for undergraduate students. Undergraduates will
have until the last day of classes to choose the Credit/Non-credit option for undergraduate courses (100-400 level) they are registered in the Spring 2020 semester."

Senator Menascé: The intent is to ensure we give the undergraduates until the last day of classes. In case of further changes, this would accommodate without needing any additional revisions.

Discussion:

- Senator: But the idea is they will have until the last day of classes to opt for the credit/non-credit option, but not during the exam period?
  
  Senator Menascé: Yes. Instead of specific date, this allows for the policy to adjust in case of any further calendar changes. This was seconded during the special meeting on March 24, and it is being presented now for discussion.

- Senator: Doe it mean that the students will have until the exam gets done and graded and the grade is up, to make a decision?
  
  Senator Menascé: No, it’s quite the opposite. The last day of classes, as officially noted in the academic calendar, do not include the exam.

- Senator: So why do we want to do that? Why do we not want the students to have all the information available before they make this decision?
  
  Senator Menascé: We do not want the students to make the decision after they have taken the final exam. If we provide the students with all the grades up to that point, they have enough information to make a decision.

- Senator: I assume the reasoning for this proposed change is because we suspect there may be further delays in the school year?
  
  Senator Menascé: Yes, just to make the language simple and avoid having a hard date associated with the last day of classes and having to change that, if it changes.

  Follow up: Just a streamlining thing? Yes.

Spirited discussion followed where senators noted:

- Our need to be particularly mindful of extraordinary circumstances in play.
- Senators shared concerns about students who have communicated lack of access to the internet, variable/unreliable access and may not be able to meaningfully be able to access information to make their decision or be able to communicate the decision.
- There was concern about differential impact of such policy on types of students. Good students who perpetually believe they did more poorly than they did, and overly optimistic students who tend to believe they did better than they actually did.
- Concerns were noted about situation where students or their family may themselves get sickened in the pandemic after the “deadline”.
- A number of senators noted that given the nature of uncertainties, we cannot foresee all the unusual circumstances that may impact a student at any time. For these reasons, we
should adopt an approach that has clarity, and is most compassionate in offering students the flexibility in timeline for decision making.

Doug McKenna, University Registrar: based on solution created to accommodate selection of option by students, he noted maximum possible flexibility (as allowable by the system) in the deadline is -- the end of the term (May 20th).

Senator Slayden: There is a whole sentence that is being struck in this amended motion: “This deadline may be extended by the University if circumstances warrant.” The Academic Policies Committee put that sentence in there originally on purpose, because it means it can be extended if the University thinks that it needs to for everybody, or the University might extend the deadline if the students’ circumstances warranted again, for most flexibility. What we want to do is avoid having administrators making unilateral decisions, and in a way, this gives them permission to say yes. Something could happen after the last day of classes or whatever other arbitrary deadline there might be set, and this allows flexibility both for the University and the students to exercise this option. So, it is actually more complicated than simply putting the last day of classes.

Chair Davis: Bringing the discussion to a close, noted that there have been a number of points raised that can be discussed after this vote.

There were 7 votes in favor of the amendment and 27 votes opposed; the amendment did not pass.

Senator expressed desire to refer the matter to Academic Policies Committee. Indicating that the committee is better informed and positioned to thoughtfully examine all of the issues pertaining to the matter.

Chair Davis noted that we would need a motion that is seconded on the floor so that the matter could be referred to the AP Committee.

Motion was second.

Discussion:

- Senator clarified that the intent is for AP Committee to work with Registrar’s office to identify workable options and report back to the Faculty Senate.
- Doug, University Registrar: Currently implemented solution in the system would work till end of term (May 20, 2020). Beyond that date, it would have to be a manual system. Depending on number of students – that could become a significant administrative overhead.
- Associate Provost Janette Muir: Agreed that there is a lot of anxiety and noted that students want as clearly defined guidelines as we can give them. Additional flexibility to end of the term or few days beyond might be good, because of the final grades. We want faculty to be able to enter the final grade regardless of what the student has chosen, and then based on the student’s choice, it automatically makes that change, and if it happens within the term, it’s a much easier process.
- Chair Davis asked what kind of deliberation time would the committee need.
Senator Slayden suggested that the motion can be amended to say “report back by the next meeting” or another date as Senate may want.

- Concern about timeline for the decision making was expressed as the next Faculty Senate meeting is scheduled for April 22, 2020.

Chair Davis brought the discussion to a close, and asked for a vote on the motion for referring the matter to the Academic Policies Committee

**There were 11 votes in favor, 21 votes opposed. The motion did not pass.**

A motion was made and seconded to amend the current language as follows:

(bold = new text)

“For undergraduates: As of March 25, 2020, Mason will expand the grading categories to include Credit/Non-credit grades for undergraduate students. **If Option 1 is chosen,** Undergraduates will have until at least May 11, 2020 **the end of the term, which is currently May 20, 2020**, to choose the Credit/Non-credit option for undergraduate courses (100-400 level) they are registered **for** in the Spring 2020 semester. This deadline may be extended by the University if circumstances warrant.

The motion as amended passed.

V. **New Business:** None.

VI. **Announcements**

Chair Davis: Instead of having individuals stand up in front of the Senate for announcements, these are listed out in the Agenda.

- **Board of Visitors Meeting on Financial Plan** -- On April 2, 2020 the Executive Committee of the Board of Visitors of George Mason University will meet and host a Public Comment Session to receive public input on proposed undergraduate tuition and mandatory fee increases for the 2020-2021 academic year (as mandated by Virginia codes § 23.1-307.D and § 23.1-307.E). At this session, Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, will present the proposed FY 2021 Financial Plan. Following this presentation, the Board will receive public comment on tuition and mandatory fees. The full agenda and meeting materials are available on the ‘Meeting Agendas & Materials’ page on the Board website. While the meeting will be held in person, there will be a live stream of the meeting; Senators as well as the general faculty are encouraged to attend.

- **Faculty Conduct Working Group** – Senators are reminded to review three work products from the working group: Human Resources & Payroll Department – Procedures for Handling Investigations into Alleged Violations of University or Commonwealth Workplace Policy (Draft), Compliance, Diversity and Ethics Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Grievance Procedure (Draft of revised policy), and Working Group Recommendations, including Educational Plan and submit questions/comments to Shannon Davis (sdaviso@gmu.edu) by April 6. Revised
documents will be made available for final deliberation and vote during April 22 Faculty Senate meeting.

- **QEP** - As part of Mason’s reaffirmation of accreditation, we must develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is a five-year initiative focused on improving student outcomes/student success. Information about the top 4 topic proposals, as well as a recording of the entire presentation session given on 3/26/20, will be posted to the QEP website. There, you can also find a link to provide comments/feedback and to rank the proposals. Ranking and feedback must be received by 4/17/20. The final QEP topic should be announced by the end of the semester. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Matt Smith (msmit55) or Dr. Oscar Barton (obarton2).

- **Faculty Senate Mason FACTs Update** -- As many of you know, we have contracted with Interfolio to invest in two tools that will facilitate the work of our faculty, our academic programs, and Mason as a community. These are a Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) content management system and a Faculty-180 (F-180) database.

  The RPT Implementation Team has been meeting weekly this academic year to oversee the build of our existing promotion and tenure process into the RPT tool. We are moving our face-to-face final testing of the system to a virtual environment. We expect the testing will be completed by the end of April, keeping us on target for launching the use of the RPT for promotion and tenure cases coming up in the 2020-2021 academic year. As we have seen over the past few weeks, having a stable, secure virtual online environment for this important process is more critical than ever.

  The F-180 Leadership Team has been meeting weekly to oversee the configuration and implementation of this faculty database. While we continue to make progress forward, we are expecting some delays in our original timeframe due to necessary diversion of critical individuals and resources to focus on our COVID-19 continuity planning.

  More information can be found online at Mason FACTs. Please direct all questions or comments to Molli Herth, Program Manager, Faculty Affairs and Development at mherth@gmu.edu.

- **Open Educational Resources and Other Low-Cost and No-Cost Learning Materials – University Libraries**

  With the sudden shift to online teaching, Open Educational Resources (OERs) assume even greater relevance to student learning. For some time, University Libraries has been developing capabilities that we are deploying at this critical time to help faculty discover, access or even develop open/low-cost resources to help keep education affordable for students and accessible in a virtual learning environment.

  There are several ways you can make educational resources accessible and affordable to your students:
  - Find existing OERs to adopt or customize using the nationally recognized Mason OER Metafinder ([https://mom.gmu.edu](https://mom.gmu.edu))
Choose a textbook, other books, or journal articles where the library already offers free digital access. Place the item in the Libraries’ E-Reserves system and then link to the item on your Blackboard site or include a link in your course syllabus.

Other immediate options include:

- Choose a standard textbook, put a physical copy on reserve, then let your students know how to access it. (During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, library staff will endeavor to digitize portions of textbooks for online availability to students.)
- Let your students know about the TextSelect program that puts expensive textbooks on reserve in the library each semester. (Online availability to students during present crisis, same as above.)

As faculty plan learning materials for their courses, they are encouraged to:

- Let University Libraries help you find funding for a course redesign grant to feature open or low-cost resources in your course.
- Work with the Libraries’ Mason Publishing unit to develop and publish an OER for your course(s). Contact Andrew Kierig at akierig@gmu.edu to get started.

More broadly, with the immediate and ongoing actions outlined and recommended above, the Libraries are also coordinating the university’s compliance with recent Virginia law in this area (Virginia Code, § 23.1-1308, 2019). To learn more about OERs support at Mason, please see: https://oer.gmu.edu

VII. **Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty**

Chair Davis: Acknowledging that the meeting was past the scheduled time, expressed her appreciation for everyone’s engagement in this virtual space despite competing demands upon our time.

“I do want to provide two minutes of remarks for the good of the general faculty, because we’ve not done that in a while. You are all amazing! You are pulling things along that are hard and difficult and challenging at the same time while managing your own emotions for not seeing your students again, not being able to give them a hug when they graduate, for not being able to have those moments which we, as social scientists, know as rituals, are important in value and valued as a part of who we are as a human society. And so, I want to say from me personally, thank you for everything you are doing and know that we are still a community, despite the fact that we have sometimes some static between us electronically. I thank you for everything you are doing, know that you are valued, invaluable. And that when things get rough, we’re all still here as a community to support one another. We are here for the students and we are here for ourselves and each other. Please know that if you need assistance, there are a number of folks on this campus ready to support you even if it’s a virtual coffee date. That’s one of the things I miss the most, sitting down with somebody drinking a cup of coffee. It’s different in the virtual space, but I’m ready. If you’re ready to have a virtual coffee date, I’m here to do that with you. Take care of yourselves senators, faculty who are not senators, administrative faculty, staff, students, all who are participating today. Thank you for what you’re doing. And thank you for taking care of yourselves and for taking care of each other, recognizing that this too shall pass and we will do it together. So that’s my couple of minutes of taking some personal privilege.”
Chair Davis stressed the importance of knowing how the budget of the university is being impacted by this crisis and the accompanying financial crisis. She noted that the Board of Visitors are scheduled to meet tomorrow. Sr. Vice President Carol Kissal will be presenting the current fiscal outlook and the Board will be taking some public comment at that time, and the decisions will be made after that.
Chair Davis strongly encouraged everyone to participate electronically and via TV (a link is available through GMU TV for everyone to be able to watch). Chair Davis expressed hope that the Faculty Senate will have the opportunity to ask questions of the interim provost at a later meeting.

VIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Kumar Mehta
Secretary