Present: Lisa Billingham, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Richard Craig, Shannon Davis (chair), Visitor Tom Davis (BOV liaison), Provost Mark Ginsberg, Sr. VP Carol Kissal, Tim Leslie, Bethany Letiecq, Kumar Mehta, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden.

I. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of August 6 and August 18, 2020 were approved.

II. Announcements
Chair Davis welcomed Visitor Tom Davis for joining EXC meeting as BOV Liaison to the Faculty Senate. Noting that this is a new position, EXC wanted to ensure that it (and each of the Faculty Senate standing committees) has an opportunity as to meet and engage with Visitor Davis at least once each semester.

Visitor Davis: Noting that he had served as Rector for six years and have had numerous opportunities to engage with the Faculty Senate. He believes that faculty are the greatest asset that the university. He mentioned his commitment to shared governance was demonstrated through his consultation with faculty in appointing Interim President Anne Holton; as well as appointing Chair Davis to serve as co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee and having faculty representatives as part of the search committee. He observed that Mason has been very successful managing its opening through the COVID crisis unlike other public universities in Virginia and the nation.

Discussion:

- Senator wondered if based on the remarkable job Mason has done in managing its resources and continued to deliver on its mission – State of Virginia should reward Mason by helping it overcome the fiscal deficit instead of requiring Mason to rely on tuition revenues.

Visitor Davis: Interim President Holton accomplished revision of the formula used by State of Virginia for allocating budget to Mason. Beyond that, he does not anticipate any additional funding because the state has competing needs with increased healthcare costs because of the Pandemic.

- Enrollment in online vs. in-person classes

Provost Ginsberg: In Fall most of the in-person classes were small (25 or less). With 40% of all courses taught hybrid or in-person and 60% full online. In terms of registrations 17% of registrations were for hybrid or in-person. For Spring 2021, 54% of class sections will be taught hybrid or in-person, with registrations accounting for 29% of all registrations.
Visitor Davis: Being in an in-person class is much more engaging for students and professor, he noted that for BOV the big concern is of lawsuits.

- Visitor Davis conveyed that BOV will continue to try raise money from business and individuals. He observed the maturation of operations in managing alumni network and building a strong base.
  - Expressed appreciation for the fact that the staff and the faculty are in an area with high cost of living and Mason is unable to pay what it would like to. It was the motivator for raising the tuition this time.
  - Even when state did not allocate budget to salary increases, Mason has tried to identify ways to provide some increases.

**Sr. VP Kissal:** Recounted that Mason has received an increase in our base allocation: $10M more this year, and an additional $12M for FY 22. This has not been all allocated yet, but one of the first priorities is faculty salaries. Two assessments have been done:

1. Regression analysis re gender/racial disparities in pay. This has been completed and where corrections have been identified by the deans, corrections are being undertaken.
2. Market compensation analysis will take through summer to complete.

Much work is being done on financial framework and the planning framework.

Details of budget recommendations and how they will be implemented will be presented at the BOV meeting on December 3, 2020.

**Discussion:**

- Senator followed up seeking clarification on “not many places where there were salary discrepancies by gender, race”.

**Sr. VP Kissal:** Could not recall the detailed analysis and referred to Lester Arnold (VP HR & Payroll), who has been working with deans to make the salary adjustments.

Chair Davis mentioned the Lester Arnold is also working with Salary Equity Study Committee.

- Senator inquired if funding for Ombudsman office would be coming from the additional allocation.

**Sr. VP Kissal:** President Washington wants to have an Ombudsman and there is funding for that.

- Sr. VP Kissal shared that her office is working on identifying ways to identify ways to increase engagement of faculty as requested by Budget and Resources Committee. She identified various
planning spaces where number of faculty are involved. Senator Leslie (Chair, Budget and Resources) indicated that he felt that faculty needed to be more regularly involved in spheres like HR and Auxiliary Services/Contracts, which could use meaningful contributions from faculty.

- Senator inquired about planning for bringing students in Spring, and whether students will be tested before sending them home?

Sr. VP Kissal: An announcement will be made before Thanksgiving, and a lot of work is underway developing the COVID testing strategy for Spring 2021.

Chair Davis asked if materials shared by David Farris and Julie Zobel at MCCT meeting can be included as an announcement for Faculty Senate meeting on December 2, 2020. Sr. VP Kissal indicated that a short document can be shared.

- Senator inquired about registrations for Spring 2021

Sr. VP Kissal did not have the numbers since registrations were still open.

Provost Ginsberg added that for Spring 2021, the number of students who have selected to live in the residence halls is less than the planned capacity. The deadline for final decision has not yet passed.

**Provost Ginsberg**

- Clarified that Governor’s latest directive for COVID prevention aimed at reducing the gathering size did not apply to the university and would not impact the in-person classes for remainder of Fall 2020 till Thanksgiving break after which all classes will be virtual.

- Enrollment data for Spring 2021:
  - At the graduate level: 51% of registrations are fully in-person or hybrid.
  - At the undergraduate level: 21% (largely because there are not as many class sections with 25 or less), that results in forecast of 29% of potential registrations would be hybrid or fully in-person.
  - Noting that in next 40 to 60 days situation could potentially deteriorate, he stressed on the importance of paying attention to public health issues and need to follow recommendations from state.
  - University will be observing closely and will be prepared for possibilities.

- Senator inquired about provisions for faculty vulnerable to COVID and cannot come to campus, specifically, faculty’s choice to prevent them from being scheduled to teach on campus.
  - Provost Ginsberg: The practice of allowing faculty to determine for themselves if they believe it is not advisable/dangerous for them to be on campus – will continue just as in Spring and Fall 2020.
Follow-up: Senator noted that the experience at departmental level indicates that the practice of allowing faculty to determine themselves is not being followed, and that faculty are not being given that option.

Provost Ginsberg expressed his concern about the disconnect, and thanked Senator for the information.

- Senator commended HR was creating the pods for learning as a way to support faculty/staff coming to campus with kids in virtual space. Senator also inquired about legal constraints.
  
  o Provost Ginsberg: concurred that it was a great idea and provides tangible support for working families. He shared that the licensing requirements for child-care and child-care facilities, but not for scenario where Mason students are providing supervised learning environment to school aged children.

- Senator inquired if faculty should be planning their classes for Spring 2021 or beyond Spring 2021?
  
  o Provost Ginsberg: Currently the focus is exclusively on Spring 2021, and there has not been any communication regarding Fall 2021. He acknowledged the difficulties of planning for Fall 2021 in face to far too many uncertainties and lack of clarity. The need to plan for Fall 2021 will need to be undertaken soon – possibly after a few weeks.

  Follow-up: Another Senator shared that schedulers in Senator’s department are indicating that the directive is to expect 10% increase in number of classes that are in-person for Fall 2021.

  Provost Ginsberg shared the President Washington has mentioned a goal of increasing on campus presence of students by 10% in Fall 2021, and possibly that has been the basis for the communication. He reiterated that no decisions regarding Fall 2021 have been made – especially considering all of the uncertainties.

- Senator expressed concern about differential and disproportionate impact on faculty of the COVID pandemic, and asked for Provost’s view on conducting evaluations under such conditions and if guidance would reflect in criteria for tenure/promotion?

  o Provost Ginsberg: Provost’s office sent out a message a few weeks ago saying that evaluations should be undertaken with the understanding of the impact of COVID on work performance. The impact is not consistent across individuals and thus it is only fair to consider COVID as one of the factors. He noted that tenure clock has been extended for faculty – both who joined in 2019 and those who joined in 2020. He also expressed support for similar consideration in annual evaluations.
• Senator observed that students were provided an option to choose an alternative grading scale in Spring 2020, and the option was made available again in Fall 2020. Similarly, would faculty be afforded an option to opt out of online evaluation of teaching, and whether their evaluation is published?
  o Provost Ginsberg expressed his commitment to conduct the evaluations. He observed that the bigger question is how will this data be used? To be able to do the evaluation as nothing more than a pilot. He stated that he has in the past said it publicly and maintain the position that we should look past that form and those questions. He has been and continues to advocate for that reformation. He does not believe that the student evaluations can be used in a very determinative fashion, given the shift in modality and everything else that has been going on. He thinks it is important to gather the data and at least see how students are reacting to the classes.

Follow-up: Senator requested Provost to consider that faculty have choice of what to do.

• Senators on EXC from different units shared experience of over-reliance on student evaluation of teaching (SET) for performing teaching evaluation for faculty during annual evaluation as well as during RPT. Specifically, the narrow focus on two questions (Q15 and 16) from SET. They noted that this approach is at a divergence from Faculty Handbook.
  o Provost Ginsberg: For a number of years Faculty Senate has missed the opportunity to take action on completely revising and refreshing the SET process and form. He noted that a number of pilots in different colleges were not accepted. He stressed that it was time for Faculty Senate to work with the administration to revise, refresh and come up with a much better process. He also noted that the reliability and validity of the data from SET is doubtful. He agreed that he would not be supportive of basing RPT decisions on two questions from SET.
  o Chair Davis observed that Effective Teaching Committee (ETC) proposed an alternate SET that was to piloted in Spring 2020, but due to COVID the pilot was postponed. The pilot is now likely to be in Fall 2021. ETC is working in consultation with Stearns Center to create set of documents that afford peer evaluation for online instruction. ETC is expected to reach out to FMC in Spring 2021 as FMC begins drafting recommendations on faculty evaluations.

Executive Committee meeting with President Washington: Nov. 18, 2020, 1:30-3p Appendix A contains email that we shared with him after our meeting last August. As in the past, EXC will not have a specific agenda for the conversation.

Spring Planning Enhancements Project Update: postponed given the public health changes in the local community.
III. Progress reports, business, and agenda items from Senate Standing Committees

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden
   Nothing for the December 2 meeting agenda at this time.

B. Budget and Resources – Tim Leslie
   Committee is:
   - Soon going to send in their annual request for salary data.
   - Is continuing to work for college financial data to iterate on the communication plan and faculty data engagement.

Chair Leslie noted that in previous discussions, Sr. VP Kissal specifically said that she would like more engagement. There has been a disconnect before in the desire for communication and implementation. How do we bridge this gap?
   - Provost Ginsberg did not disagree. Rather than commenting or criticizing something after it is done, he expressed his preference for having a formative engaged process.

Tim Gibson has invested time with the University Libraries’ working group regarding the state effort to reconsider contract for all of Elsevier’s contract for journals. This process that specifically including gathering and talking with people about what is going on. Information will be shared at a subsequent Senate meeting.

C. Faculty Matters – Bethany Letiecq and Solon Simmons
   The committee provided updates on the following topics:
   - The Faculty Evaluation of Administrators is completed.
     - Notably CHHS had a very robust 76% response rate.
     - The overall response rate was around 26-27%.
   - Workload Issue: Keith Renshaw has taken the lead on this and has a meeting with CHHS Dean/Administration today, pending his report.
   - Evaluation of Faculty: Had a meaningful and constructive meeting with Provost Ginsberg. Future conversations to work out specific details.
   - Term Faculty Committee – Solon Simmons
     - For non-tenure track faculty titles such as Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor are used. Should term faculty rank clearly differentiate them? Or should they be free to use Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, like tenure-track faculty? Noted that there is difference in requirements for those titles for tenure-track faculty.

Provost Ginsberg: Intuitively, would this create first and second classes of citizens; would that be one of the net effects? He believes that the difference between and term and a tenured professor the work assignment, not the esteem or respect that they had from their colleagues. He requested time to consider the issue before continuing the conversation.

Provost Ginsberg shared that while chairing the Adjunct Committee for four years, there was some talk about adjunct faculty having titles as “Adjunct Asst. Professor”,

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“Adjunct Assoc. Professor” and “Adjunct Full Professor”. To avoid confusion between full-time faculty with our adjunct faculty, it was not adopted.

Senator Slayden, serving in the role of Chair of the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee, noted that the committee is also discussing this question. She suggested to have FHC propose the resolution to this question rather than the Executive Committee.

D. Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig
Committee has no items for the December 2 agenda.

E. Organization and Operations – Lisa Billingham
1. Potential Discussion of Committee Charges – Athletic Council Charge: The committee wants to go back to the Athletic Council.
2. Grading Process Task Force – proposed charge by Senator Broeckelman-Post and Senator Leslie, below:

Grading Process Task Force

GOAL
The Grading Process Task Force will consider the grading scheme used at George Mason University for its undergraduate and graduate students and make a recommendation for our future grading processes. This task force is intended to evaluate the university’s previous use of the plus/minus grading system prior to COVID-19, assess the implementation of the alternative grading system as a result of COVID-19, and develop a proposal for how we will transition from the optional alternative grading system used during this crisis to the grading scale that will be in place for the future. The Task Force is further asked to be mindful of students and programs with a variety of backgrounds, as well as the communicative value of grading schemas to students once they leave the institution.

CHARGE
The Grading Process Task Force is charged with doing the following:
(i) Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the current A+ to F structure in place
(ii) Conduct a thorough review of peer institutions, best practices, and existing scholarship about the advantages and disadvantages of other known schemes, including such options as Mason’s ‘Alternative Grading Scheme’ used in Spring/Fall 2020, High Pass / Pass / Fail, ranked grading, straight A-F scales, plus/minus scales, and any other system deemed worthy of consideration by members of the committee
(iii) Make a recommendation about which grading scheme best fits the institution’s mission, providing a rationale and support for that recommendation
(iv) Outline a potential timeline, cost, and a communication plan for implementing any recommended changes

DELIVERABLE OUTCOME
After deliberation and external engagement, the Task Force is charged to bring a report, including proposed action items and rationales, to the Faculty Senate for subsequent approval and implementation by University Administration. If appropriate for time-sensitive elements, intermediate reports and action items are welcomed.

COMPOSITION
The Task Force shall be composed of:
(i) One instructional faculty member from each college or school, elected by the faculty of that college or school
(ii) One member of the Academic Policies Committee
   (iii) Two students: one elected member of GAPSA and one elected member of Student Senate
   (iv) the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (or designate)
   (v) the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (or designate)
   (vi) the Director of the Stearns Center (or designate), and
   (vii) the Registrar (or designate).

Discussion:

- The intent of the undertaking in the short-term as well as long-term.
- Pros and cons of including timeline for the committee. It was noted that with complex undertakings it can take longer, and tight timelines may prevent inclusion/participation of term faculty members. Senator noted that it is not uncommon for a task force to report back in a year with final report due in two years.
- EXC members discussed on the need to take the opportunity to re-examine the grading process and also plan for next crisis or situation where it may be necessary. Whether such an examination was even necessary?
- Senator Slayden shared the history of grading system and rationale over time for the changes.
- Chair Davis suggested including this in report from O&O to initiate a conversation before including it in the February meeting of Faculty Senate.

3. Faculty Senate Charter Proposed Changes for first review – document forthcoming

Committee has started a review of the charter.

Discussion:

- It was clarified that changes to the charter need to be approved by the General Faculty at the meeting.
- An approval from Faculty Senate or recommendation is not required, but there is requirement to have a quorum. It was noted that getting a quorum for General Faculty meeting has been difficult.
4. Ombudsperson Status Report: salary data supplied to Chief of Staff Dr. Ken Walsh and has been discussed by Sr. VP Kissal.

IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

- Multilingual Students Academic Success Committee request to Faculty Senate: MASC needs a sustained partner in a fully funded OIEP for the identification and tracking of multilingual students' academic performance at Mason. Chair Davis referred this issue to O&O to change the composition of the committee to include a Provost's Office appointee. Should that change occur, it would be up to the Provost to determine who in OIEP is connected to this committee in order to afford them the ability to do the work that they need to do. There was no objection to referring this to O&O.

Executive Summary: Need for Integration

MASC is charged with identifying ways to support multilingual student academic success. While MASC’s independent efforts to date have better identified multilingual student populations at Mason, we need better partnerships to be able to track, assess, and improve academic performance among these student populations.

**Key concern at this time:** Without centralized data collection and data-analysis partners, we do not have a baseline of performance to direct additional efforts.

- **Request to Faculty Senate:** MASC needs a sustained partner in a fully funded OIEP for the identification and tracking of multilingual students' academic performance at Mason.

**Key concern at this time:** MASC needs to have its faculty development and student support charges integrated into campus-wide initiatives to increase relevance and impact.

- **Goal for ’20-’21:** MASC will work to identify solutions to our data needs, and will take steps to collaborate with other key faculty/curriculum initiatives.

- Faculty Success Initiative Update and Forum – Richard Craig and Solon Simmons

Senator Craig: The forum will be held December 4, 3-5 pm on Zoom. Senators will receive information in the coming days.

Senator Simmons: We have looked at the COACHE data and the committee is thinking about what is needed for faculty to be successful. The Success Initiative Forum is going to be structured so that Senators can talk about those recommendations and provide unfiltered feedback on whether they will actually work to enable faculty to be successful. It will not be a formal meeting, run by Robert's Rules, but an open discussion, in small groups as well as a big group, to hear what Senators think about what is needed to allow faculty to be successful in the coming years. This honest discussion will help us understand how to advise the administration on next steps. The COACHE process has had substantial faculty engagement and participation. But there is a
difference now with having the Senate as a body provide feedback. This is another example of how the Senate can be part of the shared governance process. Each EXC member is invited to attend.

Chair Davis:
  o Provided the background on the undertaking to derive action plans for subgroups.
  o Email will invite Faculty Senators to participate in the conversation.

- Teaching Effectiveness Committee work on evaluating virtual instruction
  Chair Davis: The Effective Teaching Committee to provide guidance for faculty who are having to conduct peer evaluation of teaching online. Especially for faculty who themselves have not done online teaching or do not have much experience with it. The committee is working with Stearns Center. After review and approval by Darlene and Faisal, and by Faculty Affairs and Development, the materials will be posted on website for the Provost's office.

V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion
- Motion to extend alternative Grade mode approved for Fall 2020 for entire 2020-21 academic year and Summer 2020
  Motion: The alternative grade mode that was approved for Fall 2020 shall be extended to include the entire 2020-2021 academic year. Students who took courses in Summer 2020 shall also be able to retroactively select the alternative grade mode for those summer courses until the final day of the fall semester.
  Rationale: Mental health experts recommend consistency for students who are facing challenges, and this policy adds a degree of certainty about whether there will be an alternative grade mode available to students in the upcoming semester from the very beginning of the semester. By instituting the same policy for the entire academic year, we can reduce uncertainty for students and faculty and avoid coming back to the same conversation again for the spring semester. Since Summer 2020 fell between two semesters with alternative grade mode, it seems fair to offer the same option to students during that term as were available in the adjacent terms.

  Discussion:
  o EXC members discussed merits of extending alternative grading scheme to entire 2020-2021 academic year and agreed that for consistency the alternative grading scheme should be offered to the students for the remainder of the academic year.
  o It was clarified that Summer 2021 is not included in the academic year and must be specified in addition.

- Non-collegiate academic unit representation on Faculty Senate: Motion from the Executive Committee:
  Non-collegiate academic units, such as Mason Korea and INTO Mason, will be afforded one ex-officio seat on the Faculty Senate. This seat will be designated for a faculty member serving in that academic unit, who will be elected by the faculty in the non-collegiate academic unit.
Chair Davis: Continuing the conversation from last EXC meeting regarding the request from the newly formed Faculty Senate at Mason Korea to be connected to Fairfax. There is also some recognition that in 2018, the Academic Initiatives Committee had made the recommendation about connecting Mason Korea faculty members to Mason Faculty Senate. There had been continued concern about the way in which the MK Mason faculty are or are not organized as a non-collegiate academic unit. Similar concern about INTO Mason faculty has been discussed.

Discussion:
- EXC members discussed whether Mason Korea can be defined as an academic unit.
- General consensus that ex-officio representation offers a compatible way to connect Mason Korea faculty and their faculty senate with Fairfax.
- Questions were raised about INTO Mason faculty. It was decided to focus on Mason Korea’s request at this time and seek clarification on official status of INTO Mason faculty (based on their employment contracts).
- Chair Davis will revise the language and send for review before inclusion in agenda for Faculty Senate meeting.

VI. Agenda for FS Meeting December 2, 2020

- Committee Reports:
  A. Faculty Senate Standing Committees
     Executive Committee
     Motion to extend alternative Grade mode approved for Fall 2020 for entire 2020-21 academic year and Summer 2020
     Academic Policies
     Budget and Resources
     Faculty Matters
     Nominations
     Organization and Operations

  B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives
     Faculty Conduct Working Group Report

- New Business
  Motion on Mason Korea representation in the Faculty Senate

- Announcements
  - Provost Ginsberg
  - SVP Kissal (see note above about whether to have her in Budget & Resources report)
  - Reminder of Faculty Senate Meetings in Spring 2021 (all via Zoom)
    - February 3, 2021 - Rector Hazel to address the Faculty Senate
    - March 3, 2021 - President Washington to address the Faculty Senate
    - March 31, 2021 (if needed)
    - April 7, 2021
    - April 28, 2021

- Remarks for the Good of the Faculty

- Adjournment
Respectfully submitted
Kumar Mehta
Secretary
Appendix A

Sent to Dr. Washington August 22, 2020

Dear Dr. Washington,

On behalf of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, I want to convey our thanks to you for taking time to join the meet and greet with us. We are appreciative of your candor and willingness to share your ideas and discuss various topics, and heartened by your express desire to initiate action on some of the discussed items.

On behalf of my colleagues, I have summarized the actionable items you requested.

1) At each local level of faculty evaluation -- there is a need for clearly communicated standards and expectations, for performance in research/scholarship, teaching, and service. Faculty expectations may vary with academic rank and title. This would also be in accordance with the Faculty Handbook, faculty at the local level are instrumental in developing performance standards.

2) With respect to research/scholarship, there needs to be robust institutional support for helping faculty acquire and manage grants for funded research in areas of importance to the university. (For example: funded NIH research)

3) Faculty are expected to teach well, regardless of instructional appointment. All teaching performance assessments should be holistic and reflective of teaching effectiveness and contributions. It should include a variety of evaluative methods to assess teaching performance. Heavy or exclusive use of student evaluation of teaching as a proxy for teaching performance should be discouraged.

4) Improve the incentive structure to motivate and reward faculty taking on administrative and leadership responsibilities at the local level (departments/programs): Chairs and Directors; as well as for faculty making valuable service contributions for the university. There is also a need to improve training and support at these levels to ensure that policies and processes are known and followed, and there is adherence to shared faculty governance. Building in accountability for all levels of the administration to encourage transparency and engagement in bottom-up decision making.

We look forward to Faculty Senate Executive Committee’s Fall meeting with you to discuss high-priority items from faculty perspective -- both in the terms of long-term strategy for Mason, as well as more immediate.

Regards,

Kumar Mehta
On behalf of Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Text of email sent to Provost and Chief of Staff on October 31

As we move toward the latter part of the semester, I took a moment to look back at the key issues the Faculty Senate Executive Committee shared with Dr. Washington after our first visit with him. As I look at the key issues, I am heartened that we are collectively making progress on these issues.
For example, the Faculty Matters Committee is actively working with the Provost on faculty evaluations (Point 1). The Teaching Effectiveness Committee is working with the Stearns Center and Provost's Office on establishing a broader set of practices for evaluating teaching, and making those practices public (Point 3).

We are still in need of discussion and collaboration in expanding research support (Point 2) and incentivizing/recognizing service at all levels (Point 4). And the discussion around Point 3 needs more attention (and some of that is on me as I am working personally with the chair on how to proceed).

Having said all of this, I hope we can continue to collaborate on these four specific concerns as identified by the Executive Committee. I believe Point 4 will be connected to the revision of the faculty evaluation process but in the interim, more can be done to recognize faculty at all levels who perform extraordinary service. I thank the Provost's Office for financially supporting the Executive Committee for summer service. As we think beyond the Exec Comm and Senate, frankly, we have faculty serving their colleges/schools and departments and have minimal recognition OR are told that the service is not encouraged because it takes time away from research. This requires continued conversation with Deans as well as with LAU heads. Further, the outstanding achievement awards were postponed until spring. This is one way we can provide recognition for faculty and staff for their service. When can we expect to see these nominations open up? And to this point, I wonder if there can be discussion with Deans to have something similar in each of the colleges/schools. This is in direct response to the COACHE data, whereby recognition for service from Deans and higher was noted as an opportunity for growth.