

SCSU Faculty Senate President's Report – October 28, 2020

Announcements:

- Welcome to Stephanie Fischer and Ginny Metaxas – Please join me in bidding a warm welcome to Stephanie Fischer, English Department and a welcome back to Ginny Metaxas, History Department (Ginny was a Senator for many years when she was a full-time faculty member at Southern). They are our two new Senators, elected as a result of our recent part-time faculty elections.
- We are seeking a Senate representative to the Faculty Development Advisory Committee (FDAC).

Preparation for the 10/28/20 meeting:

Resolutions

1. Search for Next CSCU President (from FS EC) – This resolution was presented at our last meeting and is similar to the resolution approved by Central in August.
2. Regarding BOR Resolution for Revised FY 2021 Spending Plan (from FS EC) Senators may wish to watch the [video](#) of the 10/15 BOR meeting.
3. Faculty Choice in Administering Student Opinion Surveys (SOS) in the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Semesters (from Technology Committee) – This resolution extends the policy that was approved during spring 2020 to provide faculty with choice regarding whether they wish to utilize Student Opinion Surveys during the fall and spring semesters of 2020-2021, recognizing the challenging and unusual circumstances faculty are facing. Faculty who choose to utilize the SOSs will solely be provided with the results and will choose how they wish to utilize the data.
4. Resolutions regarding P/F options for undergraduate and graduate students for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters (from Student Policy Committee) – These resolutions utilize the [policies](#) that were approved during spring 2020. The p/f deadline would be extended until the end of finals week, recognizing the challenging and unusual circumstances students face during this semester. The p/f option would be available for all courses, including electives, LEP courses, and courses in the major and minor (if allowed by the individual department). Advisor approval is required. We will discuss the fall 2020 undergraduate and graduate resolutions first and time-allowing, will get to the spring 2021 resolutions.
5. Resolution Regarding Withdrawals and Incompletes for Fall 2020 (from Student Policy Committee) - This resolution utilizes the policy that was approved during spring 2020 which

extends the withdrawal deadlines and allows students to use the late withdrawal together with the Incomplete grade (I and I+) to withdraw from the course after the semester has been completed as one option to reconcile the I or I+ grade). We will discuss the fall 2020 resolution first and time-allowing, will get to the spring 2021 resolution.

Updates:

1. Student Opinion Surveys for courses – Due to the campus closing after the week of Thanksgiving break, it will not be possible to offer paper and pencil student opinion surveys as an option and all SOSs will need to be done electronically. In order to utilize paper and pencil, faculty would need to administer the surveys in mid-November and hand-deliver them to the Office of Assessment and Planning immediately, then be on campus to pick them up from their offices. Also, given that the forms are required to be administered by a third party who is not a student, this is more complex since fewer personnel are available on campus. Finally, since the Office of Assessment and Planning is closing after the Thanksgiving break, the scanning may not be completed on time for renewal file submission, especially for first-year renewals which are due on the first day of the spring semester. The electronic surveys are more convenient; however, the drawback is the poor completion rate when compared to paper and pencil (about 40% or less completion). Departments should discuss how to encourage robust participation and instructors should discuss with their students the importance of the surveys. For on ground and synchronous online courses, one idea would be for the instructors to take the first ten minutes of a class to encourage the students to access and complete the surveys during class time.

2. Digital Files – David Pettigrew, University Digital Evaluation Facilitator
 - Time of day when access to the digital file is granted and removed - Evaluators will be granted access to the digital file between the hours of 6am and 9am on the designated date (the process takes several hours) and access will be removed at 5pm on the designated date. Previously, we had thought it would be possible to provide and remove access at 12:00am and 11:59pm, respectively, however, due to technical considerations, this was not possible.
 - Please note that for Promotion and or Tenure candidates, access is granted (October 20) and removed (November 9) on the same days for both the DEC and the Chairperson. Since the Chair does not view the DEC letter, given electronic access, it is now possible for both to review the digital file simultaneously.
 - Finally, due to the overlapping calendars, colleagues undergoing evaluation for Promotion and Tenure and for Renewal, during the current academic year, will be provided with a second digital file for their Renewal application by November 9. The digital Renewal file will, initially, be an exact copy of the contents of the Promotion and Tenure file. Following the duplication, colleagues can continue to add documents, as appropriate, to both files. This creation of a second file allows the Letters of Evaluation for the separate applications to be nested in the respective files. Evaluators will automatically be provided access to the separate files on the contractual calendar dates. Like the "Digital Evaluation" file for Promotion and Tenure, the second digital file for "Renewal" will also be housed under the candidate's courses on Blackboard Learn 9

3. Follow up on survey sent to students by Student Affairs – As presented in the previous FS President’s report and discussed at our last Senate meeting, this student survey contained a number of items that faculty felt infringed upon teaching and evaluation of faculty performance. In the interim, AAUP and the administration met and agreed tentatively to the following:

- Data will be assembled and all identifiers removed, including anything that could lead to identification of an individual faculty member.
- Instead of providing a summary of a class(es), a summary of general themes by department would be presented.
- This department specific information (only of general themes), along with the other generic student affairs/support information would be shared with a department chair only.
- No department would see another department’s information.
- The analysis would not be public; instead the information should serve as a tool to inform faculty and administrators in their planning for the remainder of the semester and the spring.

Once the analysis has been completed, the findings will be reviewed with the AAUP leadership. Once reviewed, it is hoped by the administration that we will agree to an appropriate format to present the information.

Update from constituents on campus:

1. Jules Tetreault Associate Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs notes that it has been a very difficult semester for many of our students. There are a number of things happening within our environments that are continuing to raise their anxiety levels. The continuation of the pandemic, racial injustice/climate, and a divisive election all are weighing heavily on students. He asks for everyone’s continued flexibility and support of students’ individual circumstances. He ask that if you identify a student who is having difficulty, reach out and try to respond and offer support and if necessary refer them to my office via Navigate or the Student Support Referral form. For more information on supporting students in distress the following link, <https://inside.southernct.edu/dean-of-students> is recommended.

Dr. Tetreault reports that due to the generosity of many donors and our community as a whole an announcement should be going out soon about the opening of the Opportunity Center and Food Pantry in Wintergreen. We have a lot of students who continue to not have their basic needs of food and shelter met and this Center will not only offer a pantry but an opportunity to connect to other support services. Please look out for more information coming soon. If you or your department is interested in becoming a sustaining partner please contact Sue Zarnowski in my office (zarnowskis1@southernct.edu).

2. Technology Update: - Trever Broliar, Co-director, Information Technology

As we prepare for fully remote classes post-Thanksgiving break, it is requested that if faculty or students need any assistance with the following bullet points, they reach out to the helpdesk or to Trever for further support:

Helpdesk: helpdesk@southernct.edu

- Test proctoring assistance
- Blackboard Learn 9
- Webex, Teams & Collaborate
- General computing & technology questions
- Computer loans
- Password Resets
- MFA assistance
- Home wireless access issues

3. Sage Crary Stachowiak, Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships - <https://inside.southernct.edu/onestop/financial-aid/freeze-date-policy>

The Freeze Date policy is located on the link above on our website, and it's a big win for students!

In summary, the 'old' policy was that we kept continuously updating students aid awards and taking away their aid every time they dropped a class. This meant that all these students were left owing a balance for the course (because billing and student accounts still charges them) and they needed to come up with that money in cash in order to pay off their balance and register for the next term.

Now, with the Freeze in place (all 3 of the other CSU's all have a Freeze too, we were the only one that didn't) as long as a student is still enrolled in at least 1 aid eligible course, they can withdraw from the other courses with no financial aid penalty. So, while they obviously won't earn credit for the course they withdraw from, at least they won't have the financial burden of needing to pay for the class they withdrew from in cash and will be able to seamlessly register for the next term etc. The important thing to note, is that the Freeze Policy does 'Freeze' their enrollment and aid eligibility as of the 'Freeze Date', but if the student withdraws from all courses, they are of course still considered a university withdrawal and their aid is still recalculated accordingly per the federal laws.

Example:

1. On Freeze Date Student X was enrolled in 12 credits and is considered full time.
 - a. After the Freeze Date they withdraw from 2 courses bringing their new current enrollment level to 6 credits.
 - i. In the 'old' policy, we would eliminate all their grant aid and reduce their other funds accordingly, but the student would still be billed for the entire 12 credits, thus leaving the student with a large bill due to the institution
 - ii. Under the Freeze Policy, the student will still keep their 12 credits worth of aid

- iii. When we analyzed student behavior using FA19 and FA18 terms as baselines, we found that there were an average of over 700 students in this scenario (I don't recall the exact number, but it was around the 700 mark if I recall correctly)
- b. After the Freeze Date they add 3 credits for Session 2
 - i. Under the 'old' policy we would recalculate their aid, but because they were already full time they would not qualify for any additional aid since Full Time (12 or more credits) is the same aid amount
 - ii. Under the 'new' policy, no recalculation would be done and no more aid added.
 - iii. When using FA19 and FA18 as baselines, there were an average of 35-40 students who increased enrollment after the week following add/drop and of those who increased enrollment, less than 10 students qualified for more aid as a result of the additional course(s)

Hopefully that makes sense, there is a bit more to it than that, but that is the pretty easy explanation that will account for the vast majority of student scenarios. As always, if a faculty member ever has a question or concern regarding financial aid for a student they are working with, feel free to reach out to us directly. I am always more than happy to help!

Travel Funds

Available Faculty Travel Funds as of October 27, 2020				
Fund	Starting Balance	Spent	Encumbered	Balance
FT "AAUP" Travel	\$491,173.00	\$2,339.00	\$15,245.70	\$473,587.88
PT "AAUP" Travel	\$39,437.00	\$0	\$624.02	\$38,812.77
Creative Activity	The Faculty Creative Activity Travel Fund was voluntarily forfeited this year by the faculty.			

2020-2021 Resolutions approved by Faculty Senate

Number	Date	Resolution regarding...	For	Disposition
F-2020-01	9/3/20	Revisions to Sabbatical Leave	Approval	Approved
F-2020-02	9/19/20	Indigenous Peoples' Day	Approval	Approved
F-2020-03	9/19/20	Enrollment Caps for Online Courses	Approval	Disapproved
F-2020-04	10/5/20	Faculty Creative Activity Travel Funds	Approval	Approved

