

SCSU Faculty Senate President's Report – October 12, 2021 meeting

I. Announcements

President Cheng will be visiting the University campuses this fall. AAUP has been presented with the following dates for the visits: CCSU - 11/15, WCSU – 11/19, SCSU – **11/30**, ECSU – 12/2

II. Preparation for 10/13/21 meeting – There is one resolution to consider for this meeting – from the Finance Committee, in the packet. This resolution presents a minor change to the FCARG application narrative.

III. Updates

- 1) Response to Provost's campus-wide email of 10/7/21 - Some of you probably read the Provost's email that was sent to the campus. If you didn't receive it, please let me know, and I'll forward you a copy. While I don't believe it would be fruitful to engage in a back and forth debate, I think it is important that I address some of the issues that were raised.
 - a. What transpired at the 9/30/21 FS meeting – Obviously there are different perceptions of what transpired at that meeting. Luke's minutes are always carefully written and can be trusted to provide an objective narrative. Please share this information with your departments.
 - b. Shared governance –The Provost stated, "It is unfortunate that there is no ready and facile path for the administration to bring large initiatives to the Faculty Senate or to more deeply collaborate in major issues facing our university." We have collaborated with the administration throughout the history of this University. The FS is always open to working on large initiatives and major issues. What is unfortunate is that the actions regarding faculty development were made without faculty input.
 - c. Structure of Faculty Senate – Because the Provost addressed this issue in his email. I am providing a clarifying explanation and context. Since coming to Southern, the Provost has made it no secret that the structure of the Senate at his previous institution differed from that at Southern and he preferred the structure of the other; since that time, he has pushed for our Senate to be changed. The entire exchange between the Provost's Council and the Executive Committee that the Provost alluded to in his email is too lengthy to appear in the body of this document, however, I have placed the response from the EC in Appendix A, and I believe it will provide you with the essence of the context and exchange. There is a positive outcome that I would like to report and that is that the EC will be meeting with the Provost's Council on Thursday of this week. I will report on the content and outcomes of these meetings as they take place.

In response to the structure of Senates at our sister institutions referred to in the Provost's email, this is by no means a clear-cut issue. I have been in conversations on a number of occasions with the other Senate Presidents, most recently, today, and each institution has a different structure, constitution, bylaws, and way of conducting business. For example, our Senate handles curricular issues with an autonomous standing committee, the UCF, which is unique to Southern. The UCF, which is a part of our Senate, has broad representation across the University including the Provost's office, Registrar, Advising, etc.; the other campuses handle curricular issues through their Senates.

Here is another interesting example of how the Senates differ. I was recently surprised to learn of an issue approved by one of the Senates that was opposed by their President, however the resolution was passed and subsequently approved by the BOR because it did not require the President's signature to be approved. That could not have happened at Southern because our President has broad veto power over any resolutions that require action. My point is that if you read about the structures of faculty senates across the country, you will find nearly as many different models as there are senates. What is common to nearly all are the principles of shared governance. The key to making any of these structures work is a willingness to work collegially and collaboratively utilizing the tenets of shared governance as the guide. The SCSU FS has demonstrated our desire to do this during the 40+ years the Senate has been in existence and we still desire to do this. All of you are on standing committees and you have experienced first-hand how we consult and work with relevant constituencies, including the President, Provost, Deans, VP of Student Affairs, Dean of Student Affairs, VP of Finance, etc. There is no more transparent and collaborative body on this campus.

- d. Faculty Development – Some quotes included in the Provost's email included:
 - i. Specifics of what will be "housed" in Faculty Development programs are, as always, open for discussion.
 - ii. ...the Office of Faculty Development would essentially remain intact (as does the FD budget), including hosting support teams (e.g. creating teaching forums), and will still be overseen by the Provost's Office.

It is not clear how these statements are to be reconciled with the document that was approved by the BOR. We look forward to this open discussion. We had a meeting scheduled with the President and Provost on 10/11, however, the President was unable to attend due to other obligations so we put this issue on hold until the President could join us. We have requested that the meeting be scheduled ASAP. The EC would like the Faculty Development Director position restored and a clear outline regarding how the details of FD are to be worked out in order to comply with the CBA 9.8 in providing "activities by and for all full- and part-time members that enhance their ability to be productive and innovative professionals." There is also the issue of the Center for

Educational and Assistive Technology which appears in the proposal as being co-opted in the same manner as FD which should also not be housed within the COE.

- 2) Meeting with President and Provost – 10/11/21 – This monthly, regularly-scheduled meeting takes place between the President, Provost, FS EC, and Faculty Leadership Council (FLC). As previously mentioned, the President was not available, so the meeting took place between the Provost and the EC and FLC. The EC and FLC are waiting to address our agenda items of shared governance and faculty development until we can meet with the President and Provost together. A few of the discussions that took place at the meeting follow:
 - a. The Provost provided an update on statistics regarding online versus on ground classes and plans for the future. He stated that most classes will return to being on ground. The question was asked as to whether the expectation was that summer and winter classes would also be required to be mostly on ground, given that many of these classes had already been held online prior to the pandemic by design to increase attendance and encourage flexibility. The Provost didn't have a ready answer for this but said that he would check into it.
 - b. It was noted by the EC and FLC that requests for remote attendance options on campus are sometimes being refused, even when the technology is simple and readily available to do this. It was asked, for example, why there wouldn't be an online option for school/college Chairs/Directors meetings or department meetings, especially if requested by attendees. It was requested that the Provost communicate with the campus to encourage this consideration whenever possible. He stated that he would think about this but didn't want to commit to this action at the meeting.

IV. Report on [BOR meeting](#) of 9/23

I encourage you to watch the meeting. I usually view it on 2X speed since it is a 2-hour meeting and I know that many of us don't have two hours to spare. The approval of the many business items was done through a "consent agenda" and there was no discussion on any of the issues of substance, e.g., approvals and discontinuations of academic programs, etc. so very little actual business was discussed during the 2 hours. There were 4 public commentators, all of them faculty members who spoke, each limited to 3 minutes. This was followed by lengthy comments by Chairman Fleury and various members of the BOR who spoke at great length, defending the actions of the BOR and commending fellow board member and themselves on their dedication and the job that they do. There are three issues that I want to summarize, all related to contract negotiations in some way:

- 1) Dr. Bendan Cunningham, Professor of Economics at ECSU, wrote an [OpEd](#) that appeared in the CT Mirror on 8/30/21 regarding the inappropriate behavior of Andrew Kripp, VP of HR at CSCU during collective bargaining agreement negotiations. This was followed by an [OpEd](#), written jointly by President Cheng and BOR Chairman Fleury, that appeared in the CT Mirror on 9/9 that was critical of Professor Cunningham's OpEd and defended Mr. Kripp's actions as having "maintained professionalism." During the public commentary portion of the meeting, Christine Japely, Professor of English at Norwalk Community College (around 1hr., 18 min) called on President Cheng and Chairman Fleury to apologize for their OpEd which she felt impugned Dr. Cunningham's honesty and

chastised him. You may read the [complaint](#) here against Mr. Kripp and the [inquiry report](#) written by Carolyn Magnan, University Counsel.

- 2) The BOR has faced a great deal of ongoing criticism regarding the BOR proposals for the CBA negotiations. In addition to spending a significant portion of this meeting defending the BOR, Fleury asserted that the contract proposals originated from the campus administrators and not from the BOR. At around 1 hr., 49 min. he stated:

“Lest there be any sort of misconception of where the contract terms as proposed under the board’s auspices through management come from, *they originated in conversations that the SO had quite extensively with administrators across the system from every campus of the system.* We are dealing with the various realities and objectives that we have and *the contract terms that were proposed by the Board originate there, not from, frankly, the Board necessarily,* which reviewed those through the subcommittee and found them to be appropriate but leaned heavily on the advice of those who run our campuses and run our system in saying, “advance those as your proposal—expect to hear the other side has a different perspective and work towards the middle and expect to win some, expect to lose some as happens in any such negotiation.”

- 3) Finally, at around 1 hr., 57 minutes the BOR Finance Committee presented several issues:
 - i) Introduced by President Cheng and strongly supported by the University Presidents, College CEOs, and the Board, raises were approved for the management confidential employees. This group includes, for example, Deans, VPs, etc. The raises are 5% for those earning up to 120K, 4% for those earning 120-170K, and 3% for those above 170K. This affects approximately 310 employees, will cost 1.5 million dollars next year, and takes effect July 1. The Finance Committee Chair pointed out that these employees are not represented by a union and count on the Board to “do the right thing.” The motion was approved unanimously and Fleury stated that he “applauds” this action.
 - ii) Following this, the Finance Committee stated that lower than budgeted enrollment at the colleges and the universities is “at this time, not good” and presented the following deficits:

Community colleges – 14 million
CT State Universities – 18 million

The System Office will look for budget revisions to be presented at the October meeting including the use of surpluses from the Universities, and spending cuts that are being identified by the campuses. The budget includes does include 90 million dollars in federal assistance, however the Chair stressed that this is a one-time assistance.

The juxtaposition of the pay raises for management confidential employees, who are among the most highly compensated employees in the system, just prior to statements that spending cuts are being identified on the campuses is striking. Further, the BOR is calling for pay cuts and furlough days in contract negotiations with faculty.

V. *Travel Funds Report for AY 21-22 – update at meeting*

Travel Fund Report			Date: 9/24/2021	
Full Time	Beginning	Spent	Encumbered	Remaining
FT Rollover	\$262,837.31	\$10,040.23	\$3,019.31	\$249,777.77
FT New	\$297,970.00	\$872.98	\$8,296.71	\$288,800.31
Creative Activity	\$85,000.00	\$554.00	\$17,969.94	\$66,476.06
Combined Total	\$645,807.31	\$11,467.21	\$29,285.96	\$605,054.14
Total Spent & Encumbered (S&E)		\$40,753.17	% S&E 6%	
Part Time	Beginning	Spent	Encumbered	Remaining
PT Rollover	\$30,078.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$28,578.00
PT New	\$33,108.00	\$850.00	\$0.00	\$32,258.00
Combined Total	\$63,186.00	\$2,350.00	\$0.00	\$60,836.00
Total Spent & Encumbered (S&E)		\$2,350.00	% S&E 4%	

VI. 2021-2022 – [Resolutions approved by Faculty Senate](#) – Updates on the resolutions and their status may be found on the FS website.

Appendix A.

Dear Bob,

Thank you for sending us the document titled, "Proposals to Enhance Collaboration, Provosts Council-Academic Affairs, September 15, 2021," and thank you for the subsequent email exchange that clarified several of the issues. The Executive Committee met recently to discuss the proposals. Our feedback follows:

In the first bulleted point, you request that all Faculty Senate resolutions be received by Deans, AAVPs, and the Provost before they are placed before the full FS membership. Aside from the logistics of how this would be accomplished, since there are seven standing committees and many Senate resolutions emerge from those committees, the EC feels that administrative oversight of this nature would not be conducive to us conducting our business in an expeditious manner, nor would it respect the autonomy of the Faculty Senate. However, we encourage any interested parties to access the FS website where all FS business is clearly displayed. All members of the campus receive access to these documents on the Monday prior to the full Faculty Senate meeting, which for the most part, is the same time the Senators receive access.

We will continue to consult with appropriate constituencies on the various issues we debate and will continue to try to obtain as broad a consensus as possible. You state a concern regarding funding, space, etc. as they are addressed in resolutions, however, in reviewing the approximately 70 resolutions that the Senate has approved over the last three years, there is little to do with funding and space, and whenever these issues arise, consultation with the appropriate authorizing body almost always takes place. The resolutions focus on issues of importance to faculty, such as grading, student misconduct, student opinion surveys, faculty policies (e.g., Chairs' document, sabbatical leave, etc.).

Regarding your proposition that the EC and Provost's Council meet twice per semester, in a subsequent email to you, you were asked if there is interest in convening the two groups regardless of the resolution issue described above, given your wording, "with agreement on the above proposal." Your response indicated that the two are linked together and that the meetings are conditional upon accepting administrative oversight over FS resolutions. Although we cannot support this request, the EC suggests that regardless, there is much that could be gained by meeting. You specifically mention the following issues:

"Confronting the pandemic, budget issues, dwindling enrollments, parent and guardian (bill payers) complaints, growing competition, complexities of being part of the CSCU System, responding to the BOR, navigating challenges brought by the state legislature, dealing with the growing disrespect education in general is facing, keeping current in disciplinary areas that reflect the "real world" and emerging careers, fund raising, promoting and creating community and corporate partnerships, facilities growth and repair, etc."

We agree that all of these issues could lead to fruitful discussions and collaborations between administration and faculty, and we are willing to meet for the suggested two meetings per semester to discuss these and other issues. Perhaps we could rank order these issues and choose one topic per meeting. Even if some are not immediately solvable, we could certainly find some common ground and possibly some common solutions. The Executive Committee does not understand why these two proposals must be linked; if the goal is to foster earlier and better communication between the Senate and the Deans, these meetings would clearly serve that purpose. Regular meetings could potentially

help to prevent issues such as the recent failure to consult with faculty regarding the changes that have been made to Faculty Development.

Addressing the other miscellaneous issues:

- The Personnel Policy Committee has already met to discuss the issue regarding the sequential progression of the files and we have a response to this issue which we can address with you or with the group.
- Regarding the calendars, all of the dates are restricted according to the CBA. They are not completed by a committee but rather by the Senate President, AAUP Secretary, and last year, Trudy Milburn. They are then sent to HR to double-check that all dates comply with the CBA. If you feel that someone other than Trudy should represent your office this year, please let us know. In short, the review of calendars that you ask for already happens annually and it includes two opportunities for administrative input and agreement.

Finally, regarding the course numbering, you state in your follow up email that this issue has been cleared up. You further asked about course number association and student cohort level and I have forwarded this question to Meredith Sinclair, Chair of the UCF. However, please note that your office has two representatives to the UCF and they are able to send curricular issues and questions directly to Meredith, who, together with the UCF Steering Committee, charges the UCF standing committees with their business.

Thank you for opening up this conversation. We look forward to receiving a response regarding potential collaborative meetings.

FS Executive Committee members