

SCSU Faculty Senate President's Report – December 7, 2022, meeting

- 1) ***Current Referendum & Faculty Senate*** - Thank you to the many stakeholders for engaging in the multiple meetings that gave space for expression of perspectives since our last Faculty Senate meeting. Though communications may have reached the limits of productivity at this stage, I fully expect productivity will be revived as we all move forward following the outcome of this referendum.

I share this message with warmth and respect to all stakeholders, with an understanding that its contents might not be agreeable to all. While I in no way wish to imply a minimization of the position and challenges all face, I hope all can appreciate that there exist a considerable number of variables the Faculty Senate President must weigh and consider at every moment. And, that this topic is only one topic of many that require my and the Faculty Senate's attention.

I understand there have been some concerns about the role of Faculty Senate and my leadership approach at this time-- some of you have wanted me to take a position that favors one stance or the other. As also introduced in my past nomination letter, my leadership is an adaptation of different approaches and styles with flexibility dependent upon the situation, and particular emphasis on impartiality by prioritizing process over content. Ultimately, I proceed with my decisions, as stated in my letter, "knowing that faculty representation is the duty of the Senate President". That does not mean I do not offer kindness, support, or empathy to other groups. Like other leaders across campus, whose perspectives and positions I value, my role has boundaries and duties. Additionally, the following from Robert's Rules may be helpful:

"Rule against the chair's participation in debate" (p. 394-395) If the presiding officer is a member of the society, he has--as an individual--the same rights in debate as any other member; but the impartiality required of the chair in an assembly precludes his exercising these rights while he is presiding. Normally, especially in a large body, he should have nothing to say on the merits of pending questions. On certain occasions--which should be extremely rare--the presiding officer may believe that a crucial factor relating to such a question has been overlooked and that his obligation as a member to call attention to the point outweighs his duty to preside at that time. To participate in debate, he must relinquish the chair, and in such case he should turn the chair over: to the highest-ranking vice president present who has not spoken on the question and does not decline on the grounds of wishing to speak on it; or if no such vice-president is in the room, to some other member qualified as in a), whom the chair designates (and who is assumed to receive the assembly's approval by unanimous consent unless member(s) then nominate other person(s), in which case the presiding officer's choice is also treated as a nominee and the matter is decided by vote). The presiding officer who relinquished the chair then should not return to it until the pending main question has been disposed of, since he has shown himself to be a partisan as far as the particular matter is concerned. Indeed, unless a presiding officer is extremely sparing in leaving the chair to take part in debate, he may destroy members' confidence in the impartiality of his approach to the task of presiding."

I understand this information may be met with differing interpretation and frustration for some but rest assured that I have proceeded with care and thorough consideration, prioritizing process over content, which I see as critical to supporting long-term faculty needs and stability. There may come a time when the process also protects and legitimizes an outcome that is more favorable to those who disagree with present-day topics and outcomes. Procedures and processes are intended to protect the faculty's democratic process, the alternative would be disenfranchisement of faculty voices.

Procedures have been upheld by the Faculty Senate and the process needs time to unfold. It is not my wish that this cause distress; we are all waiting for the outcome together. The existence of other competing priorities and variables that contribute to this situation is understandable. Faculty Senate fulfilled its procedural obligation, and it is my hope that all understand that when senators, as duly elected representatives of all faculty, gave consideration to the petition they felt compelled to act and to act quickly if one considers the possibility of a referendum later in the academic year. Senators fulfilled their obligation, and I am fulfilling my obligation to protect faculty voices as a unit and to ensure that eligible members can vote and that all votes are counted.

Time needs to pass before we can all gain a more objective perspective on the process itself and any ways in which it might be strengthened. I'm sorry that individuals have felt unseen or unheard, that outcomes are not agreeable and have such a distressing effect on so many. These feelings and impact are not my wish for anyone. If the faculty as a unit wish to re-examine the procedures and process, that decision too lies with the faculty via referenda. At present, Faculty Senate does not have plans to further engage on this matter. Yes, plans may change, and it is true that Faculty Senate can be compelled to consider more actions. I can imagine that one thought might be "Does that mean there could be more petitions (for this topic or other topics)?" The answer is unequivocally, "Yes." I don't believe this would result in an infinite loop of actions. Faculty Senate is a group of hard-working, educated, and reasonable professionals, just like other groups on campus. They are elected by their constituents to represent the faculty and understand the critical decision-making nature of their role and I believe they make decisions in good faith. I do not believe such a group would allow for an infinite loop to occur. Petitioners made very clear their reasons for requesting Faculty Senate action, which were highly specific, not requesting infinite reconsideration.

Multiple pathways to exercise one's rights exist. Petitioners, as stated in the petition's wording, elected to exercise their rights via VI.A.1 of the Faculty Senate Constitution. One might understand the realm of possibilities for how and why petitioners made the choices they made. It could be within the realm of possibilities that individuals weighed the option to send their petition to a body that did not vote on the very matter of the petition's topic, a body the petitioners asked to decide whether the petition's request for action had merit or not. A reminder that at no time did Faculty Senate vote to approve, disapprove, or otherwise judge the merits and content of the original proposal or proposal to delay. The Faculty Senate's decisions related to this topic have continually been that such curricular decisions and judgment are democratic and belong with the faculty body.

I ask all to reflect upon the reasons we have a Faculty Senate, why faculty referenda exist, and why some curricular decisions need to include all faculty voices, whether or not other variables, like timing, may be unfortunately coinciding with referenda. Communications that have reached me that imply it was wrong of the Faculty Senate to choose to allow the faculty to express their voice via a vote in this situation have been disheartening for me to hear. I encourage reflection to any that feel faculty are not informed enough to exercise their right to vote on this matter.

I thank the many people for their expressions of support and encouragement for the way I am handling this situation. I look forward to our continued work together as a university community as we are moving beyond this stage of the process.

- 2) ***Service Opportunities & Faculty Senate Representation / Shared Governance*** Beginning with the 11/9/22 packet and going forward, there is now a list of senators empowered by the Faculty Senate to represent the Faculty Senate and thereby representing the faculty body in their role and contributions to the respective committee/group in which shared governance of business is being conducted with a duty to report back to the Faculty Senate minimally once per semester (additional

reports determined by the respective representative or upon request by the Faculty Senate). It is recommended representatives also seek the Faculty Senate's support and endorsement for matters determined by the respective representative or upon request by the Faculty Senate. The goal of the list is to maintain organization and transparency of Faculty Senate representation. **If you are a senator serving or otherwise representing Faculty Senate in any capacity and your name and committee/group assignment does not appear on the list, please contact me starlingn1@southernct.edu and Luke Eilderts eilderts1@southernct.edu.**

- 3) ***Invitation to the Faculty Senate President to attend Provost's Council 11/17/22***– Thank you to the Provost for the invitation to attend the November meeting of the Provost's Council. I very much enjoyed engaging with the Council and offer my impression that this is a positive step forward. I highlighted the work of the Faculty Senate and responded to questions. It is my hope that there will be continued opportunities for the Faculty Senate President to engage with Provost's Council.
- 4) ***The Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Leadership Council (FLC) meetings with administration*** – While disheartening that the first meeting of the academic year did not occur until 11/18/22, I thank this group for agreeing to reinstate the typical once-monthly meeting schedule. In keeping with this agreement, the group also met on 12/5/22 to continue discussions and monitoring of the following:
 - a. ***Digital Files & Faculty Evaluation*** – The Faculty Senate Executive Committee and FLC are aware of issues related to digital files and discussion began and remains underway regarding the organization, process, and roles for those involved in the digital file coordination. While reassurances were provided by administration that issues are or will be resolved, faculty leadership requested that a faculty member with reassigned time join the Academic Affairs team alongside the Blackboard facilitator. The response included reference to budgetary issues and the request was not granted. The potential for a different platform (other than Blackboard) for future evaluation cycles was also discussed by the group. A reminder that if you've experienced any issues please reach out to Trudy Milburn milburnt1@southernct.edu, and copy me starlingn1@southernct.edu and Linda Cunningham cunninghaml1000@southernct.edu.
 - b. ***Zoom*** – Currently, it is understood that Zoom was purchased with non-recurring funds. These funds are no longer available. Trevor Broliar from IT has examined information about past usage and cost. It is understood that each School/College is examining capacity and need to continue with a Zoom contract. It is my understanding that HHS faculty will continue to have access to Zoom per an email from the Dean of HHS. Advantages and disadvantages to Zoom and the desire for strengthening communication between groups about this topic were discussed at the 12/5/22 meeting. Additional information will be shared if and when available.
 - c. ***Budget: University Space Committee*** – A topic that had not yet been discussed in other budget-related meetings is the matter of the University Space Committee. Faculty leadership was assured that there is a plan to reinvigorate this committee and its activities. Additional information will be shared if and when available.
- 5) ***University Budget Committee meeting on 12/2/22*** – members participated in an “Academic Budget Scenario Workshop” which included multiple hypothetical budget planning and problem-solving exercises. No budget-related planning specific to our institution was undertaken at the 12/2 meeting. Additional meetings are anticipated in the Spring semester. **The Finance Committee would like to gather senators'/faculty perspectives and suggestions to bring to future meetings. Please reach out to Cindy Simoneau, FS Treasurer/Finance Committee chair, simoneauc1@southernct.edu.**

- 6) ***Reassigned Time Committee meeting on 11/28/22***– The group reviewing the allocation of reassigned time across the university held its second meeting and reviewed existing data for all reassigned time. In brief sum, the group continued discussion of the organization and interpretation of the data. In beginning to develop recommendations, a number of perspectives were shared. Some of these perspectives include but are not limited to: recommendation for improvement of data and information collected for reassigned time, a desire to consider if and how different duties may share commonalities, the possibility of stakeholders (deans, chairs, program coordinators, faculty) working together to examine possible reductions, and a desire that current allocations be reviewed to determine whether they are fair and equitable prior to recommending reductions. Additional meetings are planned with the next meeting scheduled for 12/12/22. **Please reach out to Troy Paddock, the Faculty Senate representative to this committee, with input and questions, paddockt1@southernct.edu.**
- 7) ***Senate visits to departments***–This is an optional and open opportunity and will remain open for the academic year. Please email me and Luke with any questions and to schedule a visit. Luke and I visited the following departments since the previous President’s report and wish to thank the faculty for the opportunity.
- a. Information and Library Science
 - b. Art
- 8) ***Preparation for the 12/7/2022 meeting*** –
- a. Please attend to the minutes of standing committees and their chairs’ reports on the floor. There are multiple items of business that will result in Resolutions and/or other actions in future meetings. Please ask questions and share these topics with your departments and constituents.
 - b. *Proposal for Ad-hoc Committee for Non-credit, Continuing Education & Micro-credentialing (from the FS Executive Committee)* – Please review this proposal in the packet. The Executive Committee wishes to bring forward this proposal following discussion with FLC. Please prepare for discussion and a vote to establish this committee.
 - c. *Resolution Regarding Revisions to the Incomplete Grade Policy (from Student Policy)* – Please review the packet. The Student Policy Committee (SPC) wishes to bring forward this Resolution for deliberations and voting. Please see the [Incomplete Grade Policy](#). The SPC, following consultation with Alicia Carroll, are recommending clarifying language resulting in a change in timeline and additional language that addresses how students qualify to be awarded an “Incomplete” grade that aligns with financial aid rules.
 - d. *Presentation from EDL* – Department of Educational Leadership to become Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Similar to the presentation from Nursing, it is my understanding that formal documents refer to the department as the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies but that the department has been referred to by an abbreviated name for some time in our community. More information/rationale will be provided by a department representative at the meeting.

The role of the Faculty Senate is to provide advice to an entity seeking to become established under a new status. While this is not an official status change for EDL, the department has been recognized in our SCSU community as the Department of Educational

Leadership and is therefore proceeding with this step to engage Senate's advice as they re-establish the department's title. We will take a vote of support following our discussion and Q&A. Although this vote is non-binding, it will serve as the Senate's 'advice' regarding this matter per the CBA.

e. *Guests* –

- As a planned follow-up to the item from my President's Report dated 10/26/22 "Initiating Conversation about Interactions, Communication, Climate/Morale", the ombudspersons have been invited to speak at the 12/7 meeting as the first of multiple potential conversations. It may be that our guests will need to reschedule this first conversation for a meeting in the Spring semester.
- The Newer Faculty Discussion Group has requested to postpone their presentation to a meeting in the Spring semester.

9) On-going topics / "What's Going on with....?"

This section of the President's report is a repository of questions received by the Executive Committee in which information is still being gathered and on-going discussions are still being held. The Executive Committee welcomes additional questions and information from the university community.

- 1. Renovation of the former HHS Dean's office in Engleman** – What is the cost and rationale for the renovation?
 - a. This item will appear on future agendas for FLC/admin meetings
- 2. Early College** – What is the status of the program (e.g., fall enrollments, faculty involvement)?

10) 2022-2023 – [Resolutions approved by Faculty Senate](#) – Updates on the resolutions and their status may be found on the FS website.