

SCSU Faculty Senate President's Report – February 22, 2023, meeting

- 1) A note of gratitude to Maria Diamantis, Past President of the Faculty Senate, for chairing the 2/8 meeting in my absence due to jury duty. Thank you, Maria!
- 2) ***Encouragement for Faculty Attendance at the 2023 Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony*** – Announcements continue to come forward about this year's commencement ceremonies. The 2023 Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony will take place May 19, 2023, at the Total Mortgage Arena (formerly Webster Bank Arena) in Bridgeport. Doors open at 8:15am and the ceremony starts at 10:15am. We cannot celebrate our students without our faculty, after all, the celebration of student success and the supportive relationships they formed with our campus community members, and with faculty in particular, is at the heart of the ceremonies. Please consider attending and/or discuss with your departments/constituents to have representatives attend.
- 3) ***Service Opportunities & Faculty Senate Representation / Shared Governance*** – On-going challenges with filling faculty service opportunities remain. Thank you to those who have volunteered to be a representative. The following seats remain:
 - two Senate representatives for the University Library Committee (ULC) – The committee has shared “If we could have senate representatives join ULC together with elected members in Spring 2023, it would be highly welcomed by our committee.”
 - two Senate representatives for the Ad Hoc Committee on Continuing Education, Non-Credit, & Micro Credentialing (these seats are in addition to the APC chairs)

A proposal for by-laws changes that would allow for senators who serve in formal capacities representing Senate (i.e., on the list below the attendance table on our agendas) to be excused from standing committee commitments. This proposal is under review by the Rules Committee as the committee assigned to on-going review of our by-laws.

- 4) ***Planning of a Meeting/Retreat of Faculty Leadership Executive Teams (FS/UCF/Grad Council/FLC)*** – A meeting of faculty leaders to review governance documents and procedures to identify possible areas that would benefit from clarification and strengthening. SCSU-AAUP will have representation at this meeting. The meeting is scheduled for March 24th.
- 5) ***Meeting of SCSU-AAUP, FS President, and Human Resources Chair*** – This group met on 2/13 to discuss HR's comments, provided at the request of President Joe, regarding governing documents and procedures related to the second Referendum held in Fall 2022 (the proposed delay of implementation of changes to the LEP). Relevant CBA sections/preamble were reviewed. While no procedural violations were identified, all parties shared the perspective that clarifying language within the documents (e.g., definition of “autonomous”) would strengthen the documents and reduce ambiguity. Item #4 above reflects one plan to explore possible improvements and clarifications to the documents. Proposed changes would need review and consideration by the Rules Committee as the committee assigned to on-going review of our by-laws.

- 6) ***The Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Leadership Council (FLC) meetings with administration*** – This group met on 2/13 to continue discussions and monitoring of multiple topics.
1. ***Initial Intent for New Programs*** – This form was distributed among some faculty and administration earlier in February. Following discussion with Academic Affairs on 2/13, it is understood that use of this form and procedure is not required but will be required beginning in Fall 2023.
 2. ***Digital Files & Faculty Evaluation*** – Interfolio, and the recent demonstration, was discussed by the group. While no final decision was shared during the 2/13 meeting, my impression was that Interfolio did not have strong support. If Interfolio is not selected, what remains are numerous challenges with the digital file coordination process. As shared in my previous report, though a reasonable option at the time of our transition away from binders and paper files, Blackboard is not designed for a process like our faculty evaluation process. The “movement” of files in terms of access and availability for reviewers in carefully timed succession is not well supported by Blackboard and places high demands on time and communication among multiple parties (e.g., candidates, reviewers, Blackboard coordinator, Academic Affairs, AAUP, P & T Chairperson, FS President). Use of Blackboard also appears to increase the likelihood and impact of any human error. **A stronger workflow mechanism for the “movement” of candidate files throughout the evaluation process is highly desirable. Faculty members in both the candidate role and reviewer roles are impacted by challenges with the current workflow approach.** To help resolve these challenges, as shared in my previous reports, the faculty leadership at our meetings on 11/18/22, 12/5/22, and 2/13/23 requested that a faculty member with reassigned time join the Academic Affairs team alongside the Blackboard facilitator. Responses from administration included reference to budgetary issues and the requests have not been granted, though reassurances were provided by administration that issues are or will be resolved.

A reminder that if you’ve experienced any issues with Blackboard and the current faculty evaluation process please reach out to Trudy Milburn milburnt1@southernct.edu, and copy me starlingn1@southernct.edu and Linda Cunningham cunninghaml1000@southernct.edu.
 3. ***Reassigned Time Committee*** – Following discussion during the 2/13 meeting, it is our understanding that this group has not met this semester and there are no plans for future meetings at this time. The Provost acknowledged the committee’s efforts and shared that a report was received.
- 7) ***State Budget / University Budget Committee meetings*** – The understanding is that meetings will continue this spring. The Finance Committee continues 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.**

On February 15, the Appropriations Committee heard arguments for funding for public higher education in the state. CSCU President Terrence Cheng gave his remarks earlier in the day and public testimony occurred in the evening. Though scheduled for in-person testimony, due to the lengthy list of speakers that took testimony late into the evening I provided my testimony via Zoom. I was happy to wait in such a long line and proud to see such a great diversity of speakers from across Connecticut! Thank you to those who contributed, supported, were in attendance, and/or submitted oral or written testimony in Hartford on 2/15.

- 8) *Senate visits to departments* – A reminder that 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.
- 9) *Continuing Conversation about Interactions, Communication, Climate/Morale* – A reminder that the ombudspersons have been invited to join us again and are tentatively scheduled for our March 8th meeting. In addition to facilitating further discussion at Senate, we anticipate that there will be opportunities for Q & A about ombuds' work at Southern.

10) Preparation for the 2/22/2023 meeting –

- a. *Unfinished Business: Newer Faculty Discussion Group* – While this group is not seeking to become a committee of the Faculty Senate, being recognized via a formal acknowledgement by vote of support would reinforce this group's efforts and continuation. As the group gave their presentation at our previous meeting, we can move forward and hold a non-binding vote.
- b. *Resolution Regarding Inclusions to The Promotion and Tenure Procedures and Renewal Procedures (from Academic Policy)* – Please review the packet. These updates would directly impact all faculty in the Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure evaluation process. Academic Policy has spent considerable time over multiple academic years inquiring with faculty and deliberating potential opportunities to streamline the faculty evaluation process as it pertains to candidate files and preparation of files. This Resolution is another result of those efforts and seeks to establish additions to the P&T guidebooks in the form of an appendix. Said appendix would include "Supplemental Guidance on Form, Scope, and Nature of Evidentiary Documentation, Including Recommendations on Inappropriate Material for Inclusion." Please see the packet for the complete list of recommendations. As with all efforts made to improve the faculty evaluation process: One on hand, greater specificity provides increased clarity for candidates. On the other hand, greater specificity can be more limiting or may not always apply to a candidate's circumstances or role.
- c. *Resolution For Information Regarding the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Powered Tools (from Technology)* – As a follow-up to Technology's informational presentation earlier this semester, this Resolution seeks to establish the faculty's stance regarding AI Powered Tools, specifically that "...the unsanctioned use of AI powered tools in the completion of student work, without the explicit written consent of the teaching faculty, (is) a violation of the BOR/CSCU Student Code of Conduct part D.1, and therefore a form of academic misconduct." Additionally, the resolution acknowledges the individual faculty member's role via their course syllabi and refers to the academic misconduct policy.
- d. *From the Undergraduate Curriculum Form (UCF) updates to the Flow of Proposals* – Please review the packet. The UCF has updated the Flow of Proposals (a component of the UCF's by-laws) specifically regarding the addition of a process for program discontinuation and a slight change to how the UCF interacts with the school/college curriculum committees. SCSU-AAUP's review confirmed no contractual issues with the section on program discontinuance. In the spirit of supporting the UCF and strengthening procedures and documents (see also Items #4 & #5 above), my observations for possible further strengthening are below and may not be priorities at this time. Please share questions to our meeting as Meredith Sinclair, Undergraduate Curriculum Forum Chairperson, will be available during our 2/22 meeting. Some questions that came to me were: at the point of proposal submission, who is the primary contact for changes? Which parties

are communicating? There is guidance in the document that the department must agree to the changes or make the changes. Is this the department chair, the entire department, or the DCC? Another question that came to me was whether there is a benefit to the FS Elections Committee conducting the polls—an opportunity also for the Faculty Senate to provide direct support to the UCF. Again, these may be very minor or further updates can occur at a later time. Please bring your observations and questions to our meeting.

11) 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. Should Faculty Senate include statement(s) regarding Indigenous Peoples and land acknowledgement in Faculty Senate documents and meetings (see WCSU Senate as example)?

- i. Following outreach to our DEI Office, this item is on hold until such time as the Executive Committee can learn more about what may be meaningful and appropriate. The topic has become more controversial as to whether having a land acknowledgement in fact creates more harm than good for indigenous communities. “[Moving Beyond Performative Land Acknowledgements](#)” is a podcast featuring an Indigenous scholar who shares her research on this topic. It provides a critical analysis to deepen our understanding of how land acknowledgements can create more harm than good.

12) 2022-2023 – [Resolutions approved by Faculty Senate](#) – Updates on the resolutions and their status may be found on the FS website.