

SCSU Faculty Senate President's Report – August 30, 2023, meeting*

*Please note many topics below are on-going, with information unfolding at the writing of this report. As there is much to share, I am sending this report along now and should additional information be available to me prior to our 8/30 meeting I will send an addendum to this report.

- 1) **Welcome & Introductions** – I extend a welcome to a new academic year to the entire faculty, including new, returning, full- and part-time colleagues, teaching faculty, library faculty, counseling faculty, coaches and athletic trainers and faculty on special appointment. Well wishes to all for a productive and successful year!
 1. **Welcome to our Interim University President, Dr. Dwayne Smith, also known as Dr. D.!**
It has been wonderful getting to know our new leader and I look forward to working together with Dr. D. as we all navigate this academic year.
 2. I would like to express a very warm welcome to our new and returning senators. Welcome to a new year of Faculty Senate business and important service to the University! **I will ask all senators to introduce yourselves at the beginning of the 8/30 meeting.**
 3. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I also send greetings to our colleagues throughout the University, along with a reminder that everyone is welcome to sit in on full Faculty Senate meetings as observers, when Faculty Senate conducts its business.
 4. A reminder that the Faculty Senate will host Dr. D., Interim University President, and Provost Dr. Prezant to share messages of welcome at the 8/30 meeting.

- 2) **Executive Committee** – I'd like to share a message of sincere appreciation to the incredible leadership of the AY 22-23 Executive Committee.
 1. *Maria Diamantis*
 2. *Luke Eilderts*
 3. *Rex Gilliland*
 4. *Klay Kruczek*
 5. *Doug Macur*
 6. *Helen Marx*
 7. *Michael Shea*
 8. *Cindy Simoneau*
 9. *Stephen Monroe Tomczak "Zak"*
 10. *Melanie Uribe*
 11. *Jeffrey Webb*

Last year was a year of critical faculty leadership work and this year will be no different. The election for the AY 23-24 Faculty Senate Officers (President & Treasurer) occurred in Spring 2023 and I would like to thank Cindy Simoneau for continuing in the role of Treasurer and Luke Eilderts for agreeing to continue in the role of Secretary.

The election for standing committee chairpersons, who will also serve as members of the AY 23-24 Executive Committee and members of the Faculty Leadership Council (FLC) alongside the Faculty Senate Officers (President, Secretary, & Treasurer), is a priority of our 8/30 meeting.

All faculty senators are eligible to serve as standing committee chairs, and co-chairs are permissible under our Senate documents, with a three consecutive 1 year term limit for the chairperson role. The

AY 22-23 Elections committee/chairperson will host the election. Following the conclusion of the 8/30 meeting, we will immediately hold our first executive session.

- 3) ***SCSU-AAUP and Faculty Senate Co-Sponsored Retreat*** – This retreat, a retreat we strive to host annually, took place May 23, 2023. This was an important gathering of upwards of 83 faculty and served to inform SCSU-AAUP and the Faculty Senate of the concerns, questions, and goals of the faculty body. **Thank you to SCSU-AAUP Chapter President, Kari Swanson, and Membership Services Coordinator, Linda Cunningham, for hosting and thank you to all faculty in attendance!** Summary and follow-up information will be shared by SCSU-AAUP at upcoming meetings of its executive committee and a chapter meeting, and during Faculty Senate standing committees' first meeting on 9/6 to engage faculty-driven discussion of future initiatives.
- 4) ***Service Opportunities & Faculty Senate Representation*** – Senators, please engage with your constituents about the importance of faculty service as we prepare for the upcoming academic year. Service is not just a category of faculty evaluation; service is a mechanism by which faculty influence, give input, and engage the faculty's voice with our collective community. Whilst you've understandably heard a similar message each year, given fiscal challenges, **it is critical to state that if there was ever a year that faculty service and engagement in shared governance were of utmost importance, this is the year. A unified faculty is a strong faculty.**

Continuing with last year's practice, a list will appear next to the attendance list on our meeting agendas. This is 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 eildertsl1@southernct.edu](mailto:Luke.Eilderts@southernct.edu).**

- 5) ***Fiscal Impacts / State Budget / University Budget*** – Numerous events continue to transpire at the time of this report. My observation is a rapidly unfolding landscape of efforts and opportunities. Please ensure you and your constituents attend to the message from the Provost regarding the 9/1 meeting for Academic Program Planning (APP); attendance at the event is encouraged.

As of the writing of this report, I can confirm that I and the curriculum chairs, the chairperson of the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum (UCF), Dr. Meghan Barboza, and the chairperson of Graduate Council, Dr. Barbara Cook, have been notified by the Provost of APP information in draft form and a follow-up conversation is scheduled. Dr. Barboza, Dr. Cook, and I are recipients of this information at this time and have not given formal input into any proposals nor have we expressed any agreement on behalf of faculty with the draft APP information. Conversations are scheduled with some scheduled to occur this week. We look forward to reviewing the information, engaging in conversation with administration and faculty, and optimistically await meetings of the FLC and administration beginning on 9/5.

CSU-AAUP faculty leaders and other senate and curriculum faculty leaders across the system are also engaging in on-going communication regarding the fiscal issues impacting the system. Please

closely attend to announcements related to this topic as the year progresses.

A reminder that the Finance Committee continues to gather senators'/faculty perspectives and suggestions. Please reach out to [Cindy Simoneau](#), FS Treasurer/Finance Committee chair.

- 6) **Technology – Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – Please see communications forwarded from the Associate Dean of Students and the Office of Online Learning received by Faculty Senate and shared on behalf of those entities.

These communications are intended to be helpful information sources and recommendations, particularly in light of the increase in academic misconduct cases in the spring. AI detection tools are a contributing variable to the increase. Transparency and specificity in instructor expectations for students regarding AI use for coursework has the potential to benefit instructors, students, and will provide helpful information in the event of reports of academic misconduct. As the use of Generative AI has increased in both education and beyond, the Office of Online Learning has created the following page to provide general information on the topic: [Generative AI](#). The page will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

A reminder that Faculty Senate upholds academic freedom and therefore cannot/will not propose requirements that faculty take any specific action related to use of technology in the classroom, including AI. Faculty Senate approved a [Resolution](#) last spring declaring a position on the use of AI-powered tools. The Technology Committee will engage in on-going review of this matter to ensure faculty receive up-to-date information and recommendations.

- 7) **Technology – Blackboard** – Please see communications forwarded from Academic Technology. Some key take-aways from Academic Technology:

*The Technology Department will be upgrading our learning management system (LMS). **We will be transitioning from Blackboard Learn 9 to the more modern Blackboard Learn Ultra platform. This upgrade will occur in two phases:** (note: Your courses will not change during phase one.)*

Phase one, January 17th, 2024, Spring, we will implement Ultra Base Navigation (UBN). This will streamline course navigation and provide quick access to updates across classes through an improved interface and menu design. Your courses will not change at this time. During phase one we will continue to use Learn 9 courses. Leading up to this UBN launch, we will offer comprehensive training sessions throughout fall 2023 to prepare all faculty and students for the new user experience. Please encourage participation to ensure everyone feels comfortable with the new system by go-live.

Phase two, the second phase upgrading existing courses to Ultra Courses will occur at a later date and we will be working closely with Faculty Senate to create this timeline. This phased approach will allow for a smoother transition.

FAQ's

1. *What does this update do to all of the Renewal/P&T/Assessment digital files currently contained in Blackboard?
The Renewal/P&T/Assessment piece is not part of the migration. This process will continue to exist in the Learn 9 environment. No action is required.*

2. *Will I have to rebuild my courses in Blackboard when the Phase 2 update happens, or can they be transferred somehow?*
We will be engaging with the Blackboard Services Ultra Migration team for course migration assistance.
3. *What about support and training opportunities?*
The Office of Online Learning will be hosting 1 to 1 as well as group training sessions throughout the fall semester. We will also be launching an informational website on the Office of Online Learning's page. www.southernct.edu/online-learning

[Trever Broliar](#) of Academic Technology will be available during our 8/30 meeting for questions.

- 8) ***Technology – Faculty Evaluation*** – Following multiple meetings in Spring 2023, the previous understanding was that Interfolio would not be selected as a platform for the faculty evaluation process and Blackboard would remain in use for faculty evaluation (See [President's Report](#) from the 4/26/23 meeting). SCSU-AAUP, Human Resources, and I engaged in conversations this summer as each summer representatives from these groups along with a representative from administration engage in shared governance in the finalization of the faculty evaluation calendar of deadlines. Additional conversation is scheduled for this week regarding the faculty evaluation process, and I will share more information when available. My impression is **the likelihood that Interfolio will be reconsidered for the faculty evaluation process is high and faculty should be aware of this possibility.**
- 9) ***Syllabi Statements*** – The Academic Policy Committee (APC) was charged with this topic last year and met with Academic Technology, Academic Affairs, Faculty Development and SCSU-AAUP; after several discussions and meetings, it was agreed that Faculty Development would handle the repository of statements: <https://inside.southernct.edu/faculty-development/syllabus-statements>

APC also crafted a template announcement for Faculty Development use and suggested this be sent out to faculty at least three times a year, and was reviewed with Trudy Milburn, Jennifer Hudson, and the new Co-Directors of Faculty Development, Darcy Kern and Shuei Kozu, in Spring 2023.

- 10) ***The Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Leadership Council (FLC) meetings with administration*** – This group is scheduled to meet on 9/5 to discuss and monitor multiple topics. Meetings are scheduled once monthly on select Monday afternoons.

Reassigned time and institutional identity were a primary focus of the last meeting held on 4/10/23, and our discussion spanned the entire length of the meeting. To review a summary, please see [President's Report](#) for the 4/12/23 Faculty Senate meeting.

Course Caps – An item of unfinished business of the FLC from Spring 2023. The FLC noted proposed changes in course caps, with concerns particularly for online and Tier 2 courses. While the [Resolution Regarding Course Class Enrollment Caps for Online Courses](#) dated 9/16/2020 was disapproved by the University President, questions have been raised within FLC about how decisions are currently being made regarding course enrollment caps and we look forward to connecting with administration at the next FLC/administration meeting.

11) Other Continuing Business – Catalog Definitions and Curricular Review Process for Continuing Education Offerings, Non-Credit and Micro-Credentials – This [Resolution](#) from APC was based upon the work of the Ad Hoc Committee for Continuing Education/Micro credentialing, and includes the establishment of definitions presented by the Ad-hoc Committee, that micro-credentials, badges, and non-credit continuing education are part of SCSU curriculum and therefore, subject to faculty governance via UCF and GC proposal processes, and that the UCF, GC, and university administration shall be charged with developing curriculum proposal processes along the lines described by the Ad-hoc Committee for Non-credit, Continuing Education & Micro-credentialing “Recommendations” document. The Resolution was disapproved by administration in Spring 2023. This topic will be discussed by the AY 23-24 Executive Committee as potential APC business, alongside UCF and Graduate Council, and in conversations with a new member of our university community, Dr. Amy Feest, Founding Senior Director for Online and Continuing Education.

12) Preparation for the 8/30/2023 meeting – There will be two elections (**please remember to bring a device to participate in the virtual ballots**).

i. The Elections chair/committee will lead the annual election process for standing committee chairpersons with voting occurring at our 8/30 meeting.

ii. The Elections chair/committee will also lead the election for one representative to the *Working Group for Governing Bodies & Documents*. The *Working Group* is a (1) collaborative effort to support next steps following the Spring 2023 meeting of the executive committees of UCF, Grad Council, Faculty Senate, and SCSU-AAUP pertaining to matter of governing documents language, specifically the term “autonomous” and (2) through discussion, pose and respond to questions such that forthcoming updates to the language within the governing documents have been brought to the attention of each of the forementioned groups. Membership of the *Working Group* will be established by an election process determined by the specific body (excluding those members specified below):

1. two (2) representatives from SCSU-AAUP, which shall be the Chapter President and Contract Administrator

2. two (2) representatives from Faculty Senate; one of these two representatives be a non-member of the Rules Committee and one be the Rules Committee chair or designee

3. two (2) representatives from Undergraduate Curriculum Forum (UCF)

4. two (2) representatives from Graduate Council (GC)

The meeting schedule and duration will be determined by the *Working Group* during the first meeting. The *Working Group* will report to the Faculty Senate at least monthly or at greater intervals as determined by the *Working Group* or the Faculty Senate. The charges to be completed by last day of Fall 2023 semester:

Charge 1: recommend to the appropriate groups (e.g., Rules Committee for the Faculty Senate) of each of the three bodies (Faculty Senate, UCF, GC) language which reconciles the governing documents of each of those three bodies with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

Charge 2: recommend to each of the three bodies (Faculty Senate, UCF, GC) pathways to advance sharing and communicating these anticipated changes with all constituents to support understanding and clarification.

13) 2023-2024 – [Resolutions approved by Faculty Senate](#) – Updates on the resolutions and their status may be found on the FS website.