

JSCC Faculty Council Meeting Minutes August 23, 2019

The Faculty Council met Friday, August 23rd at 2:00 p.m. in the Health Sciences Building, Conference Room 111

Present: Benjamin Lawrence, Vivian Grooms, Lauren Bryant, Ben Jeter, Tammy Prater, David Hart, James Mayo, Lisa Matlock, Pete O'Brien, Anna Esquivel, and Emily Fortner.

Call to order at 2:15 p.m.

Old Business

1.1 Review of April and July Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the April 19th and July 22nd meetings were reviewed and approved with a motion from James Mayo, which was seconded by Lisa Matlock. The motion was carried unanimously.

1.2 Update on Peer Review Requirement for Promotion and Tenure Portfolios (Fortner)

The question about the peer review requirement from Promotion and Tenure was clarified in the most recent President's Cabinet meeting. It is part of the Promotion and Tenure process, as listed in the Faculty Handbook. Council discussed a college-wide form, commonly used as part of classroom observations, versus the letter of support that is used instead or in addition to form. The Tenure and Promotion committee has not specified a preference between the two methods of peer review in the past, but we can request that an official form be available to candidates.

The faculty handbook does not specify a date for the Fall Tenure and Promotion meeting for candidates with Dr. Bailey. Council will request that Dr. Bailey make information available for candidates prior to the fall meeting along with any available forms necessary to complete the portfolio.

1.3 Withdrawal Survey update (Fortner and Esquivel)

Dr. Hamilton responded to our letter regarding the Withdrawal Survey. Her response made it clear that she felt faculty had plenty of opportunity to provide feedback on the survey. She provided a date for final revisions to be made for the survey, which allowed Anna Esquivel and Emily Fortner to meet with Sara Vonderheide to review the survey in light of faculty concerns.

Adequate changes were made to the survey, particularly in regards to “conflict with instructor” questions. However, there is a possibility that the survey can elicit negative information about instructors. Currently, that information is being reported to direct supervisors by the IA office. Council recommends that the process be changed so that any feedback elicited by the survey about a specific instructor is not shared with an instructor’s dean.

1.4 Review of Standing Committees (Fortner)

Dr. Bailey presented his report on college-wide standing committees. He consulted committee chairs and permanent members of each committee to ask about the makeup of the committee and how often the committee met. He produced a list of his findings, a copy of which Emily Fortner made available to the Council.

Dr. Bailey has requested that Deans populate active committees and is in favor of encouraging the committees to convene at least once this semester to produce a committee description, a members list, and minutes (when possible) to be posted on JWEB.

Council agreed that committee chairs and committee members should be held accountable for the work with which they are charged and that a process be put in place for consistently communicating the work of the committee to the campus.

Council also agreed that we should be thinking about a durable campus-wide committee structure through which dynamic, temporary task forces or sub-committees can be filtered.

Dr. Bailey agreed that the Distance Education committee should remain a populated standing committee. He asked for Council guidance on this process, such as what we believe the purpose and committee structure of the DE committee should be. Council agreed that this committee should be faculty-led.

Council discussed the need for Dr. Hamilton to issue the charge for committees on campus to meet.

1.5 Digital Engagement Initiative

This discussion was tabled until later in the meeting.

New Business

2.1 Suicide Prevention Statement

Due to the overwhelming concerns from Faculty, the requirement that the Suicide Prevention Statement was to be included in all course syllabi has been lifted.

2.2 Faculty Overload Pay

A pay increase was approved by TBR, and instituted by the college, for adjunct instructors but not full-time instructors.

Lisa Matlock made the motion to ask Academic Affairs to clarify the discrepancy in full-time instructor pay, faculty overload pay, and adjunct instructor pay in light of the recent adjunct pay raise. David Hart seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

2.3 VA and TA Financial Aid Issues

Due to clerical errors, students who are active service members were not granted tuition assistance at the beginning of the Fall semester. Emily Fortner reported that the issue, which affected only a few students rather than the whole of our veterans and active-military student population, has been resolved. Jackson State is once again in good standing with the Department of Defense in regards to tuition assistance.

2.4 Accessibility

The announcement regarding accessibility audits in Division meetings during in-service week caused confusion and concern among faculty. Faculty reported receiving conflicting information in these Divisions meetings and in follow-up communications with Distance Education staff. Council discussed the concern that the instructions for completing the audit are unclear and the documents that have been provided by Distance Learning to our Deans are riddled with inconsistencies and errors.

Emily Fortner asked Patrick Davis to clarify who is responsible for making course materials accessible. In an email correspondence, he listed the options for potential auditors for each course: 1. Faculty could audit the courses themselves; 2. Faculty could work with their Dean to complete the audit; 3. Staff assigned to provide audit support to the course could coordinate with the Faculty to complete the audit; or 4. A hybrid model could be employed to complete the audit. Patrick Davis strongly encouraged Faculty to complete the audit themselves.

Dean Grooms attempted to provide some clarification to the timeline for the audit that she received from the Distance Education office:

Sept. 9-30: Faculty should review their course materials and take note of what documents should be made accessible.

Oct. 1-31: For each course, faculty should complete the Audit Forms provided by the Distance Education office.

Nov. 15: TBR deadline for colleges to report the status of accessibility in the audited program and related courses.

Dean Grooms explained that while we are not expected to make all of our material accessible during this process, it is her understanding that Distance Education is encouraging us to take this opportunity to make accessible as much of our content as possible. The long-term plan is to provide accessibility training for everyone on campus.

James Mayo made the motion to ask Distance Education for a clear plan leading up to the Nov. 15th deadline with specific instructions for Faculty on how to conduct the accessibility audit. David Hart seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Upon further discussion, the Council raised concerns regarding communication about and support for the accessibility audit roll-out.

James Mayo made the motion that Council inquire about who on our campus is responsible for the accessibility audit process and why this audit was not communicated to faculty sooner. Lauren Bryant seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Patrick Davis requested that a member of Faculty Council serve on the Accessibility Task Group. Emily Fortner will follow up with Patrick Davis when Council selects a representative.

New Business, Revisited

1.5 Digital Engagement Initiative

Council discussed the questions and concerns about the DEI that arose during the in-service meeting with Follett representative Ann Barlow. Council has since learned that Dr. Bailey was charged with carrying out the DEI and, in turn, appointed Ann Barlow as the DEI task force leader for our campus.

Emily Fortner took Council's concerns about the lack of faculty on the DEI task force to the most recent President's Council meeting. It was her impression that the task force was populated by staff because of the various restrictions and guidelines related to fee-structures.

The Council agreed that the DEI task force should be led by an employee of Jackson State, who has the time to dedicate to this initiative and who understands Faculty concerns and perspectives related to digital content and eBooks, rather than a Follett representative.

Pete O'Brien made the motion to request in writing the membership of the DEI Task Force, including the Task Force lead. Lisa Matlock seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Other Discussion Items

3.1 President's Cabinet Report (Fortner)

All reports from the President's Council were reported under previous agenda items during the meeting.

3.2 Report from the Dean's Council (Grooms)

All reports from the Dean's Council were reported under previous agenda items during the meeting.

3.3 Faculty Council Vacancies

Emily Fortner announced that she will be stepping down as Faculty Council Vice Chair and At-Large representative. In order to fill the At-Large, Nursing, and Executive Council vacancies, the council will hold a formal election in the next two weeks.

Anna Esquivel made the motion requesting that Emily Fortner resign effective Sept. 6, 2019, so that she can facilitate the election process. The motion included a call for a special meeting to be held after the general election to elect new Executive Council members. David Hart seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The next meeting will be held on Sept. 13, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in a location T.B.D.

Pete O'Brien motioned to adjourn at 5:17 p.m. Ben Jeter seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Esquivel
Faculty Council Secretary

Emily Fortner
Faculty Council Chair