

JSCC Faculty Council Meeting Minutes
SPECIAL MEETING WITH DR. GEORGE PIMENTEL
July 23, 2020

The Faculty Council met Thursday, July 23rd at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Present: Candyce Sweet, Mark Walls for Kim Benson, Lauren Bryant, Tammy Prater, Anna Esquivel, Liz Mayo, Bob Raines, Jane David, Stacey Dunevant, Cindy Roberson, and Justin Curtis.

Discussion with Dr. Pimentel

Faculty Council spend time discussing faculty concerns and suggestions with Dr. Pimentel. Summaries of the conversation topics are below:

- In response to **faculty concerns that HR had overreached** on power, Dr. Pimentel noted “HR is not in charge of anything. Their role is to implement the policies that have been approved through Cabinet.”
- On **faculty innovation in the classroom and beyond**, Dr. Pimentel stated, “People should not be afraid of trying new things. And it is okay if you fail. As a faculty member, I revised my syllabus every year to try new things, and they didn’t always work.”
- On **online versus ground classes**, Dr. Pimentel said, “We should be treating online education just like face-to-face education.”
 - This referred to rigor and legitimacy, as he noted several faculty at Vol State taught fully online but still kept ground office hours, while others taught a hybrid of online and ground. Others taught completely in person; all of these modalities were viewed as equally valuable for student learning. He did not feel that faculty teaching online should be viewed as receiving a break.
 - He added that online classes should be capped at 25 (in a normal budget year), and Vol State English classes in writing were capped at 22.
- Dr. Pimentel touted his Vol State **Faculty Fellowship Program** in which two faculty from each division were given leave to help others with online content and development.
 - This program came up again when Council shared faculty concerns that contracts for fall had not yet been issued. We asked what would happen if a faculty’s classes didn’t make, and Dr. Pimentel said that someone like that might be a good fit for a faculty fellowship.
 - Besides helping others with online development, he is also looking for a faculty member who is adept with data, as there’s some room for improvement within the Institutional Research division of campus.
- On **tenure and promotion questions**: He noted that Vol State has been using ePortfolios for ten years now for faculty going up for tenure and promotion, suggesting that might be a good fit for us; however, he stressed that faculty own this process and should be the ones, within reason, to decide how tenure and promotion work. In short, tenure and

promotion should not have a constantly rotating committee, and it should be faculty-lead and faculty-driven.

- Faculty development at Vol State was quite different. There was a professional development office with a standing \$25,000 budget used to bring training opportunities to campus. Faculty also individually received \$500 for personal travel development—money that could be combined from peers who weren't traveling one year.
- Dr. Pimentel assured Council that he is invested in establishing a **Teaching and Learning and/or High Impact Practice** office.
 - In response to faculty concerns that our ambitious projects, club pursuits, and high-impact practices need greater support, Dr. Pimentel stated, “While we can't do everything this year, these things are on my agenda. You guys have my full support.”
 - He called the notion that faculty must promote and run events entirely alone with little institutional support “foreign.” He gave the following examples: The Honors/PTK director at Vol State received a six-hour course release, and there was a two-person Study Abroad/International Education office—something for which faculty expressed a desire.
 - He said that everything would run through Cabinet for approval, then the institution would be behind those events 100%.
- When asked about the chance for re-establishing **department chairs**, Dr. Pimentel said, “I had to be reminded yesterday morning that you guys don't have chairs, and that needs to change.”
- Some noted a tradition of ignoring **faculty hiring committees** in favor of a third, fourth, or even fifth choice candidate. Dr. Pimentel was opposed to this method, stating that administrators are really just there to meet the candidate and, barring a background check issue, the committee's will should be done. He based this on the fact that the “teaching demo is the most important part [of a faculty interview], and I won't be present for that.”
- We expressed concerns about **accessibility and Zoom training during the pandemic**, and he wanted to be sure we have a full ADA division to help faculty with accessibility. Some stated that there is a committee working on this, but that group hasn't met since before the Covid break.
 - Moreover, he acknowledged that **Distance Education** needs to provide more active support to faculty; thus, he has asked that the DE office get more resources rather than cutting their budget.
- Dr. Pimentel wants all JSCC employees to consider the following: As a college, what motto or slogan could we build upon? We all need to ask this key question: **Why should a student come to Jackson State over all the other colleges in our service area?** What sets us apart from other schools? (The answer cannot be that it is "free," as that tends to undermine the idea that we provide quality education.)
- Dr. Pimentel ended by saying that he would let us know about **contracts** “ASAP” and that he would ask Tim Dellinger why our regular contracts aren't just generated in FLAC

(this is the Faculty Load and Compensation system through which we get summer and overload contracts).

In short, Dr. Pimentel heard our concerns, responded respectfully and openly, and noted that he would start “clicking off this list” of items we expressed to him were of deep importance.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Esquivel
Faculty Council Secretary

Candyce Sweet
Faculty Council Chair