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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – December 2019

Faculty Senators

University of South Alabama

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I am submitting this report to the Senate in writing so that we will have enough time at our plenary to discuss our policy issues before proceeding with our Community Awards celebration. I will be happy to answer any questions about this report either individually or publicly at the next plenary.

1. Thanks/Town Halls

Thank you again for adjusting schedules to accommodate the double booking of our plenary with the Arts and Sciences Town Hall. In the end, the President's office postponed the Town Hall until January, anyway. I hope that we will have reports from all the remaining **Caucus Leaders** concerning Town Halls at the next plenary (except A&S because the Town Hall is the day after the plenary).

3. Meeting with Admin

At our recent meeting with Admin we brought up a few issues, some of which we'll need to revisit.

Parking came up again because there was some confusion about the stickers. We had been told that a license plate reader system was in place, so many faculty were asking what the point of the stickers is and whether it needed to be moved from one car to another. ***NO, you don't need to move it from one car to another.*** They are using the license plate system and as long as you don't have more than one of your registered cars on campus at the same time, you should be fine. The stickers are there in the unlikely case of a failure in the license plate reader. We also inquired about the University Parking Committee, which hasn't met since at least last spring. No clarity there.

Student absences for athletics/band A concern had been raised by a faculty member that students coming back from athletic events are excused from class only for the day of the event, even if they should return very late at night to an 8AM exam the next day. That seems hard on the students and so we asked admin to provide some clarity on who sets this policy and how much leeway faculty have in extending the excused absence. A related question involves courses that have a strict attendance policy, and it wasn't clear to us – or me at least—whether and how instructors are required to adjust for event absences. Anyway, after some misunderstanding, the Admin made it clear that the onus is on the athletes/band members to be prepared for class even if they return very late on the day of the absence. I still think the students might want to take this up and advocate for a more generous policy through their own channels.

Handbook We reiterated the need for and our willingness to help develop a rational process for handbook updates. Right now, it is a mess, with new policies in effect but not visible in the handbook.

Budget cuts were, of course, the major topic. But aside from getting a deluge of information, we didn't really have much discussion. We're going to have to pursue this at the next meeting as well. Here are the numbers, which come from some different sources so they may not add up to the penny:

The total budget deficit resulting from the enrollment decline was : \$4,168,004 but with some cost savings about \$3,600,000.

Despite assurances that Academics would be spared, the amount that fell to AA was: \$2,598,053 (Of course, you can't *really* spare AA because it is the main part of the budget.)

Cuts to other areas were:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Athletics | \$231,562 |
| Development | \$81,529 |
| Executive Management | \$191,238 |
| Finance and Administration | \$894,015 |
| Marketing and Communication | \$40,368 |
| Research and Economic Development | \$54,112 |
| Student Affairs | \$77,127 |

AA made unspecified cuts in their own admin, Honors, Global USA, and other non-teaching units in the amount of: \$1,063,192

The rest was divided among the Colleges and Schools: \$1,534, 861

How was the division of cuts among the colleges determined? By a formula created by Charlie Guest which he called "credit hour loss." He took the number of credit hours produced by each College or School at the University's peak in Fall of 2016 and subtracted from that the number of credit hours in Fall of 2019. That is the "credit hour loss." That number was then multiplied by the cost to produce each credit hour in each college/school, which varies. The final (rounded) cuts are here:

AHP \$87,000
A&S \$832,000
Engineering \$213,000
Education \$150,000
MCOB \$121,000
Nursing \$50,000
SoC \$79,000

I can share a more complete chart if you're interested. (smccread@southalabama.edu)

Now, there are some issues with this process. 1) It was done entirely in the Admin Building, apparently between Charlie Guest and David Johnson. The Deans had this announced to them as a fait accompli without any input from them. 2) Nursing showed no credit hour loss but was asked to take a nominal cut anyway. (This indicates to me that they lack confidence in this formula, if it must be "adjusted" this way.) 3) Unclear how the fact that Special Programs moved to Education in 2017 changed this calculation or how that change was fairly accounted for. 4) Arts and Sciences produces about half the credit hours for the university because every student in the university takes courses Arts and Sciences, not just our majors. Therefore, a calculation based on "credit hour loss" counts, so to speak, twice against A&S. We (yes, I am personally invested here!) have your students AND our students taking classes with us. 5) The formula has the veneer of scientific precision but it's really a blunt instrument that doesn't take many things into account.

Going forward we're going to revisit this and advocate for a more collaborative, inclusive, and transparent process. This applies to general budgeting and to, heaven help us, further budget cuts.

University Instructor

This is the approved third rank for instructors (currently Instructor or Senior Instructor are the only ranks) and it is stalled pending funding. It would apparently cost only \$200,000 a year. We are pushing.

Building updates

Everything is moving along with the Simulation hospital, the Alumni Center, the stadium, and the demolition of SHAC. In early 2020, they will break ground on a free-standing emergency unit on Hillcrest Road near the credit union.

4) *Due South* printer scandal

For those who are not aware, the student publication *Due South* sent their latest issue to their printer (Interstate Printing) in early November only to have them refuse to fulfill their contract to print it for unspecified "religious reasons." The issue focused on diversity and inclusion.

The university issued this statement:

"The University of South Alabama is committed to the principles of freedom of expression and the exchange of different points of view. We respect our students for having the courage of their convictions. At the same time, we also respect the rights of individuals and private businesses to make decisions that are consistent with their values. It is our hope that healthy and constructive dialogue can emerge from differing perspectives," which was picked up by many news sources.

The story itself was everywhere: Al. com, *NBC News* on line, *The Advocate* and all over Twitter. As long as you only read the headline, USA came out looking great. It was usually reported as "Printer refuses to publish student magazine" and the sympathy was all with the students. The beautiful, professional-looking photo of the cover of the magazine featured students who defy every negative stereotype people have of the Alabama and demonstrated the beautiful work the student editors of *Due South* are producing. But if you read beyond the headline and got to the university's statement, it was roundly dragged in the leftist press as "refusal to condemn discrimination" and in on-line comments sections as a "very fine people on both sides" statement. (I lurked in a lot of comments sections, trying to get a read on how this story was landing.)

The University was trying to thread the needle with this statement, not wishing to offend anyone. I think a better approach might have been to say something in support of the students and leave it at that.

The students were able to get our Publications Services to do the job at the price agreed to in the original contract.

Regardless of anyone's individual feelings or beliefs, the printer was within their legal rights to refuse service. It seems to me, though, that the University would be entirely within its rights from a straightforward business perspective (no religious reference required) to say, "This company has failed to fulfill the commitments of its contract, and therefore we are no longer going to do business with them." Or "We will not do business with any company that won't do business with our entire community."

We have a strong non-discrimination policy:

The University of South Alabama and its colleges and subdivisions follow a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, age, genetic information, disability, protected veteran status or any other applicable legally protected basis. The University of South Alabama does not

discriminate in its student and employment practices in violation of any applicable laws. The University of South Alabama is an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access educational institution. The University of South Alabama does not discriminate on the basis of disability. No otherwise qualified person with a disability, solely on the basis of such disability, will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in the administration of any educational program or activity including admission or access thereto or in treatment or employment therein by the University of South Alabama.

Would it be legal/feasible/possible going forward to stipulate on bids and contracts that vendors have to agree to abide by this policy? I would like to pursue this, but will not until we have discussed this a body and come to a consensus about whether this is an appropriate course of action. Everyone will have an opportunity to express an opinion, but comments from lawyers and contract specialists on the *legality* of this idea would be very helpful. Perhaps this is a non-starter from that point of view already.

5) Faculty Bill of Rights

Ex Comm discussed a "Faculty Bill of Rights" that would state clearly and succinctly the principles of shared governance and our basic rights as faculty members. The idea would be to craft such a document, adopt it and ask the Deans to ratify it for inclusion in the Handbook. This is a subject for a future discussion with the whole body.

6) Reminders, varia:

Contact info. if you'd like to attend the Senior Faculty Caucus luncheon on December 16. Please respond by Dec 9: Joaquin Holloway, Jr., 478-5525 (h) 251 610-1339 or joaquinholloway@aol.com

Our next plenary is on Wednesday, January 22 at 3PM back in the Faculty Club.

Caucus Leaders, please don't forget to communicate with your colleagues who are not on the Senate. A monthly update from you will go a long way to keeping everyone informed.

We are still waiting for some kind of ADA compliant formatting for the charts in the Faculty Surveys but the Executive Summaries are posted [on our website](#). In the meantime, any faculty member who would like to look at the complete survey may email ngossett@southalabama.edu.

Please bring any questions/concerns you hear from faculty either to the relevant committee, your caucus, or if you're not sure where else to go, to me.