

University Faculty Senate Minutes

September 16, 2014

The second meeting of the University of Mississippi Faculty Senate was called together at 7:00 PM on September 16, 2014.

Senators in attendance: Rachna Prakash; Charles Ross; Patrick Curtis; Randy Wadkins; Tossi Ikuta; Feng Wang; Tom Garrett; Elliott Hutchcraft; Adetayo Alabi; Andre Liebenberg; Robert Holt; Yang-Chieh Fu; Oliver Dinius; Darren Grem; Joshua Howard; Vanessa Gregory; Antonia Eliason; Dennis Bunch; Lorri Williamson; Susan Ivey; Jessica Leming; Jing Jing Wu; Milam Aiken; Christopher Newman; Sasha Kocic; Tejas Pandya; Heather Allen; Valentina Iepuri; Adam Estes; Michael Gardiner; Laurel Lambert; Erin Holmes; Allison Bell; Mary Thurlkill; Breese Quinn; Ben Jones; Greg Love; Marilyn Mendolia; David Rutherford; Desiree Stepteau-Watson; Marcos Mendoza; Allan Bellman; Mark Ortwein; Joe Sumrall

Senators excused: Ben McClelland; Chris Offut; Jos Milton

Senators absent: Philip Jackson; Brice Noonan; Brad Cook; Dwight Frink; Minjoo Oh

The following departments seats were unfilled as of this date: Bimolecular Science; Chemical Engineering; Civil Engineering; Law (seat 2); Pharmaceuticals

Guests: Chancellor Dan Jones

- **Call meeting to order by current Senate Chair, Michael Barnett**
 - 7:00PM
- **Approval of September 2, 2014 minutes**
 - Approved
- **Introduction of Kate Lindsay (Lklindsa@go.olemiss.edu)**
 - Kate is serving as the Administrative Assistant for the Faculty Senate for the second year.
- **Presentation by Chancellor Dan Jones**
 - Chancellor Jones welcomed the 2014 faculty senate members. He explained that Faculty Senate is an important function and an important service for the university. It provides an opportunity for dialogue, and he urged new members to speak out on issues. He also welcomed Kate Lindsay, stating that she is a great example of why the faculty are here and why what we do matters.

The Chancellor addressed that last year, the Senate spent time discussing Ombuds and a task force was appointed. That task force reported this summer and recommended a full-time position for that that reports directly to the Chancellor's Office. Lee Tyner has begun the process of searching. He believes this will create another pathway for accountability at our university and thanked the Senate for their good work on that.

Chancellor Jones touched on the local issues that Provost Stocks presented at the last Faculty Senate meeting, which was the Diversity Action Plan. Chancellor Jones knows that the Senate had a lengthy discussion, so he did not want to go into details, but he is open for discussion if anyone wishes.

He then discussed several broader issues in Higher Education. First, he spoke about tensions between academic freedom and civil conversations around sensitive issues. An example that he cited from his time as a student was the Vietnam War. Today, American universities are seeing growing issues around the issues in the Middle East, and these growing issues are playing out in American university life. He reminded faculty that whenever people have strong opinions, there is an interface with academic freedom. He noted that we have seen this at the University of Mississippi in regards to differing opinions about race and gender identity. Nationally, there is tension about the Middle East, and some are calling for civility in the conversation. Chancellor Jones made two points to the Senate: 1. That he uses the term "civil conversation" from time to time, and he in no way wants to cross the lines of academic freedom; 2. At the University of Mississippi, we have public conversations with our students that differ from other campuses, and he urges us to keep communication open and to hold each other accountable.

Next, Chancellor Jones discussed athletics. As he has expressed in the past, he feels deep frustration about the state of college athletics nationally. He expressed his love for college sports and his desire for the University of Mississippi to be successful, stating that he will continue to support the athletic department. However, he believes that the finances in college athletics will come to a crisis at some point, as we are already seeing discussions surrounding coaches' salaries and funding for facilities. He expressed an interest in college and university presidents taking a lead on this issue, though he noted hesitation of these leaders to go to congress for help, citing the competitive nature of athletics and the anti trust laws. However, Chancellor Jones stated that without help from congress, his hands are tied on this issue. He wants the faculty to know that he is concerned

and engaged with this complicated issue, yet is pessimistic about change from within rather than from congressional actions. He reiterated that he supports our athletic department and wishes them great success.

Next, he discussed the ever more complicated funding issues for public universities. In the past, most money came from public sources, yet today, most comes from tuition, and this trend will likely continue. He believes it is unlikely that there will be growth for public education funding, particularly in Mississippi. Additionally, public officials are talking about a tax cut, which will be painful for higher education, since higher education is the easiest thing for the state budget to cut (simply because universities can make up for it by increasing tuition). Another trend in large flagship universities is that enrollment is down (though we are growing). Chancellor Jones reminds the Senate that how the state divides its budget among public universities is complicated, and the high number of public universities and the low economics in MS makes it even more so in this state. His hope at this point is that funding stay steady without declining.

Lastly, Chancellor Jones discussed growth at the university. His main motivation for continuing support for growth at the University of Mississippi is because he believes in our university—our faculty, students, and Oxford. He also acknowledged that small universities do not always do as well as larger ones, and the university's ability to grow is the way that we increase money (due to more tuition money). He acknowledged that growth is painful, and asks that faculty continue to adjust to the inconveniences from construction and other growing pains. Chancellor Jones states that the Strategic Plan calls for us to grow about 3-4% each year, and that we pause at 25,000 students to consider how to move forward. Right now, we are at 23,000 students, so this should occur soon. He also mentioned that faculty applications are increasingly stronger.

He closed by telling the Senate that he visited with Mr. Hume Bryant earlier in the day, thanking him for a gift that he gave previously to support a faculty position in philosophy that focuses on ethics. Mr. Bryant comes from a family of University of Mississippi leaders, and was himself a leader here, currently retiring in Oxford. Chancellor Jones tells the Senate that Mr. Bryant's gift shows that Mr. Bryant appreciates not only what his family has done for the university, but also what our current faculty is doing.

- **Opportunity for Questions to Follow Presentation**

- Q: You touched on two big challenges- growth and research development. Can you please talk about trade offs between these goals? Can we do both?

A: Yes, we can do both, but it requires effort. Think about our mission as faculty—research, teaching, and service. We all know that we cannot meet these goals on the number of hours that we are paid to work— we have to work extra. And our university will have to do the same. We have focused greatly on teaching in the past, particularly in teaching fast-track (underprepared) students to get them to achieve at a nationally competitive level. When I get discouraged about where we are on the research side, I remind myself of all of the good that we've done for teaching. This is not an excuse, though. I think we can reach these goals with private funding, recruiting more faculty, and a continued commitment at hiring at the tenure-track level. Those are some strategies we can use.

- Q: Major difficulty in the sciences is obtaining government funding, and at this moment, this is drying up. What can happen from administration? Do you follow this issue?

A: Yes, I follow this. My research career came out of that pot of money, so yes, I keep up with the funding issues for research. The charts say the money is not going down much, but it is dramatically less than it was years ago. Part of our response is to look for creative relationships—faculty need to foster creative relationships for funding. Chancellor Jones cited a collaboration between Boston University, University of Mississippi, and the American Heart Association as a good example of a creative relationship that is bettering science, both universities, and health care for America. He says that this conversation would not have happened years ago; universities would not have thought about collaboration. He thinks that we need to think about more opportunities like this, specifically in the fields of chemistry, biology, pharmacy.

- Q: A follow up on that question—scientific equipment here versus that at other institutions, such as Mississippi State. I'm concerned about the fact that they have more equipment than we have. The University of Mississippi needs to manage to stay updated, or we will not even be eligible to apply for what little grant funding is available. I know there is no easy answer to this, but would you give your thoughts? Are we falling behind our sister institutions?

A: If you compare us to most research-intensive universities, we are smaller in scope in almost every way. There is no question that this university has sacrificed research over teaching, and we have ground

to make up. It will take a lot of time to get there. I have been chancellor for five years, and I know this is an issue. We are working hard on this. Federal earmarks is how I feel about college athletics—I wish it was different. They were useful for our university for a long time, and part of what our sister universities did was make more from the earmarks during that time for equipment needs. So yes, we need to catch up some.

- Q: How much do all of the universities in Mississippi work together to focus on the research side for funding from Washington?

A: The last time I visited Washington for money was with Mark Keenum, president of MS State, about NIH funding. I'm not optimistic, because I don't see in the foreseeable future that the US House will be controlled by anything other than very conservative, and this will keep the NIH budget small. I don't see an expansion in this money, though I hope I am wrong. I don't think the environment for funding for research will change—remaining flat or unchanged is the best that I think we can hope for.

Q: We have had three years with incremental raises. What is happening in the future?

A: This is a sensitive issue. I always invite the decision makers to look at salaries here compared to other public universities in the area. This is a high priority for me, because we have to be nationally competitive in the marketplace. Two things motivate me in this area: fairness (maintaining those nationally competitive salaries) and retention. We recruit excellent faculty here, but we all know that we lose some rising stars (some assistant/ associate professors) because of competition. Strategically, this is an important issue for us as a University, and we are aware of that. I cannot commit to a dollar or percentage figure as in past years, but we will continue to strive to make progress on the national marketplace.

Q: Can you comment on the benefits side, especially healthcare?

A: We continue to raise these issues with those who make these decisions. We have expressed concerns about how non-competitive we are. This is in the hands of congressmen, and I am not convinced it will change any time soon. We (The University of Mississippi) can only control locally, not at the state level.

Q: Regarding the roads and parking: What is the university's vision in the future (particularly roads)?

A: We continue to execute our master plan by continuing to move parking (cars) outside of the center of campus and use more shuttles to get people into the center of campus. That will reduce the congestion in the middle of campus. That is a slow process—we're growing our buildings faster than dealing with this. We are in the latter stages of planning for coliseum (known as the Whirlpool) to draw more cars and parking off campus. For the next few years, transportation infrastructure will lag behind enrollment increases, but we hope this will ease in the following years. We are aware of this and doing what we can. Another issue is that we are increasing campus housing. We want students to come and live on campus, but they come with cars. We do not want to restrict cars, because we feel we will not be competitive with other schools on this issue if we do so. There is also a tradeoff between safety for students and convenience for faculty parking. We have to think of the safety of students. Spending on student safety also complicates funds for faculty compensation and research funding. It's a complicated puzzle.

Q: Can you talk more about the safety piece? I am concerned about the safety of students, though I'm not sure I understand why having more cars in the center of campus is safer.

A: I'm talking about the safety around those students coming in late at night—the risk from the care to the residence halls. Security and safety in this regard.

Q: (Same question poser as the previous question): But what about drinking and driving at night?

A: Yes, but we cannot control that. That is a societal issue. We are not going to make a rule that eighteen year olds cannot drive. Most public universities in the US let students have access to cars. Not allowing cars is not a viable solution here, because we feel that it will constrict the applicant pool quite dramatically. People have looked at this issue for us and this is the consensus' opinion.

Q: Regarding the diversity position that we talked with the Provost about at the last meeting—a portfolio was still to be determined. Can you tell us what your goals are for this position?

A: I believe that the more we focus on diversity and inclusion in the broad sense, the better off we are. Race in this state (black and white); economic diversity; religious diversity; all social issues. One of the consultants (from the University of Texas) has student success as part of his portfolio. Student success is taking unprepared students and getting them successful (what we call fast-tracking). We have

students coming from extreme poverty and rural students coming in that are not prepared, and I think that this position will deal with this. Giving opportunities to these students is a crucial part of this new position.

Q: So this is a student-focused position then?

A: Yes, but there is also a large interest in faculty and staff diversity. This position is not confined to students. I should also mention that some of these would be direct responsibilities, and some liaisons.

Since there are no additional questions, I'll end by thanking you all for the good work, both as faculty and as Senate members. I hope to keep the relationship open between us.

- Senate Committee Reports
 - Executive Committee: No formal report
 - Academic Affairs: No formal report
 - Academic Support: No formal report
 - Finance: No formal report
 - Governance: No formal report
 - University Service: No formal report

- Old Business
 - It has been requested that the Faculty Senate generate a list of Best Practices related to Academic Discipline. This list would suggest the appropriate disciplinary measure to take for a set of common infractions.

This came about last year, and the committee did not act upon it. This will be referred to Academic Affairs. Currently, there are no guidelines for best practices. Questions to ask yourselves- should ramifications differ? What are typical responses from faculty? What do we see statistically? Suspend? Expel? Fail test/assignment they cheated on? Fail course? What is probation? An FYI for everyone- probation doesn't flag a student—it just scares them but does nothing formally. A note- this is not a recommendation that we create a policy (because it would be mandated), but simply guidelines/recommendations.

- New Business
 - The Need for University-Sponsored Childcare. This item was an item presented to the Strategic Planning Council as part of the Senate's Faculty Excellence Task Force report in spring of 2014.

Faculty Vice Chair Oliver Dinius gathered and presented data comparing child care offerings from other universities in the state and in the SEC, and presented a chart for each on the overhead screen. Oliver states that the data shows the University of Mississippi looking fairly bad in relation to the others. He measured: “ages served”; “hours of operations”; “12 month?”; “tuition”; “priority for university relations”.

His understanding is that the University of Mississippi has reduced what it offered last year. He explains that this issue relates directly to faculty opportunities. He reminds us that there is a demographic shift in faculty—we are hiring younger faculty. He cites an initiative that was brought up in that past that the Senate did not act upon, and it is time that we should.

Michael Barnett: This will be handed off to the University Services Committee to explore with other departments and recommend how we should move forward. Charts will be sent to Senate members for sharing with colleagues.

Q from Senate member: We have Willie Price, so are we looking at after school care? Or expanding the range of ages? Or something else?

A from Oliver Dinius: We are talking about expanding the capacity of Willie Price, afterschool, preschool, and looking at the price for what we offer.

Comment from Senate member: Remember that we should adjust pricing among institutions based on 9 months and 12 months in order to reflect accuracy.

- Adjournment at 8:08 PM
 - Next meeting is schedule for Tuesday, October 14, at 7 PM.