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Faculty Senate Minutes February 18, 2021

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex

1. CALL TO ORDER OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING:

Faculty Senate (FS) President Echevarria called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

All Senators were present except for Amin, Leatham, Schniederjans, Sendag, Strubel, Zhang. Ex Officio members present were: Provost DeHayes, Vice President Collins, Vice President Snyder, Vice Provost Ako-Adounvo, Vice Provost Bodah, Vice Provost Libutti, Vice Provost Veeger, Dean Ebrahimpour, Dean Larrat, Dean Riley, Dean Wolfe, Interim Dean DeBoef, Distinguished University Professor Nassersharif. Others in attendance, Dean Graney, Senior Associate Director Humphrey, Chief Information Officer Kaugars, Special Assistant to the Provost Morrissey, AAUP President Reumann, and Ombud Tyler.

2. DISPOSITION OF MINUTES of Faculty Senate Meeting January 28, 2021

FS President Echevarria announced the minutes of the January 28, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting had been posted with the agenda. She asked for any comments, additions, or revisions. As there were none, FS President Echevarria declared the minutes were approved.

3. REPORT OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- a. **Announcements:** FS President Echevarria reminded senators to vote yes on State Bond Referendum #1: Higher Education Facilities on March 2, 2021. The Fine Arts Center is scheduled for renovation with the approval of the Bond. She asked everyone to communicate the importance and necessity of this Bond to as many people as possible.
FS President explained that the Mars Perseverance Rover was scheduled to land at 3:55 p.m. She requested a modification to the agenda to allow, if possible, the landing to be projected. The agenda modification was approved.
- b. **Activities of the Executive Committee** - FS Vice President Cardany announced that the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings were available on the Faculty Senate Website. She asked if there were any questions. The Senate did not have any questions.
- c. **Recommendation of the Executive Committee** - FS Vice President Cardany recognized Senator Morokoff for the presentation of the Nominating Committee.

Senator Morokoff thanked Senators Greaney and Sodhi for assisting her on the Nominating Committee. She explained, in accordance with Senate By-Laws section 5.1, the nomination was for the position of Faculty Senate Vice President/President Elect for the 2021-2022 academic year. The nominees were Senators Meyerson and Rice. Senator Morokoff asked if there were additional

nominations from the floor. As there were none, FS President Echevarria posted the link for the ballot. Vice Provosts Bodah and Veeger volunteered to validate the results.

Senator Rice was elected as the 2021-2022 Faculty Senate Vice President/ President Elect.

4. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT:

As President Dooley was out of town, Provost DeHayes spoke in his place.

a. Announcements

Provost DeHayes also encouraged Senators to spread the word on State Bond Question #1 and to vote yes on March 2, 2021. He explained that \$57M of the Bond would be used for the renovation of the Fine Arts Center.

Provost DeHayes gave an update on the report presented by Vice Provost Libutti at the January 28, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting. Spring enrollment, with late registrations, is on target largely because of the enrollment of 80 new students in January, including transfer, deferrals, and out-of-state students. He thanked the Graduate School for the great work they have done. The rate of graduate students fall to spring melt was only 3% as compared to 13% last year.

Provost DeHayes noted that URI had a momentous occasion, it has surpassed 100K surveillance COVID tests. He thanked Director Reynolds and Medical Director Nasin of Health Services for their leadership in managing the University's goals of staying on top of COVID. He extended his thanks to the Senators and to the University Community. He relayed that the 100K surveillance testing costs were around \$2.5M.

Senator La Luna inquired about vaccinations for faculty. Provost DeHayes explained that they are pushing the state for more flexibility. A proposal to have URI become a vaccination site for South County, has been discussed with the State as they begin to open up more sites. The goal would be to not only serve URI members, but also members of the greater South County community. This is under consideration.

b. Legislation Forwarded to the President after the January 28, 2021 Faculty Senate Meeting:

Provost DeHayes confirmed that Professor Dooley had approved all legislation forwarded to him after the January 28, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting.

- i. Bill #20-21-19B Curricular Report #2020-21-3 from the Graduate Council to the Faculty Senate: Curricular Proposals. Approved by President Dooley on February 2, 2021.
- ii. Bill #20-21-19C Curricular Report #2020-21-3 from the Graduate Council to the Faculty Senate: Creation of an Accelerated Online Graduate

Certificate in Data Science. Approved by President Dooley on February 2, 2021.

- iii. Bill #20-21-20 Joint Report of the Curriculum and Standards Committee and Graduate Council Report #2020-21-2 to the Faculty Senate: Abbreviated Bachelors/Masters Programs. Approved by President Dooley on February 2, 2021.

5. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEE:

- a. Interim Dean DeBoef presented Graduate Council Report # 2020-2021-4 to the Faculty Senate. A motion to approve was made and seconded. As there were no questions or discussion, the FS President presented the poll for voting. The Report was approved.
- b. Senator Kincaid presented the Curriculum and Standards Committee (C&SC) Report #2020-2021-6 as moved and seconded motions to approve. He relayed the School of Education asked to remove the changes to prerequisites for EDC 485 from the report. The report was revised accordingly. Senator Kincaid reminded the Senate that at the January meeting MAF 300 had been pulled off of the last C&SC report due to concerns of potential overlap. The concerns had been addressed and MAF 300 was now reappearing on the report. He presented the remainder of the report and asked for any questions or comments. A Senator noted an error under the program section; the incorrect college was listed for the Nutrition and Food Science program change. The report was adjusted accordingly. With no additional questions, the voting poll was activated. The report was approved.
- c. Senator Hicks informed the Senate that the Constitution, By-Laws, and University Manual Committee is working on updating the University Manual to reflect a gender neutral format.

She presented as an informational item the Administrative Report 2021, submitted on behalf of President Dooley, which captured the necessary changes to University Manual, Chapter 1, Statutes and Rules for the Government of the University. The changes were precipitated by the inception of the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees. As this report was informational, no vote was required.

The Constitution, By-Laws and University Manual Committee Report #2020-2121-2 presented a motion to accept changes to the University Manual on committee structure language changes in 5.78.12, 5.84.13, 8.20.14, 8.20.17, 8.20.30, 8.70.10, 8.70.12, 8.70.13, 8.70.20, 8.70.61, 8.70.72, 8.81.50, 8.81.80. Similar changes were previously approved and made to the Faculty Senate By-Laws. The motion was approved.

Senator Hicks presented Constitution, By-Laws and University Committee Report #2020-2021-3, a motion to accept changes to University Manual Chapter 4, section 4.11.10, refining the definition of general faculty. The revised definition was extended to include full-time faculty positions whether tenure-track or non-tenure track. The language in the University Manual will also be streamlined to use the phrase general faculty and eliminate the use of university faculty. A question was raised as to why college associate deans were not included in addition to college deans in paragraph 4.11.10. A motion to amend the original motion by including associate deans in section 4.11.10 was made and seconded. After discussion the motion to amend was approved. The original motion to revise the definition of the general faculty description in section 4.11.10 was approved.

- d. Senator Roman presented on the activities of the Research and Creative Activities Committee. He reported that University Manual language regarding Marine Research Scientists has been forwarded to the Constitution, By-Laws and University Manual Committee.

Senator Erickson-Owens, Chair of the Competitive Grants Subcommittee reported 32 grant proposals have been submitted. The reviews are done by the Subcommittee and an additional 16 campus participants.

Senator Roman explained that he is working with the Controller's Office to establish a more effective process and better timeline for the overhead report. He also reported that the review of Centers is making good progress. The first draft of revised University Manual language has been prepared.

Senator Roman and Senator Eaton, Chair of the Center Review Subcommittee, reported committee recommendations including a new standard for the terms "center" and "institute," removing partnerships from the centers section of the University Manual, eliminating temporary centers, changing to a 4-year review schedule for centers, and presenting new centers and institutes as informational to the Faculty Senate. In response to an inquiry, centers who do not participate in the review process would be discontinued. The Committee would like to have centers listed on the Research Office website rather than in the University Manual. When the senate questioned the status of non-research centers, Faculty Senate President Echevarria explained that revisions to the University Manual language are being carefully prepared to eliminate unintended consequences, particularly to non-research centers. Concern was expressed of the reports being presented to the Faculty Senate as informational and approval being granted separate from the Research and Creative Activities Committee. Vice President Snyder assured a dual step process will be in place with the faculty senate committee approval being the first step.

- e. Senator Pearson-Merkowitz, Chair of the Report of the Technology and Infrastructure Committee informed the Senate that the survey for faculty access for teaching, research, and technology needs will be going out shortly. She asked the senators to encourage their colleagues to complete the survey.

6. FORUM: Looking Ahead to Fall 2021

Faculty Senate President Echevarria initiated the conversation regarding the upcoming fall 2021 semester by expressing the goal for the University to create a new normal with the familiar feel of university life before the COVID pandemic. While the ambition is to move back to face-to-face instruction method, an inquiry was made if faculty had been consulted. Provost DeHayes stated that productive meetings with AAUP, the Faculty Senate leadership have taken place. The safety of the students, faculty, staff, and university community is a priority in discussions of the necessity to re-establishing URI campuses as a centerpiece of learning. Provost DeHayes was asked if the fall 2021 semester was contingent upon the reaching the goal of high vaccination rates; he responded that COVID testing would continue and reiterated that safety is vital. Concerns were expressed regarding student mental health due to the lack of socialization caused by the absence of face-to-face courses. A senator asked about the message sent from the Provost and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee requiring all faculty teaching online to be qualified. Vice Provost Veeger explained that those standards had been in place for years but were temporarily suspended due to the circumstances of the pandemic. Responding to an inquiry of face-to-face courses going back to full capacity, Vice Provost Veeger responded that it would be dependent on COVID rates and classroom ventilation capabilities.

A motion was made and approved to extend meeting time for 15 minutes.

Faculty Senate President Echevarria expressed the extraordinary need for having a stable schedule for the fall semester allowing the students to be able to effectively plan their schedules. Late changes to the schedule of courses can be problematic for students and faculty. The Faculty Senate leadership reminded senators that a blended course method is available. Blended courses contain a certain amount of online asynchronous teaching, reducing face-to-face meetings. An existing face-to-face course changing to a blended teaching method needs only the approval of the department chair and dean before notifying Enrollment Services. For the blended modality, it is critical to make the face-to-face schedule of course activities explicit in the e-campus schedule.

- 7. There was no old or new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.