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## FSEC Minutes November 12, 2021

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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**Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC)**  
**Meeting #26, November 12, 2021**  
**1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

1. President Cardany called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Vice President Rice, Senators Maier-Sperdelozzi, Meyerson, Nassersharif, and Welters were in attendance.
  
2. Announcements: Given that the meeting would be running on a tight timeline, President Cardany advised the group that written announcements had been provided as part of the agenda. Members were asked to avail themselves of that information. There was no further discussion of items *a* through *d*. The information included, in brief:
  - a. COVID-19 Advisory Group (Messaging Update) - Members were asked to take a look at the tracker website and provide any comments or feedback to President Cardany. It was noted that Interim Provost Beauvais is working on messaging around testing and vaccinations for the Academic Year, especially as relates to exemptions and requirements for leaving for/returning from breaks.
  - b. Administrative Policy Committee (APC) (Approval of NIL and Vehicle Use policies) - At the APC meeting, the policy for student athletes naming image likeness (NIL) was approved without change. The Vehicle Use Policy was also approved with the condition that the number of passengers be limited to 12. The APC determined that the back seats of 15-seat vans would be removed and a training plan was discussed with a target of three training sessions for drivers per year.
  - c. Honorary Degrees Committee - Interim Provost Beauvais advised that the Committee would consider FSEC's recent request to study the revocation of degrees from two individuals.
  - d. Policies (University Manual, Appendix G, and Presidential Informational Reports) - FSEC Members were asked to review the email thread pertaining to the Manual and reporting requirements and alert President Cardany and/or Vice President Rice as to any questions or concerns.
  - e. Administrator Evaluations - President Cardany asked Dr. Nassersharif to provide some brief background on the process and requirements for administrator evaluations and elaborate on the specific role of the FS Coordinator as part of that process. This year, the administrators slated to be evaluated include the Deans of the Colleges of Health Sciences, Nursing and Environment and Life Sciences as well as Vice Provost Veeger. Ordinarily, the FS Coordinator would initiate this process by sending a request to each affected constituency requesting a list of volunteers/nominees to serve on the

relevant review committee. Since the Coordinator is new this year, Dr. Nassersharif started this process himself. The FS Executive Committee then appoints the formal review committees from the list of nominees.

Dr. Nassersharif noted there is a little hurdle in the evaluation process. There was interest in the Provost's office in having an orientation meeting preceding the kick-off of the evaluations but that still has not happened. While the three deans being evaluated have been through this process before, Vice Provost Veeger has not, and so an orientation meeting seems especially important. The administrators being evaluated are expected to provide a list of faculty who will be involved in their reviews and there are other steps they need to take. Some outreach to help all involved attain a common baseline understanding of the process is desired. Another little hurdle in the process relates to having accurate and up-to-date faculty lists. Since the Vice Provost's constituency includes the entire faculty, a current list of all faculty with tenure status is important. The Office of Institutional Research can provide such a list and the Coordinator agreed to obtain it ASAP.

### 3. Discussion Items

Nominations: The University President has requested 5 faculty nominees to serve on the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees composition includes a Faculty member and the President has asked for a recommendation. This role involves representing the whole Faculty, not just the Faculty Senate. Traditionally, the Executive Committee has put together a sort of dossier on up to five nominees whom the President's office will then meet with and further assess for formal appointment. Mayrai Gindy is ending her two-year term in February and needs to be replaced. Each FSEC member had some names to suggest, and it was agreed that President Cardany would reach out to the "short list" to determine availability and willingness. Once a prospective group has initially agreed to serve if appointed, the FS Coordinator will create background materials for transmission to the President's office. It is hoped that this can be accomplished over the next few days.

Presentation: The scheduled guests were brought into the meeting to make their presentation on *Equity in Retention*. Kim Stack and John Olerio provided some background on their work with the Gardner Institute. They recently completed a five-week "Retention Academy" and explained what their 8-person team has

learned so far and what they hope to accomplish moving forward. They have completed an internal equity analysis of retention patterns university-wide and have identified barriers to retention as well as institutional resources that can be brought to bear in removing those barriers. The team has prepared an Implementation Framework in hopes that tangible steps can be taken over the next year. The process is expected to be iterative with an evaluation phase that will reset the identified barriers and resources and lead to a new round of proposed implementation strategies in the future.

FSEC members asked a number of questions, especially about specific graduation rate variables. They also stressed the importance of transparency and cooperation in this endeavor, noting that different departments (for example Academic Affairs and Student Affairs) could be working on retention-related initiatives within their own silos. The presentation team responded that a goal of their multi-department project would be to reduce this occurrence and foster as much data gathering and data sharing as possible. In wrapping up their remarks, Presenters Stack and Olerio explained that today's discussion was really just aimed at providing the FSEC with an orientation about the initiative and to note that they will want to circle back at some point to provide a progress report on how their implementation projects are going. They also noted that if any Faculty Senate member is interested in learning more or getting more involved, especially on the Student Success Team, they are encouraged to reach out to any of the Retention Academy participants.

Review November 18, 2021 Faculty Senate agenda: The draft agenda was discussed in detail. It was noted that approval of the last Senate meeting (Oct. 21, 2021) minutes should likely be stricken from the agenda and docketed for the December meeting instead as they are not quite ready. The section pertaining to the President's report requires his prior approval and there will likely not be time to obtain that before Thursday. Otherwise, the scheduled reports and presentations seem to be straight-forward and in good shape. Motion by Senator Welters, second by Vice President Rice to approve the agenda as discussed. Motion unanimously approved.

Resolution for Academic Freedom: The Draft Resolution was discussed in detail. President Cardany noted that the resolution remains a work in progress and will not make it to the Senate floor in November as it is still subject to revision. The general feeling was that the current draft is definitely an improvement over the

previous version. Specifically, it was noted that the “Resolved” clauses have been changed in a positive way, better reflecting the principle of “One University.” President Cardany then asked the group to focus on the specific “Resolved” clause that references the 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom. A couple of FSEC members felt this language was too pointed and could be taken as a call upon University Administration to be supportive of faculty even when they may be acting irresponsibly. There was considerable substantive debate about the need for university faculty to stand in solidarity with K-12 educators in rejecting outside assaults on academic freedom and also the need to differentiate freedom of speech from academic freedom. Some members felt that this clause could actually be taken as a restriction on freedom by “mandating” the defense of certain faculty.

The group ultimately decided the language in the resolution still needs refinement. It was noted that while there have not yet been serious or significant threats in Rhode Island, the University needs a proactive policy statement in place should outside influences start to interfere with academic autonomy. In general, the FSEC suggested that the messaging be recast in a more positive light and that the actual resolution be made more concise.

4. Approval of minutes. With a few edits, there was a motion by Vice President Rice, seconded by Senator Welters to approve the 11/5/21 FSEC minutes as corrected. Motion unanimously supported. Following some discussion, the Committee agreed by consensus to continue the 10/21/21 Faculty Senate minutes for further editing.

5. Call for New Business – None.

6. Adjournment – Motion by Senator Welters, second by Senator Maier-Sperdelozzi to adjourn at 2:34 PM. Motion unanimously supported.