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## FSEC Minutes October 30, 2022

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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**Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC)**

**October 3, 2022**

**8:30 - 10:30 AM**

**MINUTES**

**Pastore Conference Room RM224**

1. Call to order - President Rice called the meeting to order at 8:45 AM. VP Nassersharif and Senators Maier Speredelozzi, Echevarria, Forrester, and Gindy were present.
2. Announcements
  - a. Launch of the “Yes on #1” \$100 million Capital Campaign - as noted at the 9/29 Faculty Senate meeting, this is a top priority of the President and Board of Trustees.
  - b. Report of Sept 30 Rice & Nassersharif meeting with President Parlange - Many topics were covered during the meeting, including the potential future re-location of the FS office and the addition of a new finalist in the search for a Provost. The bulk of the discussion, however, focused on the need to increase faculty engagement in FS affairs, including in curricular matters as well as policy, budget and other legislative initiatives. Such discussions should be marked by robust debate but that is not typically what occurs. FSEC members were asked to brainstorm strategies for increasing participation and debate for further discussion under agenda item 6a.
3. Approval of Minutes
  - a. FSEC minutes for September 26, 2022 - The minutes were approved unanimously.
4. Old Business
  - a. Continued Discussion - per Anne Veeger - Assessments/LearningOutcomes: The Chairs of the TAAC and GEC will be asked to work together on formulating a recommendation about how to best move the assessment function forward.
5. Guest(s): Phillip Clark and Melanie Brasher (via ZOOM)  
Presentation from the URI Age-Friendly University (AFU) Committee - AFU Committee members Clark and Brasher explained the Core Principles of their interdisciplinary

initiative and provided some background on its evolution both locally and across the nation. Myriad benefits for students, the older adults involved, and the community as a whole can be reaped as the program expands. Committee members are working to ensure their efforts are reflected in the University's strategic plan and would welcome any opportunity to invite greater participation in their programming. The FSEC agreed to find time on a Fall FS agenda for a presentation by the AFU Committee.

## 6. Discussion Items

- a. Action planning for making the Faculty Senate more effective - First it was noted that if the administration would like to see more scrutiny of curricular matters, the full senate meetings are likely not the appropriate forum to expect it. Proposals have been fully vetted by that point, at the department, college and senate committee level. Programs receive additional levels of review beyond courses prior to coming before the senate. If there are concerns about the fiscal impacts of curricular proposals and ensuring that courses, programs and certificates have positive rather than negative or neutral budget effects, those should be addressed much earlier in the process - with college curriculum committees, JCAP, Department reviewers and/or Deans. It was suggested that the President take concerns about the thoroughness of inquiry into new curricular proposals to the Council of Deans and subsequently the college curriculum committees to ensure they are looked at from every angle before reaching the Senate where they are presumed to be ready for approval. A discussion ensued about the best use of FS agenda time. It was agreed that docketing matters that warrant more spirited debate could spur higher levels of engagement. The current protocol of spending time presenting editorial reports or items that will be approved as a matter of course should perhaps be reconsidered. The Faculty Senate has hosted forums on matters that stimulated lively discussions in the past and it was suggested that time should perhaps be reserved for such debates as a means of increasing meaningful participation.

Moving to a “consent agenda” model might be useful in creating dockets that make time for more discussion. This model would allow multiple matters to be bundled under a single motion and vote without formal presentation. Individual items could be carved off and considered individually where necessary. This would require getting the word out that all items should be thoroughly reviewed in advance so that if there are items deserving of special attention, open debate can occur. This method would free up agenda space to have more productive discussions and give the Faculty Senate a more proactive stance - discussing important matters on the horizon rather than simply reporting out on things that have already happened.

The policies listed on the 9/29 FS agenda provided a timely illustration. While some of them could reasonably be expected to prompt a flurry of questions, faculty members know they have already been administratively adopted and are thus disinclined to spend any real energy or effort reacting to them. If the Administration is interested in more faculty involvement, engaging them at a moment when their participation could actually make a difference would be advised.

The University Strategic Plan was another item from the 9/29 meeting that could have prompted more inquiry and debate. It is important to know what the faculty think of the draft but they likely felt there wasn't time for a deep dive into its content at the meeting. The FSEC agreed to launch a survey to all faculty to gather input on the themes and goals of the Plan and obtain results prior to the next meeting of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. This might be a way to bolster faculty engagement on a subject even if it doesn't happen within a meeting.

FSEC members agreed that as Committee liaisons, they should take a message back to their groups about the importance of taking their role seriously and conscientiously preparing for both committee and senate meetings. It was noted, however, that some committees are faced with a structural problem that leaves

them without sufficient membership or expertise to really tackle certain tasks. It is difficult to strike a balance between new energy, institutional memory, and specific subject-area expertise within the small committees.

It was further noted that while ZOOM provides a great alternative for Senators who cannot attend in person meetings and for other interested parties, it should not be used as an excuse to disengage. There was a sense that some representatives are dialing in to be counted present but are not actually committing to the proceedings. The FSEC will consider making in-person attendance at future meetings mandatory except for extraordinary circumstances like Covid quarantine or conference travel.

- b. Takeaways from 9/29 FS Meeting
  - i. Issue raised by Senator Rollo-Koster on the status of humanities & social science programs within a high-profile Blue Economy initiative. The concern is that in an effort to redefine the University around STEM-related Blue Economy pursuits, the humanities could be relegated or lost.
- c. Course release for chairpersons (funding deficits for departments) - According to the Faculty Senate By-Laws, Committee Chairpersons are entitled to a reduction in normal duties but some department heads are rejecting the reduction due to budget shortfalls and inadequate staffing. For many active Senators, this feels like an unkept promise and it will continue to be difficult to increase participation, engagement, and leadership within the faculty senate if this does not change. This has significant implications for item 6a (above) as senate service in many departments is viewed as a thankless chore instead of as a crucial component of a vibrant university. Agreeing to lead a committee is often a commitment to do double the work without reaping any real benefits and this type of service is often not valued in considerations for promotion and tenure which is a further disincentive.

- d. Honors Colloquium Certificate shell proposal - The Honors Program has inquired about creating a certificate tied to the Honors Colloquium theme each year. The idea is to create a “shell certificate” that would change every year or two with the Colloquium theme. The certificate would include the current Colloquium course, and then three more courses - to be transcribed with the Colloquium name for the cycle of courses. The FSEC agreed to refer to CASC but expressed hesitancy about the “shell” idea, noting that each cycle should probably just be presented anew as a separate Certificate.
  - e. IT Gov Meetings - Senator Maier Sperdelozzi was appointed as the at-large faculty representative on this committee but she has an unavoidable conflict with the meeting time. An alternative nominee was suggested.
  - f. Related to 5a above - Elaine Finan correspondence - tabled.
  - g. Advance planning - Fall FSEC agendas:
    - No meeting 10/10 due to State holiday
    - 10/17: President Parlange will be the guest - he requested an 8:30AM appearance (holding a 45-minute block). Topics of discussion might include the hiring process for Administrator positions and continuing discussions about shared governance (both operationally and in terms of how it is valued).
    - Next FS meeting is 10/20; agenda may be finalized via email.
    - 10/24 meeting: Guest will be new VP of Communications and Marketing Matthew McDonald. Topics to include webpage policies.
    - Transition plan for Joanne Lawrence ’s retirement - The Office of the Provost has approved hiring a replacement early so that there will be some overlap of personnel to serve as a training period.
7. Call for New Business - None
  8. Adjournment - the meeting adjourned at 10:35 AM.