



## **ROBERT HOLLAND FACULTY SENATE**

### **Uncorrected Minutes of November 12, 2021**

The Robert Holland Faculty Senate of Mississippi State University held its regular monthly meeting in the Bost Theater at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, November 12, 2021.

Members absent and excused were Mike Breazeale, Thu Dinh, Gnaneswar Gude, Alicia Hall, Stacy Haynes, Santanu Kundu, Todd MIsna, Andrea Varela-Stokes, and Kelley Wamsley.

Members absent were Erdogan Memili, Sorina Popescu, and Ted Wallace.

The meeting was called to order by Senate President Rebecca Robichaux-Davis. President Robichaux-Davis, in honor of Veteran's Day, thanked all of the veterans of the Mississippi State University community for what they have done and what they do. She also thanked Dr. Gary Jackson for sharing the space the Senate is meeting in today.

President Robichaux-Davis asked for any corrections to the minutes of the October 15, 2021, meeting. Hearing no corrections, President Robichaux-Davis accepted the minutes as amended.

### **GUESTS**

#### **Dr. Mark Keenum, University President**

Dr. Keenum said it has been a busy week. He said it is always a busy week, not just for himself but for everyone on this campus. Dr. Keenum said he had the opportunity to welcome many potential new students to MSU for our Scholars Recognition Day on Monday morning. High achieving students from around the state and around the country were invited to come to MSU with their families to learn more about our Shackouls Honors College and the wonderful disciplines and programs we have to offer. Dr. Keenum said many of these students will hopefully enroll and be a part of our university family next year.

Dr. Keenum said on Tuesday he had the opportunity to meet with our Thrive and TRiO students. He said the TRiO program is one that he is quite proud of. It is tailored to our first-generation students and it helps them with some of the critical challenges they have to overcome even now as students. He said the University also recognizes what they have had to overcome just to be here. Dr. Keenum said the Thrive program was just started in the past couple of years and is focused on students coming from foster homes. He said these students have really had to overcome a lot in their life just to become a student at MSU. Dr. Keenum said he is so proud of what we do to help these students succeed. Dr. Keenum thanked the senators for all that they do to help these students, especially the students with special needs.

Dr. Keenum said Thursday we held the veterans recognition ceremony for Veterans Day. The weather did not cooperate, so the event had to be relocated from the Drill Field to the Foster Ballroom, but the event was still a success. He said this event allows the University to recognize the men and women who have served our nation. We honor the students, faculty, and staff who have served our nation and answered the call to serve and defend our freedoms. Dr. Keenum said it is important to take a moment and thank these individuals and to recognize what the University is doing to support our student veterans and our veterans community. He said the Sonny Montgomery Center in Nusz Hall does a wonderful job of supporting our students as well as our dependents and survivors. There are many benefits that are extended to our veterans and the veterans in our community.

Dr. Keenum said this morning we held the first Fall Transfer Student Recognition Day. We hosted several hundred community college students in our state and their families. They will be spending the day enjoying our campus and learning about all we have to offer.

Dr. Keenum said he hopes the senators saw the official enrollment numbers which were posted last week. He said the official reporting date is November 1<sup>st</sup>. The reporting date used to be after the 10<sup>th</sup> day of class but was changed by IHL several years ago due to students who decided to leave early in the semester. Dr. Keenum said the enrollment reporting of these students would stay with us for 6 years and had an impact on our retention and graduation rates. The official reporting number this year for MSU is 23,086 students. This is 100 students more than last year and the first time enrollment has ever been above 23,000. Our enrollment growth over the past 2 years is 860 students. Dr. Keenum said that is remarkable in spite of the myriad of challenges society is facing. This is a reflection of this university and what we are doing. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of enrollment growth at MSU. There is no other school in the state that can say that. Dr. Keenum said he believes that the families recognize the value and the quality of the education that the faculty provide. They also recognize that our campus is a safe and nurturing environment for a young person. He said the faculty make it possible in the classroom and with advising and mentoring to help guide them.

Dr. Keenum said in March of 2020 our whole world got turned upside down. He said we are still trying to get it turned back the right way but he likes what he is seeing. The start of the fall semester could not have started at a worse time. He said he was telling new students and parents at our orientations in the summer that we intended to make the school year as normal as we could. No one could have envisioned then how our world would be turned upside down again with the Delta variant. Dr. Keenum said he worked with our State Health Officers, IHL, the leadership team, the Covid Task Force, and the Senate President to figure out how we could start a semester in the midst of a surging variant. He said he is seeing hot spots pop up around the country but he is encouraged that the numbers are going down in our state and in our county. Our transmission rate is now moderate and CDC guidelines allow us more flexibility when we are indoors where face coverings are concerned for those who are vaccinated.

Dr. Keenum said we are also facing challenges on our campus as everyone is aware. The IHL board voted to comply with President Biden's executive order which requires federal contractors to have all employees fully vaccinated. Mississippi State University is a major federal contractor and we hold many federal contracts that we rely on to do the work that we do as a major research university. If you name a federal agency, we have a contract with that agency. We are ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation in high performance computing. Our supercomputers are federal supercomputers. One of the fastest computers in the nation is the NOAA supercomputer. We do a tremendous amount of global weather modelling for NOAA. Dr. Keenum said he could go on and on. He said we also have hundreds of employees on campus whose positions are directly funded through federal contracts. Dr. Keenum said he cannot fathom us getting out of the research business as a top 100 research university. He said he also cannot fathom losing hundreds of employees because of our unwillingness to comply with the order of our President. Dr. Keenum said he has been told by numerous attorneys that we have no alternative but to comply with a federal order. It supersedes any order given by our state. He said our IHL Board recognized this and passed their directive. Dr. Keenum said he knows many senators agree with this and many senators do not, but this is our directive. We will move forward and implement it to the best of our ability. He said there may be an injunction for the courts to decide. There is already a stay on vaccinations for businesses who employ more than 100 people. Dr. Keenum said he does not know if there will be an injunction or not but he intends to move forward with this. He said we are going to make sure that our employees know what their rights are under this order. This means employees must have their final dose administered by January 4<sup>th</sup> or they must file for a medical or religious exemption. The deadline for an exemption is December 20<sup>th</sup>. He said he urges any employee who does not wish to get vaccinated to get their waiver request submitted by December 20<sup>th</sup>. This is not the original deadline. We received guidance from the White House to move the date from December 8<sup>th</sup> to allow more time for people to get vaccinated. The date may be moved again but he does not know that this will happen. An employee who has not been vaccinated by

January 4<sup>th</sup> will be allowed to continue working and will not be placed on administrative leave unless the employee does not become compliant by January 15<sup>th</sup>. An employee not vaccinated and without an exemption on January 15<sup>th</sup> will be placed on administrative leave until January 31<sup>st</sup>. After January 31<sup>st</sup> if the employee is still not vaccinated or filed for exemption they will unfortunately be terminated. Dr. Keenum said he does not want to see any Mississippi State employee lose their job over the vaccination requirement. He said we would do all we can to inform our employees of their options and work with them as best we can. Dr. Keenum said he knows this is tough for a lot of people and he understands and respects that. He said what we are dealing with is tough for all of us. All of us working together and having patience and understanding with one another as a university community and a university family will allow us to get through this. He said he believes there are better days coming for the University and for the nation. He said we just have to stay together, work together, and care for one another.

Dr. Keenum said the last time he met with the Senate he said how well our state revenues were doing. He said they still are. Dr. Keenum said it is remarkable what he has been, and is witnessing. Revenues for the month of October were \$56 million over the estimate. So far this fiscal year we are over \$314 million over estimates. We began the fiscal year with a surplus of over \$1 billion. Dr. Keenum said he has been informed that around \$600 million of this surplus is so far unobligated. When the state legislature convenes on January 4<sup>th</sup> they will be dealing with a lot of federal dollars as well from the American Rescue Plan Act and the recently passed Infrastructure Bill. These two bills amount to billions of dollars to the state with just under \$2 billion coming from the Infrastructure Bill. Dr. Keenum said he will be back in Jackson with his IHL colleagues and Commissioner Rankins to make sure they are aware of all the needs of the IHL system. Dr. Keenum said his top priority remains to be an investment in our people. Dr. Keenum said as long as he is at MSU, investing in our people will be his top priority. We already know that teachers in the k-12 system will be receiving a pay raise this year. He said our teachers need and deserve a pay raise. He said he doesn't care what they give them, it will not be enough. The people in higher education deserve an investment in them as well. Dr. Keenum said the legislature will also be looking at our infrastructure capital needs. A lot of the funds coming in are designated for infrastructure. Dr. Keenum said MSU has infrastructure needs as well. The IHL system has a list of infrastructure needs that will be shared with legislators. Dr. Keenum said he is not sure how the bond bill will be handled since we have surplus funds. He said he believes there will be a bond bill but it will be a smaller bond bill supplemented by the surplus funds. We are asking for \$9.5 million toward the renovation of Dorman Hall which will be added to the \$8 million we got last session. We will be requesting \$15 million toward the new Architecture, Art, and Design building to complete the \$30 million cost.

Dr. Keenum said another issue that will be addressed by the legislature is redistricting for congressional seats as well as the house and senate seats. They will also be looking at medical marijuana. Medical marijuana was approved by voters in a referendum, but the referendum was deemed improper by the courts. Dr. Keenum said he does not believe there will be a special session to address this. The referendum process also needs to be corrected. The elimination of the state income tax will also be discussed this session. He said all of these things will take time in addition to determining how to allocate the funds.

Dr. Keenum said he was appointed by the IHL Board of Trustees along with Trustee Cunningham to be IHL representatives several years ago on the Postsecondary State Financial Aid Board. He said since he has been on the board and before he was on the board there is always more need than funds. The board has to ask the legislature for deficit appropriation at the beginning of each session. This amount ranges between \$2 million and \$6 million. The legislature asked the board to develop a model which stayed within a set budget. The Chairman of the board appointed financial aid directors from around the state to develop a recommendation to administer state aid while maintaining need based and merit based aid. This group presented their recommendation to the board and the board approved it and recommended it to the legislature. Dr. Keenum said he views this as a good first step to opening the eyes of our legislative leaders. He said the legislative leaders want to keep need based aid and so does he. He said we also need to have a merit based system for state aid. Many of the states we compete with for students have merit based aid systems. He said he is fine with the system we had, but the legislature did not want to continue to keep increasing funding every year. He said given the constraints established by the legislature a plan had to be developed that best meets the needs of our students and their families.

Dr. Keenum said the senators would be seeing a presentation on the campus master plan. MSU is always thinking and planning out where are we headed and what our needs are. This applies not just to our campus, but to our community at large. Dr. Keenum said he is excited about where we are going. He said he realizes we have some pedestrian issues and we've tried to address this by closing down some streets and some access points in order to make this a more pedestrian friendly campus. The hope is to make this a more pedestrian campus, but we have to open some of the new roadways to do this. There will soon be a ribbon cutting for Blackjack Road. Famous Maroon Band Street which connects Stone Boulevard and Hardy Street is already making an impact. Bulldog Way will connect Blackjack Road and Lee Boulevard and will include a connector street to behind the Student Health Center. Until these projects are completed we are just going to have to be careful and please pardon our progress. There are speed bumps that have been deployed around campus. He said Jeremiah Dumas and Saunders Ramsey and their teams are working to help come up with a way we can make the campus slower. Dr. Keenum said our campus police will be doing more enforcing of speed on campus.

Our campus will continue to evolve and grow and expand. The presentation will show the plans for accommodating this growth moving forward. Dr. Keenum said it can take 5 or 6 years for an infrastructure project to go from infancy to completion. We always have to be thinking about the future and that is what this presentation is about.

Dr. Keenum wished all of the senators a wonderful Thanksgiving and a blessed holiday season.

**Dr. David Shaw, Provost and Executive Vice President**

**Mr. Greg Havens**

**Mr. Ben Zunkeler, Sasaki Associates, Inc**

Dr. Shaw said he is excited to bring the presentation of the master plan to the senators today. He said this is not just a presentation about where we are in the master planning process. This is not a final plan. Dr. Shaw said he would love to get feedback on the presentation.

Dr. Shaw, Greg Havens and Ben Zunkeler gave the master plan presentation. This presentation can be viewed on the recording of this meeting on the Faculty Senate website.

Senator Pelaez asked how the differing needs for office space between faculty in different disciplines would be addressed with the standard office spaces presented. Mr. Havens replied the presented spaces were not intended to be the way actual office spaces would be built. He said it is a kit of parts for future design processes. Any change to any building would involve the occupants of the building. A programming exercise would be performed to identify the specific needs.

Senator Tagert asked if there was any discussion of the foot traffic on North Farm and South Farm. She said a lot of people like to go there to walk, run, or take their pet. She said this can, at times, interfere with research being performed. She asked if any of the proposed design would alleviate some of this. Mr. Havens replied that the wellness link is designed to provide a space that people can exercise in a more central area of campus. He said the plan includes a new wellness center adjacent to the new Kinesiology building which would be the southern counterpart of the Sanderson Center. The new facility could be slightly different by offering more programs including nutrition programs and counseling. Jeremiah Dumas, Executive director of Transportation, asked if Senator Tagert was referring to pedestrian issues internally on North and South Farms. Senator Tagert replied she is. She said the issue has to do with timing. It is only an issue during working hours while research is being performed.

Senator Wood said she has commuted by bike for over five years to campus. She said she is very excited to see the pedestrian core and the acknowledgement of bike traffic. She asked what thoughts were in place to highlight mixed-use, pedestrian, and bike only paths. She said we currently have bike only paths and they are not used as bike only. Mr. Havens said he

completely understands how this needs to be thought through in detail. He said over time as the plan develops and things are implemented there will be more and more detail. He said the design is intended to coordinate bike movements with all of the other movements that will be taking place. He said the Hardy Street project will inform future projects of how to best handle this. Mr. Zunkeler added that things such as trees are being used to help delineate the pedestrian paths from the bike paths. Mr. Dumas said MDOT has funded a study for MSU, the City of Starkville, and Oktibbeha County which identified that most of the users who create safety issues do not know the differences between the pathways. He said a regional master plan has been created which identifies different levels of bike infrastructures from a bike path and a multi-use way and identifies them by picture and glossary of definitions. He said the bike racks identified in the presentation will also help with this by not encouraging people to ride their bike right up to the front doors of buildings. This will include signage indicating where to ride your bike. He said this is also being done for scooters.

Senator Miller asked if the large classrooms proposed would be flexible or if they would be fixed seat auditoriums. Mr. Zunkeler replied that the 100+ seat rooms are intended to take advantage of new technologies which help make them flexible. He said once the room size gets to 300+ seats it becomes a different room type. Senator Miller asked if there has been consideration that 10 or 20 years from now classroom spaces may look a little different in the form of hybrid education. She said in this case we would not need 300 seat classrooms. Mr. Havens replied we need to be planning in our design for this as a future possibility. He said it could become the case that there are only 20 students in a classroom but 50 more are attending virtually. Mr. Zunkeler said locating the large classrooms away from the core to allow for them to be used for outside events as well will also free up the core space for more flexible layouts.

Senator Miller said the design factors in a lot of outdoor space. She asked how much consideration was given to the climate in Starkville where many months of the year we are rainy or it is unbearably hot. Mr. Havens said this was a big factor in the design. He said shade is a big factor in what is being proposed either through trees, umbrellas, or structures. He said rain is harder to deal with, but outdoor spaces can be positioned on the south side of buildings to help protect from wind and capture sun.

Senator Miller said she thought the Kinesiology building would be located by the Sanderson Center. She asked if the location of the building had been changed. Dr. Shaw replied after a lot of analysis and a lot of conversations with Kinesiology and the college, it was decided to change the location to save a lot of money. This savings will be put back into the building and it will be a bigger facility as a result. Dr. Shaw said the new location also fits with the plan being proposed today.

Senator Miller asked for elaboration on panhellenic plots. Mr. Havens said the panhellenic organizations have a tradition of having plots which are outdoor gathering spaces where the organizations can place their insignias. It is a tradition seen on many campuses across the south. Mr. Saunders Ramsey, Executive Director of Campus Services, said not all panhellenic organizations have a house and this is a place where they can gather and tell their story. He said being located next to the Multi-Cultural Center also has some strategic meaning behind it. He said this will be something that will happen in the near future and planning for the project will begin in the next week.

Senator Gregory said she believes there is also a culture that needs to be overcome with regard to pedestrian issues on campus. Many of our students come from rural areas where they only drive to get around. She said she takes students on field trips to large cities and they complain about walking the whole time. Senator Gregory said she believes we need to educate our students about the benefits of this and teach them respect of bikers. She said she has been threatened by drivers while using crosswalk telling her she is stupid and she shouldn't be walking. She said she has also been in touch with Facilities Management because students litter and do not clean up after their pets at Chadwick Lake. She said there is no culture of pride in their environment. She said she would like this to be included in the master plan.

Senator Pelaez asked how the plan is connected with sustainability. Mr. Havens replied there are several initiatives which are being examined. Building orientation should reduce load on HVAC systems. Consideration is being given to how storm water management is handled on campus. He said consideration is also being given to the way shade can be utilized to reduce heat gain from paved surfaces. Mr. Havens said the President's Climate Commitment was adopted into the 2011 plan and it remains as part of the new plan. Efficiency will remain a key priority for new buildings and renovations. Mr. Ramsey said some other not so visible sustainability improvements have been made as well including the redesign and upgrade of the chilled water loop that cools our buildings. The chiller plant will also be expanded in the near future. He said we are constantly embracing solar energy and water quality. Native grasses have been established on our water bodies to return them to be more naturalized. Spraying on campus has been reduced and lowered our maintenance. Mr. Saunders said he believes it is important to acknowledge the multiple layers that exist outside the building framework.

Senator Williams asked how much thought was put into parking on campus in terms of the zones. He said we have a lot of gated lots that are not at capacity. He asked if the zoning of the lots would be reconsidered. Mr. Havens said part of the plan is to consider the quantity of parking. Mr. Ramsey said an assessment of parking needs has been ongoing and the recommendation should be coming soon.



Senator Tagert said she works in the Ag & Bio Engineering Building and although it is a fairly new building the department is already out of space and having to convert spaces and share labs. She asked if the plan includes room for expansion of her building. Mr. Havens replied that expansion of Senator Tagert's building is planned to the north. He said this was included in the 2011 plan as well. He said the current plan is to make the building more a part of the foreground with the new Kinesiology building being located adjacent to it creating what is proposed as the McCarthy Quadrangle.

Senator Pelaez asked what the plans are for Allen Hall. Mr. Ramsey said he is always trying to find funding to replace Allen Hall, but for now we are planning around Allen Hall and will be looking on how to better it.

Senator Zuckerman asked about the plan for museums and galleries. She asked if there was a plan to highlight multiple museums and galleries or have a central location for them. Mr. Havens said they are currently thinking about how much space might be needed to consolidate museums and galleries on campus. He said more work needs to be done on this before a plan can be presented. Mr. Ramsey said this is way at the top of the list and the University sees the value in having the museums and galleries centralized. He said the analysis needs to be completed before any decisions can be made.

## **REPORT OF THE FACULTY SENATE PRESIDENT**

During the last month, many of the university standing committees on which I serve did not meet. However, other university standing committees on which I serve met more than once. I have also attended meetings of the Faculty Development Task Force and have continued to attend weekly COVID-19 meetings. Throughout the past month, I have remained in contact with MSU administrators concerning various issues brought forward to me.

As you know, the month of October was designated as Faculty Athletics Month. Thanks to each of you who participated in the various events held to show the Athletics Department's appreciation for what we do. These events were quite successful with about sixty members of the faculty or staff and their families attending the National Championship Trophy photo op, thirty-eight members of the faculty and staff along with their families, an additional eighty-six guests, attending the open Football Practice at the Leo Seal Practice Facility, and great WINS by our soccer, volleyball, and football teams at the three games which were part of Faculty Athletics Month.

With regards to the implementation of the Student Course Survey that we approved during our October meeting, I have collaborated with Dr. Shaw and Dr. Tracy Baham in OIRE and the survey that will be implemented will have the 11 items that we approved. Unfortunately, because of a lack of time and an approved process, faculty will not be able to add their own

three items to the survey this semester, but in preparation for next semester, if you know you would want to add items to the surveys for the courses you teach, please prepare those items between now and early February so that when the process for adding items is established and the request for those items is made, you will be ready. It was just too late in the semester to individualize the survey in this way for this semester. You will notice that the scale will go from strongly disagree on the left to strongly agree on the right. In terms of the coloration of the scale, Class Climate meets ADA accessibility requirements. The particular red and green shades that we will be using are more widely visible even among those with visual issues. These particular shades do not catch everyone with color blindness, but in addition to the colors, we have the words listed above each option, as well as the gradient and size tool to connote the positivity. These scales meet accessibility standards for screen readers and other accessible devices. Because we are using more than color alone to communicate the values of the scale and response options, even those with this particular color blindness could read the scale without the need for screen reading devices. The option for “abstain” has been changed to “ABSTAIN/N.A.” Also, the drop-down menu for the question that asks about the number of hours spent outside of class engaged in class activities will contain numbers 0 to 20. I have also discussed with Dr. Shaw the concern about the survey items not addressing some of the experiences of Campus 5-only students and in the near future, we will be looking at the previous items that were used strictly for Campus 5 students and adding either those items to the survey or a version of those items. However, for this semester, the survey that will be implemented will be exactly what the RH Faculty Senate approved.

As a reminder, we are still accepting nominations for the SEC Faculty Achievement Awards. The deadline for nominations is Nov 19, 2021. You should have received a reminder email this past Monday asking for nominations. Please consider nominating colleagues who are Full Professors and have taught predominantly undergraduates. Details of the nomination requirements are posted on the Faculty Senate website.

### **Reports from Committees on which I Serve:**

*Athletic Council* – This committee met on October 13, 2021. Dr. Fountain shared that the NCAA is looking at a new constitution. Christine Jackson shared that they are in the midst of interviewing three candidates for a position within Athletic Academics. Twenty-seven student athletes have applied for December graduation. The M-Club has lots of service activities going on during October and November. A Pink Dawg Walk for cancer was held on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Bracky Brett of the Compliance Office shared that earlier that day Dr. Keenum spoke to all of the athletic coaches during their regular monthly compliance meeting. Dr. Keenum gave them an update on everything going on around MSU. John Cohen shared that Baseball Alumni Weekend will be October 29 – 30<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the National Championship Team being

recognized at the Homecoming Football Game. The first Women's Basketball Game will be on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> and the first Men's Basketball Game will be on Wednesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

*COVID-19 Future Planning Task Force* – The COVID-19 Task Force has met three times since my last report. Information from each of these meetings is provided primarily through weekly Cowbell Well updates that are provided on Fridays. Our current mask requirement is masks must be worn in classrooms, lab, studios or other instructional space, and individual employees can require masks in their office spaces if they choose. Employees are now required to be vaccinated or have a medical, religious or other exemption on file. Vaccine requirement information is to be uploaded at <https://covidvaccine.msstate.edu/employee-upload/index.php> The COVID-19 Vaccine and Flu Shots continue to be available at the Health Center and at various pop-up clinics in the Student Union's Dawg House. We are trying to make it as easy as possible for anyone to get vaccinated and get the flu shot. See [www.msstate.edu/covid19](http://www.msstate.edu/covid19) for more information.

*Design Review Committee* – This committee did not meet since my last report, but we considered and approved of one item via email discussion and review of documents. We reviewed plans and construction details for the construction of a paved parking lot (currently gravel) to the east of Leo Seal Football complex and to the north of Dudy Noble. After some discussion concerning the need to include 7 ADA parking spaces to be in compliance with the required percentage of ADA spaces, the committee unanimously voted to approve of this project.

*Inclusive Excellence Leadership Council* – This council has not met since my last report.

*Executive Council* – This council has not met since my last report.

*Executive Enrollment Management Committee* – The committee did not meet since my last report.

*Fall Convocation Group* – This committee has not met since my last report.

*Game Day and Special Events* – This committee met on October 13<sup>th</sup> and October 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss and approve various Game Day requests. New stop signs have been installed in two locations on Famous Maroon Band St. Famous Maroon Band St. will still be blocked to traffic, though, on football game days. A Press Release was sent out via email, social media, and news outlets notifying everyone that on-campus policies for golf carts and low speed vehicles have not changed, although new policies were adopted by the city of Starkville. Violations of the stated laws and policies will result in ticketing, booting, towing, and revocation of parking and access privileges. Concerning football tailgates, people are leaving entire tailgates set up past the

midnight deadline for removal. Any tailgates and/or content of tailgates still on campus at 7:00 the next morning gets thrown away when campus is cleaned for the start of the new week.

*Information Technology Council* –This committee met on November 2, 2021. You should be aware that a Phishing Campaign began on Monday, November 1, 2021. As of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4% of those employees who had received the phishing email fell for it completely and gave out their password. Please be aware of this. If you haven't completed the Information Security Training, please do so at this time. This is an annual training that all employees must complete. Only 40% of MSU employees had completed it when we met. The majority of the meeting was focused on ITS' IT Transformation Work Intake and Prioritization Pilot program. This program is a work in progress. It is a multi-phased project with one of the phases being a "discovery process" where ITS researches the project prior to doing anything. The project aims to expand the coordination and collaboration between ITS and the university and to establish clear delivery responsibilities and expectations across all stakeholders. ITS should be involved with technology issues as soon as they arise. This pilot project was prompted because of the sheer number of projects being requested. One of the biggest changes that will result from this is that the Vice-Presidents will now prioritize all ITS projects. Each month the VPs will review where all existing projects are in terms of completion and prioritize all new requests.

*Master Plan Development and Advisory Committee* – This committee has not met since my last report.

*Parking and Traffic Regulations Committee* – This committee met on October 28, 2021, to discuss two main items. First, we discussed and approved a "Gated Parking Expansion" project which would allow us to control traffic on Hardy Blvd and make it primarily pedestrian. With the expanded gated parking, the gates for all gated parking lots would be relocated further "out" and therefore there would be fewer such gates. All gated permits would work in any gate so once "inside" the gated area of campus, one would have the choice as to which lot to park in.

*Sustainability Committee* – This committee has not met since my last report.

Senator Gregory said she has been overwhelmed and has not had the opportunity to do the security training. She asked that future trainings not occur during the busiest time at the end of the semester.

## **REPORT OF THE FACULTY SENATE VICE PRESIDENT**

### **Academic Deans Council**

The Academic Deans Council meeting was cancelled due to lack of agenda items and travel schedules of key personnel.

### **Committee on Campus Access**

No meetings were held since the last Vice President's report, and no meetings are scheduled to date.

### **Community Engagement Committee**

No meetings were held since the last Vice President's report, and no meetings are scheduled to date.

### **Master Plan Development and Advisory Committee**

The Master Plan Development and Advisory Committee did not meet when scheduled due to no new business.

### **Undergraduate Research and Creative Discovery Committee**

No meetings were held since the last Vice President's report, and no meetings are scheduled to date.

### **Sustainability Committee**

No meetings were held since the last Vice President's report, and no meetings are scheduled to date.

Updated on November 8, 2021

Respectfully submitted, Missy Hopper

## **FACULTY DESIGNATES ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

### **BUSINESS TO BE SENT TO COMMITTEE**

- 1. AOP 10.08 Classroom Regulations (University Resources)**
- 2. AOP 12.39 Policy on Undergraduate University Scholarship (Ancillary Affairs)**
- 3. Letter of Request: Faculty Senate Meeting Space (University Resources)**

Senator Stokes said the University Resources Committee has already begun to gather information on potential Senate meeting spaces.

The motion to send the items to the committees indicated passed by unanimous hand vote.

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

<b>Academic Affairs</b>	<b>No Report</b>
<b>Ancillary Affairs</b>	<b>No Report</b>
<b>Charter &amp; Bylaws</b>	<b>No Report</b>

### 1. Modification of Bylaws: Electronic Meetings

Senator Spurlin, on behalf of the Charter & Bylaws Committee, presented the committee report on electronic meetings.

Senator Carskadon said he was distressed earlier this year when he learned a senator resigned because we did not accommodate their medical needs. He said he supports the committee's recommendation to be able to handle meetings in times of emergency. Senator Carskadon said that he believes the entire Senate should vote on whether to routinely allow remote participation. Senator Carskadon made a motion to amend the recommendation to allow for routine remote participation by those senators who need to attend in this manner. He said if a senator has a medical need or is away at a conference and could participate, we should allow for this. He said if a senator just simply does not want to attend in person, they do not have a need. President Robichaux-Davis asked for specific language for the motion. Senator Carskadon said the language should be, "Remote participation in Senate meetings be allowed if needed." President Robichaux-Davis asked who would determine the need. Senator Carskadon said he would trust the judgement of his fellow senators. Senator Gregory seconded the motion.

Senator Pelaez said the Senate could follow University policy for excused absences. She said this could apply to medical or academic needs. Senator Gregory said the language should say personal needs such as childcare. Many of our faculty could have to stay home and take care of a sick child but could still attend a meeting. She said instead of saying academic needs which could include grading, it should say conferences. President Robichaux-Davis said she does not know the legal aspects of it, but she does not believe that faculty can be paid for caring for their child. She said Senate meetings are work. Senator Gregory said she thought Senate membership was voluntary. President Robichaux-Davis replied it is voluntary, but senators are elected by their peers. Senator Gregory said her concern is that faculty are not getting their due representation because senators are unable to attend due to a wide variety of issues. She said the faculty we represent should be consulted for a list of reasons senators could attend remotely.

Senator Miller asked how voting by hand would work with some senators remote and how feasible it is to have a handful of senators remote versus having all senators remote. President

Robichaux-Davis replied the committee recommendation states that in the event of remote attendance a secure electronic voting system would be used. She said with the amendment she believed there would be at least one senator attending remotely for each meeting which would mean the secure electronic voting would be used for each meeting. Senator Miller asked what the associated costs would be for operating in this manner. President Robichaux-Davis replied it would cost over twice as much to have a remote component.

Senator Zuckerman said she believed the language should not be specific and should leave it up to individual choice and necessity. She said this would create a more flexible policy which should avoid potential legal issues and would emphasize that this is not a way to stay home to get out of attending Faculty Senate. She said this is for when you would really like to attend but there are extenuating circumstances that make in-person attendance not possible including medical reasons.

Senator Carskadon said he would like the wording to say, “for medical, academic, or personal reasons.” Senator Carskadon said he did not realize that Senate paid for our meetings. He asked how much we currently pay and how much it would be with a remote component. President Robichaux-Davis said we currently pay less than \$500. She said with a remote component it would cost roughly \$1,000.

Senator Fincher said he believes there is some value to the senators being in the same room to discuss the issues. He said he understands people having other concerns, but we have very important work that is facilitated by senators being in the same room. He said if we are to have exceptions to this, he would like for them to be in line with the standards we hold our students to with regard to attending classes.

Senator Davis said the Senate is a deliberative assembly. He said we need to be in person. Senator Davis said the only time he has not been in his office and teaching face to face was when he legally couldn't be. In fall of 2020 he took 40 students on 7 field trips in 14 vehicles. He said he shows up and he meets face to face. He said he doesn't mind change. Sometimes he changes his lectures 10 minutes before he walks into class because he has a good idea. Senate meetings are an example of something that does not need to be changed. Senator Davis said Dr. Shaw is really busy, but he is here every meeting. He said if a senator needs to go to a conference or do something else, you get an excused absence. The Coronavirus is an extenuating circumstance. As soon as we leave it up to choice and allow for this, it gets really gray and fuzzy. Senator Davis said when there is a pandemic or emergency and people have extenuating circumstances, exceptions should be made. He said outside of these situations it needs to be black and white and punctuated.

Senator Gregory asked if senators could vote by raising their hand on video if they are remote as has been done in department and college online meetings. She said she believes the Senate is putting these limitations on itself and we can make changes if we feel we should. She said we have to realize things have changed during the pandemic. People have gotten used to meeting and communicating online. Senator Gregory said she would argue that representation is just as important as meeting in person so we need to be more flexible and think about how we move into the future. She said we need to think about how we lead in the future as part of the leadership of the University. She said she asks that senators are empathetic towards our colleagues with concerns and we think about how we move forward and not just stick with what we have done. Senator Gregory said we have seen that online can work. We are known as one of the great universities for online learning and it seems counterintuitive to say that we cannot have meetings online.

President Robichaux-Davis made a point of clarification that the recommendation from committee states that a secure electronic means would be used for voting. She said it does not specify what this would actually look like.

Senator Tschume asked what would make a quorum in a hybrid meeting. He said he would hate for 10 senators to show up in person and the internet on campus fails. He asked if quorum is established at the beginning of the meeting. President Robichaux-Davis replied quorum is determined at the time of the vote and in the instance Senator Tschume is stating we would not have quorum to conduct a vote. Senator Tschume said this could mean that the meeting would be a waste if something like this happened to exclude the online participants. He said the Senate needs to consider situations like this while deciding this issue.

Senator Davis asked if there is a situation which prompts the senate to go to a closed session, would we be able to do so with remote attendees. President Robichaux-Davis replied it would prevent us from going into closed session. Senator Davis said this means if a faculty has a P&T or other sensitive issue, the Senate would not be able to address it.

Senator Fontenot said additional changes to the bylaws would be required to address closed sessions with remote attendees. She said she would assume that those attending remotely would be excluded from the closed session since there is no way to determine that the remote attendees are indeed alone where they are located. She said the committee did not address this since the recommendation strictly dealt with emergency situations, but if this was expanded beyond times of emergency it would have to be addressed.

Senator Zuckerman said she believes the discussion should return to what initiated this study. She said the underlying conditions of the senators have not gone away and no matter how optimistic we are about the future, Covid 19 is not going away anytime soon. She said if



department heads and deans are able to allow for faculty to teach remotely to preserve their health, we can certainly make the same accommodations for our senators for the same reasons. Senator Zuckerman said she feels there is the impression that if someone is working from home they are slacking in their pajamas. She said people are still doing remote work when there are pressing health conditions. She said returning to the core issue of why this request was made would be very helpful. She said this way we can get away from perceptions that there are other motivations that don't involve doing work that we are paid for.

Senator Carskadon said the report shows that other institutions allow for remote attendance at their Senate meetings. He said it must work for them or they would not still be doing it. He said if we tried this and it did not work we could revert to strictly in-person attendance. Senator Fontenot said it was difficult to find information for other institution's practices. She said in some instances the committee was only able to find that the next meeting would have a remote component but it could not be determined if this practice was adopted specifically for the pandemic or if it was established for all regular meetings in the future.

Senator Williams said he believes we are trying to fix a situation where there was a special circumstance. He said a hypothetical situation would be that a faculty member was elected to the Senate and they then start going through chemotherapy. They feel like their health is compromised and they do not want to attend face to face but they still feel like they were elected and can serve their purpose just as they do through their online teaching. The University is fine with them doing their teaching and research from home, so why shouldn't they be able to do their service from home. He said this would be a special case in which the senator would like to continue their service and we have the ability to accommodate this. He asked if in this very rare special occasion, much like the pandemic is a rare special occasion, the Executive Committee could determine that there is a valid need and grant the ability to attend remotely. He said, in his thinking, having a sick child and needing to miss a meeting to take care of them is what excused absences are for. Senator Williams said he believes we should be able to accommodate senators in these rare instances. He said it may be best to send this back into committee to determine language that would solve these rare situations. Senator Williams said he wants us to be kind to one another but not get lost in the weeds.

Senator Wood said that the Faculty Senate is representative of all faculty and those senators who have special circumstances would bring a perspective which represents faculty in similar situations. She said she echoes what Senator Williams said and thinks that special circumstances do deserve consideration.

Senator Fincher said there is a difference between what we are teaching our students and what we are doing here. An example of this is things that deal with Human Resources and privacy. He said these things would not be discussed in a classroom setting. Senator Fincher said if we

explore expanding access, we should seek some legal counsel. He said maintaining security of information is very important but could be very difficult in some instances.

Senator Follett said in view of the comments made, it may be best for the Senate to vote on the recommendation of the committee which covers remote attendance in times of emergency and send to committee the consideration of any special permissions that may be necessary to allow for virtual participation for a demonstrated need.

Vice President Hopper thanked Senator Follett for his comment and said the proposed amendment has been clarified to an extent, but we would need more clarification to be able to adopt the amendment. She said sending the amendment to committee and adopting the original motion would be beneficial to all.

Senator Carskadon withdrew his motion to amend with the understanding that it will go to committee.

Senator Gregory said that the committee should also consider the legal implications of being seen as being discriminatory to those with medical conditions.

The motion to accept the recommendation of the Charter & Bylaws committee passed by unanimous hand vote.

## **Faculty Affairs**

### **1. AOP 13.15 Evaluation of Teaching Performance**

Senator Banik, on behalf of the Faculty Affairs Committee, presented the committee report on AOP 13.15.

Senator Pelaez asked about the change to send comments to the department head and dean or director. Senator Banik said the change was to bring the policy into compliance with IHL regulations. Senator Williams said that the Senate has continually fought to keep the comments with the faculty member, but IHL voted to provide the comments. He said it seemed like it was done during the summer when we were not together. Senator Miller said the comment section on the new course evaluations will be very different than the open-ended comment sections on the previous survey. She said this only has to be sent to the named individuals and does not have to be sent with P&T packages. Senator Gregory said in her department student evaluations are required to be a part of P&T packets. She said they are removed for external reviewers only. She said she was on the committee reviewing this policy and she has concerns that some of the language is vague. She said if there is a contentious relationship between a faculty member and their department head, this allows for a negative evaluation. Senator Gregory said she thinks this should go back to committee to address some

of her concerns. Senator Carskadon said we are bound to release the comments, but he feels we should set some guidelines for the appropriate use of the comments. The people receiving these comments need to be aware of some of the perceptual traps they might fall into during their review. He said this is a further step we could take. Senator Carskadon said he does not believe it affects this policy and he intends to vote for its adoption, but it is something the Senate could and should do. He said he also wanted to make the senators aware that this revision does do away with a paper and pencil administration of the survey. This was recommended by the university committee that reviewed surveys. Senator Carskadon said after we start getting data from the new survey, we need to analyze the data to see if there is any bias or if it is better or worse than it was before. He said we need to examine this after a couple of years and make any necessary changes.

Senator Banik said he wanted to point out that this policy is not solely about course evaluations. He said the course evaluations are just one of the “a through n” options that faculty have for the evaluation of teaching.

Senator Miller said, with regard to Senator Gregory’s comment about course evaluations being used in P&T packets, Senator Gregory should consult with whomever is writing the P&T document to ensure that it is taken into consideration that teaching should be evaluated in multiple ways for everyone on campus. She said there shouldn’t be as much emphasis on student course evaluations as there has been in the past. She said she understands that department heads will have an opportunity to be educated on other methods of teaching evaluation.

Senator Pelaez asked if the comparative chart for student evaluations will still be included on the tenure form. Senator Banik said a task force is reviewing this document and there will no longer be a global mean or anything like that.

Vice President Hopper asked for an explanation of what is in the statistical report. Senator Banik replied that the statistical report will contain a count of the different responses.

The motion of the Faculty Affairs Committee to accept the report on AOP 13.15 Evaluation of Teaching Performance passed by majority hand vote.

**Student Affairs**                      **No Report**

**University Resources**              **No Report**

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

Senator Follett made a motion to adjourn. Senator Miller seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed by unanimous hand vote at 5:06 p.m.

Submitted for correction and approval.

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Stephanie King, Secretary

Jason Cory, Administrative Assistant II