

FACULTY SENATE ROUNDTABLE

May 2, 2023

Enriching and Supporting Student Experience at Mississippi State 2023 Spring Faculty Roundtable Report from Vice President Robert Banik

The 2023 Spring Faculty Roundtable was held on May 2, 2023, at the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) in the Thad Cochren Research Park on the Mississippi State University campus. The theme was inspired by the new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) initiated by the university. The participation of the roundtable is significant for this type of discussion because the faculty and administration representatives from across the campus are invited to attend this roundtable. The following table includes those representatives who participated.

Maroon Team	
Jason Barrett	Associate Extension Professor / President of Holland Faculty Senate
Brent Fountain	Vice Provost
Les Potts	Associate VP for Administration
Mike Breazeale	Associate Professor of Marketing
Ra'Sheda Forbes	Vice President for Access, Diversity, and Inclusion
Rebecca Robichaux-Davis	Professor, Curriculum, Instruction, & Special Ed
Regina Hyatt	Vice President for Student Affairs
Robert Grala	Professor of Forestry
Stacy Haynes	Professor of Sociology
Terry Jayroe	Dean of Education
Wes Burger	Dean of Forest Resources

White Team	
Robert Banik	Instructor of Mathematics / Vice President of Holland Faculty Senate
Amanda Stone	Associate Professor
Derek Marshall	Associate Professor / Director of Branch Libraries
John Rush	Vice President for Development and Alumni
Kelley Wamsley	Associate Professor of Poultry Science
Lauren Priddy	Associate Professor of Bioengineering
Paul Spurlin	Associate Professor of Finance
Shelby Balias	Director, Strategic Initiatives
Susan Seal	Executive Director of MSU Online
Terry Dale Cruse	Associate Vice President and Head of Campus, MSU Meridian
Thomas Bourgeois	Interim Associate VP for Student Success and Dean of Students
Tracey Baham	Assistant Vice President for Institutional Strategy and Effectiveness

The purpose of the Roundtable's discussion was to have a dialogue about ideas related to student success at Mississippi State. The new QEP that was introduced in April 2023 is introducing experiential learning throughout our campus. We, as faculty and administration, came together to talk about the process of implementation and supporting current students across campus.

The Roundtable began with a welcome by current Faculty Senate Vice President Robert Banik and an explanation of the theme and rules by current Faculty Senate President Jason Barrett. Mississippi State University President, Dr. Mark Keenum, also spoke to welcome everyone, and to thank them for their time and efforts in discussing these matters for the afternoon. The following is the agenda from this meeting.

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Theme: Student Experiences

12:00 – Lunch

1:00 – Welcome – Robert Banik

1:05 – Overview – Jason Barrett

1:10 – Welcome – President Mark Keenum

1:20 – Split into Teams (Maroon and White)

1:25 – Session #1: Enriching Student Experience

Question 1: How do we implement experiential learning into every course? What does this look like in a typical English or Math course?

Question 2: With programs starting to become fully online, what does experiential learning look like in an online platform?

Question 3: What are some non-traditional methods of experiential learning?

2:25 – Break

2:35 – Session #2: Supporting Student Experience

Question 1: What are some primary obstacles that students face in progressing towards degree completion?

Question 2: What additional student success initiatives could be implemented beyond freshman/sophomore courses?

Question 3: Proud alumni often serve as powerful ambassadors for their institution's brand and speak glowingly of their college years. How do we support and retain those students that are currently enrolled so they can tell their story about our campus?

3:30 – Team Reports & Discussion of Team Findings

4:15 – Wrap-Up – President Keenum

4:30 – Reception

Team discussion and conclusions

Each team was asked to discuss three questions in two different sessions, for a total of six questions. Each team brainstormed answers and the facilitator listed those answers on poster board. At the end of each session, team members got to vote four times on the listed answers. The top three to four choices are listed below in this report, and this report will be sent along to our administration for reference and suggested guidance.

Session 1, Question 1: How do we implement experiential learning into every course? What does this look like in a typical English or Math course?

Maroon Team:

- Programs need a course area with experiential learning (Maker Space to engage more undergraduates)
- Concepts to real-life and value to other courses
- Practical experience specific to discipline that may be leveraged in other areas that may be content heavy

White Team:

- Why it matters to students, using applied problems
- Pair with experts in content area
- Incentives for faculty to develop experiential learning for various courses

Session 1, Question 2: With programs starting to become fully online, what does experiential learning look like in an online platform?

Maroon Team:

- Encourage undergraduate and graduate students to connect with the community agencies in their field and geographic region
- Building relationships
- Find experiences on their own

White Team:

- Real-life projects
- VR, AI, Online Tools
- More accessible

Session 1, Question 3: What are some non-traditional methods of experiential learning?

Maroon Team:

- Can experiential learning be counted toward course hours?
- Professional experience – Undergraduate Research and Internship, 4800 reflective pieces, prop up the internship
- On campus student employment and be reflective

White Team:

- Testing differently
- More resources, designers, people
- Brainstorm with less directions

Session 2, Question 1: What are some primary obstacles that students face in progressing towards degree completion?

Maroon Team:

- Belonging or lack there of
- Preparing faculty to also build relationships
- Know and where to communicate with faculty (where to go for support)

White Team:

- Lack of belonging
- Orchestrated failure
- Realistic expectations, e.g., time expectations or career expectations

Session 2, Question 2: What additional student success initiatives could be implemented beyond freshman/sophomore courses?

Maroon Team:

- Teaching is at the heart of what we do
- More formalized mentoring
- Faculty impact in the junior/senior years

White Team:

- Life skills/transitioning to adulthood/financial literacy
- Different Student Entry
- Degree Completion/Integrating Advising
- Networking with field and professionals

Session 2, Question 3: Proud alumni often serve as powerful ambassadors for their institution's brand and speak glowingly of their college years. How do we support and retain those students that are currently enrolled so they can tell their story about our campus?

Maroon Team:

- What does it look like to be an alumni
- Building their capacity while on campus with campus experiences and reflections
- Make the connection with giving back to MSU/Department/College and celebrating that (Donor \leftrightarrow Student)

White Team:

- Sense of belonging/strengthen our bonds
- Recognize/Incentivize student mentoring
- More faculty with more diversity in faculty and staff positions

Conclusions

After session two was over, the teams came together to share the highlights of each team's discussions. The following are the conclusions reached by the collective group summarizing each session.

Session 1 – Enriching Student Experience

As we begin to think of newer ways of teaching and learning, both faculty and students will need to open their minds to different ways to express and gain content knowledge. Programs may need to be adapted or created for students to get that content knowledge by various means, other than passing a paper-based test. Students need to see the value in what they are learning, and why it matters to them. Incentives to faculty may grant reasons for faculty and staff to adapt content and coursework to fit a new way to learn. Relationships with faculty are crucial to helping students with experiential learning, and having mentors for students will ensure development outside the classroom as well. Continued support for the mentoring process (both peer-to-peer and faculty-to-student) should increase across campus.

Session 2 – Supporting Student Experience

All students face some type of obstacle in their pursuit of a degree. Some students have more than others. Faculty need to know they are a contact (sometimes the primary contact) for students seeking help, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Yet this contact should not become a safety net for students and an obstacle for learning. Students today are people that want to ensure work is done by knowing exactly what is required. Giving less direction and more freedom for failure is a process of learning as much as memorizing content from a lecture. Faculty should expect students to come for help, but not to give them everything on an assignment. Realistic expectations are also valuable for students to realize not everyone can do everything. We should support students through their career at MSU outside of the classroom as much as inside and guide them to appropriate help. Mentoring by faculty through junior and senior years and building relationships will also ensure alumni know that MSU is their home and family.

Comments from RHFS Vice President, Robert Banik

As host for this event, it was a pleasure coordinating this event. The inspiration for the event came from discussions around campus leading up to our QEP announcement. As a mathematical minded person, I look for the most logical and most efficient way to do anything, and as an advisor working with students, I look to help our students throughout their careers at MSU. This led me to these types of questions for the roundtable, and I thoroughly enjoyed this event and the discussions that took place. I hope that this event sparks new and creative ideas for faculty to want to enrich and support student success across our campus.