

Minutes CLAS Faculty Council Meeting

1-3PM, January 25, 2021

Those present: Stephanie Bogart, Eleni Bozia, Rori Bloom, Andréa Caloiaro, Christine Davis, Daniel Contreras, Selman Hershfield, Aida Hozic, Nancy Hunt, Valeria Kleiman, Eric Potsdam, David Richardson, Suzanne Robbins, Tarek Saab, Lea Schwartz, Ben Smith, Martin Sorbille, Alexander Wong

The meeting was conducted via Zoom and started at 1PM. The minutes of the December meeting were approved.

Dean Richardson's update:

The app which allows students to report on faculty has had very few referrals. It has been agreed that any referrals will work through the normal administrative channels: college offices and then chairs and directors.

An update to the teaching FAQ will go out soon. Some of the highlights are

- A faculty member can remove their mask if they are teaching in a classroom with no students and if there is no class in that room in the immediately following period.
- There is a detailed procedure to follow if all of the students in a face-to-face section wish to meet online and the instructor does as well. Many students are working in empty classrooms, which they find using the STARS system. Dave will check how that influences this rule.

Some faculty reported that there have been issues with students not wearing face masks properly. The rules are the same as last semester. Dean Richardson promised to get some additional material showing what UF Health guidelines are for mask wearing. Also, as explained in the teaching FAQ it is UF policy that there should not be any eating or drinking in classrooms.

Dave also explained that instructors are allowed to specify in their syllabus whether the F2F students can attend the online sections and what the implications are in terms of attendance, etc. However, instructors can in no way coerce students to not come to the F2F sections.

ACTION ITEM: The main action item for this meeting was a discussion of how to rebuild trust. Aida reported on the recent meeting of the Steering Committee, where three options were discussed: escalate - looking for example at possible AAU violations or bringing the case before different senate committee, deescalate - simply do not push the issue, and mediation - try to find common ground. The unanimous choice was to pursue mediation and try to meet with the President rather than the Provost. Dave told us that President Fuchs has a standing position that he will meet with any faculty group.

The committee discussed many different issues and topics related to app and building trust for well over an hour. The following is a synopsis of the key issues in no particular order.

- How does the app work now? What are the impacts for faculty and students? Of particular interest is the impact relating to diversity and inclusion. How is the data stored and used?
- Acknowledge and understand what happened:
 - One of the first steps in solving a problem is to acknowledge that there is a problem and try to understand what happened. One of the suggestions was to create a history of the decision making that led to the app and also the HyFlex teaching decision - not to create blame but to understand and prevent problems like this in the future.
 - There is a loss of trust between the administration and the faculty. Several members of the committee expressed a lack of confidence in the Provost.
 - The app creates a possible antagonistic relationship between students and faculty. Several members expressed that this was particularly hurtful because they and their colleagues are working so hard to maintain quality instruction during the pandemic.
 - The app and the news around it have created nation bad press for the University of Florida.
- How can we build trust going forward?
 - Highlight, advertise, and acknowledge all the great work that faculty are doing to try to keep the university going. Some departments have places where students can thank a faculty member. During the meeting we heard stories of faculty holding multiple sessions of a class to accommodate all students with social distancing. Entire new labs have been created. Not just faculty, but our College's office, central IT, and organizations like the Center for Teaching Excellence have been working exceedingly hard.
 - Communication: Judging from the response in CLAS and other colleges, if the idea of the app had been communicated prior to release, this whole problem could have been avoided. We need another avenue for communication with the administration. There were several ideas: weekly office hours, meetings several times a semester with a subset of faculty, or even meetings on demand when specific issues come up.
 - Transparency: We live in a time of uncertainty. We do not know what the COVID-19 situation will be next fall, although we are presently planning for the fall and summer semesters. Students will begin registering for them in March. Both faculty and students deserve to be updated as to the latest plans - even if they change.

- Vaccine: Several members said that they would like to have any information as to when the general teaching population might be vaccinated. We understand that this is not known at this point, but it would be a good gesture.

The committee agreed that we should try to schedule a meeting with President Fuchs to discuss these and other issues soon. The entire committee will be invited, as well members of the Steering Committee. It was recommended that the the questions and individuals to address them be determined in an agenda ahead of time.

FOLLOW-UP ITEM: Eleni Bozia reported from the diversity and inclusion committee. They are looking for faculty to help update departmental bylaws for diversity and inclusion.

UPDATES:

Stephanie Bogart reported on the results of the non-tenure track title change survey. There was broad support for the title change. She has relayed the results to Sean Trainor, and the faculty senate will develop a similar survey for the faculty in all colleges. The Council agreed an executive summary be released to CLAS faculty. Stephanie will work on this.

Andréa Caloiaro reported on the chairs and associate deans evaluation surveys, which are to be conducted from March 15 to April 15. The surveys will be accessible using UF login credentials, but they will be anonymous. This year the survey will be broadened to include college committee members - not just the committee chairs. There will also be some questions relating to the response and impact of COVID-19. Valeria asked to make the results available, which will be further discussed.

Student evaluation committee will report at the February meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3pm