

CLAS FACULTY COUNCIL 2020-2021 REPORT TO THE COLLEGE ASSEMBLY

Stephanie Bogart, CLAS Faculty Council Chair (2020-2021)

Introduction

The CLAS faculty council has been busy this year in its capacity to represent the faculty to the Dean on all matters of concern to the college, including college strategic plan, the welfare of the faculty, the full development and maturation of its students, and resource allocation. The council continued the excellent efforts from previous years 2018-2020. These previous initiatives include the following: (1) *Continuing Our Conversations* and mentoring program for junior faculty; (2) proposing suggested changes to the student evaluation survey; (3) revising and implementing the Chairs and Directors and Associate Deans surveys; (4) promoting student health and well-being programs; and finally (5) drafting guidelines for Centers and Programs applying for departmental status. These initiatives will be expanded on below associated by number.

The council started three new initiatives this year: (6) promoting and collaborating with the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC); (7) providing input on the non-tenure-track title change policy in the Senate; and (8) recommendations on a policy for Posthumous Promotion and Tenure of faculty. These initiatives will be expanded on below associated by number.

This year has been particularly impactful due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting university changes that have been implemented. Several matters needed immediate attention from the faculty council, which included the policy draft on furloughs, spring teaching directives from administration, and the GatorSafe app usage for monitoring faculty. The council was diligent in addressing each of these narratives which will be explained further below. See *Pandemic Related Activities* below for further information.

Initiatives (in the order aligned in the introduction)

1) *Continuing Our Conversations* and mentoring program for junior faculty subcommittee composed of Stephanie Bogart, Paula Golombek, Selman Hershfield held a Tenure and Promotion Workshop on November 16th, 2020 and December 4th, 2020 over zoom. At this informal event, faculty received a brief introduction on the T&P process with a Q&A session from Dean David Richardson, Associate Dean David Pharies, Associate Dean Mary Watt, and Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs Chris Hass. Previous T&P committee members and recently promoted faculty provided more intricate knowledge of the processes in break-out rooms for the humanities, social science, and natural science fields.

A Town Hall with Dean was organized for faculty (Apr 22nd, 2021), staff (Apr 27th, 2021), and graduate students (Apr 26th, 2021) to provide faculty with an opportunity to hear about administrative initiatives regarding pandemic matters and ask questions. The subcommittee included Stephanie Bogart, Selman Hershfield, Suzanne Robbins, and Christine Davis, and Alexander Wong

2) The council has discussed suggested changes to the student evaluation survey for the past several years to ensure that the GatorEvals survey questions enable students to evaluate the *quality* and *effectiveness* of *instruction*, rather than focus on the instructor, or the medium or

method of instructional delivery. The subcommittee, Tarek Saab, Charles Baer, and Martín Sorbille, suggested several changes to edit the wording of questions in order to reduce the potential for implicit biases in responses, as well as suggesting that midterm evaluations are open for a longer duration of days. The proposed changes were sent to the Faculty Senate Chair and Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs, Chris Haas in March.

- 3) The council, with the aid of subcommittee members Andréa Caloiaro, Daniel Contreras, and Martín Sorbille revised and implemented the Chairs and Directors and Associate Deans surveys. Small revisions were made to both the survey of Chairs and Directors and the survey of Associate Deans, as well as additional questions relating to the response and impact of COVID-19. This year the survey was broadened to include college committee members, not just the committee chairs. The surveys were deployed on March 22nd, 2021 by BEBR (Bureau of Economic and Business Research) to ensure coordination.
- 4) CLAS Faculty Council is invested in promoting student health and well-being programs. According to Gerry Altamirano, Assistant Dean and Director of the Disability and Resource Center (DRC), more and more students are requesting accommodation for disabilities: 1214 students in 2012-2013 and 3850 students in 2019-2020. 87% of those requesting accommodations are undergraduates. COVID-19 has had both negative and positive impacts on those with disabilities, depending on the specific individual. Discussions about DRC accommodation request process and letters provided insight and the council was tasked with spreading awareness to departments and faculty.

Further, with the struggles of the pandemic, the council was also concerned with UF employee welfare. As such, Angie Brown, Assistant Director for Communications and Worklife, Office of Human Resources joined the council to highlight the following programs:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) <https://eap.ufl.edu/>
- UF Mindfulness (<https://mindfulness.ufl.edu/>)

- 5) The Women's Studies Center engaged in creating a new department during the 2019-2020 academic year. The Council was integral in this process and a subcommittee with Valeria Kleiman and Christine Davis drafted guidelines for Centers and Programs applying for departmental status: outlining a 5 semester procedure for creation of a new CLAS department (from introduction to Board of Trustees approval). The guidelines were finalized in April 2021 and will be voted on by the council in the fall of 2021
- 6) This year one goal of the council was to promote and collaborate with the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) - <https://diversity.clas.ufl.edu/>. DISC's Chair, Eleni Bozia, presented info on the mission, objectives and strategies, and communication of the committee. A member of the committee attended every Faculty Council meeting to ensure communication and provide insight related to their mission regarding all matters of the council. A sub-committee to include members of the council and DISC was formed to re-visit departmental by-laws regarding diversity and inclusion support and facilitate these activities.

- 7) A non-tenure-track title change policy was submitted to the Senate in the fall. This policy change was well regarded, but made without consultation from the faculty at large. A zoom discussion with CLAS non-tenure track faculty was held on November 10th with a panel member from each of the subdivisions and Sean Trainor (Senate). The result from this meeting was that a broad survey on overall acceptance of the policy on title changes and the specifics therein was needed. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Faculty Council in collaboration with UF Faculty Senate Compensation Committee and the UF Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) conducted an online survey of University of Florida full-time CLAS faculty to solicit opinions about changing position titles of full-time, instruction-intensive, non-tenure track faculty on December 15th, 2020. See the full report and a [summary report](#) on the [council website](#). There was broad support for the title change. The results were shared with Faculty Senate, who deployed this survey for faculty in other colleges. The Senate will revisit this policy fall 2021.
- 8) The University has no current policy for posthumous promotion. After a discussion of the council, a sub-committee composed of Nancy Hunt and Ben Smith were elected to draft such a policy and then submit to the Senate, a process that will likely take a year and will then need to be approved through the Collective Bargaining Agreement with UFF-UF. The draft will be voted on by the council in the fall of 2021.

Pandemic Related Activities

The faculty council conducted a survey on the furlough policy and spring teaching directives from CLAS faculty sent on September 29th, 2020. A total of 355 responses were examined by the council to inform the development of our [Statement on Furloughs and Spring Teaching](#). This statement was shared with key members of administration and Faculty Senate, as well as the UF-UFF President. Many of the suggestions from this document were utilized in the [Senate approved policy](#). Unfortunately our efforts on the spring teaching directives did not dissuade the administration from Hy-flex in-person classrooms.

The spring implementation of the GatorSafe app as a tool for student reporting of instructors was widely unpopular. The faculty council discussed the growing mistrust among the faculty over administrative decisions. The council wanted to have an open conversation with administrative heads to discuss moving forward and rebuilding trust. We invited the President to meet with members of the faculty council, CLAS steering committee, and DISC to develop ideas. The discussion took place over zoom on February 8, 2021 and representatives from each committee presented statements that included actionable propositions as suggestions on how to rebuild faculty-administration relations moving forward. A complete list of those items was sent in an email to all CLAS faculty on February 23, 2021. To highlight a few of the recommendations: discontinuation of the reporting tool on the GatorSafe app; expansion of teaching awards and recognition; more graduate student representation on committees; and greater transparency from administration in decision-making initiatives. The council continues to advance these propositions and will re-evaluate in the fall 2021 to determine the propositions that require further attention.

Acknowledgements

The members of the council were tireless in their agendas this year and many people were working on several ad hoc subcommittees. Below I recognize each, as well as guests that provided invaluable information.

The hard work of all council members is much appreciated: Charles Baer, Rori Bloom, Andréa Caloiaro, Daniel Contreras, Christine Davis, Paula Golombek, Selman Hershfield, Nancy Hunt, Valeria Kleiman, Suzanne Robbins, Tarek Saab, Ben Smith, Martín Sorbille, and finally our undergraduate representative Lea Schwartz and graduate representative Alexander Wong. Finance committee chairs were also present at every meeting and provided invaluable input: thank you Eric Potsdam, Tarek Saab, and Catherine Tucker. I had the absolute honor of being mentored by our assembly chair, Aida Hozic, who was also a voice of reason and guidance during council meetings. Dean Richardson attended every meeting, listened to our concerns, answered our questions, provided excellent information, steered us on precise paths, and was diligent in supporting the college at all levels. Of course the council and the Dean are ever guided by the tireless assistance of Robin Schrieber.

Guests included Eleni Bozia (chair of DISC), who attended almost every meeting, President Fuchs, Senate Chair Sylvain Dore, and Senator Sean Trainor who helped steer the Senate's non-tenure track title proposal. We appreciate your time and commitment to faculty governance.

Chair's Statement

This year was the most challenging of my career for many reasons, however I was inspired by the collaborative nature on the council and the often unrewarded work that members committed for the good of the college. The council provided actionable changes and invaluable discussions that benefited our college during this tiring year under a global pandemic. I am encouraged that the future will see progress if the work on the Faculty Council this past year is any indication.