

Kansas State University Faculty Senate
Faculty Affairs Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Sept 19th, 2023, 3:30 pm
Zoom <https://ksu.zoom.us/j/837797836>

- **Call to Order –**

Brad Cunningham and Tareque Nasser (co-chairs) called the meeting to order. In addition to Brad and Tareque, those present included Ashley Noll, Merta Scott-Hall, Tanya Gonzalez, Charlotte Self, Andrew Wefald, Anthony Ferraro, Cliff Hight, Roger Adams, Amir Bahadori, and Eve McCulloch. Brad noted that Justin Kastner will continue to serve as committee secretary, but sometimes (due to teaching responsibilities on Tuesday afternoons) he will simply watch a recording of the meeting and use that to transcribe minutes.

- **Approve the May 16th, 2023, Minutes –**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

- **Welcome to those continuing and joining FAC! - Brad Cunningham (co-chair); Tareque Nasser (co-chair)**

Brad expressed gratitude for everyone's time serving on the committee, and indicated that much of our committee's work will likely center on the University Handbook. Brad also noted the availability of a Microsoft Teams page, where files are shared, etc.

- **Committee Reports**

- **Salaries and Fringe Benefits Committee:** There was no committee report.

Merta Scott-Hall asked how one knows which committee they have been appointed to. Brad explained that such appointments typically occur on the occasion of Candance LaBerge requesting someone serve. Brad also said that we can each check with our caucus to find out if we are to serve on other committees.

- **University Handbook and Policy Committee:** Cliff Hight noted that their meeting occurred earlier today, and he noted that progress was made. While Cliff said that nothing was ready for review just yet, he would pass along some items in the future for the FA committee's consideration. Some of these will relate to Appendix S and D40-41 regarding "conflict of interest" matters, Appendix C regarding "engagement," and Appendix Y. He also noted that the Professional Staff Affairs committee was working on proposed changes to Appendix C159. Other proposed changes relate to D71 and various global pronoun-related changes. Brad thanked Cliff for his efforts on all of these items.

Brad then described the current process and state of various proposed changes, which spawned conversations regarding the relationship between the "parent" committee of Faculty Affairs and the subsidiary University Handbook committee. Brad said that he, Cliff, and Candace recently met to kind of harmonize the various efforts.

Tareque noted that he attended the Handbook committee earlier today, and he emphasized that the Handbook Committee isn't really in the business of "writing things," but rather taking

proposed additions and then considering them and making minor editorial changes to make such proposals “fit” into the Handbook, and then the proposal is sent to the FA committee for consideration; then, if the FA committee approves them, then the proposals are sent to Faculty Senate committee. Tareque shared this on the basis of his recent investigation into the actual process by which handbook changes are to be proposed, considered, and approved. Brad added that there is also an additional consideration to make sure that any handbook proposals match the policy and procedures manual (PPM).

Roger then noted that sometimes there are also PPM (policy) changes that then drive handbook changes. Brad acknowledged the need to make sure there is collaboration between faculty senate’s handbook work and the administration’s policy work.

- **New and Continuing Business for 2022-2023**

Brad asked for feedback from any committee members about “Dean’s Access to CANVAS,” inviting such feedback in writing, so he can collect it and forward it on to the FSCOT committee.

- **Future Business**

Brad noted that we will continue to strive to work hand-in-hand with the handbook committee’s work. Brad thanked Tareque for attending the handbook committee meeting earlier today and becoming the content expert on this topic.

Brad invited any committee members to join Roger in exploring current problems with the Undergraduate Grievance Board. Roger explained that he is the Provost Office’s appointee to the Undergraduate Grievance Board, and indicated that he chairs the Board. Roger has noted an increase the number of students needing guidance in understanding the path to resolving a dispute with an instructor. Roger explained that Kimathi Choma (the sole ombudsperson available to students) is very overworked; therefore, it would be beneficial to have one more student ombudsperson. The Provost Office will make a decision about that, but perhaps if the FA committee provided solid documentation on why another ombudsperson is needed, we could perhaps persuade the Provost Office. Roger explained there is an *ad hoc* group to look at all the student grievance procedures, and the *ad hoc* group is trying to improve the work flow; the current University Handbook is not clear on the process, and a flow chart is needed. Tareque proposed that perhaps a committee could be performed to author a white paper on this very issue; Roger was supportive of this approach, and indicated that Christy Craft could offer a lot to this committee. Brad and Tareque then said that such an *ad hoc* committee could be created to write this white paper, and Brad invited any and all interested to let him know. Tanya encouraged the *ad hoc* committee to engage with other potential experts/minds, including Dr. Rana Johnson (K-State’s VP for DEIB) and getting her insight into both the *ad hoc* committee’s research and its evolving ideas/insights. Roger agreed to initiate reaching out to Dr. Johnson. Tanya expressed the importance of an additional communications task—namely, that the work of the *ad hoc* committee be notified to the Faculty Senate leadership.

- **From Committee Members**

Brad noted that student Progress Report survey requests went to faculty on 15 September, and he encouraged committee members to exhort all of their colleagues to submit this data. This is important because the data is shared with the deans, provost, and KBOR.

- **Announcement(s)**

Brad noted that there will be a Town Hall on Friday, September 22nd from 9-10 am; this will be a follow-up Q and A regarding the Next Gen K-State Strategic Plan.

Amir Bahadori asked if anyone knew anything about the constellation/cluster hire part of the strategic plan. Tanya reported that there is an initiative from the VP of research and the Provost to pursue “cluster hires” for high-impact areas, fields of interdisciplinary research, etc. Tanya gave a bit of background on the “GRIP” (game-changing research innovation program) efforts which led to the cluster hire initiative. The first such initiative is in bio-manufacturing, and the hope is to hire people from different disciplines in this constellation/cluster area. Tanya said there are other emerging clusters/constellations, and feedback is welcomed from the faculty. Tanya noted that while there was no specific call for feedback from the FA committee, there was an effort to solicit general faculty input. Amir expressed concerns about this effort; in his view, it seems that the Provost may be reserving faculty lines/positions for this plan at a cost to individual existing department research/teaching/service faculty needs. Amir gave particular perspectives from his view of the Nuclear Engineering program. Tanya acknowledged Amir’s concerns, but noted that the funding for the constellation initiative is not coming from existing positions/lines (but rather separate/new money). She noted the example of the JCERT-funded Olathe cluster hire initiative as an example. Tanya acknowledged the reality of faculty having left Engineering and Arts and Sciences and the impact of that and the need for replacement hires. Brad noted that this challenge is not unlike the frustrating challenges created by the reality that donors may give to, say, a building, but not existing programs that are in need of support. Amir expressed concerns that the perception of the cluster hire initiative is that it is indeed taking away lines/positions/funding for existing departmental programs, which are basically being choked off. Tareque noted that this conversation needs to be pursued with department heads and deans, because of the questions/concerns about “faculty lines.” Amir said that based on the answers he has received, it seems like a portion of vacated positions go back to the Provost office, and this has been ongoing (i.e., the positions don’t stay at the college level). Both Amir and Tareque expressed concern about the impact of all of this on the morale of faculty. Tanya said that she would definitely convey these concerns to the Provost office. Tanya said that our committee and Faculty Senate leadership could also perhaps create a position paper on this issue. Tanya also noted that the concern here seems to be a possible lack of transparency/communication; she said that she knows it is an initiative between the VPR’s and Provost’s offices, and there is an effort to get a committee(s) to conceptualize the implementation of these efforts. Tanya also noted the practicalities of the university leadership wanting to secure investment via the state, donors, federal funders, etc., and the need to “highlight” strengths, etc. in which they might invest. Amir said his primary concern is that this impacts faculty, and Faculty Affairs should be more involved in it. Brad acknowledged this concern. Cliff asked questions about who would be making the hires of the cluster hires, and Tanya noted that many of those details are being worked out depending on which department each new hire is keen to affiliate with, etc. Tanya acknowledged the importance and critical nature of dean and faculty buy-in regarding the

placement of new hires into their departmental “home.” Roger voiced concern about newly hired Full Professors joining departments where such highly ranked faculty don’t presently exist. Tanya acknowledged this challenge.

Eve asked what role the FA committee will have with the faculty workload policy. Tanya noted this is in-process (since May) and there is a draft and review process (via Qualtrics) that will close on September 20. She noted that various groups that will offer additional feedback, and then all the feedback information will be collected and reviewed by the workload policy task force, and any draft proposals will be shared with the FA and Handbook committees. It is expected that the FA committee will have an opportunity for input on this proposed policy sometime in October, with a goal of getting it to exec by November; however, it may take a bit longer. Brad reiterated his previous request for feedback from committee members’ colleagues in their colleges, networks, etc. Ashley asked if there would be a survey opportunity (regarding the next draft proposal) for faculty senate, and Tanya indicated she could likely create such a Qualtrics tool. Tanya offered to come to the next FA committee meeting and share a summary of the feedback thus far.

Tanya noted that the Handbook committee approved proposed amendments for both (a) definition of engagement and (b) COI/COTC related issues. These will be shared at the next FA committee.

- **Adjourn**

The committee adjourned. The next meeting will be on October 3, 2023, via Zoom (<https://ksu.zoom.us/j/837797836>)