



FACULTY SENATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

August 17, 2017 meeting

“I am strangely glad to get back again to you” (Overview) Faculty Senate held its first official meeting on August 17th. It elected a new Executive Council and approved a slate of faculty members for the strategic planning process.

“I have no wish to talk nonsense” (Announcements)

- There will be a special session of Faculty Senate on the 14th of September for the President to inform faculty about the particulars of performance funding, our new diversity initiative, and the state metrics that will shape our path forward. All faculty are encouraged to attend.
- The Provost has requested faculty use the new BlackBoard attendance-tracking tool in the first weeks of classes to enter data for on campus classes by August 24th. (This is to help with student financial aid.)
- Chair Tallichet encouraged faculty to make their feelings known about the proposal to offer 3-year interim contracts to the acting Deans of Humanities and Education.
- The parking lot directly behind Combs may be the best parking space for faculty on Senate days.

“A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play” (Election of the 2017-18 Executive Council)

The body elected a new Executive Council. Because the colleges of Business and Education could not secure more than one nomination, and because only the nominees from the college of Humanities were willing to serve in the “at large” position on the council, the body decided to suspend the rules and approve the nominees as a slate.

The members of the new council:

- Senator Ahmadi (Business)
- Senator Carlson (Humanities)
- Senator Dearden (Science)
- Senator T. Hare (at large, Chair-Elect)
- Senator Lennox (Education)

Senator White asked the administrators present (both the President and Provost were in attendance) to note that many faculty are unable to take leadership positions in the Senate because other institutional commitments and duties prohibit them from serving.

“My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it” (Approval of the slate of faculty for strategic planning committees)

Necessary context: Over the summer, Chair Dobranski emailed the Senate, informing them that our current strategic plan, ASPIRE, was sunsetting, and that Senate was being asked to nominate faculty to serve on committees to draft a new plan. The time frame, he noted, was tight, as the new President wanted to have lists to approve at an August 18th meeting. Senators were therefore urged to offer recommendations and speak to faculty in advance of the first official Senate meeting (August 17th), so Senate would have a slate of potential nominees to approve. He iterated this information at the Faculty Senate retreat on August 10th.

A number of faculty, working within this admittedly tight time frame, completed the task, and Chair Tallichet, with the aid of ADS Willoughby, was able to present the Senate with a representative slate at the August 17th meeting. The proposed slate, as both Chair Tallichet and Regent Pidluzny stated, would be the recommendatory list from which the steering committee (a committee comprised of the President, the Faculty Senate Chair, the Staff Congress Chair, and the President of SGA) would choose.

When discussion of the slate began, Senator White expressed his displeasure with the time frame. After correcting a misunderstanding of the process, Chair Tallichet added that the new administration was working within the same constraints, as it had to finish this plan in advance of the March Board of Regents meeting. She further noted that Senators had been given the fullest information available in Chair Dobranski’s previous communications.

The body removed one Senator’s name and added another faculty member to a different committee. Senator Schack, in response to the continued discussions of the tight time frame, stated that the process, as seemingly rushed as it is, is preferable to the process that created ASPIRE: this time faculty were actually involved, and involved early in the process.

The slate was approved and forwarded to the steering committee for their August 18th meeting.

“Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine” (Regent report)

Regent Pidluzny, who will be officially sworn in as Regent at the August 24th Board of Regents meeting (at 9:00 a.m. in the CHER building), expressed his belief that the new President, Dr. Morgan is committed to the principles of shared governance and well situated to address the challenges the institution faces. He is particularly impressed with Dr. Morgan’s understanding of the budget, an understanding that will render much of the Senate’s previous work to disambiguate budget numbers, and insist on classificatory clarity, unnecessary as we move forward. Regent Pidluzny also noted that Dr. Morgan has already enacted positive change: he will be submitting a revised 6-year capital plan to the Board of Regents that will focus on facility renovation, not new construction (a revision that will allow MSU to position itself well for new funds and meet the metrics of performance funding), and he has committed to regular meetings with representative to key campus constituencies (the Chairs of the Faculty Senate and Staff Congress, the Faculty and Staff Regents, and the SGA President and Vice President).

After acknowledging that faculty have been routinely asked to do “more with less,” and have rarely seen a return on their investment, Regent Pidluzny nonetheless encouraged Senators to work with the new President, and our staff persons in Student Success, because he and the new Senate Chair (Chair Tallichet) feel that faculty have real opportunities under the new administration. They hope that Senators will circulate the joint statement they presented at the meeting (this statement is included at the end of this report) and upload the Support Resources for Student Success to their course BlackBoard shells. (Regent Pidluzny also made a point of thanking Lora Pace for compiling this helpful resource document during a brutal opening week.)

“What necessity is there to dwell on the Past, when the Present is so much surer—the Future so much brighter?” (Provost report)

The Provost was happy to report that retention continues to creep up: we retained 71% of our freshmen to their sophomore year. If we can increase the number to 75%, we will be in “rarefied air.” The enrollment deposit also appears to be working, as we don’t see much variation or decline in terms of enrollment numbers. We are fairly confident that we will end up with 1300+ incoming students, up about 100 from this time last year.

Fuse Ideas, the company that created our new webpage, will be coming to campus to help us market our graduate degrees (CO aside: hopefully in a different font). We continue to see a decrease in graduate enrollment and would like to reverse the trend.

In response to questions from the faculty, the Provost asserted:

- Overloads need to be codified in an official agreement with chairs (in an FWA). No faculty should be “working for free,” and we need to follow our policies and account for what we are doing.
- Load policies (especially regarding things like independent studies) are not consistent across campus, and accreditation standards can cause discrepancies or variation (among programs) in terms of load.

- The President has placed most hiring decisions on hold until we hear what happens in the special session. Increased benefit expenses are more than likely, and there may be mid year budget cuts/withdrawals. Faculty who were needed to teach existing classes this fall were hired. The prioritized lists prepared by administrators from Academic Affairs will be considered after the special session, which, right now, looks like the end of September. (CO aside: if the August 14th “Kentucky Tonight” is to be believed, this session may not even occur until October.)
- The institution will eventually have to determine what the right size of the university is, given our budget (and budgetary constraints) and consider how much tuition we can reasonably charge. The Provost is confident that we will be able to make sound decisions under our new President.
- There is no official policy regarding course cap, and there has been no discussion of increasing section sizes to make money. Such a strategy would net money in the short term but could adversely affect us in the long, when we have to prove that we’re adequately progressing and graduating our students.
- We are still looking at international education and making changes there.

Reader, we adjourned. The meeting concluded at 5:35 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be August 31st, in CB 413.

Gentle reminder that the “cord of communion” is not “snapt”: Senate’s Scholar Works page contains all available Senate documents, including the minutes and reports from the three previous years. If you have not already done so, please visit the site and see all the work our archivist has done.



Provided by the 2017-18 Faculty Senate Communications Officer
(a.k.a., the mad woman in MSU’s attic)

Subj: Message to MSU Faculty from Faculty Regent and Faculty Senate Chair

Dear MSU Faculty,

Welcome back to campus!

As the academic year begins, we want to express our optimism and enthusiasm for MSU's future. The challenges we're facing have not disappeared. But we believe that with our new president in place, the campus has a great opportunity to come together to chart a path forward we can all support.

President Morgan has been meeting with campus constituency leaders since his first days on campus, including Faculty Senate at last week's retreat. In these meetings, he exhibited his experience and expertise in public budgeting and finance, demonstrated his understanding of Kentucky's higher education landscape and the new performance funding metrics, and signaled his commitment to utilizing the principles of shared governance to carry out the academic mission of the university.

All of this is evident in his broad-based vision for a strategic planning process to replace ASPIRE, which sunsets this year. The planning process Dr. Morgan has proposed will draw upon the energy, talent, and creativity of the entire campus in a collaborative effort, driven by the student, faculty, and staff leadership. Because we believe that this process can productively move MSU forward, we would like to encourage the entire faculty to participate: by serving on planning committees, by taking advantage of opportunities to provide feedback, and by learning more about the institution's mission and how all of us can support it.

We would also like faculty to consider taking a modest step that could aid the dedicated staff in First Year Programs and Student Success who have been working hard to improve the services MSU offers its students. Attached, you'll find a list of resources available to our students, along with the relevant office locations and contact information. By posting this information in Blackboard, and by drawing attention to this list where appropriate, we can help build a campus on which every student has the support he or she needs to finish his/her courses. If we work together, we believe we can make this year the year MSU's retention rate spikes.

We realize that campus leaders have been asking faculty to do more with less for years now, but we really do believe that we have a chance to complete meaningful work under Dr. Morgan's leadership, work that will strengthen academic programs on campus and enable us to improve the education and opportunities we provide our students. As the semester begins, we ask that you participate in the new attendance tracking system in Blackboard (faculty are required to log attendance for at least one meeting in every face-to-face and hybrid course by August 24th), take advantage of forthcoming opportunities to learn more about Kentucky's new performance funding metrics, and participate actively in the strategic planning process.

Thank you for your tireless efforts to further our students' success today and tomorrow as you have in semesters past.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Pidluzny and Suzanne Tallichet