



FACULTY SENATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

May 3, 2018 meeting

“If you're reading this, you've gotten out. And if you've come this far, maybe you're willing to come a little further.” (Overview)

Faculty Senate held its sixteenth official meeting on the third of May. It received updates from the President and Faculty Regent and ratified a revised PAC-2. It approved another slate of nominees from Governance and heard reports from the remaining Senate subcommittees.

“What say there, fuzzy britches? Feel like talking?” (Announcements)

Chair Tallichet relayed:

- Faculty are strongly encouraged to attend commencement. (The Craft commencement will be May 12th at 5 p.m. in Button)
- Departments need to secure Senate representation for the upcoming year. Any necessary elections should be held as soon as possible. Please remember that instructors vote for Senators; they just cannot run for office.
- Faculty Senate leadership is in talks with President Morgan to revise UAR 331.01 to allow select mass communication.
- Faculty have encountered some troubles with “Self Serve.” Senator Collinsworth is going to email instructions.
- Chris Howe sent an email on the 19th of April regarding phishing messages. Remember: MSU will never ask you to validate your email or password. Do not click on links or attachments. If you do receive a suspicious email, please email it to the Help Desk. (Senator Blankenship wondered why phishing emails, once identified, couldn't be sent to “clutter.”)
- The College of Science Honors banquet is tonight.

“I was in the path of the tornado. [sighs] I just didn’t expect the storm would last as long as it has.” (President’s report)

One of the guiding mechanisms of our budgeting has been comparing our institutional spending to that of analogous schools (UT Martin, Truman State, Murray State, and Western Carolina). Our instructional expenditures are relatively low, but our research, public service, academic support, and instructional support expenses are all high. (Note: there was some discussion as to what constitutes “research,” as faculty saw no indication that there was much spending in this area at MSU. It turns out that all of Space Science had been listed under research. This oversight has been corrected.) According to the President, our spending has been “abnormally high” in some areas, and this increased investment has been in places that are not recognized by external rankings or rewarded in Kentucky’s performance funding model. (CO aside: so the Senate’s critique of the previous administration’s budget priorities was correct. Why did we even have to argue, given the overwhelming consensus of the data?) The current administration has been doing what it can to trim unnecessarily high expenses and redirect funding to actual instruction.

The budget has to be completed by May 18th, and we are about where we need to be for the start of the next fiscal year (July 1st). Legislatively, we did get a few breaks. The 5.1% tax on optional retirement programs (OPRs) is gone, which will provide about \$500K of relief to the institution. Given the fact that the differential between the new retirement rates for the Kentucky system and option programs will be as high as 21%, we are hoping that new hires will elect to be “optional.” We also have a one year reprieve on KERS increases. The year after next, the rate will balloon to 84%, so we will have to budget for that extra \$3.2m in the future, just not in 2018-19. That said we are still facing a cut to higher education appropriations, which for us amounts to \$2.7m. That cut will “roll forward” in the performance funding model, which is why we are now working on three-year forecasts. Because we can predict much of what is coming our way, it makes sense to budget in advance, not just lurch from year to year. (CO aside: we are finally using accurate data to make predictive decisions. How refreshing!)

The deposits (for housing and tuition) look good for new, incoming students, but President Morgan is budgeting for less than what the deposits would indicate for two reasons: (1) he won’t feel confident in the numbers until the students are actually on campus, and (2) we will be graduating our biggest cohort this year. The loss of this cohort will leave a \$4.1m (recurring) hole in the budget.

Due to recent legislative actions, there will no longer be tuition remission between universities. This does not affect tuition remission for faculty or staff taking classes at MSU. It only affects those who have been taking classes at other institution and programs that have relied on students from other schools to fill classes. Conversations among schools are ongoing, but MSU is making very careful considerations, as we are primarily an “inbound” institution (in that employees from other schools come here—we do not have a large number of our employees enrolled elsewhere).

We had a number of full retirements, and the ten phased retirements will be going to the Board for approval. These voluntary separations have provided significant savings. We will continue to buy sick leave credit until the pension bill is no longer under litigation, and we are still obligated to purchase the old jail. This will more than likely occur in August. We are also making the final payment on the Board of Education building this year. Last, but not least, the Facilities committee report will be presented at the May 10th Board of Regents meeting.

In response to questions, President Morgan stated that budget sheets should be available after May 18th, and that the performance funding model (under which we perform so abysmally) will be reviewed by the legislature in three years. Any change to the model would have to happen statutorily, and be agreed upon by the House, Senate, and Governor. Any input we have would be through our legislators and legislative leadership. Dr. Morgan is hopeful that a review will begin at the end of the biennium.

“These prison walls are funny. First you hate ’em, then you get used to ’em. Enough time passes, gets so you depend on them. That’s institutionalized.” (General Education update)

At the last General Education Council meeting, the GEC approved a new proposal for FYS. The proposal was designed to:

- focus on “student success”
- be taught primarily by staff
- be completely standardized

The proposal did not:

- include the input of the current FYS coordinator, who was merely tasked with presenting the proposal to the GEC
- go through standard curriculum committees
- include any funding for FYS or its coordination

According to Chair-elect Hare, the decision to redesign FYS was made at a level beyond AVP Couch, and the work to craft the new course was done behind closed doors. The GEC was given a fully formed proposal the last meeting of the term and told that they needed to approve it because FYS demand could not be met by our current faculty.

At this point, faculty do not know which staff will be teaching the course. They only know that there is a cap of 27 students per section, and that Lora Pace will be training those staff persons.

Chair Tallichet iterated her willingness to help staff who find themselves newly in the classroom, as did the Senators who had previously agreed to hold workshops for those who had been “fractionalized.” This willingness to help, though, did not countermand Senators’ significant reservations regarding the FYS redesign. The body as a whole was concerned that the push to place staff in the classroom was both unfair to staff persons and a problem for retention efforts. Many cited the article Senator Long had circulated, which noted the importance of having new

students interact with engaged faculty. Such engagement appears improbable when employees responsible for other duties will be forced to teach a cookie-cutter course. A number of Senators expressed their dismay that we were essentially reviving MSU 101, and even more were troubled by the fact that this revival negated faculty control of the curriculum (control that is mandated in SACSCOC accreditation standards). (CO aside: when will we learn that consulting a few faculty members is not the same thing as “faculty led”?)

“Geology is the study of pressure and time. That’s all it takes, really. Pressure, and time. That and a big goddamn poster.” (Pac-2 Second Reading [redux])

The body agreed that the conversation regarding the possible elimination of the college promotion committee was best reserved for another time, so it voted to ratify the policy as already amended. The revised Pac-2, with the college-level committee in tact, will be sent to the Provost for review.

“He had a quiet way about him, a walk and a talk that just wasn’t normal around here.” (Regent’s report)

Regent Pidluzny began his report by thanking Chair Tallichet for stepping into Senate leadership at the last minute and by apologizing for his previous absences (which were due to a previously scheduled talk and being responsible for taking students to a professional conference). He vowed to be more present in the future. (CO aside: the length and detail of Regent Pidluzny’s reports belie the need for any such apology. Our Regent has been “present,” even during his rare absences.)

HB 265 saves us roughly \$2m next year (because we will not have to pay increased KERS rates in 2018-19). In 2019-20, KERS costs will jump from 49.47 cents for every dollar to 87. KTRS increases will be far less, but still substantial (moving from 13.5 cents to 30). The three major expenses we had to deal with this year (the \$2.3m overrun of ADUC, the purchase of the jail, the last payment for the Board of Education building) are non-recurring, so that’s somewhat positive—a positive we need given the fact we received none of the re-added state appropriation. The \$31m was apportioned via performance funding, so we received no relief (whereas our competitors did).

Regent Pidluzny recognizes that our less than impressive salaries compromise our ability to recruit and retain faculty. With the aid of the Executive Council, he would like to create a faculty salaries task force to study the issue over the summer. Ideally, this task force would include a representative from each college and a department chair, as well as the Faculty Regent, who has begun compiling data. We want to demonstrate, through a variety of means, that there is a real crisis here, especially with salary compression. Senators supported this move, and a number even approached the Regent after the meeting to offer help or support. The Regent promised that the report would be inclusive, even addressing the apparent salary “fixes” that have compounded

some our current woes (such as the “market” correction that effectively wiped out merit and penalized faculty who had performed well in the past).

There are two upcoming Board of Regents meetings, the “special called session” on May 10th, when reports from the Healthcare and Facilities task forces will be presented, and the June 7th meeting devoted to the budget. The Regent promised to provide written reports of these meeting, even though there are no scheduled Senate sessions; he only asked that faculty review the agenda books in advance and contact him with any questions/concerns.

“Get busy living or get busy dying.” (Reports from the Senate committees)

- Academic Issues: The committee has completed an inventory of items recognized as service in FEPs.
- Evaluation: The full report from the committee was printed in the 4/19 Communications Report. Thanks to the hard work of committee members, we now have the full collection of departmental FEPs. This collection has been sent to the Provost’s office, and the committee has requested that there be a central repository (which is monitored and updated) for these important documents. The committee recommends that Faculty Welfare and Concerns take a look at PAc-35, the policy that governs FEPs, to make it fully congruent with PAc-2 and PAc-27. Currently, the policy does not address what happens to FEPs when programs move departments or colleges. Given our propensity to reorg, this should be addressed. Additionally, Senate may wish to expand FEP approval to all faculty, not just those on the tenure line. Last, but not least, the committee recommends that departments should review and re-certify their FEPs every five years (to keep them up to date).
- Governance: The committee brought forward nominations for GEC and Student Media Board. It also provided a replacement for an opening on the Undergrad Curriculum Committee. The nominations were approved as a slate.
- Issues: The committee focused its efforts on clarifying organizational structures within Academic Affairs and defining the role of General Counsel in relation to faculty representation. The committee proposed two solutions to address the former and is still working to resolve the latter. The Provost has been asked to (1) include “department of” before units in schools on the academic organizational chart (so that there is formal documentation that the units in schools remain distinct departments) and (2) draft a UAR that defines “college,” “department,” and “school.” (Note: the outgoing Provost, who is forwarding these recommendations to our interim, stated his belief that UARs were not for definitions, but we currently have a UAR that defines what a credit hour is, so. . .). Although the committee has reviewed the role of General Counsel at other institutions, and forwarded information to the President, there has not been much movement on that front. Issues is primarily interested in getting a formal recognition that service on Senate is university service, and hence part of regular faculty duties. Our current General Counsel has begrudgingly agreed that service on tenure and promotion committees is university service. We have yet to hear a formal pronouncement that Senate is, indeed,

university service. Next year, Chair-elect Hare will be bringing forward a statement to that effect that can be added to the Senate constitution. (Note: such a statement is necessary because the current General Counsel wrote a formal letter to the 2016-2017 Executive Council of the Senate, stating her belief that Senate work is NOT university service, despite that service being recognized as such in FEPs and Faculty Workload Agreements.) The committee would also like to see the General Counsel page on our website define the position by explicitly outlining what such an employee does for the institution. The current page, which includes an out of date picture and a folksy biography, is out of line with what other schools in the region provide.

Final comments from Chair Tallichet:

The Chair ended the final meeting of the year by thanking Senators for staying active and involved. She offered particular thanks to her Executive Council and commended the work done by committees on reports. After thanking our part-time ADS (the great Barb Willoughby) for her work, she also praised the faculty as whole for being wise enough to elect Regent Pidluzny, who has done a wonderful job this trying year (as his thorough reports attest).



“I find I’m so excited I can barely sit still or hold a thought in my head. I think it is the excitement only a free man can feel, a free man at the start of a long journey whose conclusion is uncertain.” The last regular meeting of the term adjourned at 5:11 p.m.



Submitted by the 2017-18 Faculty Senate Communications Officer, who found no escape, even after crawling through five football fields of unimaginable foulness. (Here’s to hoping salvation truly does lay within!)