

# MSU Faculty Senate October 2020 Minutes

The 2020-2021 MSU Faculty Senate met at 3:00 PM on October 8, 2020 via Zoom.

## **Senators present:**

Chuck Bultena	Attapol Kuanliang	Kimberly Onstott
Dave Carlston	Tammy Kurzewski	Morgan Page
Sarah Cobb	Adam Lei	John Schulze
Eduardo Colmenares	Marcos Lopez	Beverly Stiles
Mary Draper	Matthew Luttrell	Christopher Vivio
Catherine Gaharan	Janise McIntyre	Lynette Watts
Timothy Hinchman	Kelly Medellin	Tiffany Ziegler
Tina Johnson	Karen Moriarty	
Erica Judie	Michael Olson	

## **Guests:**

Dr. James Johnston (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Ms. Darla English (Registrar)

Ms. Laura Estrada

Dr. Bradley Wilson

Dr. Geoffrey Clegg

Ms. Ruby Garrett (Staff Senate Representative)

Call to order: 3:00 PM

## ***Housekeeping:***

The agenda and minutes were approved as presented.

## ***Current Business:***

### **1. Office Hour Policy—Dr. Johnston**

Dr. Johnston presented a proposed revision of the Office Hours policy proposed by the Deans' Council in response to the Faculty Senate's proposal from March 2020. The proposed language of the policy matches the requirements of the 2019-2020 academic

year pilot of reduced office hour requirements. Dr. Vivio moved to accept the policy and Dr. Watts seconded.

A senator expressed disappointment that the policy as presented here was more restrictive than what the senate proposed in March.

Several senators noted that the requirement for unposted residence hours would be difficult or impossible to enforce uniformly. Dr. Johnston explained that compliance would generally not be closely monitored.

Dr. Johnston stated that nearly all faculty are already meeting the requirements of this policy and that it would therefore mainly affect a few faculty who are seldom present on campus. A senator responded that this did not seem like an effective tool to compel those faculty to participate actively in the work of the university.

Some senators suggested that approval should be delayed until the senate has a chance to confer with other faculty and deans to work towards a mutually acceptable policy. Senator Lei moved to table the motion until the November meeting. The motion passed.

## **2. Faculty Survey Results—Dr. Carlston**

Dr. Carlston presented the results of the survey sent to faculty to solicit feedback on the fall semester.

Things that were frequently cited in the survey as helpful included provision of Zoom with D2L integration; technical support; college and departmental leadership; and flexibility and autonomy.

Faculty expressed appreciation for the work of Dani McAfee, the Distance Education staff, the IT staff, and the custodial staff. A variety of other individuals and offices were also mentioned.

Some survey responses mentioned that specific difficulties encountered during the semester's launch included technical difficulties; increased teaching load; ineffective communication; and Zoom management.

As the university prepares for the launch of the spring semester, faculty suggested that certain difficulties could be alleviated by continued technology upgrades; accurate course listings, including course modality; increased communication; and improvements in the reporting process for Covid-19 cases and contacts.

The survey also showed divided opinion on the administration of student course evaluations for the 2020-2021 academic year. While some observed that the feedback from evaluations was useful for informing pedagogical decisions for the spring semester, there was also concern that evaluations given under the present circumstances do not reflect a faculty member's ability or commitment to fulfill teaching responsibilities in more usual semesters.

Dr. Cobb moved to recommend that course evaluations should be administered in the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, and that the feedback from evaluations be delivered to

faculty prior to the beginning of the next semester, and also recommend that submitting evaluations from this academic year should not be required as part of the annual review or in tenure and promotion materials. Dr. Lei seconded and the motion passed.

Senators also asked that students be encouraged in some way to provide feedback to promote a large enough sample for meaningful analysis and that the evaluations be tailored to the particular circumstances of the semester to allow for meaningful feedback.

A senator suggested that student course evaluations are not generally an effective way to evaluate an instructor. Another senator mentioned that evaluating faculty would be difficult for chairs if course evaluations were not conducted.

### **3. Piper Award—Dr. Carlston**

Dr. Carlston stated that he would send out information from the Piper Award nominees and that an electronic vote will be conducted to determine the university's nominee.

### **4. Free Speech and Social Responsibility Statement—Dr. Carlston**

Dr. Carlston moved to accept the proposed statement on Free Speech and Social Responsibility. Dr. Cobb seconded.

Dr. Carlston explained that the statement is intended to be a general statement that is relevant to current news surrounding MSU. This statement does not comment on specific incidents or individuals, but gives a general position statement. The content is largely based on MSU policy and on ACLU statements.

Senators discussed the damage that certain speech causes damage to the social fabric of the institution; makes some members of the community feel unsafe; and harms the university's reputation in the community and position with donors. Senators also affirmed the importance of free speech.

A senator requested more time to review the statement and seek input from colleagues. Dr. Cobb moved to table the motion for an electronic vote on Tuesday, October 13. The motion to table passed.

## **Committee and Other Reports:**

### **1. Administrative Council (Dr. Carlston):**

No meeting

### **2. Board of Regents (Dr. Carlston):**

No meeting

### **3. Academic Council (Dr. Lopez):**

No report

**4. Incident Management Team (Dr. Carlston):**

Dr. Carlston stated that the Incident Management Team is finishing up with randomized testing and looking at the reboarding process for spring, as well as considering policy for once a Covid-19 vaccine is available. Dr. Johnston is working on an official statement that instruction modality will stay as stable as possible in case of movement between phases. The team is also discussing the expansion of random testing to commuter students.

**5. Financial Report (Dr. Stiles):**

No report

***Old Business:***

None

***New Business:***

None

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Submitted,

Dr. Sarah Cobb,  
Faculty Senate Secretary

Dr. Dave Carlston,  
Faculty Senate Chair

**Next Meetings:**

The next **Executive Committee meeting** will be at 3:00 PM on Thursday, November 5 via Zoom.

The next **Faculty Senate meeting** will be at 3:00 PM on Thursday, November 12 via Zoom.