On March 21, the Faculty Senate met.

On March 25, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) officers met to discuss our priorities for the upcoming month.

On March 30, I met with Provost Wright. He gave me an update on his ongoing process of providing each Dean with a comprehensive annual review this year and the plans for that to continue moving forward. This is something the Senate Executive Committee encourages as a regular practice. He also had an update that the planned formation of a new Faculty Honorifics Committee - a joint project with VPRP de la Rubia for a committee that identifies candidates for nomination for national and international awards/fellowships - is progressing and should be formed by the end of the semester.

On March 31, the FSEC officers met to discuss the agenda for the upcoming FSEC meeting.

On April 4, the FSEC held our monthly meeting. The Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee (FCBC) Chairperson Anthony Natale reported that they are ready to report to the Senate with results and analysis from the Pay Equity Survey that they sent to faculty earlier this year. They will be presenting at the April Faculty Senate meeting. He also mentioned that they are scheduled to meet with VP Dorothy Anderson (HR) soon. The Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) Chair Sarah Robbins reported a productive conversation with Vice Provost Snyder regarding next steps for hearing the voice of the instructional and research faculty who do not belong to the Regular Faculty. She also updated us on the work of the Office of Policy Management with regards to the Faculty Handbook. Heather Shotton, Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (FDEIC), shared that the committee did not meet in March due to Spring Break but were concerned about faculty retention. Chair-Elect Dave Hambright discussed the remaining few vacancies needing to be filled for committees for next year. The FSEC briefly discussed the creation of a checklist for committees, councils, and boards to use to help ensure a strong transition from one academic year to the next.

The FSEC welcomed Dean of Students David Surratt to our meeting. His report to the group included an explanation of the new style of orientation for incoming students - held all together as one group rather than spread throughout the summer - in a way that helps them build a sense of OU community before activities and classes start. He described the expansion of the Student Legal Services to a full-time position due to fairly steady demand. He also discussed the rapid growth and development of OU’s eSports program. We asked about how students are doing overall, and whether there has been enough mental health and student support available. Dean Surratt reported that there has been growth in capacity at Goddard, and also in the diversity of the staff members, but they are working to maintain that staffing level through some recent turnover. Other wellness topics such as telehealth, health and wellness from the Fitness/Recreation Center, and social community-building efforts were also discussed. He also shared that Big Event happened in-person for the first time in 2 years, which he hoped would add to the sense of community for students attending for the first time. He discussed how the challenges of the first-year students overlapped with challenges we all are facing - strain from recent family illnesses or losses, difficulty connecting, trouble assessing risk and safety. He said Student Affairs is emphasizing social connection and routine, both to students and to the SA staff members.
Later in the meeting, the FSEC welcomed Provost André Wright. He described the process of doing detailed annual evaluations for all Deans and Provost-direct reporting staff. He also gave updates on the planned formation of the new Honorifics Committee, a project he is doing jointly with VPRP Tomas de la Rubia. FSEC members expressed some concern over the role that data from Academic Analytics would play in the process of selecting faculty for nomination for national and international honors. Examples where Academic Analytics either does not track certain kinds of scholarship very well or falls behind in updating information were shared. We emphasized that a variety of sources would be required so that excellent faculty members in some disciplines will not be overlooked. The Provost also updated us on plans to create an office for undergraduate research.

The FSEC discussed the proposal from the March meeting coming from the Scholarly Communication Task Force, requesting the formation of an ad hoc Open Access Policy Committee consisting of faculty members and library staff. We will continue the conversation about the formation of this committee at the May meeting.

On April 8, I had a brief phone call with VP Dorothy Anderson. Given the hope that annual (or at least regular) raises are part of the plans for the future at OU, I wanted to advocate for raise programs that would consider merit, but that would also redress issues of compression and inversion and would align salaries of all of our productive faculty members more closely with those of their peers at similar institutions. I also discussed the historical participation of the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee in decisions regarding strategies for salary increases.