

## Faculty Senate Chair's Report

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**I became Chair of the Faculty Senate on Monday, May 4**, while OU campus remained closed following spring break. That same day I received a **preview of communication regarding phased reopening of campus for research**, to which I provided feedback after consulting with FS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair Heather Shotton. On Wednesday, **May 6, I attended the monthly Deans and Directors mtg** via Zoom. On Thursday **May 7, Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) held our first meeting**. We learned the Regents were considering removing the “Interim” from the President’s title. FSEC discussed the related topics of interim appointments, open and transparent searches, best practices for searches at multiple levels, and pathways to leadership, generally. We also considered Committee on Committee recommendations for the FSEC appointee to the search committee for the next Title IX Officer, and we recommended Siduri Haslerig. We also discussed chairships of various committees. Although FSEC members are not paid for FS-related work during the summer months, for the last few years, it has become urgently necessary that FS chairs, officers, and other EC members remain active and engaged during the summer. By my first week as FS Chair it was already clear this would be another such summer, so I invited both outgoing and incoming FSEC members to overlap and stay involved as much as feasible during the summer. All members of both outgoing and incoming executive committees affirmed their willingness. We also agreed to request the monthly meetings with the President continue through the summer. I directed the Committee on Committees to generate and consider names for recommendation to the Provosts Advisory Committee for Women’s Issues. On Friday, **May 8, I responded to a request from Marketing and Communication for a statement** on the possible removal of the word interim from the President’s title, and watched that day’s session of the livestreamed Regents meeting. I also watched the livestream on Saturday, **May 9, as the Regents announced the change to President Harroz’s title**. Later the same day, **I met with several recent past Faculty Senate Chairs as well as the new Chair-elect** to discuss transitions, the OU budget outlook including potential impacts on graduate students, and other issues on our collective radar.

On Tuesday, **May 12, I met via Zoom with Provost Kyle Harper and Vice Provost Mark Morvant** to discuss the Fall campus reopening. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) had previously provided lengthy and detailed feedback on a draft of the Safe and Resilient Fall Reopening plan, and this meeting was a response to that feedback. Provost Harper reiterated that the number one priority of Fall reopening considerations is Health and Safety of the faculty and community. The number two priority is Instructional Excellence, which means back in person as much as possible, but “possible” will be defined by what is safe. They reported that they were considering where and how to include our specific recommendations in the plan, and were exploring answers to our questions. They said there’s not a model robust enough to accurately predict what will happen months from now, but that they were preparing for all options. They reiterated that decisions regarding fall scheduling including teaching modes would be determined through three stages, and reiterated that they would like first- and second-year students to have majority in-person classes, but that they would not have a heavy hand on unit decisions. He added they did not want Deans and supervisors to ask or know private information as part of the decision making process. One idea had to do with HR and accommodations, another would be to work with Deans and units and if they determine online or F2F, especially at grad level, there will not likely be pushback. At undergrad level, the main pushback will be at first- and second-year levels, where they want to be able to provide a strong face-to-face experience. They also indicated they would explore how to address appeals if faculty wanted to teach online but their units or Dean say no. On Thursday,

**May 14, I met via Zoom with Senior Vice Provost Jill Irvine.** Later the same day, **I spoke by phone with Vice Provost Mark Morvant** regarding proposed changes to general education requirements to accommodate the new DEI course that will be added as a general ed requirement. I asked whether he would be willing to participate in a town hall on the topic so faculty on summer break would be both informed and have a chance to provide input regarding the plan before it was implemented. He agreed and **FSEC and I began working on scheduling and formatting of the townhall sessions.**

On Monday, **May 18, FSEC met for our second meeting of the summer.** The Draft Journal of the Faculty Senate is typically not available until a few days prior to the next FS meeting. I proposed that in 2020-21, the FS Secretary provide an informal "Meeting Recap" that could be distributed to senators for use along with their own notes in keeping their units informed of senate actions and happenings in a more consistent and timely way. FS Secretary Dave Hambright agreed to begin this starting with the September 2020 FS meeting, with assistance from Administrative Coordinator Stacey Bedgood. We discussed several issues on the radar, including disruptions to spring sabbaticals, and particularly noting the need to stay alert to what's happening with OU's contingent faculty. Concerns also were raised about cheating on online tests during finals in Spring after courses were shifted fully online, and we acknowledged the need for trouble-shooting and brainstorming about how to deal with it if we are online again in fall. We were pleased to hear that *Gradescope* would likely be retained for at least the Fall 2020 semester. We discussed concerns regarding the Safe and Resilient Fall reopening plan, acknowledging the necessity that many of our recommendations were not yet being rejected nor fully committed to, but would be explored and kept on the table as the situation developed. We briefly discussed ongoing concerns about the OU IT policy, specifically related to computer standardization and the one-computer policy and related appeals process. We continued our discussion of the proposed changes to the General Ed requirements. In the spring 2020 semester, two separate task forces had been convened, one focused on planning toward the course curriculum and another focused on determining how to accommodate the new course among the general education requirements. FSEC discussed at length our concerns about a change of this nature being made during summer while most faculty are off contract, as well as ramifications of the changes for different programs, particularly related to capstone requirements at program and department levels (as opposed to the university / general education level). During the later portion of this meeting **Vice Provost Mark Morvant joined us** by invitation so we could provide feedback on the Gen Ed changes proposal, ask further questions, and discuss the developing plan for the townhall sessions on the subject. Vice Provost Morvant also provided FSEC with a preview of the Clean and Green plan. On Monday, **May 25, I requested information slides for the upcoming Proposal for Changes to the General Education Requirements Townhall** from Vice Provost Mark Morvant on behalf of FSEC.

On Wednesday, **May 27, FSEC met with President Harroz and Chief of Staff Sean Burrage.** We discussed COVID-19 and the Fall return to Instruction plan, and FSEC expressed concerns related to optional mask use, air-handling systems, internships and practica, mid-semester impacts and disruptions, and faculty determining whether their classes could be appropriately conducted online. We suggested administration conduct a survey of faculty preferences and needs to go online. We also discussed the Pathways to Leadership resolution approved by the Faculty Senate on March 19, 2020. President Harroz said he agreed with the resolution and favored putting it into practice. President Harroz provided updates regarding exceptions for IT purchases to support online teaching, and regarding searches. He said the big elements of the budget for the upcoming year were in place. We asked whether an ombudsperson was included in the budget for the coming year and strongly communicated the need for it. President Harroz indicated that from this conversation he understood how important this issue is to FSEC and the faculty broadly, and that he would have a response to the question at our next meeting

with him. He cautioned that there would need to be cuts to help administrative efficiency and that while they would not be popular, they would not be cuts to teaching positions. Later that day, I reviewed the slides that would be presented during the Gen Ed Q&A Session on 28<sup>th</sup> and asked Committee on Committees Chair Keri Kornelson to have her committee generate names for the FSEC appointment to the search committee for the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence.

On Thursday, **May 28, FSEC hosted the Proposed Changes to General Education Townhall** with Vice Provost Mark Morvant. Afterward, we sent him a list of questions collected from the chat of session, and again requested a FAQ be made available to faculty. The night of Wednesday, **June 3, I requested a conversation with Sean Burrage** regarding concerns about the perceived role of HR in determining faculty fall course teaching modes, and on Thursday, **June 4, we spoke by phone about these concerns**. On Friday, **June 5, I discussed these concerns by phone with Provost Kyle Harper**. He acknowledged the need for clearer communication.

On Monday, **June 8, we held our Monthly FSEC Meeting**. Guests included David Horton, Nick Key, Chris Kobza, and Andy Fagg. We discussed the computer standardization policy and the appeals process. We also spoke with Provost Kyle Harper, who mentioned the new COVID officer, Dr. Dale Brazler. We discussed masking, as well as the high level of frustration we were hearing from faculty regarding accommodations and the perceived role of HR in determining course mode. Provost Harper said it was very important to determine how many faculty wanted to move their courses online and that if only one percent wanted to it would not be a problem but if it's 10% it would be. We noted that a fairly high proportion of faculty are in an age group identified as highly vulnerable. Questions also were raised about programs with in-person practica or fieldwork. **FSEC was joined by Chief of Operations Eric Conrad**, who provided a presentation and discussion regarding facilities preparation, cleaning, increased custodial staff, reduced population density on elevators and in stairwells, and modification of air handling equipment and upgrading air filters in many buildings from MERV8 to MERV13. He said faculty would receive welcome back bags with 2 cloth masks, 5 disposable surgical masks, a bottle of hand sanitizer, and instructions for ordering more supplies through facilities. He said the goal was to have 350,000 masks by August to provide students, faculty, and staff with a mask to use every week of the semester.

On Wednesday, **June 10, FSEC met with President Harroz**, who provided updates regarding enrollment and financial projections for Fall and told us that the FY21 budget included funding for an Ombudsperson and that the FS Chair would be included in discussion regarding reporting structure for that role. The Provost and his staff were still working on the strategic plan, which he hoped would be approved at the July Regents meeting. President Harroz also updated FSEC on dean searches. We asked about the status of the task forces we had named members for and were told that they were formed to look at possible cuts but were not needed as much as had been expected. President Harroz said at this point they were not expecting any furloughs to be needed before the end of the fiscal year. He also indicated that they were looking at possible changes to benefits. I requested that as we look at possible changes to benefits, that we protect the most vulnerable (lowest paid) employees. We also had an extended discussion of other diversity, equity, and inclusion issues and discussed the need for appropriate responses to racist incidents as well as the need to be proactive.

On Thursday, **June 11, available members of the FSEC participated in a Title IX listening session** with Associate Provost for Faculty and Student Affairs, Chris Walker, and Gender and Equality Center Director, Erin Simpson. On Wednesday, **June 17, FSEC hosted the second townhall on Proposed Changes to General Ed Requirements** and, later that same day, **I met with Senior Vice Provost Jill Irvine**.

On Monday, **July 6**, **FS DEI Chair Heather Shotton led a meeting with FSEC** members for an extended conversation on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Afterward, **I met with Interim Provost Jill Irvine** and, later the same day, **FSEC met for our July Monthly Mtg.** We discussed faculty flexibility in teaching delivery mode, the Return to Campus Plan, contact tracing, issues for discussion during our next meeting with President Harroz, and other priorities and concerns. At 4:00 p.m., **Interim Provost Irvine joined us** in her new role (as of July 1), and we discussed fall course delivery modes.

On Tuesday, **July 7**, **I met with President Harroz** via *Zoom* to revisit and extend our previous conversations regarding FSEC's requests for an Ombudsperson. We also discussed the need for clear and direct communication between faculty and administration, and we discussed ways to ensure we continue working toward ideals of shared governance. We also discussed the high levels of anxiety and concern among faculty, and the need to respond to those increasingly urgent concerns.

On Wednesday, **July 8**, **FSEC met with President Harroz.** We discussed Fall teaching issues including keeping faculty, staff, and students safe and prioritizing health and safety over economic concerns, possible triggers for shifting online, allowing faculty to shift courses without revealing private health information, pedagogical concerns about teaching in masks, economic concerns and student preferences, COVID testing, quarantines, and screening tools. We again discussed the increasing anxiety among faculty. We also discussed issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly related to valuing the heavy service burdens on BIPOC faculty and others committed to mitigating and transforming unjust structures.

On Monday, **July 13**, **FSEC was updated regarding Federal Department of Education changes to Title IX at OU** in a meeting with Associate Provost for Faculty and Student Affairs, Chris Walker, Gender and Equality Center Director, Erin Simpson, and Interim Institutional Equity Officer and Title IX Coordinator, Faustina Layne. Afterward, **FSEC met for further discussion regarding the return to campus plan and to discuss releasing a formal statement.**

The morning of Wednesday, **July 15**, **I spoke by phone with President Harroz** about our concerns regarding fall scheduling and class modes and the high anxiety and growing anger among faculty. I acknowledged the competing pressures of health and safety, pedagogical soundness, and economic realities, and reiterated that health and safety must be the top priority. I acknowledged the effort the administration is putting into making the campus as safe as possible, and the serious financial ramifications related to decisions to go fully online, and also shared the high level of faculty frustration and concerns regarding health and safety, lack of clarity and cohesiveness in communication from administration, the need to prepare faculty to be ready to shift online if it becomes necessary, and pedagogical concerns about forced face-to-face or forced online classes, reiterating that decisions regarding curriculum and delivery mode are best made at faculty and units levels.

**Later that day, FSEC released the [FSEC Statement on Fall 2020 Safe and Resilient \(SAR\) Instruction Plan](#).** (I note here that three of the four requests in that statement were integrated into policy. The one that wasn't formally reflected in policy was the request that departments be given freedom to allow all faculty to move the delivery method of their course for pedagogical reasons.)

On Thursday, **July 16**, **I worked toward a plan and a date for a Townhall with President Harroz and Administrative Team members** for Monday. Each member of the admin team would build responses to some questions into their brief presentations and I will follow up with more questions drawn from the many anonymized ones I sent to Jill Irvine and Lori Snyder.

On Friday, **July 24**, having been **asked to recommend a faculty member for the Flexible Teaching Appeals Board, FSEC named Mary Sue Backus (Law)**.

The same day, **I sent feedback regarding the Research Strategy DRAFT to Vice President for Research Tomás Díaz de la Rubia** from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

The OU Board of Regents met on July 7-8. On Tuesday, **July 8, I attended in person the public session** where the Strategic Plan and Changes to the General Education Requirements were approved.

On Tuesday, **August 4, FS Executive Committee members met with Interim Provost Jill Irvine and Chief of Staff Sean Burrage**, to discuss considerations regarding potential shift(s) to fully online.

On Friday, **August 7, FS Officers Bradshaw, Kornelson, and Hambright met to discuss ongoing concerns among faculty**. Later that day **I met with Interim Provost Jill Irvine** and we discussed anxieties and concerns persisting among faculty about returning to in-person instruction. I asked about contact tracing and requested further clarification for faculty regarding what that would look like in practice for various scenarios. I asked whether faculty would be informed if any of their students were infected with COVID-19. Interim Provost Irvine indicated that the CDC guidelines would be followed. As long as people were 6 feet apart and masked, instructors will not be informed. She also pointed out that anyone can be tested for COVID as often as preferred, free at Goddard.

On Monday, **August 10, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee Monthly Meeting** was held. We discussed issues on the radar including the strategic plan, questions about OU Online, shared governance rights and responsibilities, possible changes to the FS Bylaws to increase clarity regarding committee functions and FSEC elections scheduling, as well as the State of the University Event to be scheduled in September. **Interim Provost Jill Irvine joined the meeting** and we discussed childcare related needs of faculty and staff, and other issues and concerns, and we requested OU develop an online COVID Dashboard.

On Friday, **August 14, I met with Interim Associate Vice Provost Lori Snyder** to discuss developing support for faculty and staff related to challenges of childcare, home-based schooling, and working from home, including access to necessary equipment and faster / more reliable Internet access.

On Wednesday, **August 19, FSEC met with President Harroz**. We discussed COVID-19, our request for an OU COVID Dashboard; Fall 2020 updates and concerns; diversity and racial equity issues in leadership, recruitment and retention, faculty development, and service expectations; structural concerns regarding Research Support Services; continuing OU-IT concerns related to uniformity and other limitations counter to a healthy academic context; and OU Online.

On Wednesday, **August 26, we held the Faculty Senate Orientation for New Senators**, during which we provided background information regarding Senate roles, charge, structure, and best practices, and participants discussed issues of concern and priorities for the coming year.

On Friday, **August 28, I met with Interim Provost Jill Irvine**. We discussed efforts underway for increased testing, and I expressed our continuing concerns for faculty – particularly related to contingent faculty and faculty who are now in different circumstance than when the flexibility requests were initially submitted. On Monday, **August 31, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee held its monthly meeting**. **Guests Interim Provost Jill Irvine and Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer Belinda Hyppolite joined us** to discuss developments related to the new DEI course. Later,

**Vice President for Research Tomás Díaz de la Rubia** joined us to discuss issues, concerns, and opportunities related to research at OU, the research strategic plan, and the VPR's evolving perspectives now that he has been here for several months.

On Wednesday, **September 2**, I attended the **monthly Deans Council Meeting**.

On Thursday, **September 10**, I met with **Chief of Staff Sean Burrage and Senior Associate Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer Angela Church** to develop plans regarding job description and search committee composition for an Ombudsperson. Later that day, **FS Officers Bradshaw, Kornelson, and Hambright** met to discuss concerns and issues on the radar.

On Friday, **September 11**, **FSEC met with HR** for a preview of information to be shared with the full Faculty Senate at the September 14 meeting. This was **followed by the FSEC monthly meeting with President Harroz**, during which we discussed proposed changes to benefits and expressed our strong concerns and objections to eliminating the tier structure. We also discussed faculty climate and concerns, metrics and triggers for shifting courses online, concerns about students not reporting positive tests, and persistent salary inequities. We also discussed logistics for the upcoming State of the University event, and received updates regarding searches.