



College of Engineering and Computing

Faculty Council on Governance

Meeting on Monday, November 13, 2023

(ZOOM: from 4:00 to 5:30 pm)

Minutes

Committee members:

In Attendance: Walter Tang (CEE), Xia Jin (CEE), Vladimir Pozdin (ECE), Mohammad Rahman (ECE), Anamika Prasad (BME), Hamid Shahrestani (BME), Pezhman Mardanpour (MME), Lufan Wang (MDCM), Wallied Orabi (MDCM), Bruk Berhane (SUCCEED), Janki Bhimani (KFSCIS), Bogdan Carbunar (KFSCIS)

Absent: Norman Munroe (MME), Stephen Secules (SUCCEED)

Guest: Dr. Ines Triay

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Dr. Walter Tang.

1. Call to Order – Dr. Tang

2. Interim Dean’s Brief – Dr. Ines Triay

Dean Triay discussed her background and future work priorities in the College. The following highlights the key points in her brief.

- A. **Management and Leadership Philosophy:** Dean Triay emphasized her extensive experience in management and her collaborative leadership style, advocating for multi-disciplinary efforts and the pursuit of significant funding for college projects.

B. **Strategic Planning:** Dean Triay mentioned the university's strategic planning effort, which includes three focus areas: health, environmental resiliency, and advanced technological concepts. She stressed the importance of aligning the College with these areas and the broader FIU community.

- a. **Health:** Dean Triay highlighted the collaboration between the Biomedical Engineering (BME) unit and the School of Medicine, particularly considering a new partnership with Baptist that will provide FIU with its own hospital.
- b. **Environmental & Infrastructure Resiliency:** Dean Triay discussed the potential for Civil and Environmental Engineering to play a dominant role in the university's vision for environmental resiliency, especially in infrastructure.
- c. **Advanced Technological Concepts:** Dean Triay pointed out the need to combine AI, robotics, machine learning, cybersecurity, and other areas into multi-disciplinary research to secure substantial funding.
- d. **New Engineering Building:** Dean Triay mentioned the new Engineering Building will be open in 2025, and the second phase is currently under design. She emphasized its role in enhancing the College's thrust areas and fostering connections with the industry, national laboratories, and other potential employers, which will allow students to start their careers early, balancing academic rigor with opportunities for internships and research.

C. **Discussion:**

- a. Council members asked about the shortage of teaching assistants (TA) and the lack of a clear TA assignment policy in the college.

Dean Triay acknowledged the budget challenges on TA assignment are across many departments. She mentioned the need to honor the commitment to the new faculty, and the TA need from faculty. She has planned upcoming meetings with department heads and school directors to address these issues, emphasizing transparency and the need to understand departmental needs beyond the current fiscal year's provisions.

- b. Council members raised concerns about the surge in enrollment in engineering, the challenges it poses with the same budget, and the impact on the quality of education due to larger class sizes or canceled classes.

Dean Triay stated that the university's financial model for assigning dollars based on enrollment needs revision. She believes that the strategic planning effort of the university should address this issue and that discussions with senior leadership indicate a recognition that the funding educational model needs to be reevaluated.

- c. Council members asked about the status of the post-tenure review process.

Dean Triay explained that the university is waiting for reactions and reviews from the legal team in the last discussions. She encouraged faculty to raise concerns about the post-tenure review process. She assured that the senior leadership and legal team are committed to respecting the academic freedom and prowess of the faculty, and that any comments made by faculty regarding post-tenure review proposals will be taken seriously.

- d. Council members asked about long-term plans for sustainability as the college grows, particularly concerning the increase in faculty and instructors without a proportional increase in staff members, leading to delays in support.

Dean Triay agreed that staff support is crucial and mentioned that her next objective is to secure an increase in staff. She discussed the importance of having more staff to assist faculty, especially in pre-award and post-award processes. She also mentioned the potential use of peer advisors to support the advising staff.

3. Approval of Last Faculty Meeting Minutes (October 09, 2023) – Dr. Tang

The meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

4. Major items discussed at the meeting.

A. University Faculty Senate’s Ad Hoc Inter-professional Committee status.

Dr. Tang updated on the Faculty Senate’s new Ad Hoc Inter-professional Committee, which aims to establish rules and encourage collaboration across colleges. It will be voted to merge with the Committee of Academic Research.

B. Assignment of space in the new engineering building and industrial park.

Dr. Tang proposed the idea of converting the old Engineering Center into an industrial park, aligning with Miami-Dade’s designation as a tech hub. Dr. Wang mentioned many other top universities have similar practices (e.g., the Research Park at University of Illinois and the Raleigh-Durham Research Triangle Park at North Carolina). This proposal could foster innovation and collaboration within academia and industry. Dr. Orabi suggested forming a subcommittee to draft a proposal for this initiative and report to the Dean and the University. Dr. Tang, Dr. Orabi and Dr. Wang are willing to join the subcommittee and work on this matter.

C. Teaching assistant assignment policy for College of Engineering and Computing.

The Council discussed the need for a transparent and fair TA assignment policy. It was acknowledged that the job descriptions for current Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, and Graduate Assistant are not clear. The need for a policy to differentiate the responsibilities associated with each role is discussed. And the Council agreed that each

department should develop its own policy or formula on TA assignments, to ensure faculty are aware of the process and can hold the administration accountable to promises made regarding TA support.

D. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in engineering and computing: teaching, research, and service: capacity building of AI hardware and software to support the faculty.

Dr. Tang emphasized the urgency of empowering faculty and students with AI hardware and software. He mentioned the potential of using AI to assist in teaching, research, and service, and proposed that EIC should update the current software and enable AI in the EIC labs. The Council raised concerns related to AI usage in higher education, as there still are discussions on the ethics issues of using AI in higher education. Dr. Berhane offered to have Ph.D. students present research on the benefits and challenges of using AI in higher education at the next meeting, which could inform the Faculty Council's recommendations on AI capacity building.

5. Items left to be discussed at the next meeting:

- A. Departmental advisory board
- B. Alumni engagement in fundraising
- C. Naming rights as innovative ways to raise funds for various spaces of the new building can be a powerful way to foster their connection to our college.
- D. The Library, Curriculum, Tenure and Promotion, Awards, IT, and Budget committees need to:
 - a. election new College Committee Chair
 - b. conducting the first meeting
 - c. develop new vision, mission, and action items at the AI era
- E. Chain of command in College of Engineering and Computing
- F. Research priorities and resource allocation at the College of Engineering and Computing
- G. College Committee' Report: IT committee

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 PM.