



College of Engineering and Computing

Faculty Council on Governance

Meeting on Monday, December 11, 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), Hamid Shahrestani (BME), Pezhman Mardanpour (MME), Lufan Wang (MDCM), Bruk Berhane (SUCCEED), Anamika Prasad (BME), Stephen Secules (SUCCEED)

Absent: Norman Munroe (MME), Janki Bhimani (KFSCIS), Bogdan Carbunar (KFSCIS), Wallied Orabi (MDCM)

Guests: Dean Ines Triay, Dr. Vanessa Sohan, Nicolas Leger

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

1. **Call to Order – Dr. Tang**
2. **Approval of Last Faculty Meeting Minutes (November 13, 2023).**

The meeting minutes were approved with no change.

3. **Strategic Plan and Industrial Park Proposal.**

The strategic plan for the college was discussed. The need for Faculty Council's input and the importance of establishing an industrial park was emphasized. The industrial park is seen as crucial for providing students with practical experience and faculty with opportunities to apply their knowledge. Dr. Tang shared a draft proposal shared with the Council representatives, encouraging involvement in this proposal to obtain more opportunities for the college.

4. Call for involvement in UFF (United Faculty of Florida)

Dr. Vanessa Sohan, the Vice President of the Union (an associate professor in the English department), discussed initiatives the Union has been working on and expressed a desire to hear from and involve the engineering faculty more in the Union activities. Below are the summaries:

- a. She mentioned the FIU UFF's efforts to reach a 60% membership threshold to avoid decertification due to a new state law.
- b. The Union has been active in bargaining, with the next big contract negotiation coming up in the spring. They've recently worked on post-tenure review negotiations, revising the dossier for faculty, and reworking the evaluation criteria.
- c. The Union also worked on addressing faculty housing concerns and the possibility of public-private partnerships to assist faculty with housing costs.
- d. She invited the CEC faculty to participate in upcoming surveys and town halls related to salary, equity, and academic freedom, and to reach out with ideas for Union direction and engagement, especially on the engineering campus. Survey link is as follows: [Bit.ly/joysurveyfiu](https://bit.ly/joysurveyfiu).
- e. The link to join UFF was shared during the meeting: <https://feacms.floridaea.org/portal/fastrack/165/form>.

5. Interim Dean's Brief – Dr. Ines Triay.

- A. **Strategic Planning:** A strategic planning team with representation from all units of the CEC was established to focus on three thrust areas proposed by the Provost: health, environmental resiliency, and technology innovation (i.e., AI, automation, robotics, and cybersecurity). The Dean mentioned the idea of branding FIU engineers and computer scientists as proficient in using AI to solve problems for potential employers, which could set them apart and appeal to students, donors, and funding agencies.
- B. **New Engineering Complex and Industrial Park:** The Dean noted that not all units could move into the first building of the new engineering complex due to space limitations. She proposed using the thrust areas to select super innovators for the complex and establishing an industrial park at the current college site. The Dean emphasized that an industrial park could be a powerful strategy to attract investment from donors and private industry.
- C. **University Financial Model:** The Dean reported that the enrollment in CEC is increasing, while a lot of other colleges are facing declining enrollment. She is discussing with the Provost the need to revisit the financial model to ensure investments align with areas of growing enrollment.

6. Other items discussed at the meeting.

- A. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) in engineering and computing education**

Nicolas Leger, a PhD student under the supervision of Dr. Berhane, presented his research about AI in engineering and computing education at the meeting, and discussed how AI can be used to help faculty and students in more effective learning teaching and learning.

The Faculty Council then discussed necessities to require all engineering undergraduate students to be skilled in Python and to apply AI in their senior design projects. Concerns were raised about whether such a requirement would be realistic for all departments, given the diverse needs and existing curricula. Council members have mentioned that KFSCIS has a course called Programming for All that includes AI and machine learning, which could be beneficial for students across engineering disciplines. Other departments like Moss Department of Construction Management (MDCM) have developed new course about AI applications in their specific domain.

B. Departmental advisory board.

Dr. Tang raised the issue of inactive Departmental Advisory Boards in some departments and the need for written policies to define their roles and engagement. Council members shared experiences in their department, e.g., MDCM has a very active industry advisory council that meets once every month. It was suggested that the Faculty Council representatives should request each department to allocate time during faculty meetings to discuss the role and activities of its Industrial Advisory Board. This would ensure that faculty members are informed and can improve the interaction between the the faculty and its industrial board in the challenging AI era.

C. Alumni engagement in fundraising.

The Council discussed on how to better engage alumni, especially during homecoming week, and the potential for alumni to contribute to the college's success. Suggestions included inviting alumni to give talks, engaging them in senior design projects as judges or mentors, and hosting them at events where they can interact with current students and share their experiences. It was suggested that best practices for alumni engagement should be shared among departments to learn what has been effective.

D. Naming rights for various spaces of the new building can be a powerful way to foster their connection to our college, innovative ways to raise funds through naming rights.

The Council discussed the potential of using naming rights as a strategy to engage alumni and secure funding. The idea is to encourage faculty to connect with industry partners and alumni to secure endowments and investments, and those who secure such endowments should be given priority for office space in new buildings as a recognition of their efforts. Concerns were raised about past efforts where faculty secured funding but did not see direct benefits or returns from their work. To address this, it was proposed that a policy be established to ensure that faculty who bring in substantial funding are rewarded with benefits such as better office space. The resolution was to take this idea to the administrators' meeting for further discussion.

E. College Committees' Reports: IT

An update of the IT committee meeting includes discussions about tech fee proposals and the potential for improving AI infrastructure within the college.

- a. The committee discussed opportunities for faculty to submit tech fee proposals aiming at enhancing their courses through technological improvements. There was a successful example mentioned where funding was obtained for a robotics course, which led to course improvements and further academic output such as papers and additional funding.
- b. The committee discussed the potential for improving AI infrastructure within the college. However, concerns were raised due to the lack of clear policies on adopting AI in higher education. As a result, it is suggested to form a subcommittee consisting of instructors actively incorporating AI into their courses. This subcommittee would explore best practices for integrating AI into education and start a dialogue on this topic within the college.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 PM.