



College of Engineering and Computing

Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2022

Committee members in attendance (Zoom): Jessica Ramella-Roman (BME), Markondeyaraj Pulugurtha (BME, Secretary), Albert Gan (CEE, Chair), Xia Jin (CEE), Mohammad Rahman (ECE), Vladimir Pozdin (ECE), Xuan Lv (Moss), Lufan Wang (Moss), Charlie Lin (MME), Ibrahim Tansel (MME), Leonardo Bobadilla (KFSCIS, Vice Chair), Alexandra Strong (SUCCEED), Trina Fletcher (SUCCEED).

Meeting was called to order at 3:03 PM by the Council Chair.

1. Briefing from the Dean's Office

- Council welcomed Associate Dean Anthony McGoron at the beginning of the meeting.
- Briefing from Associate Dean:
 - College aims to establish more multi-center and multi-institution grants.
 - Limited space continues to be a problem. Several faculty have to use space on the main campus because there is no space at EC. College pays a couple of hundreds of thousands a year to rent space because ORED determined that CEC exceeded its space use.
 - Several ongoing faculty searches in the early stage.
 - Have been doing well with four-year graduation rate, but expected to go down this year.
 - Dean requested that faculty review the 2025 strategic plan and provide feedback on the plan.
 - University budget to reduce by at least 1.5% across the board for all colleges next year. Even a flat budget is tough especially as we continue to add new faculty and students.
 - UGS likely to reduce 25% of budget for teaching assistants (TAs). College to see fewer TAs this year than last year, but Dean is still working with UGS and hoping it will not happen.
 - College is again providing \$300K this year to support about 10 new graduate students on research assistantships.
- Questions and answers:
 - Concern: Faculty is asked to recruit students and bring more people in, but there is no space to house them. A serious problem.

- Response: Would bring the concern to the Dean. University wants to reach the Top-50 Public ranking, which will require more research and graduate students. But College is not likely to get more space. One remedy is by getting students through the pipeline faster to make room for new graduate students. It is recognized that our average number of years to graduate PhDs is comparable to other engineering colleges.
- Question: College should consider criteria used to attract good faculty to hire.
- Response: One challenge with hiring in programs with high startup costs is that Sponsored Research had no money for startups and would not consider someone who does not already have grants. Not being able to hire at the assistant professor level is a problem.
- Question: What is the likelihood of converting some classrooms in the near future to make more room for offices and research space given that more classes continue to be moved online?
- Response: Have not heard of any plan to do so, but it makes sense.
- Question: Is there a plan to convert EC's first-floor parking area to add space?
- Response: The plan was near complete but had to be scrapped due to costly bathroom plumbing needs.
- Question: What is the funding source for the \$300K additional RA support? Any part from overhead return?
- Response: It is from the College's base budget and not from any overhead return. Overhead return is usually used to support matches for new faculty startups. Startups for faculty who need a lab are expensive and could run up to half a million dollars each.
- Question: Council has heard concerns on College's emphasis on hiring research-oriented faculty while teaching faculty are facing major teaching load increase. Should there be a better balance?
- Response: Teaching students is fundamental to what we do. However, University decided on the Top-50 Public ranking and it will continue to emphasize PhD production and research expenditures -- because those are the main ranking criteria. Faculty-to-student ratio does not fit into ranking. Another problem is the increase in online and hybrid courses which allow for much larger class sizes. This, coupled with decreasing TA lines, will further add to faculty load.
- Question: Within the College, are lab spaces managed by the College or the departments?
- Response: All lab spaces are managed by ORED. Departments usually have little say on lab space allocation.
- Question: Who coordinates the lab space allocation at the College?
- Response: Osama coordinates the College's lab space allocation with ORED.
- Question: Some faculty members have to share lab space, some involving sharing by young and senior faculty and created a lot of issues. Who made the decision?
- Response: Sponsored Research. Chair had input of course.
- Question: Are overhead returns used for startups?

- Response: Mostly for startups, but not sure. Only familiar with the graduate student side of the budget. ORED does not send much back. College has had to pick up a lot paying for AMERI. ORED also held money back for space rental.
- Question: Can you share the lab space allocation formula?
- Response: Will ask Osama and get back to the Council.
- Question: Use of automated grading could help with the problem with increasing teaching load.
- Response: There have been discussions but no known solutions on how best to give online exams, quizzes, and assignments that really reflect student learning of engineering and computing students on subjects of quantitative nature.

2. Approval of meeting agenda and minutes

- Meeting agenda was approved with no new business.
- Minutes from the January 21, 2022 meeting was approved with no changes.

3. Chair's Report

- Dean was invited but unable to attend because something came up, according to his secretary.
- Council Chair attended the College Leadership Meeting. He briefed the administration on the upcoming administrator and workplace survey and explained the reasons behind changing from one-year to two-year term for standing committee memberships.
- Faculty's vote on the approval of the constitutional amendments is ongoing. The response rate is relatively low as expected. Sent two reminders and would send a final reminder. The results received so far have been overwhelmingly positive on the amendments.
- Not many respondents provided comments. The main concern areas are the need to hire more teaching faculty to meet the increasing class size, the lack of budget transparency, and the selection of department chairs with minimum or no faculty input.
- The process to select department chairs has been inconsistent. In CEE, earlier we had internal candidates who went through two days of interview. However, most recently, the selection was simply announced to us. Faculty members had no input at all. On the other hand, our VP for Research, Dr. Andres Gil, appeared to have more input than the faculty on who we want our chairs to be. In the two recent new chair announcements, the Dean indicated that he consulted the VP for Research on the two selections. However, according to the Provost guidelines for chair selection (<https://academic.fiu.edu/docs/Provost%20Office%20Procedure%20Chair%20and%20Dean%20Selection%20Guidelines.pdf>), there is no role for VP for Research in the process. The involvement of VP for Research in the decisions also disadvantaged faculty focusing on teaching and service.
- A suggestion was received from a faculty to replace "Department" with "Academic Unit" in the Constitution and Bylaws document. Council unanimously adopted the change.

4. CEC Administrator and Workplace Survey

- Council discussed the addition of temporary questions for the new workplace survey. After much discussion, the Council decided on adding the following four temporary questions for this year’s workplace survey:
 1. Support by the College throughout the pandemic
 2. Fairness and transparency in faculty promotion opportunities to administrative positions
 3. Fairness and transparency in the hiring process of new faculty positions
 4. Fair distribution of resources including TA, lab, and office space by administration
- Council discussed and decided to exclude chairs appointed this year. Council also decided to exclude the Enterprise and Logistics Engineering program due to its low faculty number and its lack of representation in the Council.

5. New Business

- It was suggested that Council invite the Provost and Vice Provost to Council meeting to discuss concerns on chair selection issues. It was decided that the Dean should be given a chance to address the concerns first.

6. Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 PM