



College of Engineering and Computing

Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

March 28, 2022

Committee members in attendance (Zoom): 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), Mohammadamin Kharraz (SCIS), Trina Fletcher (SUCCEED).

Meeting was called to order at 3:04 PM by the Council Chair.

1. Briefing from the Dean's Office

- Council welcomed Dean John Volakis who joined at start of meeting.
- Briefing from the Dean:
 - Construction of new 125,000 sq ft, \$75M engineering building to begin next week. Expected to open in two years. Will have lots of space for students interactions, interactive classrooms, rooms for taking remote tests, rooms for SUCCEED, etc.
 - 32 faculty positions on the book to be hired. Have so far worked out 19 with Academic Affairs.
 - New hires including 9 to 10 in CS and 3 in CEE for replacements.
 - Research has increased by 125% and expenditures have doubled over the last five years.
 - Last year's four-year graduation rates at 53% overall and 65% for CS. Expected to go down this year due to inclusion of 100 students in the STEP program (that should not have been). Six-year graduation rate was at 75%.
 - College presented a 10-minute video at the annual Engineering Deans Institute meeting in Las Vegas. It will help to increase our reputation and ranking.
 - Committee spent a lot of time on developing the 2025 Strategic Plan. It is a forward looking plan.
 - New areas such as AI, robotics, cybersecurity, etc. need to have new faculty.
- Questions and answers:
 - Council: From our recent Faculty Council survey, some faculty especially those from KFSCIS have raised concerns about their increasing class sizes. We need more teaching faculty and a more balanced faculty body that also takes care of our teaching needs. What is the split between tenure-track and teaching faculty for the 10 faculty being hired for CS?

- Dean: We have a 40% growth in students over the last year, with most of the growth from CS. The 10 new faculty hires in CS are for retirements and to meet the Knight Foundation mandate to improve ranking, research and graduate programs. We are working with Academic Affairs on the class size issues. It is not because we are not hiring, but because we cannot hire fast enough. At least three of the new hires are for instructor positions. Have just approved two new instructor hires for CS. We are not alone in experiencing growth in CS. We are working hard to increase our faculty, which should also help serve our community and contribute to a wealthier Miami. We also don't want other universities such as UF to come serve in our area.
- Council: Another concern raised by faculty in the survey is the lack of transparency in the college budget.
- Dean: Every year Adriana (College Budget Director) met with the Council on the budget details (Council notes: This has not been done under Dean Volakis. However, it was due to the inactivity of the Council Budget Committee over the last few years). Please invite Adriana to meet with the Council. We never have money left anyway and the College budget is always in the negative.
- Council: What is the possibility of posting the college budget details for secured access by the faculty?
- Dean: Not sure about that. But Adriana is ready to meet with the Council anytime. University has a top-down budget and budgets are mostly fixed. Only time we have leftover money is from people who left, retired, or on leave. We used the money for start-ups.
- Council: Faculty are more interested in how the funding is allocated, such as among the different departments and centers.
- Dean: The information is available. Invite Adriana. We will do this every year. Rest assured there is no money left over that we can make a choice on.
- Council: Emphasis of university has been on investing in young faculty. Is there any seed funding for senior faculty who want to restart their research?
- Dean: There is not such a funding source. One way faculty can help themselves is by accumulating salary savings for later use. Funding for such purpose has to be from a program from Academic Affairs, as we don't have extra money for this. But I will help anyone who comes individually with ideas. We don't collect overhead money (at the college level) like some other universities do. College spent \$1.2M on pre- and post-award support each year. College also allocates \$300K for RA support each year that the faculty can tap into.
- Council: Another concern raised by faculty in our Council survey is on the chair selection process.
- Dean: CEE has an ongoing search for an external chair and should receive applications in the next two weeks. In the CS case, Provost's directive was for an internal search but faculty wanted an external search. Faculty went to Provost to get verification and received the same answer. Agreed on having two external

- deans to do an evaluation. Waiting on the evaluation report. Based on the report we will decide on the chair search.
- Council: There has been inconsistency in the process of selecting chairs. CEE, for example, has had three interim chairs in two years. In one case, there was a two-day interview, but in the latest case the appointment was simply announced to the faculty with no faculty input at all. Appointments of Interim chairs are just as important as interim chairs often stay for many years.
 - Dean: We always follow the procedure which is written and is followed. When a chair resigns abruptly the Dean is required to appoint a chair immediately. In the latest case, the interim chair resigned abruptly, so I was required to appoint a replacement quickly, in consultation with the Provost. In one previous case, I received input from faculty through faculty votes which is not binding, and VP for Research, and the Provost.
 - Council: In your recent announcements, you indicated that VP for Research was involved in the decision, but in the procedure for chair selection as posted on the Provost Office, VP for Research is not part of the process. His inclusion is not appropriate and unfair to potential candidates focusing on teaching and service.
 - Dean: Point noted, but the reality is that the VP for Research has a lot of influence in this university. If the Provost says I need to consider VP for Research, then I do it and it is to our advantage. Chair has to work with VP for Research. If 50 to 70% of overhead come to the College we would not need to ask VP for Research for funding. VP for Research controls overhead returns, UGS TA money, and is in charge of facilities and start-ups. He has funding authorities on the college. In future this kind of layout may change, but for now that is what we have and it is to our advantage to have the VP for Research involved. Also, every faculty hired is interviewed by the VP for Research who also made a decision. The reason is that they give start-up money. One can argue that the VP for Research is not an engineering faculty, etc., but how can we ask him to give start-up money if he had not interviewed the person?
 - Council: If anyone not in the procedure can get involved in the process, it is meaningless to have the procedure. Why have the procedure if we are not going to follow it?
 - Dean: Disagree on not following the procedure. I am open about receiving input from VP for research. The way our system works is that the VP for Research is involved in the decision making of the funding. The labs we have are funded by VP for Research. The labs and equipment belong to VP for Research. Every renovation is negotiated with the VP for Research. He also decided on every faculty start-up. We can become bankrupt if we don't have a good relationship with the VP for Research. He is also someone who controls our TA funds. We need to be respectful to that and work with him.
 - Council: But the VP also needs to respect us. If the VP for Research wants to get involved that much, then he has to get into the procedure. There is nothing for him in the procedure now.

- Dean: It is the right of the Dean to receive input from VP for Research. University is no different from a company.
- Council: Disagreed. Having the university work like a company can get the University into serious troubles. University received millions of federal funds from NSF for diversity training. Faculty are trained using the funding to provide input on hiring decisions. But if the Provost and VP for Research are to make the hiring decisions, why are we getting the federal funding to do the training and waste our faculty time? It is a legal issue.
- Dean: As a faculty I agree with you. There have been many recent university leadership changes. There is a lot of unfairness including the state's per student funding among the universities.
- Council: Not talking about unfairness. Talking about the problem with having millions in federal funding for diversity training but in the end faculty input with diversity consideration does not count, but others not in the procedure do.
- Dean: There is a difference between faculty and chair searches. VP for Research does not make decision on hiring of faculty. It is wrong to bring in diversity in leadership search. Diversity can be one of many factors considered.
- Council: Faculty and chair searches have the same diversity consideration.

2. Approval of meeting agenda and minutes

- Meeting agenda was approved.
- Minutes from the February 21, 2022 meeting was approved.

3. Chair's Report

- The updated Council Constitution and Bylaws document was posted to the FCOG website. Council Chair thanked members for their contribution to the effort.
- The proposed amendments to Council Constitution and Bylaws were overwhelmingly approved/endorsed by faculty.
- Council's proposed amendments to the Council Constitution: 97% approve, 3% against.
- Council's adoption in the Council Bylaws to increase the frequency of evaluation of CEC administrators from every four years to every year: 82% in favor, 5% not in favor, 13% do not have an opinion.
- Council's adoption to add a new CEC Workplace Survey to be administered with the CEC Administrator Evaluation: 85% in favor, 5% not in favor, 10% do not have an opinion.
- Specific faculty issues or concerns raised in the survey anonymously by faculty:
 - Lab space crunch.
 - Negative impacts from recent appointments of associate professors as department chairs including on faculty T&P evaluation (associate chairs cannot evaluate cases involving promotion to full professor).
 - Lack of transparency and faculty input on department chair appointments.
 - Lack of transparency in Dean's special faculty salary raises and the need for monitoring by the Council.
 - Lack of faculty access to CEC budget details.

- Large and increasing class sizes hurting quality.
- Need for more teaching faculty lines.
- Need to improve staff salaries to reduce staff turnover.
- Council Chair to distribute the 2021-2022 CEC Administrator and Workplace Survey in early April. The timeline is set to be consistent with that of the 2020-2021 academic year. To summarize the results and share with Council members. To decide what can be shared during the next meeting.

4. Faculty Council Elections

- Each unit to elect one Council representative for a two-year term for the 2022-2023 academic year.
- Each unit to elect one member for standing committees for either a one-year or a two-year term.
- The following unit arrangement to be followed in order to create a unit staggered order during the transition to the two-year term:
 - Members from BME, CEE, CM, and ECE to be elected for a one-year term.
 - Members from KFSCIS, MME, and SUCCEED to be elected for a two-year term.
- All subsequent elections will be for a two-year term.
- Council members serving the first year to administer elections and report election results to the Council Chair before the next meeting.
- Council Chair to email members to provide details on the elections.

5. New Business

Council members discussed conflict of interest issues related to major center directors who also serve as department chairs. It was pointed out that Council voted and approved specific language in the College Pattern of Administration (POA) to prevent such conflict of interest. However, the approved language was watered down by the Dean's Office with wording that included "whenever possible" and a provision to exclude schools with departments (ref: Section 7.3 of POA). It was suggested that the Council revisit this issue.

6. Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM