

FACULTY COUNCIL
Tuesday, October 12, 2021
3:30 – 5:15 pm
Zoom

MINUTES

Councilors Present: D. Andersen, D. Anderson, N. Brogden, J. Buckley, M. Cunningham-Ford, A. Curtius, L. Erdahl, L. Glass, K. Hegarty, B. Janssen, L. Joseph, M. Kivlighan, A. Merryman, M. Pizzimenti, E. Welder.

Officers Present: M. Lehan Mackin, T. Marshall, A. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, J. Yockey.

Councilors Excused: C. Bradley, N. Nisly.

Councilors Absent: None.

Guests: S. Campo (Graduate College), M. Durham (Office of the Ombudsperson), M. Gardinier (Emeritus Faculty Council), L. Geist (Office of the Provost), K. Perez (*Daily Iowan*), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office).

I. Call to Order – President Marshall called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

II. Approvals

- A. Meeting Agenda – Professor Hegarty moved and Professor Andersen seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- B. Faculty Council Minutes (August 31, 2021) – Professor Glass moved and Professor Janssen seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- C. Draft Faculty Senate Agenda (October 26, 2021) – Professor Hegarty moved and Professor Glass seconded that the draft agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- D. Committee Appointments (Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez, Chair, Committee on Committees)
 - *None at this time*

III. New Business

- *Graduate College Counseling Program (Shelly Campo, Associate Dean, Graduate College)*

Associate Dean Campo observed that mental health has become an increasingly important issue nationally and locally, including on college campuses. She commented that the University of North Carolina recently canceled classes for a day because of two student suicides. The University of Iowa has recognized the need to respond to mental health concerns on its campus, <https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/>. Associate Dean Campo added that she serves on a strategic plan subcommittee focused on well-being. She noted that tomorrow is “[Fresh Check Day](#),” part of a national effort to educate students about mental health resources and opportunities on

college campuses. Also, the university has partnered with the local community on a [24/7 crisis support service for students](#).

The mental health crisis for college students of various ages is growing, but there are unique needs related to graduate students, Associate Dean Campo continued. Larger efforts around student mental health need to pay attention to their particular circumstances. The Council of Graduate Schools has issued a report with recommendations, <https://cgsnet.org/graduate-student-mental-health-and-well-being-o>, in an effort to highlight these specific concerns. UI has participated in an AAU effort to collect more information on the mental health needs of graduate students. These students have only recently been included in national data collections. We now have available local data tracking depression, anxiety, and stress levels of our graduate and professional students. Also, a series of focus groups were held on campus last year, particularly for vulnerable populations such as BIPOC students, veteran students, and LGBTQ students. As a result of all of this data collection, the Graduate College formed a partnership with the University Counseling Service to provide extra support for graduate student mental health needs. This initiative focuses on raising awareness of services available, recognizing early signs, and providing front-end support, for example, through workshops. The partnership seeks to support graduate students, particularly those at greater risk, and provides resources related to managing stress, mindfulness, resilience, imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and relationships with mentors. This fall, the university created an edition of *Iowa Now* targeted at graduate students. Content on mental health concerns is being embedded into the publication, along with information on resources. And, the Graduate College has recently hired two doctoral students from counseling programs in the College of Education to help with the College's efforts around mental health.

President Marshall wondered if, in addition to the *Iowa Now*, other methods of communication could be identified. For example, graduate program directors or graduate student mentors could be made aware of resources, as well as of signs that students are having mental health issues. Associate Dean Campo indicated that this information is provided at meetings of the collegiate directors of graduate studies. Twice a year, the Graduate College also hosts meetings of all program coordinators, who are staff members working directly with graduate students. Information about mental health resources is provided at these meetings, as well. The two doctoral students mentioned earlier will also be speaking with a range of offices and organizations that serve graduate students, including with student governance bodies.

- *Office of the Ombudsperson Discussion (Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Faculty Ombudsperson)*

President Marshall explained that Professor Durham had been invited to speak with the Council today about faculty morale, which seems to be low across colleges. Professor Durham began her remarks by noting that she has been at the university since 2000. She is a professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Collegiate Scholar. She has served in a variety of administrative roles, as well. On July 1, she became the faculty ombudsperson.

Turning to the trends that she has observed since joining the Office of the Ombudsperson, Professor Durham noted that the Office has seen a number of issues related to diversity, equity,

and inclusion (DEI), for example, overtly discriminatory language and behavior. Administrators are often not sure how to deal with these tricky situations, she added, partly because of the current emphasis on First Amendment freedoms, along with new bills passed in the legislature. While First Amendment rights must of course be respected, racist and misogynistic statements and behaviors have impact – they can be hurtful and have effects on departmental climate and on morale, especially among people of color. Professor Durham acknowledged that it is challenging to address these issues. In fact, sometimes administrators do not address them, perhaps in the hope that they will go away or because they are unsure how to proceed. Often, these incidents do not rise to the level of a policy violation, but they do have an effect, Professor Durham emphasized, and we might need to brainstorm how to effectively deal with these sorts of situations.

Another morale-related trend that the Office has observed is anxiety around COVID. Many people – faculty, staff, and students – have come to the Office with safety concerns. They have worries about their health, about masking, and about being exposed to the virus. Some instructors would like to change their teaching modalities, but the administration is being firm about what constitutes a viable reason for switching to online teaching or to remote work conditions. Students have asked about being able to take classes online, but this is generally not allowed if no online option already exists for the class. Students have also come to the Office with concerns about accommodations; they are finding that some faculty members are reluctant to accommodate their disability needs so that they can achieve academic success.

Professor Glass asked if the Office had seen any DEI issues arise specifically because of the lack of a mask mandate on campus. He has heard anecdotally that some students might be more likely to resist encouragement to wear masks when these suggestions come from women or faculty of color. Professor Durham responded that, although she has also heard similar anecdotal evidence, she did not think that the Office had enough data to support this conclusion. She added that she could look at the data to see if there were any trends in this direction. Thinking back over the people who have raised these concerns to the Office, she commented that they had come from a variety of demographics.

Professor Buckley turned the conversation to a broader consideration of the DEI issues brought to the Office, particularly those situations in which overtly racist or misogynistic language was used in academic settings. She indicated that she is aware of several instances when this has occurred. The people who were the targets of this language felt entirely unprotected by the university and profoundly let down by administrators, she added. Noting that Professor Durham had commented that administrators are sometimes unsure how to interpret free speech policies, Professor Buckley wondered if the university could revisit the vague language in its relevant policies, so that the people who are the targets of this speech can better understand what legally constitutes a policy violation. And, if an incidence of hate speech does *not* constitute a policy violation, why this is so. Professor Durham agreed that there is a lack of understanding, first of all, regarding what constitutes a policy violation, and secondly, what the legal limits are. In general, hate speech is protected speech, according to the Constitution. Professor Durham added that she and other staff in the Office plan to meet with members of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity to seek greater clarity on free speech policies and laws. The Faculty Senate could also assist in this effort by examining speech policies

in the Operations Manual to see how they could be clarified, and by reviewing our civility and non-discrimination policies to see how they could be strengthened.

President Marshall observed that the university's [Anti-Harassment policy](#) currently states that conduct, including speech, is considered harassment if it *is sufficiently severe, pervasive, and subjectively and objectively offensive that it unreasonably interferes with work or educational opportunities*. Past President Yockey further noted that this statement encompasses a spectrum of behavior, from an isolated incident of greater severity to less severe incidents that occur over a period of time. Generally, our laws and policies are protective of speech even though that speech can be painful to the recipients of it. Past President Yockey then asked Professor Durham if her office would be consulted in the development of the mandatory training on free speech that will be given to faculty, staff, and students in the near future. Professor Durham responded that her Office has not been consulted, but would be glad to offer perspective based on the concerns they have received related to offensive speech. In response to a request from President Marshall, Associate Provost Geist explained that there is a committee of representatives from each of the Regents institutions and from the Board of Regents working on the free speech training. The committee is trying to decide between acquiring a vended product and producing a program in-house. The topic is on the agenda at every Board of Regents meeting. At this time, a spring semester implementation is still anticipated.

In response to a question in the chat, Professor Durham indicated that the Office staff meets every year with the President and the Provost to present their annual report. At that time, they also discuss the most recent trends that they are observing among their visitors' complaints. Past President Yockey asked what the typical path of engagement with the Office looks like. Professor Durham explained that every case is different; however, a visitor might simply want information, such as referrals to policies or to campus resources. In other cases, a visitor might request mediation with the other involved parties. Workshops and trainings, on topics such as civility and respect, can be offered to departments. Office staff can also speak with administrators regarding problems in their units, if visitors give them permission to do so. Professor Durham pointed out that her Office is one of the few confidential offices on campus. The initial visit is completely confidential. The information shared in the initial visit can only be disclosed in situations of impending physical harm or in compliance with a subpoena. As an informal office, the ombudspersons also do not become involved in grievance or legal proceedings, but they can offer advice to a visitor regarding how to launch a grievance or formal complaint process.

Returning to the topic of verbal harassment, Professor Erdahl commented in the chat that, in a legal context, the recipient of the behavior is the one who defines the harassment. Professor Durham concurred. She noted that sometimes this behavior is inadvertent and a conversation with the offending party can clear things up. At other times, however, the behavior is quite aggressive and should be confronted, but lack of clarity and concern about shutting down free speech prevent that from happening. Professor Janssen asked what happens in situations in which there are complaints from multiple individuals about a particular person. Professor Durham responded that, with the permission of the complainants, Office staff can reach out to administrators or supervisors and bring it to their attention. Professor Janssen followed up, asking, in the context of internal hires, if administrators could reach out to the Office for

information about situations involving repeat offenders. Professor Durham explained that, because of the confidential nature of the Office, no information could be released.

In the chat, Professor Buckley asked whether and how students receive training that aims to reduce hate speech and other forms of harmful speech and behavior. Professor Durham was unaware of such training campuswide, but noted that some departments do offer some voluntary training to students. In conclusion, she reiterated that some student visitors to the Office have complained that their requests for accommodations are not being fulfilled. She urged that we think about how to encourage faculty members to honor accommodation agreements. Secretary Lehan Mackin commented that there may be some issues with the new systems for tracking student accommodation requests. Ultimately, these issues will likely be resolved. President Marshall thanked Professor Durham for speaking with the Council today. Professor Durham indicated her willingness to engage with the Council and Senate on a more frequent basis to discuss trends observed by her Office and to consider measures the Senate could take to address these concerns.

- *Collegiate Administrator Reviews (Joe Yockey)*

Past President Yockey reminded the group that the *Guide to Evaluating Collegiate and Departmental Academic Administrators* was presented to them at the April meeting. The guide had its origins in the spring of 2019, when the Council set as one of its priorities the development of a guide or policy that would allow faculty to more regularly provide feedback on administrators within their colleges or departments, thus addressing a perceived gap in the evaluation landscape. Several colleges, such as Education and Nursing, already have this type of policy in place. The Senate officers, along with the Senate's Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee, drafted the guide. Originally, Councilors had wanted the proposed reviews to be included within the Operations Manual. We may still seek this outcome in the future, Past President Yockey noted, but he commented that colleges may want to pursue a more organic effort. He added that if Councilors felt that the guide would be beneficial to their colleges, they could pass it on to any existing collegiate committee or group of faculty who are, formally or informally, charged with policy matters. The guide could serve as a roadmap for the development of a collegiate policy.

Professor Joseph asked for clarification whether the review implementation would be a top-down or bottom-up effort. She commented that the latter option could be problematic. Past President Yockey observed that colleges have their own cultures and unique approaches to how policy matters should be addressed; these differences would affect implementation of the reviews. He noted that the guide provides for various implementation options. One option would be to institute annual reviews. Another option would be to incorporate aspects of the proposed reviews into the existing, required collegiate and decanal reviews. President Marshall added that the administrative reviews were envisioned as providing formative feedback, somewhat similar to student reviews of instructors. Administrators would receive feedback on what aspects of their jobs they were doing well and what aspects could be improved upon, leading to more successful leadership experiences. Past President Yockey indicated that the Senate officers would be willing to speak at colleges about the guide.

- *COVID Discussion (Teresa Marshall)*

President Marshall began the discussion by reminding the group about President Biden's [Executive Order 14042](#), issued last month, that requires federal contractors to mandate that their employees be vaccinated against the coronavirus. As an entity that contracts with the federal government, the university is impacted by this order, but we are unsure thus far to what extent. It is essential that the university retain its federal contracts, however. It is also unclear whether any students are covered by the order. President Marshall further indicated that it was her understanding that the executive order asks for compliance with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, as well, so that mask mandates would be required if a community's infection rate reaches a certain level.

Professor Glass wondered if we should alert our colleagues about the possible impact of the executive order. President Marshall responded that administrators had informed her that the university may make an announcement in the next week or two. The order and related documents are being carefully reviewed before public statements will be made. Associate Provost Geist agreed that clarity on the executive order is being sought by university administrators and by the Board of Regents. She added that UT's federal contracts total about \$600 million.

- *Council Roundtable (All Councilors)*

The Senate officers invited Councilors to share concerns and issues important to their individual colleges. Professor Glass commented that faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences are very concerned about potential budget cuts in the next year or two, given several budget shortfalls that have recently come to light. He asked for clarification regarding how individual collegiate budgets fit into the overall university budget. He added that it seems to him that his college does not see adequate returns on its tuition revenue, but it is difficult to confirm this perception without a clear picture of the university budget system. Professor Brogden commented that the College of Pharmacy will celebrate the dedication of its new building this Friday. She noted, however, that there seems to be a high degree of stress and tension among the collegiate faculty; perhaps this is not unique to her college. Faculty members appear to be somewhat dissatisfied by the administration's messaging regarding masking and other COVID-related issues. The low level of masking by students also seems to be a source of disappointment. Professor Cunningham-Ford noted that there is a low level of masking by students in the College of Dentistry, as well. She added that her college is in the midst of a search for a new dean.

Professor Janssen commented that a high level of masking is observed among students in the College of Public Health. Students in her college are seeking to participate in mask messaging efforts across campus. Turning to the topic of collegiate shared governance, Professor Janssen wondered if there was a role for Faculty Senate in promoting shared governance best practices and empowerment among the collegiate elected faculty bodies. President Marshall noted that she will be speaking to the CLAS Faculty Assembly soon regarding the role and activities of the Faculty Senate; she would be happy to speak to other collegiate shared governance bodies, as well, to begin establishing relationships between the Senate and those groups.

Workload issues are of concern in the College of Nursing, Professor Joseph commented. Masking rates are high among graduate students in the college. Secretary Lehan Mackin, also of Nursing, indicated that masking rates are lower among undergraduates. Professor Kivlighan noted that workload is also an issue for the College of Education. He added that some faculty members had expressed dissatisfaction with the administration's handling of COVID, while others have shown less concern about it. In collaboration with the Iowa Department of Education, the college has recently launched the [Iowa Center for School Mental Health](https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5b4WSi6BB7oOh4a), in order to help address the mental health crisis among Pre-K-12 students. Professor Kivlighan provided a link to an application for faculty to apply to become affiliated faculty of the new center, https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5b4WSi6BB7oOh4a.

Professor Erdahl expressed the opinion that faculty in the Carver College of Medicine are not doing well. She said that they are overworked and do not have adequate support from the dean or from the health system (partly due to the extreme nursing shortage), and yet they are being asked to be more productive clinically. The results of a recent review of the collegiate faculty compensation plan have not been made clear to faculty members. Faculty feel that they are being asked by administrators to do the impossible. For example, in her department, multiple operating rooms have been taken away, yet faculty are still being asked to increase productivity. She worried that students and patients may suffer because of this high level of internal conflict in the college. Professor Welder, also of Medicine, voiced her concerns about the faculty compensation plan review, as well, noting that it added yet another layer of stress on faculty, who are already dealing with the pandemic, while being asked to see more patients and expand hours, in spite of the nursing shortage. These concerns are concentrated in the clinical operation, but they are taking a toll on faculty morale overall and on the teaching mission, in which clinical faculty are heavily involved.

Professor Merryman, another Medicine faculty member, commented that hospital leadership is expressing significant despair over the health care system's staffing crisis (nurses, radiology technicians, etc.) that may lead to the closing of some clinical services. This is a macroeconomic issue across the country. Hospitals cannot compete with the pay rate that travelling nurse organizations offer. She concurred with the other Medicine Councilors that faculty morale is suffering in this environment. President Marshall commented that some staffing issues have also occurred in the College of Dentistry clinics. She indicated that the Senate officers would convey Medicine faculty's concerns to administrators. Professor Joseph expressed support for physicians and nurses currently on the front lines. She added that some legislative solutions are being sought for the nursing shortage.

Professor Anderson indicated that classroom masking levels are high in the College of Law. Service workloads are an area of concern for faculty in her college. She added that Professor Todd Pettys, a First Amendment expert, has been speaking across campus, helping educate the university community about free speech issues. Past President Yockey added that the college is trying to integrate itself more with the rest of the campus around developing the writing skills of students at all levels. President Marshall expressed appreciation for the comments offered today by Councilors.

- *President's Report (Teresa Marshall)*

President Marshall thanked those Councilors who attended the strategic planning thinking sessions that were held recently. In policy news, a review of the instructional-track faculty policy is underway. The review committee is co-chaired by Anne Stapleton (English) and Caroline Sheerin (Law). A survey of instructional-track faculty and interviews of deans are planned for the near future. The Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee is reviewing administrator-proposed revisions to the faculty track policies and the grievance policies in the Operations Manual.

President Marshall reported that she had attended the annual joint meeting of the Undergraduate Student Government and the Graduate and Professional Student Government last month. Two resolutions were passed at this meeting; one, asking the Board of Regents to establish Juneteenth as a university holiday and the other, regarding COVID vaccine availability and vaccine requirements on campus.

IV. From the Floor – There were no items from the floor.

V. Announcements

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, October 26, 3:30 – 5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, November 16, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.

VI. Adjournment – Professor Glass moved and Professor Brogden seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously. President Marshall adjourned the meeting at 4:55 pm.