

FACULTY COUNCIL
Tuesday, October 8, 2024
3:30 – 5:15 pm
Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre

MINUTES

Councilors Present: B. Ayati, R. Curto, L. Durairaj, A. Farag, N. Greysen, J. Gutierrez, J. Kline, J. Koch, C. McMillan, M. McQuistan, J. Sa-Aadu, M. Schroeder, D. Shane, A. Shibli-Rahhal, C. Vogel.

Officers Present: R. Curtu, E. Gillan, C. Sheerin.

Officers Excused: C. Just.

Councilors Excused: M. Santillan.

Councilors Absent: M. Abou Alaiwa.

Guests: J. Beck (Office of Strategic Communication), A. Hansen (Office of the Provost), I. Martínez-Marrero (Division of Access, Opportunity, and Diversity), R. Napoli (University Human Resources), S. Sanders (Campus Safety Improvement Board), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office), one illegible name.

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

II. Approvals

- A. Meeting Agenda – Professor Kline moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- B. Faculty Council Minutes (September 3, 2024) – Professor Greysen moved and Professor Sa-Aadu seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- C. Draft Faculty Senate Agenda (October 29, 2024) – President Sheerin indicated that changes may be made to the draft agenda prior to the Senate meeting. Professor Kline moved and Professor Sa-Aadu seconded that the draft agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- D. Committee Appointments (Rodica Curtu, Chair, Committee on Committees) –
 - *None at this time.*

III. New Business

- *Jeneane Beck, Assistant Vice President for External Relations, Office of Strategic Communication*

Assistant Vice President Beck presented an overview of the activity of the university-wide Office of Strategic Communication (OSC). She noted that communication professionals also exist on the collegiate and sometimes even unit level, so she recommended that faculty members

approach their local communication staff prior to contacting the OSC, but added that the OSC would certainly welcome faculty members' inquiries. Assistant Vice President Beck indicated that the OSC includes about fifty staff members involved in activities such as consultation and research, graphic design, public relations, marketing, and web strategy and development. In the course of their work, the OSC staff keep a broad range of audiences in mind, she continued. These audiences range from current students to patients and customers to policymakers. For several years now, efforts have been made to consolidate university units' many logos into a central stylistic university brand, so that the identity of the unit's institutional home is immediately clear. Branding also allows for consistent messaging regarding the unique attributes of the UI. A messaging guide and other resources, including information about standardized unit logos ("lockups") in the form of non-editable graphics, can be found [here](#). A template library provides brand-standardized templates for marketing materials, slide presentations, identification (letterhead and business cards), and formal documents. Downloads from the template library are tracked. In response to a question, Assistant Vice President Beck indicated that it may be possible to use a slide presentation template for a software program other than PowerPoint, but that she would have to look into this. The Office also hosts training opportunities for websites, media (including social media), and branding. Assistant Vice President Beck added that OSC staff often help faculty members – even on short notice – prepare for media appearances.

OSC is available to assist individuals or units in a variety of circumstances, including those related to new programs or policies, budget or program cuts, staffing changes, media interest or request, and legal issues. Assistant Vice President Beck explained that it is important to know one's audience and what one wants the audience to do. She pointed out that what audiences want to know and what university units want to provide are not always the same sets of information. When faculty members move into positions of leadership, she continued, OSC staff often discuss issues management with them. Assistant Vice President Beck emphasized that it is important for leaders to anticipate potential issues by monitoring trends, identifying "lightning rods," and building and maintaining relationships within their units. Planning is also necessary and should take the form of identifying stakeholders and drafting talking points, among other steps. Finally, the response regarding an issue should be communicated internally prior to externally and be timely, honest, and repetitive.

Managing media inquiries is another area in which OSC can assist faculty members; requests for assistance can be sent to media-request@uiowa.edu. Initially, the faculty member will be asked to assess the inquiry, including determining whether the faculty member is really the right person to respond to it. Preparation for the interview would then consist of anticipating questions, gathering supporting facts and anecdotes, considering every audience, and practicing. Assistant Vice President Beck noted that faculty members are sometimes contacted to comment on proposed or new legislation. Faculty members should feel free to comment on matters about which they have expertise and OSC staff can assist in drafting statements. The university as an institution, however, refers all such inquiries to the Iowa Board of Regents. Whether or not a university employee can use their university title for identification purposes when publicly voicing an opinion can depend on the situation. Use of the title should not imply that the individual is speaking or acting on behalf of the university. However, for those employees with

administrative roles, use of the title is generally not appropriate unless the university has adopted a position which the employee is charged with representing in an official capacity.

Assistant Vice President Beck then provided a list of links to university and Board policies (use of university name, guidelines regarding political activity, free speech, freedom of expression, and public statement guidelines) and to university and OSC resources (faculty support and guidance, managing online harassment, key issues and statements, and published research guide) for Councilors' reference. She noted that the university is occasionally contacted regarding requests for position statements on matters external to the institution, but the Regents institutions adhere to Board policy and do not publish such statements. Concerns are also sometimes raised regarding UI employees' social media posts, but as a public institution, the university is restricted in its actions. Assistant Vice President Beck noted that university-sponsored social media accounts are considered open public forums. Therefore, the university cannot remove or prohibit a comment because the viewpoint is controversial or unpopular. However, it could remove those comments that can be categorized as unprotected expression (incitement to lawlessness, obscenity, harassment, true threats, and commercial solicitation). Harassment, Assistant Vice President Beck explained, refers to *intentional conduct, including speech, directed toward a person or persons that threatens serious harm and is directed or likely directed to provoke imminent unlawful actions; or is sufficiently severe, pervasive, and subjectively and objectively offensive that it interferes with work or educational performance, including on-campus living, or participation in a university activity on or off campus.*

Assistant Vice President Beck concluded her presentation by reminding the group about Iowa's Public Records Law. As a state institution, the UI is subject to this law. She emphasized that all university business is covered by the law, even if the business was conducted on a personal device or through a personal email account. She urged Councilors to reach out to her if they had any questions about the material she covered today.

- *Campus Safety Improvement Board (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean Sara Sanders, co-chair)*

President Sheerin reminded the group that at the [September 3 meeting](#), as part of the agenda item on the dissolution of the Campus Safety and Security Charter Committee, she had provided information on the [Campus Safety Improvement Board](#) (CSIB), the entity that would replace the charter committee. Upon reviewing the charter of the new CSIB, Councilors raised questions about its membership structure. Dean Sanders had been invited to the Council today in order to address those questions.

Dean Sanders briefly summarized the origins of the CSIB. She explained that the Reimagining Campus Safety Action Committee had been formed in 2020 in response to national events involving policing. The Committee later issued a [report](#), one recommendation of which was to call for the establishment of a presidential board focused on campus safety and accountability. In 2022, Dean Sanders and Associate Vice President and Dean of Students Angie Reams were named co-chairs of the Reimagining Campus Safety Implementation Team, charged with implementing the report recommendations. The CSIB was eventually established and it met for the first time on October 3. Regarding membership, questions such as who should be on it, whether the proposed membership composition is ideal, and whether the term lengths are

appropriate were all considered. No one involved was convinced that these questions have all been answered perfectly. It would likely take a year of activity to solidify how the CSIB would function. Only then could the ideal membership composition be determined, Dean Sanders commented. Responding to questions raised previously by Councilors about the rotating participation of the affinity groups, Dean Sanders explained that concerns about over-burdening the affinity group members had arisen during discussions on membership. Effective participation by shared governance representatives, who would serve only one-year terms, was discussed following the last Council meeting by Dean Sanders and President Sheerin. Meanwhile, Dean Sanders emphasized, it was important that CSIB activity got underway. She welcomed Councilor feedback on the evolving CSIB structure. Past President Gillan observed that, unlike for the charter committees, the membership structure for the CSIB was fluid and could easily be modified, if necessary, to more fully incorporate additional voices and viewpoints.

Professor Koch asked if anyone had reached out to the affinity councils for their input on membership. Dean Sanders responded that members of the affinity councils had interacted with the Implementation Team. It was from within the Implementation Team that the recommendation regarding the structure of affinity council representation arose. President Sheerin, as the Faculty Senate representative on the CSIB this year, asked what the shared governance and affinity group members of the CSIB were expected to contribute towards the CSIB's mission. Dean Sanders directed the group to the purposes of the CSIB, listed on the CSIB website linked above; members will participate in these activities as they support the continuous improvement of campus safety. CSIB members will likely need to spend the first year, however, educating themselves about campus safety and related issues.

Returning to the issue of membership structure, Dean Sanders clarified that the two affinity council representatives per term would come from different affinity councils, not the same one. She added that, although student membership on the CSIB is currently limited to representatives of shared governance and members of affinity groups, the co-chairs continue to consider ways to engage additional student voices. President Sheerin commented that additional faculty voices would also be desirable. The larger the group gets, however, the harder it becomes to schedule meetings. President Sheerin suggested that the CSIB interact with small committees of constituents in order to gather additional input to inform their activities. Past President Gillan noted that the charter states that the CSIB *will share reports and updates with the Office of the President in partnership with an administrative liaison*. Dean Sanders indicated that the administrative liaison is Laura McLeran, associate vice president for administrative affairs and senior advisor to the president.

Dean Sanders offered to return to the Faculty Council later in the spring semester to provide a more substantive update on CSIB activity, given that the group has met only once thus far.

- *Working at Iowa Survey (Isandra Martínez-Marrero, Senior Director, Campus Engagement, Division of Access, Opportunity, and Diversity and Rachel Napoli, Executive Human Resources Director, Organizational Effectiveness, University Human Resources)*

Senior Director Martínez-Marrero began the presentation by indicating that the Working at Iowa survey has been administered to faculty and staff every two years for the last twelve years.

The survey seeks to measure employees' engagement in their work. This year, the survey will be administered October 16-31. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero reminded the group that the Campus Climate Survey used to be administered to faculty and staff, as well. However, overlap between the two surveys became evident. Options were explored for combining the surveys to create a single data set for analysis to determine ways to improve the campus work environment. The result has been to include five new questions, focused on perceptions of belonging, into the Working at Iowa survey; some of these questions came from the Campus Climate Survey. The new questions align with questions on the Press Ganey Working at Iowa survey administered to health care faculty and staff, which will take place October 7-28 this year.

Executive Director Napoli continued the presentation, noting that 69 survey ambassadors across 22 organizations have been engaged to communicate widely the value of the survey and to encourage faculty and staff to participate. The survey is a coordinated effort among University Human Resources; the Division of Access, Opportunity, and Diversity; and UI Health Care. The survey results will be presented to the university president's cabinet and the deans in December. The university-wide report will be released in early January, while the organization, unit, and special reports will be released in late January and February. Faculty members in the College of Public Health and the Tippie College of Business will work on data analysis and interpretation. An action planning toolkit, aligned with key survey themes, is being developed. The toolkit will assist units in building on strengths and addressing areas for improvement. Executive Director Napoli requested that Councilors urge their colleagues to respond to the survey. Participation rates have generally been around 60% in past years. Survey data is tracked over time and informs action.

Past President Gillan commented that he would ask a question that he has posed before, which was why only the university-wide report is publicly released. Although granular reports at the collegiate and departmental levels are produced, these are not made public to faculty and staff unless the dean chooses to do so. Executive Director Napoli responded that while broad sharing of reports is encouraged, the decision to share has been delegated to the deans by the university president and the provost. Professor Gutierrez requested examples of changes that have been made as a result of survey data from previous years. She added that this knowledge could encourage faculty and staff to respond to the survey this year. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero commented that examples of change are frequently requested. She indicated that the survey data is intended to precipitate conversations at the collegiate and departmental levels, since most changes occur at these levels. This past year, for example, a pilot program for enhanced merit-staff supervisor training was developed after the survey revealed this area of concern. It is possible that this enhanced supervisor training will be expanded. While the survey can reveal areas of concern, it is up to the colleges to take action, she explained. Executive Director Napoli added that workload distribution is one of the areas that survey respondents rate among the lowest for both faculty and staff. Many colleges have tried to respond to this issue, particularly with greater transparency around how workloads are assessed and measured.

Professor McMillan observed that the question *The UI has a strong commitment to fostering a welcoming and respectful environment* had replaced *The UI treats (faculty/staff) with respect*. He commented that quite different types of answers could be elicited by these two

questions, and he wondered how improvement, if any, over time would be tracked. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero explained that this change had been made to align with the updated universal competencies in annual reviews, as well as with the health care version of the survey. Professor Shibli-Rahhal commented that health care employees not involved in patient care, such as those involved in education, also receive the version of the survey focused on health care and therefore have difficulty responding to the questions. The subsequent survey results for these units do not seem meaningful. Executive Director Napoli indicated that she would look into this situation. Vice President Curtu commented that the survey questions referring to feeling valued, part of the *perceptions of belonging* section, were rather vague and she wondered if they could be more specific. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero explained that the remaining survey questions focus more concretely on aspects of value, such as workload and recognition.

President Sheerin commented that it was her understanding that the Campus Climate Survey had primarily been discontinued because it was unique to our campus and therefore the results could not be benchmarked against peer institutions. She asked if this new combined survey was more conducive to benchmarking. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero acknowledged that benchmarking was one goal of the new survey. Use of a third-party provider for the survey, to allow for easier benchmarking, was not feasible this year due to cost. Instead, this year, once the most meaningful aspects of the results are collected, a portion of those results will be benchmarked against peer institutions. President Sheerin asked if the results of the benchmarking could be shared. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero indicated that this would likely be possible if a good analysis is obtained.

Professor Farag observed that in previous years, survey questions often referred to one's "supervisor." For faculty, however, it is not always clear who one's supervisor is – the dean, associate dean for faculty, or division head. Also, "unit" could refer to the college or to the division. This confusion could complicate interpretation of the survey results. She asked if the language could be modified. Executive Director Napoli acknowledged the greater ambiguity of these terms for faculty than for staff. At this time, a perfect solution has not been found, but the survey directions do seek to define the terms to some degree. Also, special reports for groups of more than ten employees can be generated, in an effort to drill down for greater clarity. Professor Schroeder asked if the survey result data was subjected to the same type of analysis for all colleges. She also asked if deans could request special reports if collegiate results pointed to a particular concern. Executive Director Napoli responded that special reports can be requested through the college's senior human resources director and those requests have already been submitted, although there is still a possibility to make additional requests later on. She added that survey analysis for all colleges was the same, but that faculty partners in the Tippie College of Business are planning to more deeply analyze survey result themes.

In response to a question, Executive Director Napoli confirmed that faculty and staff receive the same set of questions. The survey is intentionally kept brief and is intended to serve as a starting point for conversations at the departmental and collegiate levels. President Sheerin suggested that survey response rates would rise if faculty and staff could be more fully informed regarding why it is in their best interests to complete the survey. Professor Farag commented

that her college created task forces after receiving the results of their last survey. The efforts of these task forces have led to improvement in the collegiate climate. Senior Director Martínez-Marrero observed that change takes time and more than one survey cycle may be needed before change occurs.

- *How to Communicate Mental Health Resources on Campus (Caroline Sheerin)*

President Sheerin explained that the President's Office had requested that all four shared governance groups consider this topic because there are many mental health resources on campus, but awareness of these resources seems to be lacking. Councilors briefly discussed this issue in small groups.

After the small group discussions, Councilors shared several ideas that they had generated. Recalling how employees used to receive a small financial reimbursement for completing their Personal Health Assessments, Councilors suggested that a similar reimbursement program be instituted for reading information about mental health resources on campus. The reimbursement could also take the form of a discount on a membership at the campus recreational centers. Another suggestion was to involve the Office of Strategic Communication in a publicity campaign to increase awareness of mental health services, especially considering that holistic well-being is a pillar of the university's strategic plan. Councilors also commented, however, that in their experiences, university and local mental health services were heavily used and even over-strained. Some concerns were raised regarding how and with whom Personal Health Assessment reports were shared. President Sheerin indicated that she would seek more information from administrators to determine what precipitated this request to the shared governance groups. Councilors praised the university's efforts to gather information about wellbeing in central locations, <https://hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being> and <https://wellbeing.uiowa.edu/>. They also advocated for the widespread availability of mental health services on campus.

- *President's Report (Caroline Sheerin)*

President Sheerin indicated that in the interest of time, the planned Councilor roundtable would be postponed until the next meeting. She reported that a joint shared governance event took place on September 24. Topics included diversity, mental health, and academic freedom. A similar event may take place in the spring, as well. Also, the last two academic freedom/free speech sessions are scheduled for October 14 and October 18. President Sheerin asked Councilors to encourage their colleagues to attend.

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

V. Announcements

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, October 29, 3:30 – 5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, November 19, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.

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VI. Adjournment – Professor Koch moved and Professor Shane seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously. President Sheerin adjourned the meeting at 5:15 pm.