

FACULTY COUNCIL
Tuesday, November 19, 2024
3:30 – 5:15 pm
Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre

MINUTES

Councilors Present: M. Abou Alaiwa, B. Ayati, L. Durairaj, A. Farag, N. Greyser, J. Koch, M. McQuistan, M. Schroeder, A. Shibli-Rahhal, C. Vogel.

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

Officers Excused: C. Just.

Councilors Excused: J. Gutierrez, J. Kline, J. Sa-Aadu, D. Shane.

Councilors Absent: R. Curto, C. McMillan, M. Santillan.

Guests: D. Clay (College of Education), M. Gardinier (Emeritus Faculty Council), L. Geist (Interim Vice President for Research and Office of the Provost), T. Villhauer (Division of Student Life), B. Walker (Governmental Relations Committee), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office).

I. Call to Order – President Sheerin called the meeting to order at 3:35 pm.

II. Approvals

- A. Meeting Agenda – Professor McQuistan moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- B. Faculty Council Minutes (October 8, 2024) – Professor Abou Alaiwa moved and Professor Greyser seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- C. Draft Faculty Senate Agenda (December 3, 2024) – President Sheerin indicated that changes may be made to the draft agenda prior to the Senate meeting. Professor Vogel moved and Professor Ayati seconded that the draft agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- D. Committee Appointments (Rodica Curtu, Chair, Committee on Committees) – Professor Abou Alaiwa moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the committee appointments be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
 - Amy Fletcher (Health & Human Physiology) to replace David Stewart (Mathematics) on the Council on Teaching, Spring 2025
 - Brian Andrews (Otolaryngology) to fill the unexpired term of Ali Jabbari (Dermatology) on the Faculty Senate, 2024-26
 - Hela Azaiez (Otolaryngology) to fill the unexpired term of Sarina Martini (Obstetrics/Gynecology) on the Faculty Senate, 2024-25
 - Jessica Goetz (Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation) to fill the unexpired term of Samuel Young (Anatomy & Cell Biology) on the Faculty Senate, 2024-25

- E. Faculty Senate Elections 2025 Vacancy Tally – President Sheerin explained that Faculty Senate approval of the vacancy tally is necessary before we can move ahead with our election process in the spring semester. Professor Koch moved and Professor Vogel seconded that the vacancy tally be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

III. New Business

- *Governmental Relations Committee Update (Beth Walker, Chair)*

Professor Walker explained that the charge of the Faculty Senate's Governmental Relations Committee (GRC) is to develop and improve the UI faculty's relationship with all governmental bodies. As the newly-appointed committee chair, Professor Walker recently discussed the role of the committee with the staff of the UI Office of Governmental Relations (Senior Advisor to the President and Vice President for External Relations Pete Matthes, Executive Director of Federal Relations Leanne Hotek, and Director of State Relations Keith Saunders). As the result of this discussion, a mutual vision emerged of the committee as a liaison between the Office of Governmental Relations (OGR) and the UI faculty. Professor Walker has begun meeting monthly with Director Hotek and Director Saunders to learn about current governmental issues at the federal and state levels and she will soon be convening the GRC on a monthly basis, as well. The GRC will then serve as a conduit of information to the Senate officers, the Faculty Senate, and the entire faculty. She emphasized that lobbying is *not* a function of the GRC.

Professor Walker asked Councilors for their thoughts on how to effectively convey the faculty voice to our legislators. She also asked if there were any types of events that Councilors would like the GRC to organize. A reception to thank our local elected officials for their service would be held on Wednesday, November 20, she noted. All Senators and GRC members are invited. Professor Walker and Vice President Matthes are scheduled to speak to the Senate on March 25, in the midst of the upcoming legislative session, regarding any proposed legislation impacting the university. President Sheerin encouraged Councilors to direct colleagues with concerns about governmental matters to Professor Walker and the GRC. Professor Vogel asked how the GRC would convey OGR perspectives on governmental activity to the faculty. President Sheerin noted that the Faculty Senate newsletter could be one means of communication with the faculty, in addition to visits to the Council and Senate by Professor Walker.

- *Mental Health on Campus (Tanya Villhauer, Assistant Dean, Wellbeing and Basic Needs, Dean of Students Office, Division of Student Life)*

President Sheerin reminded the group that at the [October 8 meeting](#), Councilors engaged in a robust conversation about mental health resources on campus. Some Councilors expressed concern that the currently available resources were insufficient or overstrained. President Sheerin then reached out to Assistant Dean Villhauer and invited her to today's meeting to address Councilors' concerns and to provide more information about mental health resources on campus. Assistant Dean Villhauer indicated that she works in three areas of student life: student wellness (education, prevention, and early intervention), basic needs (food pantry, clothing closet, emergency funds), and harm reduction (with a particular focus on alcohol harm reduction).

For the past few years, Assistant Dean Villhauer has been co-chairing the Well-Being and Mental Health Campus Collaborative with Joni Troester, Senior Assistant Vice President and Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer. The Collaborative was created by President Wilson in December 2021 and includes faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The group was charged with setting priorities to embed well-being into all aspects of campus; leading collaborations in research and partnerships; developing and communicating a framework to support employee and student success; ensuring strategies are inclusive and culturally responsive; and developing performance indicators and assessing progress. The Collaborative was later identified as the implementation team for the UI Strategic Plan 2022-27 goal of holistic well-being and success (*embed well-being and mental health into all aspects of campus culture to better support students, faculty, and staff*). As co-chairs of the Collaborative, Assistant Dean Villhauer focuses on students, while Senior Assistant Vice President Troester focuses on faculty and staff. Assistant Dean Villhauer emphasized that the Collaborative is not responsible for the actual work of fostering well-being and mental health, but that it brings together those engaged in this work across campus in order to facilitate a broad and holistic perspective.

There are four components of the community of care model for mental health support on campus, Assistant Dean Villhauer explained. These components are individual, interpersonal, campus community, and built environment. Addressing the individual component, she acknowledged that the university cannot counsel its way out of the current mental health crisis; the university simply cannot hire enough counselors. Besides, most individuals on campus do not need therapy. Instead, they need to learn coping skills and emotional management. Personal responsibility, accountability, and self-discovery of needs in order to foster growth are also important skills to acquire.

Professor Farag asked how information about campus mental health resources is disseminated to students. Assistant Dean Villhauer indicated that the new campus [well-being website](#) was rolled out this fall. The website has a search function, allowing users to search by audience, topic, and type. A [resource guide for responding to distress](#) was also created some years ago. Professor Farag noted that in her college, some information about mental health resources is included in course syllabi, but students often do not seem to notice it. She suggested that academic advisors, with whom students meet individually very early in their college careers, could also acquaint students with available mental health resources. Assistant Dean Villhauer commented that information about mental health resources often does not elicit much interest until one actually needs this information.

Vice President Curtu noted that a university app has recently been launched for students; perhaps information could be included there. Assistant Dean Villhauer responded that well-being resources are referenced in the app. Plans call for the app to continue to evolve and expand. ICON also includes links to well-being resources, she added. Past President Gillan wondered if the links in ICON could also appear in the ICON sites for individual courses. He observed that faculty members have been provided with standard email language that can be used to put students in distress in touch with the [Office of Student Care and Assistance](#). Assistant Dean Villhauer commented that students have certainly been visiting that office as a result of these email referrals.

Professor Greyser praised the holistic, supportive approach that the well-being website takes, with components on mental health and resilience; nutrition, movement, and physical health; relationships, community, and purpose; and basic needs, financial security, and personal safety. She added that faculty members can feel confident referring students to these resources. Professor Vogel commented that students could benefit from an adaptive website that presents information based on the responses to a series of prompts. She pointed out that students may not be aware of the specific resources they are seeking; the website could help guide them in the right direction so that they do not have to do all the work of discovery themselves. Professor Shibli-Rahhal added that the use of audience and topic tabs might also serve to initially guide time-pressed students quickly to the correct resources. Professor Farag asked how student input was sought in the development of the well-being website. Assistant Dean Villhauer responded that input was sought through numerous feedback sessions. Professor Schroeder observed that the mental health and resilience component of the well-being website does not appear to include resources specifically on resilience, which could be considered a foundation for sustaining many types of well-being. Assistant Dean Villhauer commented on the difficulty sometimes of finding terminology that is meaningful to students.

Professor Koch spoke positively of the [StrengthsFinder](#) inventory as a tool for self-discovery. Interim Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Faculty Geist, who was in the audience, commented that interpretation is essential to maximize the benefits of this inventory tool; unfortunately, it is not feasible to provide an appropriate level of interpretation to 30,000 students. Professor Koch indicated that, at one of her previous institutions, the assessment was successfully administered and interpreted for incoming students during orientation. Assistant Dean Villhauer added that the “growth mindset” concept is also a valuable tool for student self-discovery. Vice President Curtu asked if statistics were collected on usage of the well-being website. Assistant Dean Villhauer indicated that they were and that usage increases after publicity about the website, for example in *Iowa Now*. More refined usage data is necessary, however. Vice President Curtu suggested that student ambassadors or resident assistants publicize the website through social media. Peer-to-peer communication might be more impactful than university communication. Assistant Dean Villhauer expressed her thanks to Councilors for the many good ideas they offered today.

- *Councilor Discussion (engagement at Senate meetings)*

President Sheerin requested Councilors’ advice in raising attendance and participation rates in Faculty Senate meetings. She commented that the animated participation characteristic of Council meetings was difficult to replicate in the Senate. She added that she was also seeking ways to foster Senator engagement with Senate guests, who currently present useful and interesting information that elicits questions from Senators, but that does not always foster true dialogue. Professor Ayati observed that the Senate does not really engage in deliberations, as one might expect of a Senate. Most of the votes taken are on routine items such as the agenda. In his experience, the Senate serves more as a curated audience, rather than as a deliberative body, which likely contributes to the lack of dialogue. President Sheerin acknowledged this point, but also noted that when the Senate does deliberate, on a matter such as a proposed new or revised policy, that policy has gone through a lengthy process before arriving at the Senate. This process includes review and revision by the Senate’s Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee and

then review by the Faculty Council. The Senate is the last faculty-related step in the review process before the policy is passed on to administrators for final review and approval. Therefore, policies are typically a “finished product” by the time they reach the Senate and do not tend to precipitate much discussion. Professor Ayati commented that Senate committees could play more of an active role in formulating policies and other projects that eventually come to the Senate for approval, rather than merely reacting to administrator-proposed initiatives.

Professor Greyser suggested that a middle way be found between deliberating and serving as an audience. Perhaps speakers could be invited to pose questions that would be embedded in Senate agendas. These questions could form the starting point for a conversation about the issues that the speakers are currently facing in their corner of the institution, with Senators offering feedback from the faculty perspective. Professor Vogel commented that seeing the questions in advance would give Senators time to think about their feedback and would serve as an incentive to attend the meetings. Professor Shibli-Rahhal added that presenters could be reminded that Senators are working with students on a daily basis and have much insight to offer regarding campus problem solving. Professor Koch observed that when Senators have been given time on the agenda reserved for small group discussions, they have been eager to talk to each other. Professor McQuistan noted that one reason some faculty members join the Senate is to meet colleagues from across campus. Small group discussions facilitate this goal. Reusable name tags could help Senators remember with whom they interacted at the meetings.

In response to a question, the Senate officers recalled that attendance might have been better on Zoom (when meetings were held virtually during the pandemic), but that engagement suffered considerably in the virtual environment. President Sheerin acknowledged the challenges involved for the health science faculty on the west side of campus to regularly attend Senate meetings at the Old Capitol. She indicated that the Senate officers have been thinking of holding Senate meetings in a variety of locations, east and west, to facilitate attendance.

Professor Koch commented that, while she is excited to participate in shared governance through the Senate, other Senators may see their service as a necessary but undesirable task that other faculty members were able to avoid. Professor Shibli-Rahhal commented that Councilors have the satisfaction of knowing that their voices were heard when participating in shared governance during Council meetings; for Senators, however, the relevance of shared governance may be less apparent. Vice President Curtu suggested that the Senate be informed of Council activity. President Sheerin welcomed all of these ideas and encouraged Councilors to contact her if additional suggestions came to mind.

- *Dean Dan Clay, College of Education*

President Sheerin reminded the group that collegiate deans were occasionally invited to Council meetings to talk about issues relevant to faculty in their colleges. Dean Clay began his comments by thanking Councilors for their engagement in shared governance. He wondered if the concerns raised about engagement in the previous discussion had existed prior to the pandemic, or if this was a relatively new concern. He noted that deans across campus have experienced some challenges in re-building community after faculty and staff became acclimated to virtual interactions during the pandemic. For the last two years, the College of

Education has prioritized community-building for faculty and staff. For example, the college's Social and Wellness Committee has set up a tree of gratitude onto which "leaves" with notes of gratitude can be attached. Dean Clay commented that it is nice to read these notes, which reinforce the value of community for faculty, staff, and students.

Dean Clay acknowledged that in the past several years, there has been intense scrutiny of the K-12 education system. He reminded the group that students in the College of Education come from multiple states, with different laws and standards, and the college must prepare its students to teach in a variety of school systems. The college must also adhere to accreditation requirements. Professor Vogel commented that there has been heightened scrutiny of the work of librarians in recent years, as well. Perhaps the two fields could work together on pressing issues. President Sheerin noted that the September Senate meeting had featured presentations on academic freedom and freedom of speech. Dean Clay praised the thoughtful approach of leaders on our campus to speech-related issues. In response to a question, he indicated that the college's enrollment has substantially increased during the past decade, in spite of a nationwide decline in enrollment in teacher education programs.

The [Scanlon Center for School Mental Health](#) has been making an impact in K-12 schools across the state, Dean Clay continued. A sustainable plan for the Center is still being worked out, but it is unlikely that the demand for the Center's services will diminish anytime soon. Dean Clay noted that the [Macbride Nature Recreation Area](#) has been in the news lately. The College of Education currently oversees three educational programs (Iowa Wildlife Camps, School of the Wild, Iowa Raptor Project) which have historically been conducted at the recreation area. While the site is a beautiful place, it has numerous deferred maintenance issues, for which the College of Education is financially responsible. President Wilson has assembled a task force to consider how the recreation area supports the university's mission and what its long-term needs are. Recommendations are expected in the spring regarding the university's future involvement with the site.

- *Councilor Roundtable*

Councilors briefly shared news and concerns from their colleges. Professor Koch (Education) noted that her college also includes numerous counseling and other degree programs, in addition to the teacher preparation programs about which Dean Clay had mainly spoken. Students in these programs have been more frequently seeking advice from faculty members regarding how to deal with conflicts that may arise in the course of their work, particularly in the area of mental health counseling. Professor Durairaj and Professor Abou Alaiwa (Medicine) commented that staffing shortages continue to impact faculty in their college. This problem may become more acute as clinical expansion proceeds.

Community-building and engagement have been a focus at her college, Professor Farag (Nursing) reported. Recent strategies have included group discussions and a scavenger hunt. Two divisions were created in the college last year, necessitating a revision of bylaws to incorporate this new structure. Also, the college is working to align language about promotion and tenure for its three faculty tracks. An upcoming project will be the review of the college's

results from the Working at Iowa survey with the goal of determining what actions may be necessary to improve any areas of concern.

Professor Schroeder (Pharmacy) noted that her college has recently hired a new dean. One of the two departmental chairs is also new. The college just completed its accreditation site visit this fall, as well, and will begin work on a new strategic plan in the spring. Professor McQuistan (Dentistry) indicated that a poverty simulation was conducted earlier today for the college's students to have a better understanding of the challenges that their low-income patients face. The college is also making efforts to improve engagement, which is difficult considering everyone's busy schedules. Professor Greyser (Liberal Arts and Sciences) commented on the concerns she and her colleagues have about the collegiate budget. The college has also undertaken an enormous reorganization that involves the consolidation of numerous programs. Some faculty members have found this process to be highly unsettling. In spite of community-building efforts, a degree of friction is inevitable. But, Professor Greyser appreciated the efforts of collegiate leaders to carry out the reorganization effort in a collaborative, forward-looking manner that may lead to opportunities ahead.

Professor Ayati (Liberal Arts and Sciences) chose to speak about the [University Libraries Charter Committee](#), of which he is the chair this year. He suggested that shared governance could proactively involve itself in the issue of open access and open educational materials, particularly as colleges increasingly find themselves in the role of consumers of vended items while pursuing the university's teaching mission. Professor Vogel (Law) indicated that the search for the college's new dean has taken up much faculty attention lately. An interim dean has recently been named, thus allaying faculty concerns about leadership until a new dean is in place. Professor Shibli-Rahhal (Medicine) noted that her college's accreditation is coming up next year. The required self-study has just been completed, along with much data collection. This effort has precipitated a policy and bylaws review within the college. Regarding shared governance, the faculty executive committee has been empowered to take on more governance duties, with Faculty Senators perhaps playing a role in the executive committee going forward. Professor Shibli-Rahhal concluded her update by indicating that the dean has been doing some reorganization of the college's leadership structure lately.

- *President's Report (Caroline Sheerin)*

President Sheerin thanked Professor Ayati for his service during his one-semester term on the Council.

Because a major policy revision is expected to come before the Council and Senate next spring, Professor Sheerin gave Councilors a brief overview of the origins and focus of this revision. She explained that the revision is currently being developed by a working group, meeting bi-weekly since May, that includes representatives from the Office of the Provost, the Office of the General Counsel, the Faculty Senate, and the Senate's Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee. The policy under review is the university Policy Manual's [faculty section](#), which covers academic freedom, hiring, and promotion and review. The policy's current language is dated and the sections are disjointed and repetitive.

There are several key proposed changes to the policy, President Sheerin continued. A restructured introduction would account for all faculty tracks (the policy was written when only the tenure track existed) and make definitions consistent. Streamlined language would rid the policy of extraneous and duplicative phrasing. Sections covering post-tenure review and peer review would be revised to clarify review process, required documentation, and possible performance improvement plans. A handout provided to Councilors gave a more detailed overview of the origins and focus of the proposed changes.

President Sheerin went on to indicate that the Senate officers have been working with central administrators on a review of executive search processes.

Vice President Curtu commented that she has been involved in the search for faculty members to staff a [faculty investigative unit](#), to be housed within the Office of the Provost. Working with the Associate Provost for Faculty and the Office of Employee and Labor Relations, these faculty investigators would collect information on alleged faculty violations of the [Professional Ethics and Academic Responsibility](#) policy. The faculty investigators would *not* participate in conflict mediation or decision-making related to alleged violations. In response to a question, Interim Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Faculty Geist explained that the creation of the faculty investigative unit (FIU) had come about because of the high number of alleged violations with which she has had to deal. She has relied upon the colleges to carry out these investigations, but the FIU would introduce needed consistency and efficiency into the investigative process.

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

V. Announcements

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, December 3, 3:30 – 5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, January 28, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.

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