

Faculty Senate Minutes of Meeting

Regularly scheduled meeting of the Faculty Senate of Rochester Institute of Technology

Thursday, December 7, 2023 12:15 – 1:50 PM Campus Center Bamboo Rooms 2610/2650

Attendance: See Below

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order; A. Newman (12:16)
Meeting called to order.
Agenda Item No. 2: Approval of Agenda; A. Newman (12:16)
Motion: S. Johnson Seconded: A. Abushagur Approved by acclamation
Agenda Item No. 3: Communication Officer's Report/Approval of Minutes for the meeting of 11/2/23; S. Aldersley (12:17)
Motion: S. Aldersley Seconded: P. Kincheloe Approved by acclamation November 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes
Agenda Item No. 4: Executive Committee Report; A. Newman (12:19)

- The ExComm has released the hold on the 12/14 meeting
- In November, the Provost's Office began to assemble a Steering Committee for the Middle States Accreditation process. The process is expected to take two years. We will be asking for faculty volunteers to participate in the process in the coming days.
- The COACHE Survey results have been received. Three members of the Senate Executive Committee were on the steering committee charged with administering the survey. A schedule is currently being prepared to report on the results of the survey, first to the deans and subsequently to the Senate.
- Two vendors have been selected as finalists for the replacement of the ORACLE Management System
- The Board of Trustees met on 11/9, when President Munson reported that RIT enjoyed a \$40 million surplus for the fiscal year just passed. Shortly afterwards the Executive Committee met with President Munson to learn more details of the surplus and how it was used. Our understanding is that when there is a surplus most of the money goes to fund one-time expenditures that were ear-marked off budget in earlier parts of the year. Most of the surplus has now been distributed. Some went to cover over-budget costs for refurbishing the dorms, a good portion went to NTID, and there were sundry other beneficiaries including the contingency fund. About a week later, we met with Dr. Watters where we got more detailed information about the budget decision-making process. We pushed for more transparency and a seat at the table. Dr. Watters said he was open to renewing the budget hearings process that was discontinued pre-COVID.
- The Executive Committee has continued to meet with the individual colleges and we thank the senators who have helped facilitate those meetings.

Agenda Item No. 5: Staff Council Update; B. Strowe (12:24)

- Staff Council is working with Human Resources on revising the organizational architecture of staff positions, including restructure of career paths, career ladders and employment opportunities for staff members to advance within the institution. A pilot process is being implemented within ITS in January.
- The Council has also partnered with HR to establish new management training and leadership development programs to begin in January.
- FMS and HR are currently working together to recruit staff for many open positions that RIT, in common with many other local organizations, has been struggling to fill. Options that are being looked at include facilitating transportation from downtown to campus as well as automation opportunities.
- We are meeting today with the director of Athletics, Jacqueline Nicholson, to hear about updates in her area and finally, we are looking forward to hearing from Council subcommittees in January with updates on their plans of work.

Agenda Item No. 6: Student Government Update; J. Long (12:27)

- We have half dozen guests we have invited to come to campus next semester.
- Most importantly we have run out of our entire yearly supply of popcorn, which has

nearly tripled in price.

Agenda Item No. 7: Provost Introduction; P. David (12:29)

P. David: I think our student representative captured it very well: prices have quadrupled and there is no money left for anything!

- First, I would like to thank senators for taking on this service, which is uniquely an academic responsibility. All the time and effort is much appreciated.
- This is almost the end of my first semester at RIT and I have learned a lot from college visits, and other community stakeholders, alumni, staff, students and faculty, and my emphasis has been to understand what RIT's collective goals and aspirations are, and what I can do to push them forward. I'd like to make two points. First is we should put people first. People often ask me what is the goal, what would I like to see three, five years from now, ranking, success, all those things are very important, but my overarching principle is to ask – is RIT a place where people enjoy coming to work and to study? That may seem like a lofty goal, but I think if we work on some of the underlying factors, it should be achievable.
- One of the things that has come up over the last few months is student success, but student success cannot be achieved in isolation. So I think the first charge we have to take on collectively as a community is to understand from the data and the climate on campus, what we can do to make a difference. The results from the COACHE survey which was mentioned already indicate that we have much work to do, but there are silver linings in the survey results – RIT has a lot of social capital, faculty like their colleagues and believe Rochester is a wonderful place to be with plenty of opportunities for fulfilling work. But there is a lot of work to do in various dimensions, such as compensation and workload policy, clarity in promotion and tenure, and changing expectations over the years regarding research.
- Second, there is the budget. The ABB model that has been proposed is a very good idea, but we cannot use just a pure formula. We need to include more metrics, such as workload. Also, a program may be small but important for our strategic objectives or small and highly ranked. We need to consider that sort of thing. A formula has to be both quantitative and qualitative.
- Finally, I recently came back from India where I visited some key collaborators with some of our faculty and graduate students. What's happening in AI is mind-boggling in China, in India and of course in the US. This is a time to take on the challenge of AI with a sense of urgency. When I think of AI, I see it in three separate dimensions. One is research & innovation. We already do that, but we have to be aware that everyone all over the world is doing that, so we have to make available some additional incentives, free up some time, make some investments, that will induce faculty to really focus on making progress in the AI domain. The second is thinking about AI in teaching and instruction. We have to be innovative and think about the various ways we might use AI broadly in instruction. Again, all universities around the world are doing that but what makes RIT unique, I think, is the quality of our faculty and students, who are already tech-savvy. I believe we have an opportunity to think about RIT as a living learning laboratory for AI, and I call this the experiential dimension. So when students come here, in addition to the usual instruction and research in AI, we should be thinking about new

opportunities to exploit AI. It's not just the technology, but, from an ethical point of view, how it affects us as humans, its effects for example on employment, privacy and data protection. So I think creating a living, learning environment around AI would be a fun way to set RIT apart

A. Newman: Any questions?

I. Puchades: Thank you for that introduction. I think that AI is important but we cannot forget that there are a lot of other things that we do on this campus that could benefit from AI but maybe not. I work with microchips and sensors and hardware. I could use AI as a tool to help me make some decisions, but not necessarily with fabrication. I would benefit from having a little bit more time to think about those kinds of issues. AI is great, but it should not be the only focus. The students also have been a little bit overwhelmed with AI, it may not always be in their interest. It's important to keep that perspective.

P. David: I agree we have many areas where we need to make investments unrelated to AI.

M. Anselm: We need to make sure that we continue to require academic rigor and we need to be careful how we integrate AI into our courses. I feel like we might be taking away our emphasis on having the students learn the material for themselves and I'm nervous about that.

P. David: I think that nervousness is well-placed.

J. Long: I have a few thoughts about AI and its integration at RIT. When ChatGPT first came out and the university started to talk about it, students in the main used it primarily as a tool to help them while being wary of over-trusting it. In one of my classes, the professor had students ask ChatGPT a question and then evaluate its response in terms of how well it might help to solve engineering problems.

J. Capps: Can you talk more about where the \$40 million surplus came from and where it went and whether it will trickle down to for example faculty travel budgets. You know our travel budget is now half of what it was before COVID.

P. David: I would speculate that the surplus came from the slight increase in enrollment that we experienced last year and left-over COVID funds. You recall that during the pandemic we were being quite frugal. As to where it went, I really don't know other than a lot of it was previously earmarked. I do know that some travel money has been restored. My office acts largely as a pass-through operation. Almost all the money that comes into Academic Affairs is distributed to the colleges. My office received \$800,000 which is not really a meaningful increase in funding. I know the President is looking at salary enhancements and other kinds of things.

R. Zanibbi: When we talk about AI we should make a distinction between applying a model and building a model. When you build a model you don't want to be using ChatGPT to avoid learning how to evaluate the assumptions that need to be considered. The other thing I wanted to say is that lack of travel funds and resources militates against scholarship and support for graduate students. If the Administration wants to pursue these goals, they should realize that they need to provide the resources that faculty need to pursue them.

P. David: I agree and full restoration of travel budgets is my primary budgetary goal. With regard to AI, I am not advocating for a blind approach to its use. But if you look at the internet and social media, both amazing breakthroughs, we in academia had very little say in how they were shaped. Instead they were developed according to the principles of market economics and by the time academia had realized what was happening, it was too late. With AI, I am hoping

that academia can be agents of change by identifying both its potential and its perils earlier on in its development rather than simply going with the flow.

Agenda Item No. 8: Informal Report by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom; M. Reed (12:54) *Presentation linked below*

C. Reed: I'm here today to give an informational report on what the committee has done so far, where we're going and to ask for your help. We had a little bit of a slow start this semester but we're rolling now. The main point in our charge is to review existing RIT policies and make recommendations as to how those might change given today's climate. I think the charge was motivated by a couple of things, one being that we are required to review policies on a regular basis and the second being the fact that faculty may feel vulnerable in the current political climate to external attacks on academic freedom. We began by reviewing existing policy (E.02, C.11 & a separate document on Freedom of Speech and Expression Procedures) and previous COACHE surveys, the most recent one that we had access to being 2019 where faculty registered pretty strong sentiment that academic freedom is one of the strengths at RIT, but of course that was a long time ago. We've discussed some past issues that were known to our committee members and what the RIT response was, which generally seems to have been quite good, though in one case a little slow. Part of our charge is to develop guidelines so that responses can happen faster. Although we may know about some things that are going on, we don't know everything so we want to poll the faculty on what concerns they may have in their individual colleges so we've developed a short survey and I'd like to ask for your help in encouraging your constituents to respond so that we can start looking at the results at the beginning of next semester. One issue that came up yesterday is that when we were reviewing C.11, we realized that the 'owner' of C.11 is the Office of Legal Affairs and so our question is, can we make recommendations on revising it? As for ongoing work, Bob Finnerty, who is a member of our committee, shared with us the existing guidelines and talking points used by his office when a controversial issue comes up. We are also reviewing external resources, such as the Chicago Statement. We plan to compare our current policies with the Chicago Statement to see if they are consistent and we may be making a recommendation that RIT should adopt the Statement. Finally, our goal is to have a final report to you with recommendations by the end of the year.

S. Aldersley: Would you like to comment on the language of the charge which says that the Committee's report may lead to a recommendation of the Senate to University Council to form a Working Group to "propose guidelines and procedures regarding the University's response to attacks on academic freedom. . . ."

M. Reed: The committee agrees that it might be a good idea to establish such a working group to handle routine matters that may arise related to academic freedom since we don't have anything like that at the moment, and that will likely be one of our recommendations.

[Informal Report but the Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 9: FAC Charges; C. Schlombs (1:04) *Presentation linked below*

C. Schlombs: I'm here to present a very concrete and detailed policy change proposal to you in response to a charge that the FAC received regarding access to documents at the end of the mid-tenure process. It appears that this access has been handled differently across different colleges. I'd like to start with a short review of the mid-tenure process. It's important to keep in mind that the mid-tenure review is a formative process, in other words, its goal is for the candidate to receive feedback to help them strengthen their portfolio as they work towards going up for tenure. It's also an internal review process (no external letters). The candidate submits their portfolio and the tenured department members and the chair review it and write their own letters. Those then go to the college tenure committee which reviews and summarizes the material in a way that preserves anonymity. All the material then goes to the dean of the college, who writes a letter after which the provost writes a letter. So under consideration in this charge is the question of the candidate's access to the four letters, those written by the committee, the department chair, the dean and the provost. Since the goal of the process is formative, the committee finds that it is extremely important that the candidate have access to the letters. We believe that these letters might be seen as equivalent to receiving a peer review of an article you have submitted for publication. The charge singled out one college, but our committee discussion indicates that there have been growing inconsistencies among the colleges, and even within colleges, regarding this question of access, such that some candidates get copies of these letters and others don't. This situation creates unfairness and is highly problematic from our point of view. Finally, we also found through our discussion that the terminology of access may, in itself, be problematic. A definition of the word can be found in policy E.31, access to personnel documents. Thus, E.31 specifies that the access that a tenure committee has to a tenure file is limited to the period of time designated for review of the file. So, using that definition lends itself to a more narrow definition of access that we find is not appropriate for application in the mid-tenure review process. Having reviewed all this, the FAC recommends that Senate replace the word 'access' in the relevant section of E.5 with the phrase 'provide the candidate with unredacted copies . . . which the candidate is permitted to retain indefinitely for their personal records.' Implicit in this change we are proposing is that both hard copies and electronic copies, as long as they are unredacted, would be acceptable. The FAC has unanimously approved recommending such a change. We ran this new language by the deans who did not question it, and the Office of Legal Affairs has also seen it. (*See presentation slide #9 showing proposed language modifying E.5, including the obligation upon the dean to provide the letters to the candidate.*) In order to be consistent with this change, two further changes in the policy language would be required (*See presentation slides #s10 & 11*). The FAC would like to eventually make a motion to approve these recommendations but for the time being, I wanted to ask Senate if you have any questions or feedback.

S. Aldersley: Thank you, Corrina, for this motion. I think it's way past time that this change be adopted by the Senate. I don't understand how it can have gone this long with the inconsistencies that you pointed out and so I would actually like to push this forward.

S. Malachowsky: A question about the use of the word 'unredacted.' Wouldn't the word 'original' be more appropriate?

C. Schlombs: The letters provided by the tenured faculty will not be provided to the candidate. Those are the letters that are summarized in the letter written by the tenure committee. What we mean by 'unredacted' is that the four letters I have described will not be changed in any way.

S. Malachowsky: But in the current process, nothing is redacted, that's why 'original' might be a more accurate word.

C. Schlombs: OK.

I. Puchades: I'd like to play devil's advocate so that we look at all the angles. What was the original rationale in limiting access? Were there privacy concerns? For example, the fact that the department head is also a member of the faculty and may be rotating, which might create some animosity?

C. Schlombs: I was aware that these discussions were happening at Senate ten or twelve years ago but I was not present when the current language was approved. There seems to be some concern about privacy, and it is true that there are a lot of personalities involved. The department may be small, seven or eight faculty, so there could be a lot found in these letters which would not be the best idea to be made public. That might have been the original reasoning. But we were not charged to look into whether any other material should be made available.

J. Faber: I agree with Stephen that this is long overdue. As a current school head and a former member of the tenure committee, it's been a long-standing source of frustration that our letters have not been provided to the candidate.

M. Laver: The reason why these letters were not provided to the candidate before was that the purpose of these letters as that was construed was to inform the provost as to the progress of a candidate towards tenure. The provost would then take those letters, write a summary and give that to the candidate at the end of the mid-tenure review process. The other letters were never intended for the candidate. They were for the provost. I'm not saying whether that is right or wrong, just that that was the reason.

M. Anslem: I'd like to speak as the devil's advocate against the devil's advocate. I recognize that there might be personnel changes within a department, but as a mid-tenure review candidate, I want to know what the results of the review are so that I know what I need to work on.

J. Lanzafame: Just for clarification, this does not change the access portion of the policy. It just clarifies the meaning of that access.

A. Newman: Do we want to vote on this right now, or do you want to go back to your constituents before voting?

B. Thomas: I would like to vote but propose a friendly amendment to change the language in the recommendation from 'unredacted' to 'original'.

C. Schlombs: I do not see any problem with accepting that as a friendly amendment.

H. Ghazle: Are you making a motion to approve this change?

C. Schlombs: I assumed that your procedure is to hear a recommendation at one meeting and vote on it at the next.

A. Newman: We do it both ways, depending on whether the recommendation is controversial or not.

M. Laver: I move to caucus. I would like to meet with the senators from my college.

A. Newman: There being no objections to the motion, we will now caucus for five minutes.

There followed a 5-minute caucus.

A. Newman: Corinna, would you like to formally move acceptance of your motion?

C. Schlombs: So moved.

A. Newman: Is there any further discussion?

Motion approved unanimously.

[FAC Charges Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 10: Revision to D01.1 Minors Policy; H. Nickisher (1:35) *Presentation linked below*

H. Nickisher: This is a self-charge that is being carried over. Two years ago, we identified a small discrepancy in language in the minor revision policy. D.1 Section III defines what constitutes a significant change that requires ICC approval whereas Section IV ‘Minors Policy’ does not. We felt that the language needs to be tightened after we noticed that there were some changes to a minor in one college that probably should have come back to ICC regarding what are ‘significant changes’ in the minor’s focus. We are looking for consistency of language between the two policies and we would like to make a motion to approve this addition to Section IV (*shown in slide #5 of presentation*).

D. Johnson: When I read the blue text that you are recommending, it seems like any change I might make with regard to courses that count for a minor I would have to come back to ICC. For example, if I take an elective away because the course isn’t offered any more, or if I add a new elective, under this language I would have to come back to ICC. Could we perhaps say “major changes”?

H. Nickisher: Then we would have to define what ‘major’ means.

J. Faber: Could we just strike ‘number of available electives’ from the blue text that you are proposing in the motion?

H. Nickisher: Are you proposing a friendly amendment?

J. Faber & D. Johnson: Sure.

H. Nickisher: Accepted.

Motion approved 30:0:3

[ICC Charge Presentation](#)

Agenda Item 11: New Business; A. Newman (1:45)

B. Thomas: I would like to bring up an issue with ITS. Two years ago I could be anywhere in the world and log on to my office computer to access my files, for example, to download my lecture notes onto my laptop. But now I am unable to do that and I don't understand why. Now I have to copy the files from my hard drive all the time and go back and forth. I think for a technical institution, this should not be the case. Last Monday, I forgot my files. I had to walk back to my office to copy the folder. When I got back, I realized that I had copied the wrong folder. I couldn't go back a second time.

A. Newman: Does anyone else have a similar issue? This is something we can look into. It does bring up the other issue that a lot of people have raised regarding google drive access. This is something we have brought to the provost's and president's attention and they have said they would look into it and get back to us.

In the time remaining, I know there were some questions about the \$40 million surplus. If I look at my notes from our meeting with Dr. Watters, the surplus came about not only because of a slightly higher enrollment but also because our retention improved. Dr. Watters said the \$13.3 million went to NTID, \$10 million of which went into their endowment. \$21.7 million went to Auxiliaries, dining, dorms, and a variety of categories under FMS, which left about \$5 million for the general operating budget. They also added \$1.3 million to Marketing. Other than that, we informed Dr. Watters that there is no obvious channel for faculty to tell the Administration when classrooms are falling apart, and he suggested that the Center for Teaching & Learning should be able to help by collecting information and taking it forward.

Agenda Item No. 12: Adjournment; A. Newman (1:51)

Attendance 12/7/2023

Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended	Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended
Abushagur, Mustafa	KGCOE Senator	X	Lanzafame, Joseph/LRPEC and ASSAC Rep	COS Senator	X
Adrion, Amy	ALT CAD Senator		Lapizco-Encinas, Blanca	KGCOE Senator	X
Aldersley, Stephen	Communications Officer/ SOIS Senator	X	Laver, Michael	CLA Senator	x
Anselm, Martin	CET Senator	X	Lee, James	ALT CET Senator	
Bamonto, Suzanne	CLA Senator	X	Liu, Manlu	SCB Senator	

Barone, Keri	Treasurer/CLA Senator	X	Malachowsky, Samuel	Vice Chair/ GCCIS Senator	X
Boedo, Stephen	ALT KGCOE Senator		McCalley, Carmody	COS Senator	
Brown, Tamaira	Senate Coordinator		McLaren, Amy	CAD Senator	x
Butler, Janine	NTID Senator	X	Newman, Atia	Chair/CAD Senator	X
Capps, John	CLA Senator	X	Newman, Dina/DEIC Rep	COS Senator	X
Chiavaroli, Julius	ALT GIS Senator		Olabisi, Joy	SCB Senator	
Chung, Sorim	ALT SCB Senator		Olles, Deana	COS Senator	
Crawford, Denton	CAD Senator		Olson, Rob	ALT GCCIS Senator	
Cromer, Michael	ALT COS Senator		O'Neil, Jennifer	ALT CET Senator	
Cui, Feng	ALT COS Senator		Osgood, Robert	ALT CHST Senator	
David, Prabu	Provost	X	Puchades, Ivan	KGCOE Senator	X
Davis, Stacey	ALT NTID Senator	X	Ray, Amit	CLA Senator	X
Deese, Frank	CAD Senator	X	Ross, Annemarie	NTID Senator	X
Dell, Betsy	CET Senator	X	Shaaban, Muhammad	ALT KGCOE Senator	
DiRisio, Keli	CAD Senator	X	Sheffield, Jr. Clarence	ALT SOIS Senator	
Dye, Matt	ALT NTID Senator		Song, Qian	SCB Senator	
Eddingsaas, Nathan/RSC Rep	COS Senator	X	Staff Council Rep	Brendon Strowe	X
Faber, Joshua	COS Senator	X	Student Government Rep	Jake Long	X
Fillip, Carol	ALT CAD Senator		Thomas, Bolaji	CHST Senator	X
Ghazle, Hamad	Operations Officer/CHST Senator	X	Tobin, Karen	NTID Senator	
Ghoneim, Hany	KGCOE Senator		Tsouri, Gill	KGCOE Senator	X
Hardin, Jessica	ALT CLA Senator		Ulin, Robert	CLA Senator	Excused
Hazelwood, David	NTID Senator	X	Van Aardt, Jan	ALT COS Senator	

Hsieh, Jerrie	ALT SCB Senator		Warp, Melissa	ALT CAD Senator	
Jadamba, Basca	COS Senator	X	Weeden, Elissa	GCCIS Senator	
Johnson, Dan	CET Senator	X	White, Phil	ALT GCCIS Senator	
Johnson, Scott	GCCIS Senator	X	Williams, Eric	GIS Senator	
Kincheloe, Pamela	NTID Senator	X	Worrell, Tracy	ALT CLA Senator	X
Kiser, Larry	GCCIS Senator	X	Zanibbi, Richard	GCCIS Senator	X
Krutz, Daniel	ALT GCCIS Senator		Zlochow, Yosef	COS Senator	X
Kuhl, Michael	KGCOE Senator	X			

Standing Committee(s) Represented: ASSAC, DEIC, LRPEC and RSC

Interpreters: Nic Crouse-Dickerson and Jennifer Mura

Student Assistant: Lee Cornell

Presenters: Mary Lynn Reed, Corinna Schlombs, Heidi Nickisher