

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
September 9, 2020*

The complete Recording for this meeting can be found at:

<https://myau.american.edu/groups/Committee/fs/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Present: Professors: John Heywood, Garret Martin, Karen Baehler, Laura Beers, Randall Blair, Mike Cabot, Elizabeth Cotter, Todd Eisenstadt, David Haaga, Robert Hauswald, Olivia Ivey, Kelly Joiner, Benjamin Leff, Stacey Marien, Tom Merrill, Lillian Baeza-Mendoza, Mirjana Morosini, Hannah Park, Carolyn Parker, Britta Peterson, Jennifer Poole, Rick Semiatin, Richard Sha, Cathy Schaeff, April Shelford, Jason Snyder, Jennifer Steele, Laurie Stepanek, Brian Yates, Acting Provost Peter Starr, Interim DOF Monica Jackson

The Meeting was called to order at 2:30pm

Chair's Report – John Heywood

Professor Heywood welcomed everyone to the first Senate meeting of the year. He provided the Senators with the Zoom meeting format, tips and expectations.

Approval of the Minutes

Professor Heywood opened the floor for the discussion of the May 5, 2020, July 24, 2020 and August 11, 2020 minutes. The Senate **VOTED** 20-0-2 for May, 19-0-4 for July and 22-0-1 for August.

Professor Heywood provided a brief update on the joint Provost/Faculty Senate ad hoc group, chaired by Professor Brian Yates, which is focused on Intellectual Property and copyright. Just before the semester started, this joint group put out a statement to reassure faculty and to correct the record regarding an academic policy FAQ, which had inaccurately suggested changes in AU's intellectual property policy. This FAQ has since then been amended. Moving forward, the joint Provost/Faculty Senate ad hoc group will review AU's intellectual property policy, and not solely issues related to copyright.

Professor Heywood informed the Senators that periodically, the Chair receives email notifications regarding policy changes proposed by AU's administration and with a very short window for review. In some cases, these policy changes have little to no impact on faculty; but occasionally, they are relevant to colleagues.

Professor Heywood outlined a plan for review. He proposed that if the proposals have impact on faculty, he will first reach out to the Executive Committee to determine whether the full Senate needs to be involved. In cases where the policy changes clearly affect faculty, as in the recent non-

Title IX discrimination policy, the Chair will automatically circulate the draft to the full Senate for input.

Professor Heywood noted that the Office of General Counsel recently approached the Chair regarding some of the ambiguous language in the disciplinary action sections of the Faculty Manual, namely sections 20, 21, and 22. He stated that soon he will establish an inclusive and thorough working group to review and clarify these sections.

Provost's Report – Peter Starr

Acting Provost Peter Starr that it is critical to have faculty involvement in the conversations regarding AU's budgetary situation. He added that he hoped that the faculty understood the trade-offs that came with the various alternatives, as well as the efforts of the administration to be transparent.

Provost Starr reminded all that there are different perspectives for faculty and staff when it comes to comparing furloughs to temporary salary cuts. He also emphasized that he was supportive of a progressive approach if AU had to resort to further temporary salary cuts in the future and he reiterated that these were ongoing discussions.

He also touched upon the fact that AU had felt that it was important, and reinforced by a push by a group of faculty, to continue to pay the health benefits and retirement contribution of the contract workers and housekeeping staff, who are employed by Chartwell and Aramark, for the rest of the spring semester. AU is now continuing to cover only the health benefits of Chartwell and Aramark employees, and not their retirement contributions.

Provost Start then discussed the upcoming process of reappointment for term faculty. Previously, AU tried to review all multi-year reappointment files, and a majority of single year files, in the Fall. This will be more challenging this year and the Provost believes that it will be more realistic to review single-year files after census in the spring semester, which typically happens in February (census date is the moment when the enrolment will be considered finalized for the semester). He will also push to review as many multi-year files as possible in the Fall, since this makes sense from a workload point of view and to help program coordinators.

Provost Starr reminded all that there were no promotion freezes in the Spring 2020 semester and he believes promotions should also go ahead this present academic year. Second, when the hiring freeze for faculty is lifted, it could make sense to first focus on targets of opportunity hiring, especially from under-represented minority groups to increase the diversity of the faculty body and support the anti-racist work of AU. Finally, he hopes the new Associate Dean of Faculty, to succeed Nuria Vilanova, should be announced soon.

University Budget Presentation Discussion - John Heywood & Garret Martin

Professor Heywood mentioned that the Faculty want to be more anticipatory, and not simply reactive, when it comes to major challenges created by the Covid pandemic. The Faculty is keen to work with the Provost's office so to raise the profile of academic affairs in key university discussions and is determined to be consulted on the University's budget process. After reflection, Professor Heywood decided that it would be best to organize forward planning discussions in the Executive

Committee. Doing so would provide a confidential body, and it would be easy to work closely with the Full Senate.

The Senate then engaged in an open discussion that touched upon many key subjects, including:

- The concern about the timelines for term faculty reappointments.
- The importance of progressive reductions if the University must resort to salary cuts in the future.
- The uncertainty regarding student retention and enrollment in the future, and what that might mean for single year reappointment for term faculty.
- The great anxiety experienced by many faculty, balancing personal challenges and the pressure of offering excellent teaching online.
- The possibilities of using the Summer 2021 semester to entice and attract the students who deferred during this academic year. Ironically, the Covid pandemic offers an opportunity to regularize summer teaching.
- The plan to officialize the timeline for term faculty reappointment within two weeks.
- The likelihood that AU will decide by late October/early November as to its teaching modality in the spring.
- The importance of transparent communication as a form of direct care and attention for the faculty and the wider AU community.
- The general profile of students who have either deferred or are taking medical leave during this academic year. On this subject, Dean Waters provided an update on all the initiatives currently implemented to engage with deferred students and their parents.

Discussion of a Faculty Senate Statement

Professor Heywood then discussed a proposed statement drafted by the Senate leadership. The statement seeks to a) thank President Burwell and the senior administrators for their significant efforts in managing the crisis and seeking community input; and b) clearly state to President Burwell and senior administrators that faculty are ready and willing to be involved and consulted in the key discussions that lie ahead as AU navigates the pandemic.

During the discussion, Senators suggested restoring pension contributions as a topic of consideration in the statement. The Faculty Senate **VOTED** 24-0-1 in favor with the friendly amendment.

A Statement from the American University Faculty Senate

In this time of pandemic and uncertainty, we want to express our thanks to President Burwell and the senior administrators for their herculean efforts to manage this crisis and further the mission of American University. Since the crisis began, they have protected jobs and lives while taking significant reductions in their own salaries. We are proud to be a part of an academic community that values all of its members and shares necessary sacrifices equitably.

We welcome the administration's wide-ranging effort to gather community input about how to generate savings given the financial pressures facing the university. This week's presentations to the

Faculty Senate and Executive Committee, program chairs and directors, and the whole school community, and the discussions that followed, were informative and we appreciate the trust and transparency shown to faculty. The Faculty Senate will collect comments and suggestions from faculty who wish to contribute to the ongoing discussion while remaining anonymous. We encourage the deans to set up similar communication channels through which their own faculty may submit comments and questions anonymously as well.

The voice and perspective of the faculty, with our long-term investment in the institution and student-facing academic roles, are vitally important to the effort to retain students and reduce costs. We are keen to actively participate in more specific discussions about alternatives as they arise, including topics such as:

- temporary salary reductions versus furloughs
- constant versus progressive approaches to salary reductions or furloughs
- continued extension of health benefits for contract workers
- processes and timetables for determining term faculty contract renewal
- future restoration of the retirement contribution match
- future lifting of hiring and promotion freeze

We hope the administration will communicate and consult with faculty broadly and the Faculty Senate specifically as early as possible in these vital discussions. The faculty are ready and willing to play our part in addressing the very serious financial challenges posed by the pandemic.

Adopted by the Faculty Senate on 9 September 2020.

For the Good of the Order

Professor Stepanek alerted the Senate to a nonpartisan campaign seeking to increase voter turnout for the 2020 election. The campaign invites faculty to either make attendance to their class on November 3 optional or to pre-record their class.

Professor John Heywood adjourned the meeting at 4.00pm.