Faculty Senate Meeting
March 25, 2020
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Senate Meeting Agenda (and actions taken):
1. Call to Order
2. Announcements
   a. Update on remote course delivery for Spring 2020
   b. New Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policies
3. Report of Officers and Standing Committees (None)
4. Working Group Reports (None)
5. Unfinished Business (None)
6. New Business
   a. Motion on graduation accommodations due to Spring 2020 course disruptions (APPROVED AS AMENDED)
   b. Motion for academic relief in Spring 2020 (APPROVED AS AMENDED)
   c. Motion to move final grade deadline for Spring 2020 degree candidates (APPROVED)
   d. Motion to approve proposal for a Professional Masters in Applied Chemical Sciences (APPROVED)
   e. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Change Earth Science (ESCI) Major Name to Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences (EEPS) and Re-align Areas of Specialization (APPROVED)
   f. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Create a New Departmental EEPS (a.k.a. ESCI) Minor (APPROVED)
   g. Motion to Approve the Proposal for an Interdisciplinary Minor in African and African American Studies (includes sunsetting of current African Studies minor) (APPROVED)
   h. Motion to Approve the Proposal for a Bachelor of Science (BS) Degree with a Major in Statistics (APPROVED)
7. Adjourn


Senators absent: Sergio Chavez, Dennis Cox, Rob Raphael, Ray Simar

PROCEEDINGS
(To listen to an audio tape of this meeting, email senate@rice.edu.)

1. Call to Order
   Speaker Chris Johns-Krull called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.
2. Announcements
   a. Update on remote course delivery for Spring 2020
      Johns-Krull said it had been a fairly dramatic few weeks and everyone had been working very hard to
shift to remote course delivery. He invited President Leebron to speak. Leebron said the response of the faculty had been extraordinary and he wanted to express his appreciation to faculty. He said the feedback he got was very positive. He thanked the Crisis Management Team who had been studying and responding to the growing pandemic since January. He said it was a really critical time for people to stay at home if they could and only come to campus for essential functions. President Leebron said admissions decisions would begin going out on that Friday. He said there were a lot of concerns on the horizon, including how the current situation would impact the admissions “yield” rate and the response of admitted international students. He said in addition to the health crisis there was a financial crisis and while exact figures were not available yet, the university endowment looked to be down somewhere around 17 percent. He said it would require the university to think very carefully about the budget and take appropriate measures. He said they were guided by a set of principles, including protecting the staff. He said what differentiated the pandemic from other challenges the university faced in the past was the uncertainty.

Caroline Levander, Chair of the Online Course Delivery Working Group, thanked the faculty for their remarkable effort. She said that in the past few weeks, over 1900 courses had shifted to an online format. She said the faculty needs assessment was integral to their working group’s efforts. She said there were school-specific trainings and those were followed up with one-on-one training. She said the first few days of remote learning were a success but they recognized that challenges would continue to arise and the group would continue to be available to support faculty.

Senator Gwen Bradford asked who faculty should contact with questions about parameters or guidelines or for tips and techniques regarding online instruction. Levander said online.rice.edu is a good resource and the help extension is 8700. She said the IT number is 4949, and she would take emails personally as well. Dagmar Beck asked if the university expected fall delivery to be online. Leebron answered that it was too early to make that decision. He said the possibilities could include an online format or a delayed start for the semester. He said the Senate Executive Committee would be consulted in making decisions about future calendar adjustments.

b. New Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policies

Chief Compliance Officer Ken Liddle provided an overview of the current landscape of inappropriate foreign influence in universities. He said there has been an increase in federal concern and guidance on conflicts of interest. He said that currently around 200 universities are under investigation. Rice administration identified last summer that the university’s policies were behind where they needed to be and formed a working group to update university Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment policies. In January, the National Science Foundation released new procedures that have to be implemented by June 2020. The current Conflict of Interest policy is Policy 216. Liddle said there will now be three separate polices for Conflict of Interest, Conflict of Commitment and Process and Disclosures.

He said under the new policies, the employees expected to report will change. Now some staff and students will need to disclose. He said traditionally Rice asked for a narrow set of deliverables to be reported, but that will be broadened. He said disclosure does not include personal religious or political activities. He said they wanted as much feedback as possible on the policies.
Vice Provost of Research Yousif Shamoo thanked faculty and staff for their comments during the town halls. He said they were still working to incorporate everyone’s suggestions. He said the government’s efforts to clarify reporting are bipartisan. He also discussed the penalties for failure to disclose conflicts, which include triple damages. He said the only way for faculty to protect themselves is to disclose their activities.

Johns-Krull reminded senators that the documents were available to all faculty on the wiki. Senator Chris Fagundes asked what responsibility faculty had for the activities of their trainees, grad students and post-docs. Liddle said those individuals would have their own disclosures.

3. Report of Officers and Standing Committees (None)
4. Working Group Reports (None)
5. Unfinished Business (None)
6. New Business
   a. Motion on graduation accommodations due to Spring 2020 course disruptions
      Deputy Speaker Ed Nikonowicz seconded the motion on graduation accommodations due to Spring 2020 course disruptions. Johns-Krull proposed an amendment to clarify that accommodations would be approved by all faculty at the plenary meetings. Nikonowicz seconded the amendment. There was no discussion on the amendment. The amendment passed by hand vote. Johns-Krull explained the purpose of the motion was to accommodate students whose courses simply could not go forward and they will not have the course credit they were expecting. So, as much as possible within accreditation policies, students should not be held accountable for course cancellations that were beyond their control. Senator Scott Solomon asked if there would be an attempt to communicate with relevant departments, in particular cases in which a fundamental course has been cancelled. Johns-Krull said it was his understanding in many departments, courses involving senior theses were not cancelled. Levander said she asked all deans and their designates to identify any courses that would need to be cancelled and they told her all courses were expected to be completed.

Dean of Undergraduates Bridget Gorman said it was mostly a study abroad issue, but there was a wide range of students affected in different kinds of courses. She said when impacted students were identified there would be a process for reviewing their situation. She said the implications would stay with the university for several years since some students were being affected in their first year of study. Johns-Krull added that there was uncertainty for students who are working on senior thesis and how much research they should complete. He said, if the motion was approved, he would ask the deans and the provost to make the point that students should not be penalized for something beyond their control. He said ultimately, the degrees would have to be approved at the plenary meeting. Johns-Krull said the purpose of the motion was to put the Faculty Senate stamp of approval on the idea that students shouldn’t be penalized for something they truly could not control. He said he wanted to get the motion out now to signal to the students that faculty intend to do everything within reason to make sure they can graduate.

Senator Emilia Morosan said students had been moving between campus and home and so they had not been able to complete their research. She said she heard from her students that they don’t know what
the research expectations are because they are not getting good advice from their research advisors. Johns-Krull asked if Faculty Senate approval would empower the provost to make a strong recommendation regarding undergraduate research. Interim Provost Seiichi Matsuda said that he could draft something for review by the Executive Committee (EC). Nikonowicz responded that he did not think EC approval would be necessary. Johns-Krull agreed and said faculty would be able to approve exceptions at the plenary meeting. Matsuda responded that he would be happy to take personal responsibility for the messaging. Solomon said approval of the motion would satisfy his concerns about students who can’t complete a research course. Nikonowicz said some students had been able to conduct a significant amount of research before shifting to remote learning and would not want to see their course wiped out. He said that for many students, they should still be able to put together some kind of thesis even if their research hadn’t gotten very far.

Johns-Krull said it seemed to be a case-by-case situation and perhaps the Online Course Delivery working group should work with the senior theses group to identify which courses can be completed and which cannot, and that it might be student specific. Senator Chris Fagundes commented that it might be discipline specific. Levander said she would take it up at the next working group meeting and report back to the Faculty Senate. Nikonowicz motioned to end debate and Jesús Vassallo seconded the motion. The motion on graduation accommodations due to Spring 2020 course disruptions passed with a vote of 28-0. The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

b. Motion for academic relief in Spring 2020
Johns-Krull said this motion would allow students to Pass/Fail any letter grade course. It would also extend the deadline for undergraduates to declare a class Pass/Fail or to drop a class until the last day of classes. Nikonowicz seconded the motion. Solomon clarified that the deadline for dropping a course was not related to the decision to Pass/Fail a course. Senator Dave Messmer asked for clarification on FWIS courses. He said the motion indicated students would be able to drop or to Pass/Fail a FWIS course, which is typically not allowed. Registrar David Tenney said the intention of the motion was to allow students to drop FWIS courses up until the last day of classes.

Senator Doug Schuler asked why the deadline was moved so late. He said for courses with team presentations in the final weeks of class, it could be very disruptive for a student to drop.

Dagmar Beck asked if this relief would apply to professional masters programs. Johns-Krull answered that professional masters students would get relief under the previous motion for graduation requirements. Matsuda said he concurred that graduate students should not be able to Pass/Fail a course. He said many courses need reasonable performance before a student can move onto their dissertation. But he said some graduate students are facing difficult situations and they would be able to take a late drop.

Solomon suggested splitting the last sentence of the motion into two sentences: one to extend the deadline for designating a course Pass/Fail and another for making all courses eligible to be dropped up until the end of the semester. He said it was important to clarify those were two completely separate changes. Johns-Krull asked if anyone was opposed to allowing graduate students to drop courses until the last day of classes. No one was opposed.
Gorman said her office was in touch with many students who were experiencing a variety of very difficult issues. She said the situation would continue to evolve and she felt very strongly that students should be given flexibility to make decisions later than normal. Additional clarifying language was added to the motion.

Tenney emphasized that all typical processes and rules for dropping courses or changing to pass/fail would still apply. Bradford moved to approve the clarifying amendments. Nikonowicz seconded. The motion to amend passed by hand vote. Nikonowicz moved to end discussion. Fagundes seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 28-0. The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

c. Motion to move final grade deadline for Spring 2020 degree candidates
Johns-Krull said this would make the deadline for submitting graduating students’ grades the same date as the deadline to submit grades for all other students. He said that some faculty might need accommodations as well and having extra time to complete their final grading could be helpful. Nikonowicz moved to end debate. The motion to move the final grade deadline for Spring 2020 was approved with a vote of 28-0. The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

d. Motion to approve proposal for a Professional Masters in Applied Chemical Sciences
Senator Angel Marti-Arbona seconded the motion to approve the Professional Masters in Applied Chemical Sciences. Chair of the Graduate Council April DeConick introduced the proposal and said the Graduate Council unanimously approved the proposal. She said all of the Graduate Council’s questions and concerns were addressed in revisions to the proposal. Michelle Gilbertson said the program would be run through their professional masters office, combining business training with technical development. She said it was designed for a niche group and they did not expect the program to be bigger than ten students. Beck said the program provides alternative career paths for science students who do not want to pursue research. Nikonowicz moved to end debate and Geyer seconded. The motion to approve the proposal for a Professional Masters in Applied Chemical Sciences was approved with a vote of 28-0. The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

e. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Change Earth Science (ESCI) Major Name to Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences (EEPS) and Re-align Areas of Specialization
Jeff Fleisher, chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC), introduced the proposal. He said the proposal was relatively straightforward. He said the name of the department had changed the year before, with the approval of the provost. He said the CUC requested some clarifying language in the GA text to distinguish the program from other environmental programs. He said after that the proposal had the full support of the CUC. Juli Morgan said the main goal was to align the name of the major with the name of the department. Schuler seconded the motion to approve the proposal. The motion to approve the proposal to change the name of the major approved with a vote of 28-0. The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

f. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Create a New Departmental EEPS (a.k.a. ESCI) Minor
Fleisher introduced the proposal and said as a departmental minor, it was fast-tracked through the CUC. He said the CUC had seen a number of departmental minors in recent years. Nikonowicz moved to end debate and Charlie Geyer seconded. The motion to approve the minor was approved with a vote of 28-
The voting record can be viewed on the faculty wiki, with Net ID login.

g. Motion to Approve the Proposal for an Interdisciplinary Minor in African and African American Studies
Fleisher introduced the proposal and said as an interdisciplinary minor it was strongly vetted by the CUC and had full support. Anthony Pinn said it was an 18-hour minor meant to meet the interest of students and maximize the expertise of faculty. Tenney said it would be important for the minutes to reflect that the current African Studies minor would be sunsetted as a result of the approval of the new proposal. Senator Charlie Geyer moved to end debate and Jesús Vassallo seconded. The proposal for an interdisciplinary minor in African and African American Studies was approved with a vote of 28-0. The voting record is available with Net ID login on the faculty wiki.

h. Motion to Approve the Proposal for a Bachelor of Science (BS) Degree with a Major in Statistics
Nikonowicz seconded the motion to approve a proposal for a Bachelor of Science Degree with a Major in Statistics. Fleisher introduced the proposal and said the goal was to create a degree more in line for students who aiming for graduate school. Rudy Guerra said the B.A. degree had been changing to accommodate movement toward data science, which led to a reduction in theory. So the B.S. would allow for students inclined toward graduate school. Rudy Guerra said three or four students every year ask about the potential of a B.S. with a major in Statistics. He said it adds three new courses to the existing B.A. degree. Nikonowicz moved to end debate. Geyer seconded. The motion to approve the proposal for a Bachelor of Science degree with a Major in Statistics was approved with a vote of 28-0. The voting record is available with Net ID login on the faculty wiki.

7. Adjourn
Johns-Krull thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.