Faculty Senate Meeting
April 22, 2020
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Senate Meeting Agenda (and actions taken):

1. Call to Order
2. Announcements
   a. Plenary Meeting
   b. General Education Working Group
   c. Open Enrollment
   d. Transcript Notation for Spring 2020
   e. Announcements from the Floor
3. Report of Officers and Standing Committees
   a. Nominations and Elections Committee
4. Working Group Reports (None)
5. Unfinished Business (None)
6. New Business
   a. Motion for Additional Academic Relief in Spring 2020 (APPROVED AS AMENDED)
      Due to the rising levels of disruption and stress resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Rice Faculty Senate adopts the following additional accommodations for Spring 2020:
      • Students in terminal masters programs may designate up to two in progress, letter grade, non-research courses as Pass/Fail for the Spring 2020 semester. Any courses designated Pass/Fail as a result of this motion will still be eligible to have the grades uncovered by the normal deadline for converting Pass/Fail grades to the letter grade earned (May 20th for Spring 2020 degree candidates and September 4th for continuing students). Additionally, an adjustment and provision will be made within the university’s degree audit system (Degree Works) to allow Spring 2020 courses with a grade of “P” to be eligible towards a terminal masters student’s degree requirements.
      • All continuing students (undergraduate and graduate) will have until June 1 to drop a course. All Spring 2020 degree candidates (undergraduate and graduate) will have until May 20 to drop. For undergraduate and terminal masters students, continuing students will have until June 1 to designate an eligible course Pass/Fail, and Spring 2020 degree candidates will have until May 20 to designate an eligible course Pass/Fail.
      • The COVID-19 pandemic qualifies as an exceptional circumstance for the rules surrounding incomplete grades for all students. Any graduate student requesting an incomplete will be granted one.
      • Undergraduate and graduate students will not be placed on academic probation, academic suspension, or dismissed from the program as a result of course outcomes in Spring 2020 without the explicit approval of the Dean of Undergraduates or the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, as appropriate.
   b. Motion to Approve the Proposal for an Entrepreneurship Minor (APPROVED)
   c. Motion to Approve the Proposal for the Center for African and African American Studies Graduate Certificate (APPROVED)
   d. Motion to Approve the Proposal for New Major Concentrations in the Business PhD Program (APPROVED)
   e. Motion to Approve the New Graduate Certificate Guidelines (APPROVED)
   f. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Modify the University Distinction in Research and Creative Work (TABLED)
7. Adjourn

Senators absent: Sergio Chavez, Esther Fernandez, 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 12:06 p.m.

2. **Announcements**
   a. **Plenary Meeting**
      Johns-Krull said he anticipates a relatively large number of graduation exceptions and the deadline to submit grades was moved later, so the plenary meeting to approve degree candidates was moved. The meeting was rescheduled to Wednesday, May 27 at 3:00 p.m.

   b. **General Education Working Group**
      Johns-Krull said the Executive Committee approved the charge and tentative committee membership for the General Education Working Group. The charge states: *Rice University is committed to providing a broad, liberal education to its undergraduate students while maintaining the highest standards and depth of learning within the disciplines of the degrees offered. The working group will examine general education requirements for undergraduate students at Rice University and examine how the general education degree requirements ensure that students receive a broad education while pursuing in depth learning in their chosen field(s). As part of its efforts, the working group will examine how peer institutions achieve this goal. The working group will prepare a report and develop recommendations, as needed, on general education degree requirements that enable a broad educational experience for Rice undergraduates.* The suggested membership included: Doug Schuler, chair (BUS), Bridget Gorman (Dean of Undergrads, SS), David Tenney (Registrar), Sarah Ellenzweig (HUMA), Mike Wolf (NS), Lora Wildenthal (HUMA), Rafael Verduzco (ENG), Dawn Finley (ARCH), Zubaidat Agboola (Student), and another member from Natural Sciences. Senator Scott Solomon asked if a non-tenure-track person could be added to the group. Senator Sarah Ellenzweig asked if there should be representation from the language department. Johns-Krull said some language faculty had been approached and they declined to serve. He said the working group will be free to consult whoever they think would be helpful in their discussions.

   c. **Open Enrollment (moved to end of meeting due to technical difficulties)**
      Susan Prochazka, Director of Benefits, shared the benefits website and showed where to find the changes made to next year’s plans. She said co-insurance was added to the POS plans, and that the HMO plan added a small deductible. She said all plans added co-insurance for prescriptions and that maintenance medications must come through CVS, Walgreens, or Express Scripts mail order. She said
the dental PPO premium would be reduced.

d. Transcript Notation for Spring 2020
Johns-Krull said there will be a notation on transcripts for all students enrolled in Spring 2020. He said Registrar David Tenney is in the process of preparing the notation and consulting other institutions to find out what they are doing. He said there would be more information about the specific notation at the plenary meeting in May.

e. Announcements from the Floor
President David Leebron said the number one issue at the time was what the fall semester would look like. He said currently the administration was planning on a “more or less normal” opening for the fall. He said the second issue was finances. He said the university had instituted a salary freeze and a staff hiring freeze. Leebron said the endowment was down between 15 and 25 percent. He said even a 15 percent decrease would require significant financial adjustments for the university. He said there were additional questions and concerns about who would be able to pay tuition and whether international students would be able to travel to the United States for classes. He said in preparation for a resurgence of disease, the university was working on contingency and containment plans. He said Speaker Chris Johns-Krull was now sitting in more meetings with the administration to represent faculty views in the emergency planning.

Solomon asked if Rice was standing by the commitments of the Rice Investment. Leebron said yes. He said that returns on admissions looked good as well. He added that there is an appeals process for financial aid if students find that their financial circumstances have changed. Ellenzweig asked if the university was seeing an increase in requests to defer admissions. Leebron said they had not so far but it was seen as a risk, especially if the university opened in online mode only in the fall. He said it would be a risk among continuing students as well.

Leebron said the combination of health risks and the financial crisis was producing a lot of stress and he thought the university would see a lot of student hesitation to come back if things aren’t normal. He said some schools were considering breaking the fall semester into two halves. Senator Mahmoud El-Gamal said some universities were looking at tuition adjustments for courses that were online. Leebron said that the university was not considering that yet but if they went online for an entire semester it would need to be considered. He said one university concern was to maintain employment as well and that so far the university had not furloughed any staff. But he said the university would not be able to maintain that if they began making tuition adjustments.

Interim Provost Seiichi Matsuda said he had heard suggestions that final exams should be open book and open note. He said as a chemistry professor who requires a lot of subject memorization he originally was skeptical of that idea. But he came to realize there would be a lot of stress placed on honest students if they believed others were cheating. He said he favored the idea that there should not be closed-book, closed-note exams. He encouraged faculty to be generous with their policies and accommodations. Johns-Krull said the Senate Executive Committee (EC) had discussed the final exam situation extensively and they recognized that a number of students were in quite difficult situations. He said it could relieve stress in general if students felt they didn’t have to memorize everything. He said the EC encouraged senators to spread the message to be lenient and be considerate of the technological
issues students face. He said those were strong encouragements from the provost and the Executive Committee. Solomon said he was very much in support of the desire to create leniency but that faculty had to watch for time conflicts in final exams as well. He asked if there was guidance about using leniency without creating other scheduling problems. Johns-Krull said the General Announcements already had provisions to limit the number of exams required of a student in a 24-hour period. Registrar David Tenney advised faculty to try to arrange their exams so that they were due at the end of the exam period. Johns-Krull said faculty should talk to their students and get feedback of potential conflicts. Solomon asked if having all exams due at the end of the period would be problematic for the exam policy. Johns-Krull said it would not.

3. Report of Officers and Standing Committees
   a. Nominations and Elections Committee
      Ed Nikonowicz said as Deputy Speaker of the Senate he also served a Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee. He reviewed the list of outgoing senators and thanked them for their service. He then announced the incoming senators and welcomed them. He also thanked the outgoing committee chairs. To view the slides from his presentation, click HERE.

      Ed Nikonowicz nominated Chris Johns-Krull to serve as Speaker for 2020-2021. Johns-Krull was elected by a hand vote of 24-0. Chris Johns-Krull nominated Ed Nikonowicz to serve as Deputy Speaker for 2020-2021. Nikonowicz was elected by a vote of 24-0.

      Nikonowicz then presented the Executive Committee slate for 2020-2021. He explained that alternative slates could be put forward until a week before commencement. The slate will be approved at the first Faculty Senate meeting of the next academic year. The slate includes: Mahmoud El-Gamal (Social Sciences), Charlie Geyer (Music), Chris Fagundes (Social Sciences), Jun Lou (Engineering), Dave Messmer (NTT/FWIS), Jesús Vassallo (Architecture), Nicole Waligora-Davis (Humanities), and Colin Zelt (Natural Sciences).

4. Working Group Reports (None)
5. Unfinished Business (None)
6. New Business
   a. Motion for Additional Academic Relief in Spring 2020
      Nikonowicz seconded the motion. Johns-Krull said when the original academic relief motions were drafted and passed, there was discussion about whether graduate students should be included. It was decided that due to the nature of studies for graduate students, the accommodations would only apply to undergraduate students. However, Johns-Krull said, circumstances continued to get worse and the university continued to see stress among students, including terminal masters students. He said the first bullet in the motion would allow terminal masters students to take two courses as pass/fail. He said the third bullet clarified that the pandemic would be a qualifying event for a student to request an “Incomplete” grade in a course. He said that when considering “Incomplete” grades, students and faculty should be careful because it could further delay stress. But, he said, the additional accommodations would allow for automatic approval of graduate student requests for “Incomplete.”

      For the final bullet, Johns-Krull said that in general the Faculty Senate did not want to see students placed on probation due to stress caused by circumstances beyond their control, but there should still
be accountability for students for issues such as the Honor Code.

Johns-Krull referred to the second bullet point regarding extending the drop and P/F designation deadline. He said that some students want to “give it a shot” and stay in a course. But this would be a way to protect them if they ended up failing. One issue with allowing drops is that some students need to maintain full-time status. So, he said, the option to issue an NG (No Grade) was presented as an amendment. He said the NG is typically used in rare situations. Johns-Krull said that if a student retakes a course they can have the NG removed from their transcript, but only if they request that.

Dean of Undergraduates Bridget Gorman said she had been involved in the process of crafting accommodations from the beginning and that the challenges for students to move to online instruction were more substantial than originally thought. She said she had not seen a decrease in student concerns over time, and that she hoped the Faculty Senate would give the motion for additional relief strong consideration.

Senator Doug Schuler said the Jones Business School has a different academic calendar for its online MBA program and that a June 1 deadline might be problematic for those students. Other questions were raised about specific situations students were facing. David Alexander commented that many professional masters students had their internships cancelled and that was a cause of stress as well. Later Registrar David Tenney confirmed that the online MBA program should be included in the accommodations. Jones Associate Dean Barbara Ostdiek said the online MBA program would need a July 1 deadline.

Ed Nikonowicz moved to amend the motion to change wording of the motion, including the usage of the “NG” grade designation. Solomon asked if the later drop and Pass/Fail deadline would cause issues with summer coursework. Johns-Krull said it would be difficult to have one accommodation that worked for everyone, and students would have to have responsibility in deciding which courses to drop. The amendment passed with a 26-0 hand vote.

Senator Gwen Bradford moved to amend the motion to set a July 1 deadline for the online MBA program. Ed Nikonowicz seconded. The amendment passed with a hand vote of 27-0.

The motion for additional academic relief passed 26-0. A record of the vote can be viewed on the faculty wiki, available with Net ID.

b. Motion to Approve the Proposal for an Entrepreneurship Minor

Emilia Morosan seconded the motion. Jeff Fleisher, chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC), introduced the proposal. He said the proposal came to the CUC at the beginning of the year and went through a lot of work. He said the minor is made up largely of business courses. Yael Hochburg thanked Fleisher and said the minor would be rooted in academic theory and distinguishable from what students were getting in their majors. She said the proposal had been through quite a few iterations with the CUC. Jones School Dean Peter Rodriguez said he thought the minor would be a great addition to their program. The motion to approve the proposal for a Minor in Entrepreneurship passed 25-0. A record of the vote can be viewed on the faculty wiki, available with Net ID.

c. Motion to Approve the Proposal for the Center for African and African American Studies Graduate Certificate

Nikonowicz seconded the motion. April DeConick, chair of the Graduate Council (GC), introduced the
proposal and said the GC was very supportive of the Certificate, which was similar to the other three Graduate Certificates. Tony Pinn, director of the Center for African and African American Studies said the Certificate would give graduate students an opportunity to participate in the new center and would position students to participate in robust and rich national conversations. Senator Mahmoud El-Gamal asked about the difference between a Certificate and a degree. DeConick said a Graduate Certificate is 4-6 courses that go together as an intellectual unit. She said they add a specialty onto what students are already doing. The motion to approve the Graduate Certificate in African and African American Studies was approved 25-0. A record of the vote can be viewed on the faculty wiki, available with Net ID.

d. Motion to Approve the Proposal for New Major Concentrations in the Business PhD Program
Nikonowicz seconded the motion. DeConick said the motion was more of an administrative proposal to make fields of study into formal major concentrations. Jeff Fleming, Jones Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs, said the creation of the concentrations would not actually change anything they were doing in their program. Tenney said that this was similar to what the Psychological Sciences PhD did a few years ago. The motion to approve the proposal for new Major Concentrations in the Business PhD Program was approved 25-0. A record of the vote can be viewed on the faculty wiki, available with Net ID.

e. Motion to Approve the New Graduate Certificate Guidelines
Nikonowicz seconded the motion to approve the new Graduate Certificate Guidelines. Johns-Krull said one of the main points of the new guidelines was to allow students who are not full time students to participate in the programs. DeConick said the Graduate Council had been working on the guidelines for two years. She said the new document modified the 2014 guidelines to include non-degree-seeking students. She said the changes were originally tabled due to federal regulations, but those regulations had changed. She said the GC also worked on questions regarding admissions and that admissions would be the same as for masters or PhD programs. Applicants would apply through the DGPS portal and departments or programs would make the decisions. She said the standards would be the same as for other graduate programs.

Interim Provost and Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Seiichi Matsuda said he thought the Certificates would be really useful, like a small version of a masters degree. He said they would be offered as an off-shoot of masters programs. Tenney clarified that the new Graduate Certificates would have to be approved by the Graduate Council and Faculty Senate. Senator Scott Solomon asked if allowing non-degree-seeking students to participate would limit course access for degree-seeking students. DeConick said that existing programs that want to admit non-degree-seeking students would not be grandfathered in. They would have to be approved by the GC, and during the proposal process there must be an explanation on how the Certificate would impact existing programs. She said students would be restricted to only the courses in their Certificate program. The motion to approve New Graduate Certificate Guidelines was approved 25-0. A record of the vote can be viewed on the faculty wiki, available with Net ID.

f. Motion to Approve the Proposal to Modify the University Distinction in Research and Creative Work
Solomon seconded the motion. Johns-Krull said the report noted that the distinction has been used unevenly through departments. He said currently there is a GPA requirement to be eligible for the distinction, but that requirement doesn’t seem to do anything but exclude very deserving students. He said the recommendation was to affirm that the Senate believes the distinction is important, remove the GPA requirement, and call for clearer standards in the departments. Solomon asked about the report’s reference to using a central application portal. He said he liked the idea and wondered how others felt. Gary Woods said that might slow the process down. Johns-Krull said there was enough concern that it might be worth taking a more detailed look at the recommendations. Nikonowicz moved to table the motion. Senator Charlie Geyer seconded. The motion to table was approved by a 22-0 hand vote.
7. Adjourn

Johns-Krull thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 2:08 p.m.