



FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

Thursday, February 29, 2024 (meeting held via Zoom)

In attendance: Speaker: Ott Walter; Communications Director: McDonnell; Accounting: Briggs; Art, Design, and Art History: Brooks; Biology: May; Chemistry: Kokhan; Comm. Sci. and Disorders: Clinard; Comm. Studies: Nelson; Comp. Inf. Sys. & Bus. Analytics: Wang; Computer Science: El-Kadi Rizvi; Early ELED & Reading: Mathur; Economics: Doyle (proxy); Edu. Found. & Exception: Brown; English: Gerber; Finance & Bus. Law: Parker; Foreign Languages: Lang-Rigal; Geol. & Environ. Science: McGary; Grad. Psych.: LeBlanc; Hart School of HSRM: Hallmon; Health Professions: Harrison; Health Sciences: Lassiter; History: McCleary; IDLS: Schmitt-Harsh; Integrated Sciences: York; Justice Studies: Castle; Kinesiology: McKay; Libraries: Price; Management: Pattie; Math & Stats: C. Lubert; Media Arts. & Design: Mitchell; Mid, Second, & Math: Shoffner; Music: Suggs; Phil. & Rel.: van Leeuwen; Physics: Butner; Political Science: H. Lubert; Psychology: Zinn (proxy); Social Work: Yeom; Soc. & Anth.: Spear (proxy); Theatre & Dance: De Sanctis; Writing Rhetoric & Tech Comm: Hickman; Part-time Faculty Reps: Harlacker; Guests—Coltman, Oldmixon, Mabrey, Le, and others.

- I. **Call to Order**—3:55 p.m.
- II. The minutes from January were approved.
- III. **Provost's Report**—Dr. Heather Coltman
 - The renamed Office of Research, Economic Development and Innovation (REDI) is now a division separate from Academic Affairs. This restructuring aligns JMU with other R2 institutions, but faculty shouldn't experience much change operationally. The reorganization required no additional resources. The aim is to highlight and to provide additional support for the research faculty do.
 - BOV members observed seven classes in February, and the effort was a great success. Thanks to those who hosted and also to those (forty-five) who offered to have BOV members visit their classes. Expect another opportunity in April. The provost emphasized that hosting BOV guests is completely voluntary.
 - Two searches are beginning: one for the Director of Athletics and one for the Vice President of Enrollment Management.
 - In Academic Affairs, hiring is progressing well. Thanks to those serving on search committees and to everyone involved in welcoming candidates to campus.
 - Candidates have begun campus visits for the Dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Education position.
 - Faculty are invited to hear Dr. Marjorie Hass, former president of Rhodes College and an expert in higher education leadership, speak on campus on

March 7, 2024, at 2:30 in the Hall of Presidents. Please RSVP if you would like to attend. (See the provost's email from February 21, 2024.)

IV. **Speaker's Report—Dr. Katherine Ott Walter**

- The speaker introduced Dr. Paul Mabrey, the Director of Student Success & Enrollment Analytics, who is leading the QEP focused on raising overall retention rates at JMU.
 - Midterm grades can be an early indicator that advisors and other campus resources can use to guide outreach to students. Typically, midterm grades are submitted for 60 to 70% of first-year courses. Mabrey is seeking feedback about developing a policy to increase these rates, or implementing alternatives such as progress reports or a stoplight system (red/green/yellow).
 - There are emerging practices around using data to support students. In an effort to gather a better picture of what data can reveal, engagement data from Canvas is being extracted about the last time a student engaged in a given class. Mabrey's office is exploring the use of other indicators and is interested in how faculty feel about leveraging more Canvas data? He responded to the following questions and comments.
 - *Will students be able to consent in/out of this practice?* He's open to deliberating about that matter. The practice has shown evidence of success in that appropriate entities can proactively work with students who are flagged.
 - *The data may be suspect—containing a lot of "noise."* The data does not lead to a high-risk, high-impact decision, but outreach, potentially even for students who are not being challenged, who could be referred to study-abroad opportunities, for example.
 - *Proactively seeking student consent is an important part of cultivating their data literacy and autonomy.* Those are some of the core questions that the decision-makers are struggling with.
 - *Students, especially first-gen students, who are lost might be more likely to talk to another student rather than their advisors or professors. Opposition to the surveillance model was reiterated.* The peers suggestion is a really good one. Early evidence suggests that proactive outreach can be effective. Advisors who used student survey information that revealed non-cognitive behaviors which correlate to lower GPAs saw some results, and students were thankful that someone contacted them.
 - *When we "helicopter" our students too much, they don't learn life skills that they can take with them into the real world.* This is a legitimate concern. Efforts involve a balance of working for students and with students.
 - *As long as workload inequities are a problem, it's important to be careful about adding more work for faculty and advisors. Where's the time in our schedules for following up and having these conversations with students?* Yes, it's important to balance that piece.

- *“Disengagement” can have more than one cause: 1) Students are struggling with something other than their academic work, or 2) Students are doing subpar work, having arrived at JMU not understanding the amount of discipline required to do well in their classes. What does “support students” mean? It depends on the context, and there are resources for both causes: Madison Cares, well-being support, the University Writing Center, Madison Advising Peers, etc.*
- *Have you sought feedback from students? Students were given the opportunity to participate in and give feedback on the QEP proposal.*
- *More information is available [here](#). Don’t hesitate to reach out if you’d like to talk more (mabrey@jmu.edu).*
- The speaker expressed her appreciation to those who invited BOV members to observe their classes. And thanks to those who responded to the survey about ODS testing needs. She’ll give the data to Tim Miller.
- The Steering Committee continues to focus on policy suggestions, such as developing a policy for reporting policy violations, clarifying the difference between assistant and associate administrators, suggesting revised campus safety language, discussing the handbook review overhaul process.
- If you have resolutions, Steering will review them and provide feedback.
- A [questions/comments button](#) has been added to the Faculty Senate website. Let your colleagues know about it.
- The speaker helped organize and will be attending a webinar on shared governance, hosted by the National Council of Faculty Senates.
- As graduation approaches, spread the word about the Faculty Senate’s regalia loans, especially for new colleagues.
- If your two-year term on the Faculty Senate is ending, remember to hold elections in your department. The organizational meeting for next year’s Faculty Senate occurs in the first part of the April meeting. Report election results to the marshal (shoffneme@jmu.edu).

V. Treasurer’s Report

- Treasurer Cathy McKay reported a total of \$5,202.37 in the senate’s combined accounts.
- One bereavement form was processed since the last meeting, for a total of twenty-seven since last May.
- One senator, Marshall Pattie from Business Management, has not collected dues.

VI. Committee Reports

- A. Faculty Concerns—Chair Kristen McCleary reported on [the committee’s work and advocacy](#):
 - They are following up on the appeal of annual evaluations in Economics. Departments are encouraged to review their annual evaluation guidelines to ensure that evaluations align with the guidelines. A priority for this committee is to work to establish independent bodies to consider appeals when issues arise between faculty and administrators.

- The committee is collaborating with Academic Policies on Policy #2 about the AUH position and on developing evaluation processes for upper administration.
 - Faculty Concerns is committed to improving campus safety policies.
 - They seek to close the loop on feedback from search committees about training and searches.
 - Resolutions need timelines and deadlines that are posted to the website and updated in order to mark progress.
- B. Policies—Chair Smita Mathur noted that Policy #2 about AUHs is a product of a resolution passed two years ago. A draft of the policy is undergoing the review process. Other policies are in the works, such as a policy on the evaluation of deans and an expansion of the nepotism policy to include neighbors, friends, and other close relationships, or the perception of a conflict of interest.
- C. Adjunct Affairs—Chair Leslie Harlacker reported that confusion about raises for adjuncts has been relayed to the committee, so she'll be meeting with Jason McClain for clarification and to suggest ways to communicate such information. The committee seeks to participate in the Handbook revision conversations.
- D. Teaching and Student Relations—Speaker Kathy Ott Walter reported that the committee met and will soon review the Madison Vision Teaching Award nominees. The next meeting is on March 7.
- E. Budget & Compensation and Government Relations—Chair Harold Butner announced that the committee is following up on JMU's response to and timeline for the ALICE population resolution. They are also checking into what institutions the CAC is using for comparison since JMU's move to R2.
- F. Faculty Appeals—Chair Talé Mitchell asked that senators share with their departments the new [menu link](#) on the Faculty Senate webpage for submitting appeals.
- G. Research and Scholarship—Chair Melanie Shoffner announced that the committee awarded five mini-grants from the second round of grant proposals and thanked the provost for her support. The committee will continue to refine the processes and will return to one round of mini-grants in future years.
- H. Shared Governance—Chair Sasha Kokhan reported that the committee met twice. To ensure transparency and continuity from year to year, they are developing a list of items to pursue.
- I. Other Committee Reports—According to Faculty Handbook Committee Chair Jennifer Lang-Rigal, handbook proposals are in the final stages of the review process by the speaker, the provost, and the president. Proposals then move to review by the BOV in mid-April.

Sasha Kokhan is part of a small team of colleagues representing Academic Affairs; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Student Affairs, who are participating in the [AAC&U Institute on Open Educational Resources](#) (OER). Their goal is to explore how JMU could implement and integrate OER more broadly across the curriculum. OER can bring costs down for students, give faculty better control of course material, and reduce faculty workload (e.g., revising courses on faculty's own schedule rather than a publisher's). Events are planned for OER week at JMU next week, and a survey is forthcoming.

Harold Butner from the Institutional Peer Group Task Force reported that the group is analyzing results from the survey that sought input on selecting JMU's R2 peer institutions. There are a range of factors to consider. Another survey is coming after spring break to seek feedback on the relative weights of the selected factors.

VII. **New Business**

- The Motion of Support for Those in the JMU Community Affected by the Israel-Hamas Conflict was introduced.

VIII. **Open Discussion**

- *Mixed experiences about searches were expressed, with confusion and extreme frustration in some colleges and efficiency and success in other colleges. The negative experiences are affecting faculty morale, especially when feedback doesn't seem to lead to changes.* There are ninety searches being run this year. The provost's office recognizes how critical the timeline is and responds very quickly to the deans. It's a complex process that they're working to streamline.
- *With the shift to R2, training is needed about how to establish and fund postdocs.*

IX. **Adjournment:** 5:28 p.m.