

Faculty Senate President's Report

June 16, 2025

I hope you are all having a nice early summer so far and finding time for some kind of relaxation in the midst of all of the things going on with classes/research/service/family/and the tightrope of life balance. I'm going to take a moment and update you on what's been going on with the Senate, and the work that has been taking place quietly with your Executive Committee chairs, the Caucus Leaders, and some of our various projects/meetings, including the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board meetings that took place on June 5 & 6 and 11th, respectively. This report is not exhaustive, but should be seen as representative of some of the many activities that your team is engaged in over the summer.

1. Laura Vrana and I have continued the practice which started last year for **meeting with each FS Executive Committee Chair** (hereafter FSECC) to help with framing, planning and connecting the work they and their teams will undertake over the course of this Senate year. To date we have met with all of the filled committee chairs, and have identified projects that touch on salary and benefits, faculty wellness and workload, retention and salary survey, evaluation gaps, and input/information gathering related to the university 10+ year plan for facilities (as a few highlights). Many of these projects overlap from committee to committee, and plans are already in place to try and distribute the work as appropriate, so stay tuned for information from your committee chairs.

2. I've also started **meeting with the Caucus Leaders** from each college/division and am about 50% complete with those meetings. As usual, they have proven valuable for specific information/issues/experiences for their home base; also serving to refine some of our committee work as we follow up on some of the information gathered. As a note, please always remember that your CL is a great way of filtering information through to your FSECC and please never question if you should. Please do. We are interested in your experience and what you have to say.

3. **A great deal more fun** to look forward to is the August 30th Football game scheduled for a 6pm kickoff where the game theme is Faculty/Staff Appreciation. Of course, my first question was, well, what does that look like so I reached out to our communications people and then also our Athletic Director, Dr. Joel Erdmann, who promptly organized a lunch to discuss that exact question, which took place today. We started to put some ideas in place, which will develop in the coming weeks where we highlight faculty and staff in various ways, including their relationship with the athletes on the field. Additionally, all faculty and staff will also receive two free tickets to the game; further information on how to redeem those tickets will be forthcoming later this summer. More information on this will be shared as it develops, but for the moment, I want to thank Dr. Erdmann and his team for jumping straight into planning this idea and experience.

4. **This brings me to my board reports.** One of the fun things I get to do in this role is share updates with our BoT and Foundation about what is happening around USA with our faculty. The BoT report this quarter focused on three highlights. First, the annual accomplishments of the FS as a whole (which as you know were many) and how we planned to leverage that work into the coming year, second, the focus this year on faculty well-being (on all fronts, including financial in as much as what is possible given the various external circumstances facing USA), and highlighting faculty as 'stars' and acknowledging excellence. Ok, there was also a fourth component of the speech that is more of a woven theme and that is the continued development of faculty voices at more and more tables around the University, and our welcome to anyone in either of those rooms to join us in ours.

Foundation Board: This year, I pre-sent the annual report I created for the FS to the Foundation prior to the meeting. This enabled me to shorten the nuts and bolts of the report, and to again focus on similar themes that I shared with our BoT. What it also did was allow them to ask questions directly of me related to the report, which they did. There were questions on the salary survey, salary ranges overall, and other very useful opportunities to explain to them what we are confronting with the Executive Orders, and the University response and support in that process. Overall, what is normally a five-minute report ended up taking far longer, with lively and dynamic questions.

Finally, related to the BoT and Foundation. I want to let you know that we have had BoT members attend or attempt to attend (the April 16th meeting when Zoom died) the last three meetings. Each time I have spoken with them about the meetings they have expressed how glad they are to hear what people are experiencing and how valuable they felt like the meetings are for their understanding of faculty at South. We can expect continued and increasing interaction with this key constituent group over the coming year and they are welcome.

5. If you remember, last year we put forward a **suggestion that a Professional Development program** be developed to help our chair colleagues with some key managerial/operational gaps that some might experience due to various reasons, such as... "getting thrown into the flames with no training".. and other realities such as that. It's not like being a chair gets covered in our doctoral programs, so it really is sometimes like walking into a burning building which in turn, deeply impacts our faculty lives. The first PD for chairs will take place on Wed., June 18th, so it's actually happening. I'll sit in, along with some of our other FS colleagues, to see how it all progresses, but we are excited to see this kick off.

6. As you all experienced, at our last plenary, Donna Streeter and I were up at Auburn for the first ever **FS Leadership Retreat**. I'm sorry I had to duck in and out of the plenary so quickly but Laura did an amazing job guiding the meeting and I appreciate how all of you participated so actively in the committee breakouts, including Donna, who was both physically in the room with me at the meeting, but also in the zoom room with you. I have gotten a chance to see the work that you all did on that day, and I'm grateful for how everyone took it seriously and jumped in on the conversations.

The meeting at AU was highly productive, and I'll look forward to sharing more detail with anyone who is interested. One outcome that I will share now is that we will host the next year's meeting at South Alabama, and we are in the process of nailing down dates for that meeting now.

7. There will be two separate items put forward to the FS in the coming days. The first will be a call for nominations for the FS Committee Chair for Sustainability and Environmental Planning. We have one nominee already, but for the sake of the order, I'll call for any other nominees to throw their names at me for consideration. If you are interested in serving but have no clue what it entails, email me and I'll set up some time to fill you in. Please send me any/all names by **COB on Friday, June 20th**. If there are no other nominations, then we will announce the chair accordingly, and if there are we will open up an election form on **Saturday, June 21st and close it Wednesday, June 25th, 5:00pm**.

8. Finally, Sandra Stenson and a small band of senators are meeting with marketing and the web team to create a Faculty One Stop page with as many resources as possible that have been developed for faculty, both as operational resources, but also supportive. The initial information has been compiled and shared with MarComm and now will be evaluated for optimal location and placement. This resource will likely be part of the first wave of the new website scheduled for full rollout at the end of summer.

Announcements:

1. The Summer Ombudsperson is Dr. Bret Webb, who officially took over from Dr. Jeanne Maes on May 15th and who will serve in that position until August 15th. Please make a note of this and forward any OMB issues accordingly.
2. Please send Sandra Stenson any requests for potential speakers for the year. We are attempting to put together a yearly calendar of speakers to help with meeting planning/scheduling.

I think this is sufficient for the moment, don't you? :)

If there are any items where you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,
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