**LSUS FACULTY SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**January 17, 2025**

**11:00 A.M.**

**Assembly Room, Noel Memorial Library**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** 11:02 a.m. President Williams called the meeting to order.

**II. PRESENT:** Senator Gifford, Senator White, Senator Felice Williams, Senator Siska, Senator Shepherd, Senator Widmeyer, Senator Zhao, Senator Si Chen, Senator Yeh, Senator Cassandra Williams, Senator Noor, Senator Saleh, Senator Zaidi, Senator Mikaberidze. Senators Kim and Dunnavent attended remotely. **Absent:** none. A quorum was present.

**III.** **COMMENTS:**  President Williams opened the floor for comments from non-senators who signed up to comment, under prescribed time limits. Per parliamentary procedure, only those present in the room may comment. No one signed up for comments.

President Williams asked for a roll to be taken and asked senators to introduce themselves.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Senator Gifford moved to approve; Senator Siska seconded. Motion approved.

**V. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

President Williams opened the meeting by welcoming the faculty back to campus. She expressed gratitude for the high faculty turnout at the December graduation ceremony, noting it was the highest attendance in years. She said that while important developments are underway on campus, faculty should adopt a proactive approach by anticipating potential issues rather than focusing solely on current challenges.

President Williams invited Senator Si Chen to discuss the upcoming Homecoming celebration, scheduled for January 27 to February 1, 2025. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first graduating class of LSUS. Senator Chen requested faculty volunteers to support various events planned for the week.

President Williams invited the administrators to present their reports.

**V. ADMINISTRATORS’ REPORTS**

**Chancellor:**

Dr. Robert Smith began his remarks by warmly welcoming the faculty back to campus. He expressed pride in LSUS’s recent accomplishments, particularly highlighting a record-breaking achievement at the December commencement ceremony, where the university celebrated 1,500 graduates. Dr. Smith also reminded attendees of the upcoming Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) site visit scheduled for March 2025, emphasizing its importance for the institution.

He provided an update on the LSUS Strategic Plan, noting that discussions are progressing. As part of the strategic plan, LSUS is launching the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, which will be designed to address the needs of the university’s rapidly growing student body. Dr. Smith also shared promising enrollment figures, reporting increases across multiple categories; undergraduate enrollment is up 2%, graduate enrollment has risen by 7%, and dual enrollment has grown by 4%. Most notably, credit hour enrollment has surged by 20%. Dr. Smith concluded his remarks by apologizing for the brevity of his report, explaining that he needed to leave the meeting early to attend another engagement.

**Provost:**

Dr. Taylor opened her remarks by apologizing for the university’s inability to host the campus kick-off event initially scheduled for January 9, 2025. She then turned her attention to the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a vital component of the accreditation reaffirmation process. The LSUS QEP committee has selected a new theme for the next five years: *"Navigating Student Success and Charting the Course for Teaching Excellence."* To ensure that faculty and staff are familiar with and understand the QEP, the administration will host a special event on January 25.

Dr. Taylor highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen the university’s faculty and support services. LSUS is currently conducting 17 faculty searches, including two department chair positions and one college dean position. She emphasized the need for additional staff to support the growing student body, particularly in addressing the demands of online education.

She also announced the launch of a new initiative, *Talks on Tap*, a speaker series designed to bring the LSUS community together in a relaxed and engaging setting to enjoy faculty-led lectures and discussions.

During the Q&A session, Senator Gifford inquired about the Faculty Research and Development Grants (FRDG) updates. The Provost confirmed that the FRDG committee has met, reviewed applications, and will announce results soon. Dr. Taylor, joined by Dr. Helen Wise, then spoke about the upcoming visit by Complete College America, a national organization focused on improving college completion rates and closing institutional performance gaps. The visit is scheduled for February 13–14, 2025.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business.

**VII. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

President Williams invited Dr. Heather Carpenter to present recommendations from the Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Committee. Dr. Carpenter began by thanking the Senate for discussing and voting on the Moodle and syllabus templates during the previous meeting. She also noted that IDP is currently reviewing course evaluation instruments, with recommendations expected to be drafted by the end of the spring semester.

Dr. Carpenter outlined another key task assigned to the IPD Committee: the review of certain sections of the LSUS Faculty Handbook, including policies on faculty office hours. After thorough consideration, the committee concluded that the current office-hour policy does not require significant revisions. The committee emphasized that the issue is primarily supervisory and recommended only a minor adjustment to the Faculty Handbook. Specifically, IDP suggested that the section on syllabus requirements include a reference to section 5.11 (of the Faculty Handbook) for office hour requirements. This section details that each *full-time* faculty member will post a schedule showing at least ten office hours per week; for *online* faculty, these will be “virtual” office hours. The hours should be chosen to encourage students to take advantage of the opportunity, and faculty members should also stress their willingness to make special appointments for students who cannot meet during posted office hours. *Part-time* faculty are required to post office hours of 2 ½ hours for each three-hour credit course. Faculty members with *downloads* can adjust office hours accordingly and/or make arrangements through departmental administrative assistants to give students sufficient access to their instructor.

Following Dr. Carpenter’s presentation, the Senators engaged in a discussion of the IPD report. Senator Gifford inquired whether the IPD planned to recommend any substantive changes to the current policy. Dr. Carpenter clarified that the proposed change was minor, involving the addition of a reference to a specific section of the Faculty Handbook. Senator Felice Williams questioned whether the Faculty Senate needed to take action on the matter, noting that office hours appeared to fall under supervisory oversight rather than requiring a formal policy adjustment. Dr. Siska asked if the IPD had reviewed similar policies at other institutions, highlighting that LSUS’s requirement of at least ten office hours per week for full-time faculty was higher than that of other regional universities. This sparked a substantive discussion among the Senators who, ultimately, agreed to approve the recommendation as presented. Senator Gifford made a motion to approve, which was seconded and passed by the Senate.

Dr. Carpenter then addressed graduation attendance, noting that the university administration is proposing increasing the faculty attendance requirement from one to two graduation ceremonies per year. She explained that the IPD Committee expressed reservations about this initiative, particularly for faculty whose students primarily graduate in the spring, as opposed to MBA and MHA faculty, whose students graduate throughout the year.

The IPD also considered whether department chairs and program directors should be required to attend all graduation ceremonies but did not reach a conclusive recommendation. Instead, the committee determined that this issue is more supervisory in nature. As an alternative, the IPD recommended that the administration explore a lottery system to ensure equitable faculty representation at all ceremonies. Additionally, the committee suggested providing food and refreshments at graduation events to boost morale and incentivize faculty attendance and punctuality.

The discussion then shifted to the new syllabus and Moodle templates, which the Faculty Senate had approved as recommended for faculty use at the last meeting. Senators listened to presentations by Rhonda Failey (Director of Online Learning) and Scott Hardwick (Chief Information Officer) and considered the possibility of making the templates mandatory for faculty. Failey emphasized that the current course templates no longer meet the revised requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and must be reviewed and updated to ensure full compliance by April 2026. Senator Gifford proposed surveying the faculty to gather feedback, suggesting that this input could inform a more substantive discussion at the next meeting. Failey and Senators Cassandra Williams, Felice Williams, Siska, and Mikaberidze discussed the challenges of updating existing/legacy courses to achieve full ADA compliance. The conversation focused on practical considerations, such as providing sufficient training for faculty and allocating the necessary resources to facilitate a smooth transition to the updated templates.

**VIII. OBSERVATIONS & CONCERNS:**

None

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The motion was approved, and the meeting wasadjourned at 12:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander Mikaberidze

Secretary