**LSUS FACULTY SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**November 13, 2024**

**11:00 A.M.**

**Assembly Room, Noel Memorial Library**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** 11:10 a.m. President Williams called the meeting to order.

**II. PRESENT:** Senator Gifford, Senator White, Senator Mikaberidze, Senator Felice Williams, Senator Siska, Senator Dunnavent, Senator Kim, Senator Shepherd, Senator Widmeyer, Senator Zhao, Senator Si Chen, Senator Yeh, Senator Cassandra Williams; Senator Zaidi. **Absent:** Senator Noor, Senator Saleh. 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 White moved to approve. Motion seconded and approved.

**V. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:** President Williams opened the meeting by welcoming the faculty and highlighting the upcoming student-organized event, Palestine Awareness Night, scheduled for November 15. She commended the organizing students' efforts and encouraged faculty attendance to support the initiative. The President then recognized Senator Si Chen who discussed the homecoming activities planned for 27 January 2025. She emphasized the importance of faculty participation.

**V. ADMINISTRATORS’ REPORTS**

**Chancellor:** Dr. Robert Smith presented a brief report on the current state of LSUS. He announced that the draft of LSUS’s Strategic Plan is complete and will be shared with faculty within the next week. Dr. Smith reiterated the importance of preparing for the upcoming SACSCOC reaffirmation visit scheduled for next spring. Discussions are ongoing regarding the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance student learning outcomes.

Dr. Smith also addressed the LSU Board of Regents’ ongoing review of the university system's funding formula. He noted that there are multiple versions of the formula under consideration, one of which could potentially increase LSUS’s funding by nearly $700,000. While acknowledging that there will be "winners and losers" in this process, Dr. Smith assured the faculty that LSUS remains "in a good position" and stands to benefit from the proposed changes. Ongoing discussions are focused on revising the final metrics of the funding formula.

Dr. Smith reported that a group of first-year Louisiana legislators recently visited the LSUS campus and provided positive feedback on the university's recent changes and improvements. Additionally, the chancellor and Provost Dr. Helen Taylor met with faculty members whose programs are listed on the Board of Regents’ low completer program list. During the meeting, the chancellor reaffirmed his commitment to retaining all programs but emphasized the need to carefully examine and address "barriers" that hinder program improvement and growth.

Senator Siska requested clarification from the Chancellor regarding the development of the funding formula and asked whether international students, who comprise a significant portion of the LSUS student body, are included in its calculations. Dr. Smith explained that revising a funding formula is a “complex process” involving numerous factors. He clarified that the formula only accounts for Louisiana-based students, excluding international students.

Senator Gifford expressed appreciation for the administration's efforts in creating the Strategic Plan, highlighting its clear identification of goals and actionable steps. Dr. Smith responded by emphasizing that the administration aimed to avoid producing a plan “full of platitudes.” Instead, they sought to develop a practical document that aligns with both LSU and LSUS strategic objectives.

**Provost:**  Dr. Taylor began her remarks by addressing the seven programs currently listed on the Board of Regents’ low completer program list. She reaffirmed LSUS’s commitment to retaining these programs but emphasized the need for a thorough evaluation and curricular revisions. Dr. Taylor noted that the sociology program would undergo restructuring and would be replaced by a social work program.

Dr. Taylor reminded the faculty that the next Leadership Planning Council meeting is scheduled for November 15. She also provided an update on ongoing work related to the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). She highlighted results from a recent student survey, which revealed that pedagogy is a primary concern among students. In response, the administration is committed to establishing a Center for Excellence in Pedagogy to address these concerns and enhance teaching practices. Dr. Taylor encouraged faculty to review and update their courses to improve both content and pedagogy. Senator Kim inquired whether these efforts were focused on in-person or online courses. Dr. Taylor clarified that the initiative applies to both in-person and online courses.

Dr. Taylor reminded the faculty that the Graduation Ceremony is scheduled for December 13 and strongly encouraged faculty members to attend.

President Williams raised the issue of overload courses and referenced the Provost’s recent letter on this topic. The Provost reiterated that courses offered beyond regular teaching loads should be based on institutional needs, not as a means to provide monetary rewards for faculty. Senator Gifford expressed concerns regarding the handling of overload courses, specifically noting that the College of Education had previously used overloads to help increase faculty members' base pay. However, many of these courses are now being assigned to adjunct instructors without input from faculty members. The Provost acknowledged these concerns, reaffirming her support for providing faculty with overload opportunities where appropriate. However, she opposed practices in which some departments "artificially inflate" course offerings to create unnecessary overloads.

Senator Gifford raised a concern about overload assignments, questioning why these opportunities are often given to adjunct professors and instructors instead of full-time faculty members who express a desire to teach them. She emphasized that "decisions are often made without faculty input," which negatively impacts faculty morale. Senator Kim echoed these concerns, stating that "faculty who want to teach should be given these opportunities." The Provost, supported by the Chancellor, acknowledged that multiple factors influence decisions about who teaches overload courses. She emphasized, however, that these discussions should take place between faculty members and their respective department chairs. Both administrators also highlighted that an "overuse" of overloads can lead to reduced faculty engagement in other important areas of campus life, such as committees and the Faculty Senate.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

President Williams invited Paula Atkins, Dean of Students, to present a draft policy proposal on dropping students for non-attendance. The proposed policy would allow instructors to drop students who have never attended an in-person class or participated in an online course by the official census day (14th class day for regular sessions; 7th class day for summer or shorter sessions). Senators engaged in a discussion on the finer details of the policy and ultimately voted to postpone a decision. This delay will allow for a more comprehensive review by other campus entities and provide time for revisions by the Office of the Dean of Students.

**VII. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

President Williams recognized Dr. Heather Carpenter, who addressed two topics:

* Course Evaluations: Dr. Carpenter emphasized the need for clarity regarding course evaluation goals. She recommended revising the current survey to include clearer benchmarks and more effective questions.
* New Syllabus Template: Dr. Carpenter discussed a syllabus template developed by the Instruction and Professional Development Committee, aimed at standardizing course presentations. She and Rhonda Failey, Director of Online Learning, provided updates on the new Moodle course template. Failey explained that the Moodle template is designed to ensure LSUS complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). She urged the Faculty Senate to review the template and consider making its use mandatory for online courses. Beginning in January 2025, LSUS will review all Moodle courses to ensure compliance with ADA requirements. Failey described the new template as a tool designed to "be your best friend" but stressed that faculty must actively engage with it.

Senator Mikaberidze requested clarification on what materials would be checked for compliance. Failey and Scott Hardwick, Chief Information Officer, explained that Moodle automatically evaluates accessibility compliance, with faculty and department chairs responsible for addressing any flagged elements; icons within Moodle indicate accessibility conformance, requiring faculty to respond accordingly. Senator Gifford moved to table this matter so the Senators have more time to review proposed templates.

Senator White expressed concerns regarding the College of Arts and Sciences’ new administrative oversight checklist for online teaching. She noted that the items on the checklist were initially proposed as recommendations but have now been made mandatory without prior input from the Faculty Senate. Senator Siska supported these concerns, questioning how many rules the college could impose on faculty before they become excessive. The senators discussed this matter briefly before agreeing to table it until the next meeting.

The Senate then discussed proposed changes to the policies on Faculty Due Process (Policy 2.19.02) and Promotion and Tenure (Policy 2.01.06). The senators had reviewed the Faculty Due Process Policy during the previous meeting, but the revised version was not submitted for the current meeting. On a motion by Senator Gifford, the Senate voted to table the policy discussion until the next meeting. Regarding the Policy on Promotion and Tenure, the Senators identified the need for minor edits and voted to table this policy as well, allowing time for the necessary revisions to be made.

**VIII. OBSERVATIONS & CONCERNS:**

President Williams invited Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Demitrius Brown, to discuss the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom and the rising concerns about academic misconduct involving AI tools. Vice Chancellor Brown reported a 400% increase in academic misconduct cases over the past year, attributing much of the rise to challenges in detecting and addressing AI-related violations. He emphasized the limited utility of existing tools (including Turnitin’s AI checker) in reliably identifying AI-assisted misconduct and highlighted the importance of faculty involvement in managing these cases. He urged faculty members to provide substantive evidence when reporting suspected misconduct, cautioning that a Turnitin score alone is insufficient and "meaningless" without “wider context,” including student’s overall performance in class, substance, style, and quality of previous assignments, etc. Vice Chancellor Brown called for collaboration with faculty to develop more effective strategies for addressing this growing issue.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The motion was approved, and the meeting wasadjourned at 12:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander Mikaberidze

Secretary