

LSUS FACULTY SENATE
Minutes of the Special Meeting
Thursday, November 30, 2022
11:00 a.m. on Zoom

I. Called to order: 11:03 a.m.

II. Present: President Garcie, Senator McLemore, Senator Bible, Senator Gifford, Senator Coehoorn, Senator Cassie Williams, Senator Felice Williams, Senator Zaidi, Senator Saleh, Senator Mikaberidze, Senator Shepherd, Senator Kim, Senator Salvatore.

Absent: Senator Rubin, Senator White, Senator Zhao

III. President's opening remarks: President Garcie thanked everyone who took time to attend. He provided context and explained why this special meeting was called in response to the request of the chair and members of the Faculty Research and Development Committee (FRDC). The committee requested that the Faculty Senate consider a proposed resolution condemning the actions of a fellow senator in questioning the committee's Fall 2022 awards of sabbaticals, including calling the committee members, particularly the chair, to resign and questioning the research background of committee members. President Garcie said that he had been accused of calling the meeting because of untoward influence by the Chancellor and Provost, which was false. The FRDC requested help and support because its efforts were being questioned. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met and determined that the resolution should be referred to the full faculty senate.

IV. Resolution: President Garcie shared the resolution with the senators present and read it aloud:

Whereas Brian Salvatore has questioned the professionalism and integrity of the Faculty Research and Development Committee (FRDC)'s actions in its Fall 2022 decision on sabbaticals (2023~2024);

Whereas Brian Salvatore failed to exhibit an understanding of the FRDC's usual process of selecting awards prior to such questioning;

Whereas Brian Salvatore has attacked the honor of the members of the FRDC, especially, in an egregious manner, its chair;

Resolved, the FRDC stops all communication with Brian Salvatore about this and similar matters; the Faculty Senate President informs the Executive Committee of his unprofessional actions and the Faculty Senate President requests an apology from Brian Salvatore to the Committee and especially its chair.

President Garcie noted that he was aware of emails questioning the processes of the FRDC and calling for the resignations of its members. He was not involved in committee actions on the issue or in the drafting of the resolution. He is presenting the resolution to the faculty senate in support of the FRDC. He asked for comments.

Faculty member, Dr. Peter Siska, expressed his intention to comment. President Garcie asked him to wait until senators made their comments.

Senator Gifford asked what the faculty senate would be supporting if it supported the resolution. President Garcie answered that the senate would be asked to vote on the FRDC resolution. Dr. Beverly Burden, a member of the FRDC committee, asked if President Garcie had shared any of the emails with senators. He answered that he had not. Senator Gifford pointed out that it was hard to judge without seeing the evidence. She asked if there were any clear violations of policy or faculty handbook guidelines that have occurred. President Garcie said from his point of view, this was more an issue of professionalism than of rule violations; for example, telling the committee chair he should resign and telling members of the committee they were incompetent.

Senator Mikaberidze asked if Senator Salvatore was present, which he was not at that time.

President Garcie said that Senator Salvatore had charged that this special meeting was illegal under open meetings laws. President Garcie had contacted the LSU system attorney about the meeting and had been assured that the meeting was not illegal. Dr. Burden offered to share the emails she had received:

11/10/2022, 2:46 p.m.—Senator Salvatore wrote the FRDC chairman complaining that he had not been fairly evaluated and that bias might have been a factor. He asked if any member of administration had directed the committee not to award him a sabbatical leave. The chairman responded by providing a detailed description of the committee's evaluation protocol and assured Senator Salvatore that all members of the committee evaluated the applications and ranked applications independently. On the same day Senator Salvatore wrote the FRDC chairman again, suggesting, rhetorically, that his proposal was superior to others.

11/12/22—Senator Salvatore wrote the FRDC chairman again, arguing that his proposal was better than others and questioned the integrity and competence of his colleagues on the committee. He again asked whether anyone on the administration directed anyone on the committee not to award him a sabbatical. The FRDC chairman responded that the integrity, fairness, and objectivity of his committee members was unquestionable. Senator Salvatore refused to accept this response and told him he should resign.

Dr. Burden said the question of administration interference internally was asked in the committee, and everyone on the committee answered that they were not influenced by the administration except for one committee member who did not respond. Dr. Burden summed up by saying Senator Salvatore was questioning the integrity of the committee and making false statements. The committee members felt that neither they nor their chairman should be treated like that at this level of professionalism.

President Garcie asked for comments from members of the committee; however, none were forthcoming.

Dr. Peter Siska, a faculty member, spoke up and thanked President Garcie for the meeting. He said it was an example of shared governance. Dr. Siska said he would like to see more constructive, positive feedback on proposals than the committee provides. He had questions about what was wrong with his proposal so he could improve on it. He had the same questions about his sabbatical application. He expressed dissatisfaction with the evaluation criteria. Dr. Siska stated that all faculty members should be encouraged to express their opinions, and he believed FRDC needs this feedback. He characterized what is going as an exchange among academic faculty, and he believed something good could come out of it. He said he has been discouraged from submitting another proposal because he did not get any positive feedback on this one.

Dr. Burden responded that she agreed with shared governance and the right of a faculty member to express their opinions but not by questioning the integrity of colleagues and claiming the committee is corrupt. Opinions can be expressed in a professional way, and what occurred in this instance was not professional. She read an email from Senator Salvatore to Dr. Siska that was sent to the FRDC chairman. "You have one person on that committee from the School of Science [Dr. Burden]." He goes on to say, "Her membership has been virtually perpetual; she does not do research, and she has not published in a very long time." Dr. Burden noted that this was not correct. The email continued, "It is an incompetent system, and it is corrupt, and we need to communicate this to President Tate."

Dr. Burden then read from an email Dr. Siska sent to Senator Salvatore, which read, in part, "both my sabbatical and my FRDC proposal focused on minorities . . . It looks like this committee does not care about these groups." Dr. Burden stressed that every sabbatical the committee received had merit, so the committee had the very hard decision to choose two of the four.

Dr. Siska responded by asking the faculty senate to review the emails that were written about him and to defend him from what was said about him. He said he was accused of things he did not do. That was another thing he wanted to bring to the faculty senate. In the interest of equality, he said he should have the right to bring to the faculty senate the emails that some people wrote about him. He observed that professionalism is not easy to define. Dr. Siska observed that those in leadership positions should expect some negative feedback and be able to take criticism. He then brought up the faculty senate by-laws governing faculty committees and pointed out that the by-laws do not specifically state that the FRDC has jurisdiction over sabbaticals.

Dr. Burden suggested that the faculty senate stay on point and discuss only the issue at hand—the resolution. Dr. Siska rejoined that the faculty senate should not limit the freedom of faculty.

President Garcie noted that this was a special called meeting of the faculty senate with a limited agenda. He observed that there had been a lot of discussion at the last Faculty Senate meeting, and it could continue at the next Faculty Senate meeting. He wanted FRDC members to know that they are heard and everyone to know that if they have a valid concern, they can bring it to the faculty senate and be heard. Dr. Siska responded by saying that he wanted good communication but asserted that all committees are biased.

Senator Coehoorn observed that the argument about scientific merit was moot since the guidelines say that proposals with formatting errors will not be reviewed, and the guidelines are available for all to see. He pointed out the difference in requesting review of rules and attacking committee members personally.

Senator Cassandra Williams then moved to approve the resolution submitted by the Faculty Research and Development Committee. Senator Coehoorn seconded the motion. The senators were polled, and the resolution was approved as read.

President Garcie encouraged members of all committees to bring needs and concerns to the faculty senate, as discussions are often productive. He asked for any other comments from the senate.

Dr. Siska spoke with reference to Senator Coehoorn's comments about a "rule" and stated that he would like the rule to be changed or at least modified. He indicated that he would like to participate in other senate meetings regarding the committee and regarding the rules.

Senator Coehoorn pointed out the difference between sending emails asking for a rule to be changed and calling for the resignation of committee members and questioning their scientific merit. It is the difference between acting in a professional manner and attacking individuals on the committee. This is where the discrepancy lies.

Senator Salvatore spoke and argued that the meeting is an illegal meeting; the faculty senate executive committee is sanctioned under the Board of Supervisors subject to open meetings laws just as the full faculty senate is. He referred to the faculty senate executive committee as "a little cabal." He insisted that anyone in the public, including himself, should have been notified and allowed to attend the faculty senate executive committee meeting. He again asserted that the committee chair was incompetent. He also asserted that the faculty senate had never authorized the FRDC to evaluate sabbaticals. He claimed that it is a corrupt process and suggested that the faculty senate needed a dictionary to understand the meaning of "corrupt." He further alleged that the special meeting, currently underway, was not legal.

President Garcie responded that he had discussed the meeting with the LSU attorney prior to calling it and was given the okay to proceed. He said the Policy and Personnel Committee gave the FRDC oversight of sabbaticals in 2015. The first time the FRDC voted on sabbaticals was in 2016. President Garcie acknowledged that the by-laws were not updated following that authorization and that the senate needed to update the by-laws to reflect what was already in place. Some aspects of the by-laws were updated last year, and the faculty senate needs to continue doing that.

Senator Salvatore then asked for the names of those who were awarded sabbaticals. Dr. Burden replied that the process is that results of the committee's rankings are sent to the provost, because it was the provost's office that initially requested the committee to review sabbaticals after a long period of being unable to offer sabbaticals. The FRDC considers it a service to their fellow faculty at the request of the provost and with the approval of the Policy and Personnel Committee.

Senator Salvatore declared that he saw the provost as intervening in faculty senate business and neither the faculty senate nor the faculty council ever authorized the FRDC to [review sabbaticals]. He claimed that it was an inappropriate intervention by the provost's office, and that it was highly unusual for a faculty senate committee to review sabbaticals. Senator Salvatore then accused President Garcie of being uninformed and said he would know what was going on if he attended ALFS (Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates) meetings. President Garcie said he would keep that in mind. As for the provost's intervention, President Garcie said it was appropriate for the provost or anyone to approach a faculty senate member and ask that a process be considered by the faculty senate as a way of preventing administrators from making decisions that faculty members should make. If an administrator ordered the faculty senate to do something, that would be intervention, but recommending that the faculty senate oversee a process that involves other faculty members would not be. Senator Salvatore took exception claiming that the faculty senate never voted on, approved, or even discussed [sabbaticals].

Provost Helen Taylor asserted that there was a vote in 2015. Senator Salvatore questioned whether the full faculty senate voted on it. The provost said according to the notes she has, yes. Senator Salvatore then asked why it was not in the by-laws. The provost said she could not answer that question but

pointed out that neither Senator Salvatore nor anyone else had complained about the FRDC evaluating sabbatical applications since 2015 until this year. Senator Salvatore responded that this was because this was the first time he had submitted an application for a sabbatical and observed the process, which he argued was flawed.

Senator Cassandra Williams made a motion to adjourn as the business of the meeting was over.

Chancellor Clark stated that he had approved all FRDC recommendations forwarded to him. The process has been in place a long time, and it could have been challenged before now. If the process needs to be changed by the faculty senate, it should be discussed, but that is a separate issue. He pointed out that the issue currently before the Faculty Senate is that Senator Salvatore is not engaging in civil discourse and collegiality. He asserted that this is wrong, and we must get back to acting civilly in our dealings with one another.

President Garcie thanked the chancellor for his comments and asked that the faculty use civility and collegiality in all campus communications. He seconded Senator Cassandra Williams' motion to adjourn.

V. Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura McLemore, Secretary