

Senate Meeting Notes – February 8, 2021

Meeting started at 3:30pm.

1. Roll Call: (Automatically recorded by Zoom)

			Representation	First	Last	Term	Board
P	1	1	Administration	Mahyar	Amouzegar	(20-21)	
P	2	1	Staff Council	Kristy	Askam	(20-21)	
A	3	1	SG President	Julianne	Romero	(20-21)	
P	4	1	Alumni Assoc	Dinah	Payne	(20-21)	
P	5	1	Adjunct	David	Lambour	(20-21)	
P	6	1	COBA	Christy	Corey	(19-22)	Admin - Chair
P	7	2	COBA	James	Logan	(18-21)	Budget
P	8	3	COBA	Dinah	Payne (SE)	(19-22)	Administrative
A	9	4	COBA	Gina	Rosa	(19-22)	Budget
P	10	5	COBA	Kabir	Hassan	(20-23)	Academic
P	11	1	COE	Martin	Guillot	(20-23)	Administrative
P	12	2	COE	Dimitrios	Charalampidis (SE)	(20-23)	Academic
A	13	3	COE	Guillermo	Rincon	(18-21)	Administrative
P	14	4	COE	Ting	Wang	(18-21)	Administrative
P	15	1	COLAEHD	Brian	Beabout	(18-21)	Budget
E	16	2	COLAEHD	David	Beriss (SE)	(18-21)	Administrative
P	17	3	COLAEHD	Elaine	Brooks	(19-22)	Administrative
P	18	4	COLAEHD	Diane	Baas	(19-22)	Administrative
P	19	5	COLAEHD	Chris	Day	(20-23)	Academic - Chair
P	20	6	COLAEHD	Robert	Dupont	(19-22)	Budget
P	21	7	COLAEHD	Chris	Surprenant	(20-23)	Administrative
P	22	8	COLAEHD	Juana	Ibanez	(18-21)	Administrative
P	23	9	COLAEHD	John	Kiefer	(20-23)	Academic
P	24	10	COLAEHD	James	Marchant	(18-21)	Budget - Chair
P	25	11	COLAEHD	Chris	Broadhurst	(20-23)	Academic
P	26	12	COLAEHD	Steven	Mumford	(19-22)	Administrative
P	27	13	COLAEHD	James	Roe (SE)	(20-23)	Academic
P	28	14	COLAEHD	Ryan	Gray	(20-23)	Budget
P	29	1	COS	Nicola	Anthony (SE)	(18-21)	Administrative
A	30	2	COS	Adlai	Depano	(18-21)	Budget
A	31	3	COS	Kraig	Derstler	(19-22)	Academic
P	32	4	COS	Sarah	Black	(20-23)	Academic
P	33	5	COS	Steve	Rick	(20-23)	Academic
P	34	6	COS	Simon	Lailvaux	(20-23)	Administrative
P	35	7	COS	Leszek	Malkinski	(20-23)	Administrative
A	36	8	COS	Rachel	Clostio	(20-23)	Academic
A	37	9	COS	Ralph	Saxton	(19-22)	Academic
P	38	1	Library	Connie	Phelps (SE)	(18-21)	Administrative
P	39	2	Library	Lindsey	Reno	(19-22)	Budget

P: Present
A: Absent
E: Excused

2. Approval of the minutes from the 11/23 meeting:

There was a “move to approve” by Jim Logan, and a “second” by Dinah Payne. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Update from the Faculty Senate President:

The Senate President mentioned that the Administrative Board has been working on the restructuring of disciplinary committees and that the Academic Board has been working on a survey about faculty needs in different programs. These two committees were scheduled to provide updates later in this meeting. There would also be a discussion about authentic assessment. She also reminded the Senate about Spring 2021 Mental Health days, during which tests and online assessment may not be asked of students. These days are not required but recommended, especially because there will not be a spring break this semester.

4. Updates from the UNO Office of the President (J. Nicklow and M. Amouzegar):

President Nicklow mentioned that we will have a new update regarding the number of COVID-19 cases on campus on Thursday. So far, we have had a relatively small number of cases in the UNO community with no major outbreaks. We have been doing better than our sister institutions. He thanked the faculty for helping in this process and also for completing and submitting the new UNO Compact.

President Nicklow provided a summary of the university’s efforts to bring the COVID-19 vaccine on campus. The President wants the vaccine to be available to the campus community, so that everyone who wants access to the vaccine has access to it. Last week, it became uncertain that higher education personnel would be eligible for receiving the vaccine in the next phase (Phase 1B – Tier II). First, Louisiana’s Department of Health had listed higher education as eligible in one place, but did not list it as eligible in another. When the university asked for clarification, higher education was completely removed from the next phase vaccination plans. However, yesterday we were notified that higher education personnel is back in.

About three weeks ago, UNO faculty and staff were asked to take a survey indicating if they were interested in being vaccinated, should the vaccine be available to them. The President mentioned that the results of the survey were pretty good for UNO. In some sister institutions, only about 20% of university personnel showed an interest in getting the vaccine. In UNO’s case, about 1,200 faculty and staff members (which is about 75% of all personnel on campus) provided a response. Of those who provided a response, about 89% indicated that they were interested in receiving the vaccine. Assuming that people who did not complete the survey were most likely not interested in receiving the vaccine, we can estimate that about 65% of UNO’s personnel is interested. This percentage is high relative to other institutions. The President said that UNO personnel will not be forced to take the vaccine, but reiterated that he wants to make sure that it is available to all who want to receive it. Soon, there will be another survey for people 65 and older, to determine whether they have already received the vaccine or have an appointment to receive it. It is important to make sure that the university receives the right number of doses.

The President said that the current plan is to start classes with regular in-person component on Ash Wednesday. The university is constantly watching all developments and will update this plan as needed.

We have not reached census day yet this spring, which will be on the 14th day of classes. At this point, overall enrollment is 3.5% down from last spring. This is not atypical based on what we see at other institutions. Some students may have decided to take a semester off and come back in fall due to the pandemic. We had more students than usual who lost scholarships and went on probation. The university is working with these students and with scholarship appeals. The numbers for fall, however, are up by 4%, in terms of applications, and flat in admissions.

Regarding the budget, the President mentioned that a federal relief package has been passed. This package includes \$9.8M of support to UNO. Of this amount, \$2.7M+ is required to be a direct passthrough to students. Students will decide how they want to receive this support. The deadline for spending these funds is not yet known. The direct and indirect costs due to the pandemic were about \$22M. Moreover, it has been estimated that UNO will lose \$20M in revenue (auxiliaries, studying abroad, etc). Therefore, although UNO will be receiving some federal support, the cost and revenue loss due to the pandemic are expected to far exceed this support. We expect another federal support package, but we hope that there will also be some state support. The financial challenges are expected to persist to the next fiscal year.

Regarding social activities, the currently policy states that we should not exceed a 50% room capacity or 50 people, whichever is less. However, if there is a gathering where it is likely that safety guidelines, including social distancing and masking, cannot be followed 100%, the limits are defined as 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors.

Regarding commencement, the university is putting together different packages. There is too much uncertainty to have a single, very specific plan. The university is working on several plans, and the appropriate plan will be employed depending on the situation.

There was a question about the possibility to vaccinate families of UNO employees together with the employees when the vaccine becomes available to the UNO community. The President said that he would like for this to be possible, but we need to see how things progress as more populations are added to the vaccination tiers.

There was a question, whether it is expected that the fall schedule will include fewer or a similar number of online and hybrid courses. The President responded that this is not certain yet. Nevertheless, he said that he anticipates a normal fall semester, and clarified that by “normal” he means the “new normal”. He also added that we need to see what worked last year and possibly adopt any successful practices, even if we return to “normal” operations. We do not necessarily have to toss away all online instruction activities, but to investigate new learning opportunities.

The Provost also stated that we are hoping to see a lot of face-to-face classes in fall but, as the President said, we may still want to find new ways to teach classes and to teach some classes online.

5. Updates from the Academic Board (C. Day):

Chris Day mentioned that in the last Senate meeting she had announced that the Academic Board had been working on a survey. The purpose of the survey is to ask faculty about lost positions in their departments and about faculty line needs in their programs. This survey is in addition to the normal process followed by the university for deciding where new faculty lines should be provided. The Academic Board has now created the survey on Qualtrics, and this survey will be sent out soon to all UNO faculty. Chris Day asked the senators to encourage all faculty to take it. The committee understands that there are a lot of uncertainties with the budget. Nevertheless, the committee would like to collect this information for whenever there is an available budget again.

6. Updates from the Administrative Board (C. Corey):

Christy Corey mentioned that the Administrative Board will have its first meeting of the spring semester this coming Friday. The main item that the Administrative Board worked on this past fall was the restructuring of the Grievance Committees and the faculty Grievance Procedures document. These procedures are to be used when a faculty member has a grievance against the administration, another faculty member, or a staff member. A description is also included in this same document regarding what specific types of grievances this document addresses. The document includes two decision trees that explain the process step-by-step. The first tree deals with the informal phase of the process, while the second tree describes the formal phase. The informal phase begins with the immediate supervisor and proceeds with higher points in the supervisor chain. If the faculty member believes that the informal phase did not resolve the issue, they may move on to the formal process. The formal process may even lead to taking the issue to UL board.

There was a question regarding the members of the previous disciplinary committees. These committees were populated very recently. The question was whether we should populate the restructured committee from the previous committees. According to the new document, the committee includes two voting members and an alternate from each college and the Library (members should be tenured faculty). Members of the Administrative Board suggested that we could possibly choose some of the previous disciplinary committee members to populate the restructured committee. The document does not designate to each college and library how to decide the members. It is up to the colleges to decide.

The Charges Committee document is currently in the works. The Administrative Board also plans to revise the senate bylaws. In addition, there is a plan to have the General Education committee as a standing Senate committee, so that it is also a more faculty-oriented committee. A senator suggested that senators from departments who teach a large number of general education courses should have representation in the committee. The Senate Vice President responded that the Senate President/Vice-president give senators the opportunity to choose committees.

7. CTI presentation on authentic assessments (E. Blankenship, M. King, T. Johnson)

Vice Provost Tina Johnson mentioned that we need to find new ways to ensure that our students are successful. Beth Blankenship mentioned that in Fall 2019, only 14% of UNO courses were offered online or in hybrid mode. On the other hand, in Fall 2020, about 86% of courses were offered online or in hybrid mode. The number of high-impact courses with more than 30% DFW rates increased from 18 to 41. Beth Blankenship and Meredith King have been working on some authentic assessment ideas. Beth Blankenship mentioned that there is a plan to have a workshop and to invite faculty who are interested in sharing the experiences they had with alternative assessment methods, either successful or unsuccessful.

The main complaint from students taking online courses is with respect to online testing and proctoring. One of the main complaints from faculty is an increase in cheating, especially in online tests. There have also been issues with equity (extra cost for higher levels of proctoring, lack of equipment, environmental factors, stress of being watched, security concerns, etc).

The purpose of authentic assessments is to assess what students learn outside of a traditional testing environment. The objective is to use a process that helps faculty determine if students are learning the skills, and at the same time to help students continue learning through this process. It was acknowledged that authentic assessment may require more resources which may not be available, such as the lack of TAs for faculty, and more work from faculty especially for large classes.

Some suggestions included reminding students of honor codes, asking if they understand what cheating is, and asking them to sign an honors code for every assignment. Moreover, assignments may give students a chance to talk about the problem, how they conceptualize it, and may give them a chance to provide a detailed explanation of the overall process. This may help instructors to understand better what students have learnt. Also, faculty may explain to students why it is important that they actually acquire this knowledge and have the necessary foundation to be successful in the next courses and after they graduate. Other suggestions included give students a lot of opportunities, such as retakes and “do-overs”, moving higher grade percentages to assignments and away from tests.

8. Old Business

Christy Corey asked if the Senate is ready to vote on the Grievance Procedures document or if this should wait for the next Senate meeting. It was finally decided that the Senate should vote in this meeting, especially since the document had already been available for 2 months. The new Grievance Procedures document was approved unanimously.

9. New Business

There was a question about how to make an item a “new business” item. Senate Executive Board (SEB) members responded that any business item which is not already an agenda item can be

announced under “new business”. However, the preferred way, especially for any seemingly complex item, may be to first contact the SEB. The SEB will have a discussion and may then charge the appropriate Senate board with a new task. Simple items, such as announcements, do not have to be sent to the SEB first. In any case, a senator can always bring up a new topic for the first time during the Senate meeting regardless of its complexity.

An announcement was made that a student in Film recently won an award at the prestigious Sundance film festival.

Adjournment at approximately 5:05pm.