

Faculty Senate Meeting
April 14, 2020
Online by Zoom

Attendance:

Proceedings of the meeting are uploaded onto UB Box.

The Chair, Dr Robert Miletich called FS Meeting to order at 3.00pm.

Agenda: The agenda was accepted unanimously.

Secretary's report: The minutes of March 2020 was approved and accepted unanimously.

President: The President gave the FS an update on COVID-19 status of UB calling it trying and historic times. He informed the Senate that after March the operating budget was flat. However, the budget could be adjusted at any time during the year and could ask for limited spending. On the capital side the critical care spending, EOP, SUNY fellowships and programs remain flat. Five UB faculty members have been appointed to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Professor, the highest faculty achievement in the SUNY system. M. Laura Feltri, Jo Freudenheim, Amit Goyal, Elad Levy and Stephen Tiffany were appointed to the distinguished professor ranks by the SUNY Board of Trustees in March. 79 UB faculty members have been awarded this honor in the last 12-13 years.

Provost: The Provost thanked the Faculty for their effort in engaging the students during these extraordinary times, and the Faculty, IT and Center for Innovation for their combined efforts in this challenging climate. It has been an amazing effort successfully transitioning nearly 4000 courses to the online format.

COVID19 committees: Along with the unit, committees are already in place to allow maintaining of academic continuity, completion and retention. The committee was brought together as a broader planning group to study whether Fall instruction would be wholly distance learning, wholly in person or somewhere in between, to help ensure that the students enjoy the best possible university experience to enable their academic success while maintaining the health and safety of the campus community. The committee

will have appropriate representation from the Faculty, staff and students. With graduate, undergraduates and Postdoctoral fellows in mind a research and graduate professional committee has been formed and will be led by Venu Govindaraju, VPR for Research and Economic Development and Graham Hammill, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School. The committee will focus on issues that include ensuring:

- (a) Continuation of research and scholarship uninterrupted;
- (b) Impacts of maintaining laboratory research during this time of unintended long closure;
- (c) Sustaining future research by facilitating grants and fellowship applications;
- (d) Preparing TAs for teaching in this new environment while maintaining progress in their research and dissertation;
- (e) continuing to maintain options for completion and retention in graduate and professional programs;
- (f) understanding and mitigating the impact of COVID19 on the careers of UB graduate students and postdocs especially with hiring freezes in place across the economy especially in the higher education in the coming year,
- (g) Understanding the unique needs of the international students and providing accommodation to the best of UBs ability.

Tenure: The tenure process, including tenure stoppage has been a sure topic in the many discussions that the leadership and the Chairs have been having by Zoom. President Tripathi and the Provost favor flexibility and latitude for campus direction in this important area. He thanked the PRB for maintaining their high standard of work and in moving a record number of promotions and tenure cases this year.

Summer & Fall: Summer classes will be in the distance learning format or online. A virtual commencement would be held for each academic unit during the commencement time. Coming to Fall the Provost reminded everyone that due to COVID19 we had moved from 12% to 100% online instruction and so the Fall instructional method still remains uncertain.

UB student excellence: The celebration for UB student excellence, which is an annual celebration, has been cancelled. However, UB students continue to earn national awards. They include 6 NSF graduate fellows, a Goldwater scholar, a Fulbright scholar, a language scholar and 14 recipients of the Chancellor's award for student excellence. UB is extremely proud of its student achievements.



In answer to questions: regarding the student campus employment, the Provost said that discussions are ongoing but no decisions had been made. Regarding the formation of 6 COVID19 committees it was still in progress and a website would be setup. However it will have representation from all University groups. Regarding distance teaching, he responded that the environment is dynamic and although UB has no intention of moving instruction totally online, understandably there is going to be greater interest in having online classes at least in some pedagogy cases. Students express mixed reactions to online instruction – undergraduates majorly preferring in person instruction, the collision on campus with peers and faculty, also there are different challenges being confronted such as environment and technology, while graduate students prefer online classes. Surveys are and will continue to be administered, to understand how the students are faring in this environment. Student engagement is being tracked. If the online trend continues, it is expected that there will be a drop in Fall enrollment of about 10% which is universal. Grading has already moved to S/U with the students having the option to have the actual letter grades revealed since it is maintained in their records. As to the opening of the research, with the expectations being placed by the external governmental policies and public health offices, it is being looked into as to how to open up the university so that the faculty and students can be given the opportunity to get back to the life they need to have. Some of the clinics such as vision works is opening up practicing social distancing and other considerations in place.

Chair's report:

for the rest of the meetings of this session the Senate will be focusing on University life and mission, educational procedures related to academic policies. During this time of COVID19, we will also be discussing impact of distance learning and the student experience, faculty experience, research, plans for Fall enrollment and budget.

Obituary: The FS took a moment to honor, acknowledge and respect colleagues that have departed.

1. Peter F. Regan III, a noted educator and psychiatrist who served as UB's acting president during the period of campus unrest in the 1970s, died suddenly on April 5. He was 95.
2. Constantine P. Karakousis, MD. PhD passed away on March 31, 2020. He was Professor of Surgery at the University of Buffalo and worked for



many years at Roswell Park, Millard Fillmore, and Buffalo General hospitals. He was an expert on melanoma, wrote hundreds of scientific articles and several authoritative textbooks and atlases on the surgical management of soft-tissue sarcomas and melanomas, and he developed several innovative limb-sparing surgical procedures.

PRESENTATIONS: Slides of the presentations in UB Box

Academic Procedure: Ann Bisantz, Dean of Undergraduate Education, and Graham Hammill, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School presented the changes in undergraduate and graduate status of Academic Procedure due to COVID-19. They spoke about the goals and priorities of the Academic affairs. A month ago when the Governor announced that all SUNY/CUNY education would be going online, the President set academic continuity as a top University priority along with safeguarding the health of the students, faculty and staff. The Academic affairs set 3 priorities for the missions of academic continuity and safeguarding the health mission:

Student support: The first was student support ensuring that the students could complete their degrees with the challenges incurred due to the abrupt transition into distance learning, while increasing flexibility, relaxing policies and deadlines to the greatest degree possible thereby reducing student stress enabling them to complete their degrees.

Surveys: Secondly, two surveys were conducted to gain data as to the impact and challenges of remote learning on faculty and students. All comments are triaged to the appropriate places in 24 hours if possible. Results of surveys are public with the link given in the slides.

Communication: Third focus has been to maintain communication to gain knowledge as to the impact of COVID19. Listening to the campus needs and to clarify the changes such as policy relaxations taking place. Associate Deans for Graduate and Undergraduate council are in constant communications as to challenges that are being confronted and what challenges need to be escalated and solved. A website has been put together for students so that they could receive updates as to the COVID19 changes. Course evaluations will not be counted for tenure and promotion.

However, they will be administered with a small set of questions developed by the faculty related to online and remote learning. Schools/ Depts/individual faculty can add questions.

Academic integrity: Different platforms are available for use to maintain academic integrity which is on UB learns, such as responding monitor, lockdown browser and exam soft. Each of them have limitations and these are only avenues. Office of Academic integrity gives support to instructors.

Grading: As to grading, letter grades of S/U would be given and the students could recover their actual grades if needed. The S/U grade would not factor into their GPA.

In response to questions: Whether counseling limitation of 10 visits could be made more flexible - he responded that he would pass it onto the Vice President of Student Affairs. It was requested that the Office of Academic integrity make the piracy of faculty intellectual property a priority and to hold the students accountable.

Tenure and Promotion: Changes Tenure and Promotion due to COVID-19 was presented by Robert Granfield, VP Faculty Affairs. It had been a busy year for the PRB. They had reviewed 92 cases across the University for the current academic year, transmitted to the President and the Provost for their review and the faculty are being informed of the outcome of their dossiers in a timely fashion. The PRB transitioned online and continued with the rigorous review process undisturbed.

COVID19 tenure clock stop – discussions are ongoing across the country for relaxation of some of the policies. Research and creative activities have been restricted with restrictions of travel, cancellation of events, social distancing. This began in the middle of March and will continue, and remains uncertain as to when this will end. SUNY has shared a draft approach that consisted of a clock stop for one semester for those faculties coming up for tenure in 2021. The President and Provost are committed to a more inclusive approach and very flexible. This will be University wide policy and granted to all non-tenure faculty and there will be no need for request. The faculty could also opt to not take the COVID19 clock stop. However, SUNY needs to weigh



in on this and the University is waiting for the notification from SUNY before crafting the UB policy and promulgating it.

In response to a request that it made obligatory for the Chairs and Deans to mention the clock stop in their letters, the VP responded that it was a good idea and said that it would be considered for addition to the policy when the policy was put in place.

Old Business: None

Executive session: None

New business: None

Adjourned: Meeting was adjourned at 4.38 pm. -

Submitted by Jessy Alexander, Secretary of the Faculty Senate, May, 2020.