

CAS Council 11/22/24 Minutes

I. Call to Order (Novoa)

II. Approval of 9/27/2024 Meeting Minutes

Corton moved to approve the minutes, and Friedman seconded.

III. Committee Liaisons - update

a. Library Committee (Kissi)

There are no updates to share due to a lack of response from the new committee chair despite multiple attempts to contact him via email to introduce themselves as the committee's liaison. Our Council Chair will contact them again.

b. Diversity Committee (Friedman)

The Diversity Committee responded before our liaison's request. The Diversity Committee is inviting departmental diversity liaisons to the next meeting to hear their concerns and priorities on November 26, Wednesday. [Friedman will share details on upcoming changes for committee's mission and changes]

c. Faculty Development Committee (Allen)

The Faculty Development Committee chairs had no updates to provide.

d. Technology Committee (Corton)

We received a message from Denise, the co-chair of the Technology Committee. The committee is adjusting to a change in leadership this semester and is currently reviewing materials from the previous chair. They are attempting to meet before Thanksgiving, but Denise is not optimistic about this happening, suggesting that the meeting will likely occur afterward. In summary, the committee is currently in a transitional phase with no significant developments as they review past activities.

e. Grievance (Cleveland-Roberts)

There have been few cases escalating to review boards or committees for assignments, indicating that faculty are effectively managing classroom issues and student expectations. While reports of academic integrity issues are being received, they typically do not warrant board review, as many are not substantive appeals against faculty decisions. Faculty members often use these situations as teaching moments, applying light sanctions which do not require further evaluation.

The use of a new system for handling student concerns is not user-friendly. The new system is challenging to navigate, often needing assistance from staff members. However, the changes mostly affect the back-end processes and are not noticeable to faculty, aside from the need to manually enter student details on forms. Overall, the situation is described as orderly, with no significant increase in cases.

IV. TEP Proposal and proposal on the Mental Health and Food Security – update (Novoa)

The CAS faculty council previously worked on a tuition exchange proposal, and we wanted to persuade the provost to participate. At the January 2024 meeting he said he would get with HR on it. There's a strategy to reach out to other colleges, such as engineering, to gather support for this initiative. The idea is to ensure strong backing from multiple colleges when re-presenting the proposal to the provost in February.

Friedman and Tangela are involved in initiatives related to mental health and food security. Although disrupted by the hurricane, the Food Sovereignty Initiative continues its efforts, including seed collection and farmer's markets. Tangela noted that communication between faculty councils and the Faculty Senate could be improved for better alignment on these issues. The bureaucracy involved tends to slow down the implementation of recommendations from these proposals.

V. General Education (Novoa)

Novoa opened the discussion on General Education by underscoring the ongoing challenges and uncertainties surrounding the Gen Ed curriculum revisions. Concerns about the lack of communication and transparency from the university's general counsel were expressed, particularly regarding procedures and the final decision-making process. It was also noted that faculty confusion and the need for clear communication about the iterative nature of Gen Ed course approval.

Updates on the submissions and feedback process involving the Board of Governors (BOG) were provided. There have been multiple rounds of submissions, with feedback provided on course descriptions, syllabi, and course levels to align with BOG requirements. The courses need to be broad in scope and at the lower division level. Despite the submissions, there seems to be a lack of clarity about which courses will ultimately be approved.

Departments like Sociology, Africana Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies had submitted courses, but there was no certainty about their acceptance. The discussion also revealed misunderstandings about the approval timeline, with some faculty believing that being on the submitted list equates to final approval, which is not the case. The final decisions are expected in December, with the official list being released in February as stipulated by state law. This timeline creates pressure to ensure that courses align with requirements to avoid funding implications.

Novoa emphasized the importance of keeping faculty informed about these timelines and the potential impact on course offerings and funding. She expressed concern about the university's AAU status and accreditation, stressing the need for a coherent Gen Ed program by the catalog deadline for Fall 2025. Allison added that while the immediate focus is on having a course list ready for the catalog, the comprehensive development of the Gen Ed curriculum is expected to extend into 2026. Faculty Senate and Gen Ed Council are working to address these issues, but the complexity and urgency of the situation remain a significant concern for faculty and administration alike.

VI. Provost Meeting - February

The Provost's meeting, initially scheduled for January, was rescheduled to February due to a prior commitment on the Provost's part. This meeting represents an important opportunity for faculty council members to engage directly with the Provost on pressing concerns and initiatives affecting the college.

Collins noted that the council had previously identified several key topics to discuss with the Provost, reflecting ongoing challenges and priorities within the college. These include faculty retention, graduate student recruitment, and the tuition exchange program. The faculty council aims to use the meeting to seek support and guidance from the Provost on these issues and to advocate for policies that enhance faculty and student experiences at the university.

The rescheduling provides additional time for the council to prepare and refine the agendas, ensuring a focused and productive dialogue. It was also noted the importance of presenting a united front and clear message to the Provost, hoping to influence decision-making at the university level.

The council plans to revisit the topics discussed in the previous year's meeting to assess progress and identify areas requiring further attention. This includes following up on commitments made by the Provost.

VIII. Gift Cards and CAS streamlined process Update (Allen)

Without Dean Larson's input, the council decided to defer the discussion until more information could be provided.

IX. Associate Dean Toru Shimizu

Post-Tenure Promotion Process

Associate Dean Shimizu recognized the concerns about the clarity and fairness of the post-tenure review criteria, emphasizing that the criteria are consistent with university and departmental regulations. He acknowledged previous discussions about differences in evaluations but noted that the procedures and guidelines remain the same as before. In terms of the procedures and dates, faculty self-narratives are due by December 2nd, chairs will review them by January 7th,

and the Dean's office will begin their review after that. The number of reviews this year is fewer than last year.

He mentioned that the Dean's office will send out a Microsoft form for chair evaluations after Thanksgiving, with a deadline of January 31st. This information will be used for evaluating department chairs and ensuring everything is running smoothly.

He also reminded the group about the upcoming college assembly on December 6th, which will be held virtually. The assembly will include progress reports from subcommittees and a question-and-answer session with the Dean.

X. Dean's Remarks

Dean Spiller acknowledged the challenges faced by faculty and students due to recent hurricanes and thanked the faculty members. She also mentioned plans for a more detailed "state of the college" conversation in the fall assembly. She shared the development of a new smart lab in the St. Pete library to support student learning and retention. She also mentioned the university's focus on improving four and six-year graduation rates and continuing the strong research performance of the college.

XI. Faculty Concerns

There was a significant focus on faculty retention, with questions about how the college plans to address the demoralization of existing faculty who see new hires receiving higher salaries. There was a call for concurrent prioritization of both new faculty recruitment and existing faculty retention.

Concerns were raised about the challenges in recruiting graduate students, particularly from within the United States. The high cost of living and inadequate funding for graduate students were highlighted as significant issues.

Lack of support for international students was also raised as a concern. International students experience difficulties with language barriers and limited resources. It was shared that this should be addressed in future meetings with the provost.

Concerns about the centralization of administrative processes were raised, such as travel arrangements and research support. The implication was that the change in administrative processes may lead to unintended consequences that influence departmental culture and changes in departmental autonomy and efficiency.

XII. Adjourn