

2019-20 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Faculty Senate Minutes: No. 6

Special Meeting

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

The sixth meeting of the Faculty Senate for 2019-20 was convened at 11:00 a.m. on June 9, 2020, online via Zoom, and was also live-streamed and recorded on [YouTube](#). This special meeting was called in order to vote on proposed measures to address University financial stringency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to approve modifications to the fall 2020 Twin Cities academic calendar. Present were 136 faculty/academic professional members. President Joan Gabel and Faculty Senate Vice Chair Carol Chomsky presided.

1. Motion to Approve Special Rule (*Action by the University Senate*)

Professor Amy Pittenger, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee

The Faculty Consultative Committee proposed the following special rule during this meeting:

- Speakers shall be limited to two minutes each time they are recognized.

A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of those present and voting was required to approve the special rule.

Motion: To approve the special rule.

Approved.

2. Action on the President's Recommendations Regarding Temporary Faculty Salary Reductions Under Section 4.5 of Board of Regents Policy: *Faculty Tenure (Action by the Faculty Senate)*

Professor Amy Pittenger, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee

President Gabel provided a brief recap of the process prior to the present meeting, and noted that [the proposal](#) was in response to consultation with University stakeholders, which included looking at a systemwide survey and consultations with faculty and University Senate faculty and staff governance committees and leaders. She said that the current proposal was refined according to the feedback they received and the deliberations of the Finance & Operations Planning Work Group, which included representation from the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC).

Gabel then turned the floor over to Professor Carol Chomsky, Faculty Senate vice chair, to chair this portion of the meeting..

Next, Professor Amy Pittenger, chair, FCC, expressed hope that the Faculty Senate would choose to support a plan for temporary faculty salary reductions at this meeting, as doing so

would allow Gabel to propose a plan to the Board of Regents that the faculty have initiated and supported. She reminded everyone that the senate was only voting on the faculty portion of the plan.

Professor Phil Buhlmann, vice chair, FCC, and member of the Finance & Operations Planning Work Group, informed members that the work group compiled [an FAQ](#) that was shared with senators prior to this meeting. He noted that the work group had received a number of suggestions regarding the cutoff for the salary cuts and the pay cut percentage at the highest income tiers. In response, he said that the work group was worried about the extent to which the proposed pay cuts would help individual units to realize savings to deal with budget cuts; a high cutoff could put added pressure on units with fewer higher income earners. Buhlmann then stated that the work group also received suggestions to take the floor back down to \$40,000 from groups who hold the position that more than 70% of the workforce should be participating. He emphasized that these comments did not come from where one might have anticipated them. The work group decided not to lower the floor, but Buhlmann reminded members that employees should have the opportunity to make voluntary pay cut contributions, and that the University had established a hardship fund, to which anyone could contribute. This fund was to assist lower paid faculty and staff who find the furlough or temporary pay cut difficult to navigate.

Next, Pittenger called on Professor Mark Bee, member, FCC, to talk about an [alternate plan](#) he had formulated, which included raising the pay cut floor from \$50,000 to \$60,000 and asking those with higher incomes to take on more of the burden. The overall savings from this alternate plan were nearly identical to the original proposal.

Many senators expressed support for the alternate plan, citing the higher salary floor and reduced burden on lower income faculty. Professor Janet Fitzakerley, Medical School senator, expressed concern about clinical faculty, who had already undergone significant pay reductions. She called on Gabel to take administrative action to require deans to have approval of the collegiate faculty body and the president with respect to implementation details, in order to increase transparency and equity and provide colleges with a mechanism to address inequities if they exist. Michele Morrissey, director, Human Resources, Medical School, affirmed that the Medical School was committed to finding an equitable plan for all of its faculty.

Members expressed concern about the composition of the work group, noting that it lacked diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, and was composed of individuals on the higher end of the income scale.

Chomsky called for an advisory poll to determine which plan senators favored. 58% favored the alternate proposal; 19% said they were fine with either, and 23% favored the original proposal. After a brief recess, Gabel formally offered the alternate proposal as her recommendation. The body then voted on the following motion:

Motion: In accordance with Section 4.5 of the Board of Regents Policy: *Faculty Tenure*, to approve the president's proposal for authority to implement a temporary reduction in salary for all faculty for the 2020-2021 academic year in accordance with the [chart](#) provided here.

The motion carried, with 118 ayes and 18 nays.

3. Discussion of Fall 2020 and Action on Proposed Changes to the Fall 2020 Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendar (*Action by the Faculty Senate*)

Professor Jennifer Goodnough, chair, Senate Committee on Educational Policy

Gabel resumed chairing of the meeting and turned the floor over to Professor Jennifer Goodnough, chair, Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP), who informed members that Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel Croson had consulted with SCEP on a proposal to move the fall 2020 start date to August 31 for the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses. Senators were directed to <https://provost.umn.edu/fall-instruction> for background information.

The rationale behind this proposal were as follows:

- It would give students and faculty one additional week of possible hybrid or in-person instruction before pivoting to online after Thanksgiving. This could prove critical for courses that it would be harder to accomplish online, as in-person activities could be front-loaded.
- Public health experts advised that a week head start on the cold and flu season could be beneficial.
- It is the first day of 9-month faculty contracts.

Goodnough noted that the Twin Cities and Rochester campus calendars are tied together and cannot be decoupled. There was no proposal from the Morris campus yet, but that campus was likely to move the start date earlier, to coincide with the start of the 9-month faculty contract. Crookston and Duluth are not under the purview of the Faculty Senate, as faculty on those campuses are unionized. Goodnough emphasized that the situation could change before the start of fall semester, as well as during the fall semester.

Although members were generally concerned for the welfare of students, faculty, and staff following Thanksgiving break, senators noted the following objections to the proposed change:

- Instructors may try to cram the full semester's curriculum into a short time frame, resulting in high stress for students.
- Moving the start date could be problematic from a family/caregiving perspective, and would disproportionately affect women and people of color.
- Although faculty are on contract beginning August 31, they will need to work during the week before the start of classes before their contracts begin.

Members asked a number of questions that were beyond the scope of this conversation and are therefore not recorded. When the time allotted for discussion had passed, members of the Faculty Senate voted on the following motion.

Motion: For Fall 2020, the Faculty Senate supports the provost in making decisions on necessary adjustments to the Twin Cities/Rochester and Morris campus calendars due to

COVID-19. The Faculty Senate requests that the provost consult broadly with campus governance before making a decision, but a vote by the Faculty Senate is not needed.

The motion carried with 107 ayes in favor and 11 against.

4. Adjournment

Gabel adjourned the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office