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# The University Senate

FACULTY • STUDENT • P&A • CIVIL SERVICE

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## 2021-22 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### Faculty Senate Minutes: No. 3

Wednesday, October 6, 2021  
8:30 - 9:25 a.m.

The third meeting of the Faculty Senate for 2021-22 was convened on October 6, 2021, online via Zoom, and was also live-streamed and recorded on [YouTube](#). At the time of this meeting, there were 164 voting members of the Faculty Senate. 125 were present.

#### 1. Faculty Senate Call to Order

*Professor Carol Chomsky, vice chair, Faculty Senate*

Professor Carol Chomsky, Faculty Senate vice chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

#### 2. Motion to Approve Special Rule (*Action by the Faculty Senate*)

*Professor Ned Patterson, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee*

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

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

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

The clerk will interject when speakers have thirty seconds left and when time is up.

**Motion:** To approve the special rule.

Approved.

#### 3. Resolution on Classroom Health and Safety under COVID-19 (*Discussion by the Faculty Senate*)

*Professor Ned Patterson, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee*

*Professors Ellen Messer-Davidow and Michael Minta, representing the resolution authors*

Professor Ned Patterson, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee, introduced the topic, stating that 18 faculty senators had put forth this [Resolution on Classroom Health and Safety under COVID-19](#), which reflected many of the concerns that members of the University community had voiced to senate leadership. He noted that, according to senate practice, the resolution was listed on the agenda as a discussion item, with the intent of holding a second special meeting for

a vote. However, he added, senators were empowered to vote to hold a vote at this meeting instead.

Next, Professor Ellen Messer-Davidow, faculty senator from the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), who was one of the sponsors of the resolution, gave some background information on why it was needed. In particular, she cited the following:

- On August 18, 2021, the University administration held a town hall in response to covid-related concerns, garnering over 1,000 views.
- The local chapter of the Association for American University Professors (AAUP) held a town hall on September 4, 2021, in which about 250 people participated.
- On September 7th, the coalition of Student, Staff, and Faculty United for Health and Safety (SSFUHS) published an open letter to President Gabel, asking for stronger safety measures, which over 750 individuals signed.
- Graduate students circulated their own petition calling for stronger measures, which included 28 pages of single spaced signatures, estimated to be about 1500-2000 signatures.

Messer-Davidow turned the floor over to Professor Michael Minta, CLA faculty senator, who outlined the proposed measures in the resolution and explained why the resolution authors felt they were superior to the status quo.

Professor Chomsky then opened the floor for discussion.

Professor V.V. Ganeshanathan, CLA faculty senator, yielded time to Cherrene Korazuk, president of AFSCME 3800, who expressed support for the resolution and shared stories about the impacts of covid-19 in the workplace on AFSCME-represented staff.

Professor Katie Johnston-Goodstar, faculty senator from the College of Education and Human Development, yielded time to Scott Creer, chair of the P&A Senate. Creer noted that while he supported the general idea of the resolution, he objected to the lack of consultation with other stakeholders. He explained that the Faculty Senate holds more power in the University Senate than the other groups (P&A, Civil Service, and students), and said that he felt the resolution should be brought to the University Senate for discussion before the faculty vote,

Other faculty senators spoke in favor of the resolution, citing the following:

- The resolution was shaped by faculty in the School of Public Health, and staff and students were consulted.
- There may not have been formal consultation on the resolution, but it was circulated widely and members of all constituencies had expressed support.
- If there is a hierarchy that is being enforced, it is not the faculty overruling staff and students; it is the administration imposing decisions on everyone else without allowing for proper discussion and input.
- The resolution is not perfect, but the measures outlined therein are good and the quest for perfection should not get in the way of implementing good ideas.
- Faculty want to teach in person, but also want to be safe.

- There is a perception that the administration has ignored people with vulnerable members of their household.
- Administrative action around covid-19 has lacked transparency.
- The inability to notify students of a positive case in class is disturbing.
- The University should be doing weekly testing of every person on campus to catch early outbreaks.
- U of M Physicians (UMP) employees are required to be vaccinated. Clinical faculty are subject to a different set of rules.
- There may have been widespread consultation in some units, but not all.
- There are logistical challenges and high costs associated with some of the measures in the resolution, which may not be justified based on public health guidance.

Professor Tracy Twine, FCC member, yielded time to Sarani Millican, chair of the Student Senate. Millican said that she was in favor of the resolution, but urged senators to vote at the University Senate, not the Faculty Senate. Even though the resolution is advisory, she said, faculty speaking on behalf of students and staff is not the same as letting them speak and vote for themselves.

Sumanth Gopinath made a motion to vote on the resolution at this meeting. Tim Emory, faculty senator from the Medical School, seconded. A vote was held and the motion carried, with 85 in favor, 18 against, and 5 abstentions.

A vote on the resolution itself was held and the motion carried, with 93 in favor, 12 against, and 4 abstentions.

#### **4. Faculty Senate Adjournment**

Professor Chomsky adjourned the meeting at 9:23 a.m.