



Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Time: 11:00 am

Venue: Virtual/Microsoft Teams Meeting

Presiding Officer: Dr. Candace C. Stevens, President, Faculty Senate

Recording Secretary: Dr. Mary Shepherd (Assistant Secretary)

Members Present

- Dr. Candace C. Stevens, President
- Dr. Mary Shepherd
- Dr. Julius Ikenga
- Mr. Daniel Splaingard
- Ms. Jocelyn Haley

Members Absent

- Ms. LaTonzia Evans, Vice President
- Dr. Christine Campbell
- Dr. Shelly Garlotte
- Dr. Theresa Rash
- Dr. Latosha Caesar
- Dr. Zainul Abedin
- Dr. Oko Elechi

Call to Order

Dr. Candace C. Stevens called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. After welcoming attendees, she noted the absence of Dr. Campbell and Dr. Garlotte and explained that Dr. Mary Shepherd would record the minutes for this meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Because the previous meeting minutes were unavailable due to the secretary's absence, approval of the minutes was tabled until the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was presented for consideration.

Motion: Approve the agenda as presented.

Second: Received.

Action: Motion carried.

Old Business

I. Faculty Handbook Revisions

Dr. Stevens requested updates regarding departmental review of the proposed Faculty Handbook revisions. Senators reported that the revised handbook had been distributed to faculty members within their departments and that faculty had been encouraged to review the

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document and submit suggested revisions.

Several members indicated they had not yet received substantive feedback from their departments. Dr. Stevens reminded senators that each department is responsible for collecting recommendations and forwarding them for consideration. She also agreed to redistribute the handbook link to any senator who needed another copy.

II. UFSAM Update

Dr. Stevens provided an update from the recent UFSAM meeting, noting she had been unable to attend but reviewed the meeting information provided.

Highlights included:

- Updates regarding the newly approved parental leave legislation.
- Discussion of federal grant changes affecting Mississippi public universities.
- Proposed state tax structure changes and potential impacts on higher education appropriations.
- Senate Bill 2449.
- UFSAM's statement supporting academic freedom.
- Notification that retirement contributions for ORP participants would change.
- Discussion surrounding the termination recommendation involving the former Jackson State Faculty Senate President and UFSAM's planned response.

Faculty senators acknowledged receipt of previous communications regarding these matters.

III. Chair Evaluations

The Senate revisited previous discussions concerning implementation of department chair evaluations.

Discussion focused on:

- The need for a standardized evaluation instrument.
- Whether evaluations should occur annually.
- Reviewing instruments currently used at peer institutions.
- Modifying an existing evaluation template rather than creating one from scratch.
- Including chair evaluation procedures in future Faculty Handbook revisions.

Because no evaluation instrument had been developed or approved and a quorum was not present to adopt one, implementation was tabled until a future meeting.

IV. Faculty Salaries

Dr. Stevens reviewed President Briggs' written response concerning the Faculty Senate's request to increase summer school compensation.

Discussion included:

- The response did not reject the request but indicated that budget considerations must first be addressed.
- Members expressed concern that decisions would need to be finalized before summer school begins.
- Senators recalled that a similar salary adjustment had been approved during an Executive Cabinet meeting the previous April.

The Senate agreed that faculty compensation should remain a priority discussion during the upcoming Full Faculty Meeting.

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V. Full Faculty Meeting Planning

The Senate discussed planning for the upcoming Full Faculty Meeting scheduled for April 22, 2025.

Members agreed that:

- Faculty should submit questions through their Faculty Senate representatives.
- Questions should be compiled and submitted to the President's Office in advance to allow thoughtful responses.
- Anonymous questions would encourage broader faculty participation.
- Senators should poll their departments for questions.

Deadline established: April 11, 2025 for departmental questions to be submitted to the Faculty Senate President.

Dr. Stevens agreed to distribute detailed instructions to senators.

New Business

I. President's Department Visitations

Members discussed President Briggs' recent visits to academic departments.

Positive observations included:

- Increased visibility and accessibility of the President.
- Greater opportunity for open dialogue with faculty.
- Better understanding of institutional enrollment and budget challenges.
- Productive conversations regarding departmental concerns.

Specific issues discussed during departmental visits included:

- Student attendance challenges resulting from extracurricular activities during midterm examinations.
- Band-related scheduling conflicts affecting academic instruction.
- Enrollment concerns.
- Department-specific operational issues.
- Plans to restore selected academic and workforce programs.

Faculty expressed appreciation for the President's willingness to listen and consider departmental concerns.

II. Extended Executive Cabinet Meeting

Dr. Stevens summarized topics discussed during the Extended Executive Cabinet Meeting, including:

- Progress on Faculty Handbook revisions.
- Planning for the April 22 Full Faculty Meeting.
- Participation in the University's Day of Giving campaign.
- Faculty Senate approval to include members' names in campaign materials.

Faculty were encouraged to participate in the Day of Giving on April 8, 2025.

III. Faculty Senate Budget

Dr. Stevens informed the Senate that the Faculty Senate maintains an annual budget of approximately \$1,000.

Discussion centered on using available funds to support faculty rather than travel expenses.

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Following discussion, members agreed that the funds should be used to:

- Provide a luncheon immediately following the Full Faculty Meeting.
- Hold the event in Dining Hall IV, pending confirmation of availability.
- Work with Thompson Hospitality and Academic Affairs to supplement funding if necessary.

There was consensus that this would provide an opportunity to recognize faculty while encouraging participation in the Full Faculty Meeting.

Decisions Made

- Previous meeting minutes were tabled until the next meeting.
- The meeting agenda was approved.
- Chair evaluations were tabled pending development and approval of an evaluation instrument.
- Faculty questions for the Full Faculty Meeting will be collected through Faculty Senate representatives.
- April 11, 2025 was established as the deadline for submitting faculty questions.
- Faculty Senate funds will be used to support a faculty luncheon following the Full Faculty Meeting, subject to budget and facility availability.
- Dining Hall IV was approved as the preferred location for the luncheon, pending confirmation.

Action Items

Action Item	Responsible Party	Due Date
Continue collecting departmental feedback on Faculty Handbook revisions.	Faculty Senators	Ongoing
Redistribute Faculty Handbook revision link to senators as needed.	Dr. Stevens	As needed
Identify and review sample department chair evaluation instruments from peer institutions.	Faculty Senate	Prior to next meeting
Collect faculty questions for the Full Faculty Meeting.	Faculty Senators	April 11, 2025
Compile and forward faculty questions to the President's Office.	Dr. Stevens	Following April 11
Coordinate luncheon logistics and Dining Hall IV reservation with Thompson Hospitality and Academic Affairs.	Dr. Stevens	Before April 22
Send reminder regarding the Full Faculty Meeting, location, and faculty question submission process.	Dr. Stevens	Approximately two weeks before meeting

Announcements

- Day of Giving: April 8, 2025.
- Full Faculty Meeting: Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

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- Faculty senators were encouraged to continue engaging departmental colleagues and promoting participation in Faculty Senate initiatives.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Senate, the meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mary Shepherd

Dr. Candace C. Stevens, President

Prepared from the official meeting recording and transcript for the April 1, 2025 Faculty Senate Meeting.

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