UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST FACULTY SENATE

MINUTES OF THE
801st REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 28, 2021

Presiding Officer Steven D. Brewer called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm

A. PRESENTATION: RECENT CHANGES IN HUMAN RESOURCES
<u>**Presenter:**</u> **William D. Brady, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources**

<u>*Vice Chancellor Brady:*</u>
Thank you. I am Vice Chancellor William Brady, from Human Resources. I have been at UMass for the past three years and I have not yet made a presentation to the Faculty Senate. I am excited to do that today. I want to present what HR has been working on for the past two years. Some of you may have not interacted with HR much, but I hope that you will see that we are a very different office than the last time you worked with us.

I'm going to give you some data about what we've been working on and how we're doing. We are by no means in a place where we are happy with everything that I'm going to show you. But I think we're making an enormous amount of progress in modernizing this office.

The HR office is a great team, they try incredibly hard, they work hard on behalf of all of the employees of the university. But it has historically been an under-resourced office. As the University of Massachusetts moved from Mass Aggie to the flagship that we know now, let's just say that HR didn't necessarily make that same journey at the same pace.

I will start with a little bit about how the office is structured. It has some new features that probably weren't part of the HR picture historically.

As a modern HR office, we have a talent management team. It is really looking at how do we bring in the best talent, how do we bring in diverse talent, how do we bring in the people that are skilled to do the jobs. We're actually taking a more proactive recruiting stance.

The historical way of just throwing an ad into the paper and seeing who applies doesn't really work these days. That's not how job seekers are looking for jobs. We're really going out in different social media platforms and elsewhere, trying to find talent.

In 2019, we took over responsibility for equal opportunity, that's an office that everyone should be pretty familiar with. It manages Title IX and other discrimination and harassment issues.

We also installed, a new team of business partners, high-level HR professionals who assist colleges, schools, and divisions around campus with some of those more complex HR issues that come up. Particularly in the areas of employee relations and organizational development.

We are a relatively small office for the size of our campus. We have 62-63 people within central HR and Equal Opportunity.

I arrived here in late 2017, and since then we in HR have been doing quite a bit. We underwent an outside review, looking at how we were structured, what services we were providing.

Soon after I got here, we took over affirmative action compliance to make sure that we are meeting the obligations under Federal regulations related to equal opportunity and affirmative action in hiring. We created that high level HR business partner team.

The major organizational changes were the talent acquisition team of recruiters and having Equal Opportunity came under HR.

We've also done an enormous amount of lift to get some new technology in the office. HR used to be the office of papers; we were swimming in papers. We retired our last typewriter in 2016.We were definitely slow on the uptake in figuring out new technologies, and there's been a significant investment to try to get us on track.

Electronic timekeeping was one of the technologies that we've introduced. We have also digitized our personnel action forms. So, when you're hiring a staff member in your academic department, for example, there is now an electronic process by which we do that.

We put in new applicant tracking systems so that applicants for jobs have a much better experience when applying for positions. We can also track data more effectively regarding who is applying for positions, where are they coming from, how many of them are fully qualified for the position.

We're working on a new onboarding module that we're very excited about. It will be an electronic portal open for new employees once they accept the position at the University. This portal will include information about what they need to do prior to starting work, what they need to during their first week. It will also have a welcome message about what does it mean to be part of the UMass Community.

It's really bringing the orienting of new employees into the 21st century in terms of making them feel welcome, making them feel that they belong, and to set some preliminary expectations about what it means to be part of our community.

We've also put some additional resources and effort into how are we building our staff ranks, so we have created a new position that's focused on building pipelines to underrepresented communities within Western Massachusetts and in Boston and more generally think differently about how do we can actually enhance the diversity of our candidate pools.

This is an area where we've taken a very passive approach in the past and something that we're really trying to be very proactive about now. There is some anecdotal evidence that communities of color, particularly in the Springfield area, currently they don't feel comfortable applying for jobs at UMass.

That makes me sad, and I think it is also symptomatic of our not having done a very good job of really going down and understanding the needs of kind of the workforce in other areas, and doing a better job at trying to connect with those communities. That's something that we are working on right now that we're very excited about.

We have changed how we view HR on campus as well. This is a very decentralized campus, and we've tried in the last three years to identify the people in the various units who deal with HR processes and bring them together on a regular basis, so that there's clear communication between central HR and the field.

We have created some advisory boards, so that individuals within colleges, schools, and divisions can give us very direct and candid feedback on how things are going and what we need to focus on.

When we put forward strategic funding requests, we are asking ourselves are these types of projects and efforts that we need to go after? Is this going to bring the most value to our campus partners? Those are areas where we're actually getting active feedback from the people around campus.

We're right now laying the foundation for a pretty comprehensive training program for HR folks around campus whether it's people who are dealing with time entry, whether it is individuals who are the chief personnel officer for your individual college or school.

We need to do a better job of training people. We know that the way people are frequently trained in the HR world is that the person who is leaving or retiring give a 48-hour overview of the job to the new person. They say, "this is how I've made it work for the last 20 years; good luck and we hope that works out for you".

That's not a very effective way of ensuring that people understand our processes and understand why we do the things that we do. We need to do a better job from the ground up and make sure that people are supported and that they understand what's happening and why it needs to happen. That's something that we're absolutely working on

Then the other piece that I think is incredibly important is building a real team. When I came in, HR staff really weren't functioning very much like a team. I said, "let's get everybody together, let's have a meeting of everybody within the division" and that had not happened, apparently, in six or seven years.

We're trying to normalize working as a team, working across different areas of HR. We've done volunteering activities to bring people together outside of the office. A lot of training internally is designed to upskill the folks that we already have in position. So it's been a busy three years trying to kind of re-examine where HR is. Is it serving campus? How is it serving campus? How can we do a better job at what we do?

At the same time, the bounds of what it means to be an HR office have been expanding. When you look nationally, HR is more than just processing personnel records. HR is so vital to issues of diversity and culture within your workforce. It's incredibly important when you're thinking of things like climate, like employee relations, and organizational development. The horizons expand to questions like how do you actually design your workforce? how do you design how your departments interact with each other in ways that will make your unit more successful? Those are all endeavors that we're working on right now.

Let me give you some statistics. Again, I'm not saying that these are amazing statistics, but what's noteworthy is that historically, HR did not have systems that provided us with data.

So, when people ask how long does it take to get for a PI the hire a lab assistant, the answer was "a long time." Well "a long time" isn't really an effective answer. How long should it take? How long does it take to get a position leveled? We didn't really have systems that provided us that data, because everything was paper-based.

It was very easy for the paperwork to just be caught somewhere in the process as it went through eight different offices. So now that we have systems in place, we can start to measure the time needed for various processes so that we can see whether we're making progress and whether that progress is meaningful.

Here's some examples. Specifying the level of the position is a very common piece of the process, and people really want to know how long will it take their position to go through the process of being leveled.

In the last two years, we have improved our processing times with professional staff positions, for example. However, reclassification still takes, frankly, a long time.

But for new position descriptions of professional staff positions we've got it down from over 22 calendar days to just over seven, that's a pretty significant improvement. On the classified side, those are your clerk level positions, for example, it's gotten a little slower.

That symptomatic of two factors. One is the pandemic, which certainly hasn't helped, but the individual who has done the position classifications for the classified staff since the 1970s recently retired. I'm super happy for him; he can actually go on vacation and enjoy himself now.

We have an opportunity to rethink our processes, so I regard all of the data I am showing you as benchmarks for us to improve from. But I also want to be very transparent and share them, this is the data and this is what we've been working with.

Staff hiring is another question that comes up quite a bit. So how are we doing on staff hiring? These are our last two calendar years. The percentage of racial minorities in candidate pools, for example, 19.2% and 18.5%. This isn't great and we need to work on this.

I know there's a lot of complications that really drive how our candidate pools are formulated for staff positions, but it is something that we're actively working on and we can use this data to measure our success going forward.

Another piece that comes up quite a bit, particularly among the faculty, is how long it takes to actually get positions through the system. There's two components of this in the data in front of you right now. We have the department initiation, so whatever department, you may be in, you're in the English department, for example, so department initiation is when the English department submits the paperwork to when my team and central HR actually gets it into the system

These are the average calendar days. With new hires, it takes a little over two weeks and position changes, leave, separations, and retirements are a little bit less.

The second box -- that white row near the bottom -- is when we get the paperwork in HR and then get it into the system; this is how long it takes our staff. That light gray row is really the whole process, taking into account all of the various stops that positions have to go through, and the last piece is just HR.

Going forward, we're really focusing on three things. We're focusing on our own internal metrics, defining the types of data to use. Process redesign is a also a huge piece, and then, of course, enhancing services to campus so that that we're actually bringing strategic value to all of campus.

So, again HR data is going to be absolutely critical for us. We're absolutely committed to it, we need technology enhancements and we've been working on that. We also need to build a common data language and meaningful data framework.

Not just centrally, but also working with partners in the provost's office, working with partners in colleges and schools, so that we all understand that everybody is on the same page of actually how should we be measuring data. Something as simple as which Add COMP code should we use or what leave code should we use for a particular situation.

Because we share our HR system with the entire UMass system, the number of categories sometimes just grows and grows and grows and then there's a lot of inconsistent use. So, we really need to get some consistency in terms of how we're using various different categories. We need to know kind of what are we reporting. Is it digestible? Is it timely?

We need to have a data dashboard because transparency is key here. Hiding how long it takes to do something isn't helping anyone because people need to know how long it's going to take. That's critical. If you don't have that information you aren't going to be prepared to do the things that you need to do to be successful in your roles. Internal metrics are incredibly important.

Among the new systems we're implementing is a job ticketing system and we're in the beta phase of that. We're really excited about that. We think that will help track how issues are coming in to central HR because we think that's absolutely critical. We are doing a better job of

tracking applicants and tracking various different actions that are coming into the HR space. The other thing is absolutely key and I'm glad the provost is in the meeting because it's he and I are going to have to work very closely on this.

We have a habit sometimes of taking a process that is paper-based, just digitizing it, as-is and saying we're done. That's actually not helping a whole lot. Taking the same clunky process that has too many approvals and simply digitizing it means we're not really improving the process.

One of the big areas that that we're starting to focus on now is particularly appointments that are within the academic sphere that touch the department, the dean's office, the provost office and HR. We need to examine kind of why we're doing it, the way we're doing it. Does it make sense to do it that way?

Those of you on in the research world also have lots of other different steps. You may have to go through the controller's office or through research and engagement. There's a lot and we just need to make sure that we're always kind of understanding.

So, we are asking ourselves does a step actually make sense, does it need to be there because we need an approval or do we just need to notify someone that something is happening?

Another thing that I know drives departments absolutely crazy, and it's something that that we take the heart and are really trying to fix, is dealing with small errors in the forms. Just because there's a little error in something, do we really need to send it all the way back down the process chain and start again from the very bottom. I would suggest, no, we don't need to do that. Process redesign is going to be a key for us going forward.

Regarding enhanced services, one of the things that I mentioned briefly was onboarding, we have to do a better job of bringing people and really getting them accustomed to what does it mean to be part of our community.

Staff show up on the first day and they have no idea where they're going and how to get their U-card and they don't know where the dining hall is. It's complicated to come to a big large institution like ours without having an appropriate orientation, so really moving away from just informing people about their benefits and moving to a true orientation is something that we're working towards.

We also want to offer full service recruiting. If you're in a Fortune 500 company and you're trying to hire someone for a current position opening your department.

In the outside world, you don't have to wade through all the applications to see who's really the most qualified. In most companies HR will go through the applications and say these are your three most qualified individuals; which one would you like? You can just interview these three.

Search committees are great, but they are also slow. So, we really need to rethink our model of hiring and especially about to we use search committees and when are they really not necessary,

or when a search committee can just look at the finalists as opposed to going through every single application that has come in.

Again, I just mentioned down here that there will be enhancements to our ticketing system, how we're actually bringing people in. Something as simple as scanning your ID when you walk into HR to get a question answered. For HR staff that's incredibly important because it would save them so much time. It takes a long time to call up people's records and try to figure out what's going on. Little simple IT fixes like that will go a long way in improving kind of how we're managing things.

I'm going to switch briefly to Equal Opportunity because that now does report to me. Equal opportunity has been incredibly busy in the last year. As most of you know Betsy DeVos, and the Department of Education issued new federal regulations on Title IX last spring and put forward a very aggressive implementation date of mid-August.

EO has been very involved in the preparing for implementing the new Title IX policies and procedures. It is also in the process of taking over student on student Title IX complaints from the Dean of Students' Office and working out a plan of what that will look like.

The rationale behind that change is that Equal Opportunity will be the single place on campus where investigations are managed. That takes Dean of Students out of the position of being both support for students, as well as the people who are investigating students. There there's an inherent conflict there that we're trying to avoid.

We think that having all investigations under one roof will provide us with a level of consistency and expertise in terms of managing those investigations. Equal Opportunity also put in a new case management system which is helping us a lot. What they're really focused on right now is transparency to the extent that it's possible in the Title IX space and sometimes full transparency is obviously not possible.

We are paying attention to better communication with people who are involved in the process, and the timeliness of investigations. Obviously, how long investigations take is always a concern and there's a variety of reasons why they take the length of time that they do, but it is absolutely something that we want to measure and really focus on.

And then, of course, as many of you may know, we have been without a Director of the Equal Opportunity Office for about a year and a half. We had three finalists zoomed into campus this week and we're hopeful that we're going to be able to find a next leader of that office.

Again, just giving you a flavor of some statistics from that area. In each of the last two years we had well over 100 reports coming into the Equal Opportunity office in both of those years, and we opened 35 formal complaints. Those formal complaints go forward and on which we conduct a full investigation.

As you can see our numbers are getting better in terms of how long it takes, from the moment that the complaint is filed the moment that the investigation report is complete.

Equal Opportunity is an office that has struggled with vacancies. It's a high burnout field, and unfortunately investigators come and go, relatively quickly, we have high turnover in that space so that's something that we're really focused on. Because we know if we actually get qualified investigators in and keep them here we're going to be able to improve our turnaround time on a lot of investigations.

Lastly, some general information. A lot of people are always curious about what are the types of complaints that come into EO? Here are three most common. Title IX and Violence Against Women Act cases, so sexual harassment sexual discrimination, stalking intimate partner violence, etc. Disability is another pretty common concern, and then racial discrimination.

So, when you look at these 148 cases resulting in reports during FY 2019 (126) and FY 2020, these types represent the lion's share.

I have sped read through a lot of material and that's all I have, and I do appreciate having the time to present to you. I'd be happy to take any questions that may be out there.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Chancellor Subbaswany:
I think compliments would be accepted as well.

Secretary Peterson:
I was struck by this notion the HR will do more pre-screening of applicants and send departments three applicants. Although that's a very good business model, that strikes me as not a very good model for academic hiring because there are so many things that have to judged and so many considerations. This idea makes me unbelievably nervous.

Vice Chancellor Brady:
I promise that I won't do it for faculty searches. I absolutely understand that concern. I think that this model of HR pre-screening is not going to be appropriate in every situation. It would only be a service that would be available to departments to use if they felt that it was something that would work for them.

What we're finding is that, unfortunately, because of the burden that is already on our academic departments searching is a very heavy additional burden for the administrative staff in academic departments.

They are balancing a lot of different components and pieces. What happens sometime is there is an open position, such as the business manager or someone managing finance, or receptionist for an academic department.

Sometimes what happens is they launch a search and then it could be six to eight weeks before they actually review the application and the resumes that have come in. What we're trying to do is think about different ways that we can provide services to help speed that process up.

We don't want to really take away the independence of the department to be making decisions in terms of what is appropriate. Particularly in areas where there would be specialized expertise, we wouldn't want to substitute our judgment for that of those that actually have that expertise.

But we're definitely looking at how can we better support departments and helping them with some of the more routine hiring that happens throughout campus.

Provost McCarthy:
Did I understand you to be at least hinting, if not saying, that PSU [professional staff] searches might no longer require search committee? Because a lot of staff time is spent serving on the search committee and particularly because there is no pre-screening.

Vice Chancellor Brady:
We have been making some strides moving away from search committees within collective bargaining agreement language. We continue to push that particular issue and I think that there are different ways that you can develop an approach that has multiple voices in the process without having a formal search committee that takes three weeks to get everyone on the same page to schedule a meeting.

I think that there are creative ways that we can to that. But, PSU understands this particular concern. There were actually some additional enhancements in the last collective bargaining agreement to reduce some of the requirements around search committees.

Senator Calas:
I was struck by the language of this whole thing. I am in the school of management and therefore I am very familiar with HR language. The language that you are presenting is that language, including the recent fad of onboarding. Onboarding is a way of socializing people into the organization.

Having a website that has a lot of information is great, but the other side of that is that is still the question of the interpersonal relationships that form within the departments and so on; these are extraordinarily important.

So, each of these points that you raised, I read as being a way to depersonalize a system. That is almost a contradiction because human resources are about people. The only thing that I can say is it is great if we sort of accelerate the process as long as it doesn't cut corners and actually create a more depersonalized, off-putting, bureaucratic, business like HR department.

We are an organization that is really about learning, about being a community of learners, rather than being a business. So, I am just basically saying that since we have become enamored by all of the "business speak" we could end up doing something that doesn't necessarily make our place better.

Vice Chancellor Brady:
I agree with you 100%. I don't know if we can get any more depersonalized than what we have in some instances around campus, and I think that this is an important step to move us in a better direction.

 I think that we can't have the electronic solutions without also supporting hiring managers and departments by helping them understand what it means to bring someone new into the university. I think that is absolutely critical.

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **Principal Administrative Officers**

Chancellor Subbaswany:
I just have two quick announcements. The first is regarding the spring semester. As you know, extensive effort during the fall semester was directed at the spring semester planning for bringing students back safely and making sure that everything is safe and secure for our faculty and staff who would be on campus. Ensuring that everything else that's going to be on online will also have no hitches.

I'm happy to say that so far, so good. Of course, we are just with the students who will be on campus are coming in classes will start next week. So far everything is pretty much going according to plan. We will have approximately 5,000+ students who will be residing on campus compared to 1,100 last semester.

Then we'll have you know approximately 7,000 students living in communities that are in the vicinity of Amherst. This is the same number as last fall as well because we have no control over what comes back and lives in private housing. Last semester it was about 7,000 and we anticipate it will be about the same number this semester as well.

We will have approximately 11-12% of our classes face to face, so about 6,000 students who are enrolled in approximately 300+ courses. Again, all preparations have been done, testing protocols have been set up, set quarantine and isolation protocols in place, and success will be defined as everything working according to plan: That is no deviation from our face to face classes, no need for lockdowns because of outbreaks. Likewise, everything working smoothly in terms of online.

So, fingers crossed and I want to thank everyone from our staff, faculty administrators and students for their cooperation in trying to make this a successful semester.

Then the second announcement.   For about three years we have been talking about multimodal education and a vision for really trying to reach students where they are being much more active in continuing and professional education.

Considering the needs of the job market and the needs of our own grads and alumni, we have developed the idea that we would be a university without walls in the true sense of the word

rather than just a label.

Then the pandemic came along and forced all of us to be in some hybrid mode here. We have things that are happening online and there are things that are going to be face to face, but then if suddenly something happens there will have to be online work.

We already have a robust online program itself, which is now thrown into the confusion about what rates are we charging for online versus on campus instruction and so everyone is confused to some extant at this point.

This mode is likely to continue for a whole just given the way the pandemic is playing out but also with the change in the variants of the coronavirus may be affecting us.

With the pandemic, more and more universities are asking questions about what does this all means. We've been in an ad hoc situation and a lot of hard decisions including the rates we charge are still ad hoc.

So, the time has come for use to systematically put all the ways we're operating on the table; workload issues, fee charging rates issues, who uses what kind of support services, and how we make support service fit the needs of students in these flexible modes of operation.

All of that leads to my wanting to appoint a joint task force with input from the Faculty Senate, with the student groups, and all the governance bodies. Fairly shortly I'll be announcing the formation of a task force whose job it will be to really catalog and study these various issues and possibly make some recommendations.

But of course, any change will only occur with all the appropriate governance bodies and the union approving whatever needs to be approved.

I just want to assure that the task force, like we've done before, its job is to really study comprehensively the issues before us brought upon on both, because of our regional university without walls, but also more importantly the way the pandemic has forced to our hands to grapple with our own issues.

Probably within the next week or so I'll be announcing the formation of the task force which will be addressing these issues and bringing recommendations to all the governance parties in due course.

Provost McCarthy:
I'm going to begin with some good news before turning to some more general remarks. The good news comes from our Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Jim Roche. The application deadline for Fall 2021 was January 19th, the day before the inauguration.

The total number of undergraduate applications we received is around 42,000, which is an increase of 1,600 over Fall 2020. We are close to matching our record number of applications of 42,085 for Fall 2019.

Regrettably, international applications are down by about 1,000, a decrease of nearly 17%. This is not unexpected in light of the ongoing challenges that the pandemic poses for international travel and, frankly, four years of unremitting hostility to immigrants and international students. I hope that as these twin threats abate, we will once again see growth in our international applications.

In state application are basically flat. However, applications from members of historically underrepresented minority groups are up by about 4%. Now if you've been following the math there are 2,600 applications not yet accounted for. Total applications up by 1,600. International are down by 1,000. So, there's 2,600.

Those 2,600 are an increase in our domestic out of state applications This is quite extraordinary, it's an increase of over 19% in domestic out of state applications. It's a tribute to the marketing that University Relations have done and especially to the outreach by our Admission Staff who have conducted hundreds of online info sessions, at times appropriate for applicants in different time zones.

This remarkable is progress towards our goal of becoming a destination of choice for students from around the nation. It's do in no small part to the talent and hard work of our staff and faculty. I am grateful to all of you and proud of what we've become.

I also promised some general remarks. In fact, they will not be very general, they will be focused on two Irish poets. In a 2018 column in the Irish Times, the critic Fintan O'Toole proposed something he called the "Yeats" test. The proposition is simple, the more quotable Yeats seems to commentators and politicians, the worst things are.

O'Toole focuses on Yeats's most famous poem, The Second Coming, with its doom-laden lines

> "things fall apart, the Center cannot hold
> mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
> The blood dimmed tide is loose and everywhere,
> the ceremony of innocence is drown.
> The best lack all conviction,
> while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

Writing in 2018, 100 years after Yeats composed the Second Coming O'Toole sees in these words and aptly image of our times.

He writes as a counter example that we might try the "Heaney test". If hope in history rhyme let the good times roll, but these days, it is the older Irish poet who prevails in political discourse and that is not good news.

But what about that Heaney test? Seamus Heaney is President Biden's favorite poet.

At the Democratic National Convention, candidate Biden read from Heaney's "The Cure At Troy" and Lin Manuel Miranda read that poem on the evening of President Biden's inauguration.

Here's a stanza from it:
> "History says,
> 'Don't hope on this side of the grave,'
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up
> And hope and history rhyme."

When he wrote these words in 1990, Heaney's optimism was founded on events in South Africa, the release of Nelson Mandela and the ending of the ban on the African National Congress. I am wary of comparing our times to such momentous historical events but I think we have grounds for optimism too, and then we shall see hope and history rhyme.

A final word less weighty. On YouTube, you can find a video in which President Obama and Vice President Biden are teasing each other about Biden's love of Irish poets. The best line is spoken by Obama: "I'm going to be quoting Yeats because Heaney is already taken."
Thank you so much.

Interim Vice Chancellor Curry:
I'm pleased to be here and to let you know that we will be moving forward with the capital campaign so with the transition we're not planning on having that delay our progress in any way.

Vice Chancellor LaBanc:
I do have a quick update about our move-in process. We've welcome back over 3,000 students in the residence halls thus far, and will continue to bring the remaining students into the halls this week.

We're all proud of the creative move-in process developed in collaboration with our Public Health Promotion Center. It's working really brilliantly and families have been really pleased.

But there's been a lot of questions about what living on campus will look like and feel like for students. Much like the challenges you all have encountered in developing that online community or engagement in socially distanced classes.

The SACL team has had to get really creative and I continue to be impressed by their energy and commitment. What I want to share with all of you today is one example. I ask you to put yourself in the shoes of a first year RA charged with warmly welcoming students and building a strong community in the covid era.

It would be easy to become frustrated quickly because that's a really tall order to ask the students, especially with the moving quarantine restrictions. So, create community, make it warm, but keep them in the room.

So, allow me to introduce one of our Resident Assistants, Ryan Duggan. Actually, I'm going to let Ryan introduce himself by sharing a quick snippet of his Jurassic park style welcome video today.

Resident Assistant Ryan Duggan (Recorded Video):
"Hey, and welcome back, or welcome 'almost back'. My name is Ryan and I'm going to be your resident assistant this semester. I am currently living on the third floor of Maple and I'm really excited to have you both as a resident and, as a new part of the Maple community."

"Like I said, my name is Ryan, I am a senior in natural resources conservation and outside of being an RA I'm in beekeeping club, poetry club, archery club, and knitting club."

"One of the reasons I wanted to be an RA was to be more engaged involved in the campus community and that's something I'm really excited to be able to do this semester, especially after being fully remote and living at home for the past several months. If you ever need to get in touch with me directly, feel free to use my email listed right here."

"So, this semester is definitely going to be a little bit different than what we're used to in the past. But know that we're going to be still focusing a lot on your health, safety and overall wellness and we're going to be doing that, without sacrificing the things like building community and making connections like you used to doing in a normal semester."

"We're going to be using more of a hybrid model, so doing things like this welcome it's virtual so you can go through it sort of at your own pace to get updates on all the policies and important things to understand. So that later when we have a virtual floor meeting, we can focus more on getting to know each other and answering any lingering questions you might still have."

Vice Chancellor LaBanc:
He goes on for eight minutes and he continues to highlight staff available to the students, emergency resources, and talks about in-person events he's planning. Don't you all just want to live on his floor?

Well, I think you should, because Ryan is planning to build a close-knit community this semester because he's a knitter and it helps him relieve stress. He plans to develop socially distanced and virtual craft nights where he can engage with residents around knitting and build the community.

So, I wanted to share Ryan's work today, with his permission, so that you can all get a flavor of the energy and creativity that staff, particularly our students, are bringing back to our campus.

Despite the barriers we're all faced with in creating a welcoming engaging Community. It takes all of us and those of us in SACL are thrilled to be a part of the solution, with all of you. Thank you for your time today hope you enjoyed that.

Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Mangels:
I can provide some updates on the budget front. The Governor's budget yesterday came out, as many of you probably have seen, where there was level funding for FY'22.

That's welcome news. It was not a decrease, which was great. We were hoping for, and the UMass system submitted a 5% increase request to the state.

That was not fulfilled, but I think, from a standpoint of a budget now, I will take level budget at this point if that's the worst that we're going to get.

The request also included funding for the innovation voucher program for $2 million, which is targeted for the IALS operation here on campus which was welcome news as well continued support for that program.

As far as the FY'21 budget goes, we receive notification from the Department of Education and from the Federal Government that another round of CARES funds, it's not exactly called CARES anymore, but the Amherst campus will be receiving $28 million in total, of which about $9 million needs to be spent on providing student grants and that leaves $19 million available for institutional funding.

There's much more flexibility in the language in the regulations that accompany this transfer of federal stimulus than compared to the first round. As an example, we have the ability to utilize the institutional portion for just about anything, including revenue loss, Covid expenses, etc. It's much more flexible than the previous regulations.

As well as on the student aid front they're less prescriptive about what the student aid needs to go towards and who can receive it. They've lifted the Title IV requirements that they had in the first tranche so that provides the ability for more flexibility in the distribution of that aid.

The money is also available to be spent over 12 months, so we can carry forward funds into the next fiscal year if we so choose. That's welcome news on the budget front. It did go towards solving some of the $11 million deficit problems that we had talked about earlier and we're going to be continuing to monitor the FY'21 budgets,

The Budget Office right now is in the process of accumulating a six-month refresh of all of the budget plans from all areas throughout the campus.

We hope to take that information and be able to compile it and make sure that we're continuing to be on track and that our $11 million deficit projection is still accurate and will continue to then monitor the FY'21 budget as we go throughout the end of the year.

Vice Chancellor for Information Services and Chief Information Officer Misra:

Thank you, Presiding Officer. IT is in a process of actually finishing the strategic plan refresh which we kicked off, about a year and a half ago. We did an initial presentation to ICTC at its last meeting, we will be using the next ICTC meeting to go into more depth.

Our goal is to significantly simplify it, taking it from a 90 plus page plan down to a five-page plan with supporting documents.

I anticipate that being completed through the course of the spring semester. So, with support from the Faculty Senate would be to do some short presentation about the refresh there later in the semester. Those are the key areas of focus in the short term.

Senior Vice Provost Barr:
Thank you. I have a couple of quick announcements. First, I'd like to express a great deal of gratitude to the faculty members who were asked to do a few new things for the spring semester, based on student feedback and in preparation for spring and a lot of our fully remote classes.

Faculty were asked to identify their fully remote classes as either synchronous required or synchronous optional.

This provides additional information to students in terms of attendance and grading policies, and a great number of faculty were extremely willing to quickly put that information into SPIRE. This really helped our students in navigating course enrollments and add drop processes so thank you so much.

Also, we added preview week, which is where faculty post at least their syllabus but can also post additional information on their class, a week before the semester starts. This has long been a practice in courses using the Blackboard learning management system. We extended that to include courses using Moodle as well for this spring semester, and once again the faculty have stepped up and are putting their syllabus in their LMS and putting up additional materials

I think Mzamo [Mangaliso] reported that courses went live at midnight on Sunday or shortly after midnight on Sunday that at least 10 students had already previewed your information on Monday morning, so that's great. Again, big thanks to all the faculty; it's really helping the students, especially the fully remote students from other parts of the country or the world.

I'd also like to announce that this past Friday, we had an information zoom session for faculty and graduate students teaching face to face on campus this spring. We wanted to make sure that we provided information to them and answer any questions that they have about teaching face to face in person on campus this Spring.

We had representatives from campus planning, facility planning, and custodial work present. We talked about air filtration in buildings, social distancing, public health measures. Of course, Jeff Hescock was the star; he talked about testing and everything going on there, and it was a great turnout.

Last count, we have 357 faculty and graduate students who are serving as TOs teaching face to face this spring semester. Over 150 attended the information session. So, I hope those of you who attended found it helpful.

We recorded the meeting. The video is available on the UMass coronavirus website under the title "for faculty" on the very first page, so if any of you want to view that that session and what

is going on in supporting our faculty and graduate students teaching face to face this spring feel free to do so.

A big thanks to Senior Vice Provost Tillman Wolf and Associate Provost Claire Hamilton who really led this information and support session.

We start classes on Monday, I am looking forward to beginning the spring 2021 semester, and thank you to all of you for the good work that you're doing in supporting our students in their educational experience, thank you.

2. **The Secretary of the Faculty Senate**
   Secretary Peterson:
   Thank you, Mr. Presiding Office.

Happy New Year! We can see light in the Covid-19 tunnel and we have some assurance that the light is not the light of an oncoming train, but is a vision of the sunlight on the other side of the tunnel.

We still have challenges. Some of them come from sellers of various snake oils about how higher education is going to change post-Covid. It will change; we know that, and the chancellor is helping us get ready for that with the joint task force.

It's going to remain for us to define what we want our patch of higher education to be: true to the enduring mission to acquire knowledge, to learn, and to teach. We can do that by adopting the solid ideas but avoiding the shoddy ones, among these various innovations that are being offered. Just a thought, as we move ahead with the joint task force.

In our existence as a campus community, we clearly have the task of being what we want our wider society to be. A place where people can engage with rather than shout at each other. Where both individual initiative and the common good can thrive.

It's going to take some working out to figure out how to do these things, because the wider society seems to lack a certain amount of ability to do that.

But more immediately I'll get down to the local level. We will finish the current round of bylaws revision at the next meeting. We'll continue with other important items of business. The councils and committees are continuing their work, and we will hear from three of the councils later.

Now, at the December meeting we had an extended discussion of a program proposal. That raised the general question of: what is the Faculty Senate role in the process of approving program proposals when disagreements among the Faculty in the relevant program are brought to its attention?

I think Senator Wilmore Webley captured the essence of our role when he said, last December, and I'm quoting directly from the minutes:

"It is clear to me that there are disagreements in this department. But based on all of the conversations and presentations this evening, it has also become clear that the process that was needed to come to this place was followed.

It appears to me that you still have a faction of faculty are still not satisfied with the process. But that's not something that we should be looking at. We should be looking at the merits of the proposal that has come to the Faculty Senate."

It's very hard for the Senate, in a few minutes, to figure out a big conflict. It is easy for the Senate to figure out whether a proposal that has been recommended by the councils and has come forward to it has the academic merit to make it worth adopting.

Now, also in December, because I did anticipate we were going to have a long meeting – although not quite as long as it actually went – I deferred asking the Senate to adopt resolutions thanking two longtime members who would be retiring at the end of the month, and I would like to introduce those resolutions now if the Senate is willing to suspend the rules so that I can do so.

Presiding Officer Brewer:
A motion to suspend the rules require a two-thirds majority vote. But rather than trying to that, I would ask if anyone has an objection to move to a vote to indicate their objection.

Otherwise we can suspend the rules without objection to make these motions.

Hearing no objection, Secretary Peterson is free to proceed.

Secretary Peterson:
Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer.

The first word resolution relates to Frank Hugus, who began his Senate service in the early 1970s:

Scholar and translator of Scandinavian literature, bringing the stories and insights of a northern most part of Europe to the English-speaking world. Student of Nordic mythology including trolls in their pre-Internet existence, and Icelandic sagas.

Calm provider, maintainer of good parliamentary order, even when not presiding, you have served the Faculty Senate for nearly half a century helping maintain its energy and focus as Secretary, Senator, and member of the Rules Committee.

Resolved that the Faculty Senate expresses its thanks for your energetic and valuable service as a leader of the Faculty Senate participation and campus governance and wishes you happiness and success and the activities you pursue in your retirement.

The other resolution is for J. Elliot Moss, who began Faculty Senate service in the early 1990s and has been on a number of the councils:

Straddling the spiritual and the digital with grace. Equally adept at explicating the Bible and the workings of computer program. A pioneer in nested transactions and program performance monitoring. Local organizer of ARPANET in that pre-Internet dawn of connected computing.

You have served the Faculty senate as Senator, Council member and committee Member for nearly three decades, bringing your ability to bridge disparate realms to bear on the concerns of the day.

Resolved that the Faculty Senate it expresses its thanks for your energetic invaluable service as an active force and maintaining the Faculty Sentence participation in campus governance and wishes you happiness and success in the activities you pursue in your retirement.

Thank you.

3. **The Representative of the Massachusetts Society of Professors**
   Senator Weinbaum:
   Thank you, Presiding Officer.
   I want to let you know about four priorities for the MSP this semester. I don't have any poetry or any videos or anything very fun, but these are still really important issues that we're working on.

   The first one is about full staffing. We are working with all of the other unions on campus to make sure that all of our staff come back to full time. We've heard from many faculty and librarians who were very concerned about their departments and about the libraries.

   Between staff furloughs, some who are still on indefinite furlough, some staff reduced to part time, as well as the VSEP voluntary separations, some departments have been hit very hard and really are not able to get the work done.

   We've heard from lecturers, who are doing staff work, processing payments and enrolling students individually in classes, because their staff are furloughed or they retired and their department wasn't able to replace them.

   We're hoping to fix that as soon as possible and with the great news of the federal stimulus funds coming to campus we expect that all of the staff in academic affairs will be back to full time and we'll be back to hiring where we urgently are in need of staff. We're keeping an eye on that.

   Second, we've gotten a lot of questions about vaccines and when faculty and staff will be eligible to be vaccinated. As you know, that's up to the State, not up to the campus. But it is great that our campus has a vaccination site, though we still don't get to decide who gets vaccinated when. At the moment pre-K-12 educators are in the State's phase two which is starting on Monday, I believe, but higher education faculty are not. We're in phase three, along with the general public.

The Massachusetts. Teachers Association, our parent Union, is doing a lot of advocacy at the state level for higher ed. faculty and staff to be included in phase two, especially those who were on campus and really should be protected, as higher education workers are in 32 other states.

But we seem to have been overlooked in Massachusetts. There's an open letter that we will be sending to the State and we'll be sending out a link so you can sign it tomorrow so look for that email.

Third, that we are planning to be back at the bargaining table soon and rather than starting all over again, we agreed with the administration that we would pick up where we left off, almost a year ago now.

We had gone through a process of receiving input from faculty and librarians across campus, we had seven committees that did a lot of work researching a variety of issues and designing proposals, and we presented them at the table about a year ago, before we paused everything to negotiate the one year agreement for Covid times.

We're really looking forward to getting back to the issues we wanted to talk about in the first place including things around racial and gender equity, holistic teaching evaluations, climate justice and sustainability, and a lot more.

Finally, we have a new MSP initiative that we talked about just this morning to get more feedback from our members.
We've had some very big membership meetings this year on zoom with 500 faculty and librarians in attendance, which has been a great way of sharing information with you, but not necessarily opening things up for discussion and conversation.

We've been talking about how to do that better along the lines of building community. We hadn't thought about knitting but I might talk to Ryan, the RA, about setting up a knitting club. I'm all in favor of knitting.

But what we are going to do, is on the first Friday of each month at lunchtime setting up a virtual space sort of like open office hours or open Union Hall, with the MSP leadership for informal conversations. To have MSP members talk to each other, get updates from us and to hear what's going on and what people would like to work on.

The first one will be next Friday. First Friday of February at noon and we'll send out more information soon, but please plan to join us for some of these informal virtual get-togethers and good luck starting the semester.

4. **The President of the Student Government Association**
   President Sonia Epstein:
   Hi everyone, it's great to see you all. Happy New Year! Happy Aquarius season. Happy almost start of the new semester.

First of all, from the SGA side we're excited that move-in is going smoothly, so far, we haven't seen too many cases or heard of too many issues, hopefully, the rest of the semester continues that way even with the increase of students that have been brought to campus.

I want to say thank you to Secretary Peterson, as well as Associate Dean Wileden and Associate Dean Connor for meeting with me and a few SGA folks about the pass-fail policy. I am looking forward to hearing more about that, and hopefully seen a pass today to ensure that students are continuously supported academically, especially with the continued stress of the pandemic.

Not too many things have changed, unfortunately, in students' day to day lives and we're seeing with the increase of cases in the state and in the country, even with the vaccine rollout, continuously putting stress on students.

Overall, I am looking forward to continuing to work with you all around supporting students' success and well-being as well as mental health through work on academic, rights racial justice and a lot more. If you ever need anything, please feel free to reach out. mailto:sgapresident@umass.edu

C. QUESTIONS

Senator Ogilive:
Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer.

This is a question for Vice Chancellor Misra. I sent him detailed versions in advance so I'll try to be brief here. My first question concerns in AAUP blog report about a Northwestern University law professor's discovery that an outside company, hired by the Northwestern IT department, was silently holding, that is not sending and not bouncing, 88 outgoing emails he sent to editors pitching an article about zoom and censorship, because they have mentioned a particular URL.

It doesn't seem to have been nefarious. The company claimed that the messages were held, because the URL had been taken over for spamming. But he was very disturbed that his emails were neither being delivered nor bounced back without any notice to him.

I want to ask Vice Chancellor Misra what, if any, outgoing email filters we're using at UMass, especially with a switch away from U-mail to either Microsoft Outlook or Google Mail.

If we are filtering, who decides what gets filtered and if someone sends a message that is filtered will they be notified? I know filtering is necessary because of spam and so on, but I'm curious what the parameters are.

My second question is also an email question. I have noticed that many legitimate messages from on campus centers are being filtered into my junk folder on Outlook, since the transition away from U-mail. This includes emails sent recently to the campus community by Chancellor Subbaswamy and email sent to me personally by Dean Krauthamer.

I now check my spam folder every few days to make sure I don't miss anything important. This has been a problem for other faculty in my department and I presume across campus.

So, I'm wondering what IT is doing to work with Microsoft, to reduce the frequency of false positives and its spam filters, especially internal emails.

I would like to have confidence that I receive email sent by colleagues, and also the emails I send either in my faculty role or as department Chair, will go into the recipient's inbox and not their junk folders and I think this is particularly important as we're working primarily remotely. I would appreciate any enlightenment.

Presiding Officer Brewer:
I regret to inform you that Vice Chancellor Misra told me that he had to leave for another Zoom and would not be available for the question and answer section of the meeting, but he would be happy to take questions by email, as necessary. I'm sorry that he's not here to answer your question.

Chancellor Subbaswamy:
If I may Mr. Presiding Officer, respond, at least in part, to this question. Very recently, again -- this happens in cycles -- somebody fished my email address and sent a whole bunch of emails as if they were from my email address.

There has been some concern about trying to decrease what goes through the filter because unscrupulous people have been really getting through the normal settings of the filter.

That part I know we're working through because there have been too many cases of that sort of thing going on recently because it goes in cycles.

I'm also disturbed to hear what you mentioned about Northwestern and I'd like to know, myself, we'll find out if there is anything that is really nefarious, as you say. There's nothing being done by IT but who knows what third parties are doing.

Senator Ogilive:
I have also had my email spoofed and sent out to my colleagues in history with that "call me". I'll post a link to the AAUP blog in the chat for those who are interested, so thank you.

Senator Olsen:
I am the Chair of our ICTC, I work closely with Vice Chancellor Misra. This came up in our last meeting at well.

So, rest assured, they're aware at least of the second point that you raised about the spam filter. This seems to be -- and I'm just conveying what we were told in our meeting so please verify this with Chris Misra -- that it's affecting more the users who moved over to Outlook or Office 365 than those who moved to Gmail.

The IT security group here is working with Microsoft to fix the filters, but at the moment, there are many false flags being tagged as spam and so they're working on this. But hopefully he'll be able to give us a better update.

Senator Berlin:
Just a thought about the vaccine distribution. We have many faculty, especially in in my department in music and dance, who are providing in person instruction for the campus.

I am wondering it if it's possible that we can advocate for those who are actually delivering in person instruction to get that those vaccines ahead of time. It would allow us to do to expand what we can do in the spring and give them the best quality education.

Chancellor Subbaswamy:
Along with the unions, we also, the Chancellors of the five campuses and the President have written to the secretaries of education and others urging that in person faculty and staff, at least those at risk, also be included as soon as possible, along with the K 12 teachers.

So far that hasn't happened but we'll keep advocating for that. I completely understand that.

Senator Vouvakis:
Happy New Year! This is a question for Provost Barr. I was wondering why, in this day and age, why don't we have an electronic schedule that already is updated so that we can plan our semester?

The second part of this question is why do we still have to go in manually to create a Moodle class and why can't it be automated?

Provost Barr:
Unfortunately, I do not have an answer since this is a technology question that would be better answer by Vice Chancellor Misra. But I will follow up on the questions.

Senator Dori-Hacohen:
I want to ask about the upcoming semester. Although I know the Senate approved the Rules Committee decision about the calendar, I would like to hear this about the logic behind the Wellness Wednesday.

We're taking away what society gave us, which is a week -- a unit that is composed of five days of work and two days of rest.

We decided let's get rid of that we're going to have seven days and then every now and again we're going to have a wellness day in the middle, I wonder, maybe we should create "Serendipitous Saturday" and "Superfluous Sunday" next year, so students will use that time to to reflect and to restore and to do whatever they supposed to do on Wellness Wednesday

Maybe we should have a motion that students should not work between Friday and Monday and then we do not need Wellness Wednesday in between, to help them recover.

It strikes me that let's take April 14th that is a Wellness Wednesday then we have Patriots day on April 19th. Instead of using what society gave us, which is a Monday for a break, we decided no we're going to give them Wellness Wednesday, five days ahead of time.

I would like to hear more about why we decided that we're better than what society gives us as a resource to structure what they have as a work day and the weekends is societal time.

Provost McCarthy:
The Monday holidays are great idea when you don't have a pandemic. When you have a pandemic, you want to discourage students from heading back home, which is likely in an area with a higher rate of infection than the one we're in right now.

D. ANNUAL REPORTS

1. **Annual Report of the Commonwealth Honors College Council, as presented in Sen Doc. No. 21-036.**

   Kimberly Tremblay, Chair of the Commonwealth Honors Council:
   We had a lot of structural changes that were happening leadership changes that were happening in the honors college, as you know, we had a search committee for a new Dean. Dean Castañeda started informally started earlier in the spring.

   Associate Dean Flaherty, who was the Chair of the Curriculum and Academic Oversight Committee also retired in 2020, at the end of August, and we also had the Executive Director and Senior Assistant Dean, who held a lot of knowledge and who also helped to run the Council meetings, retire in January of 2020.

   So, there were a lot of changes in the leadership, so that was that took a lot of effort in our Council meetings.

   But we did manage to get several things done. We put out a call for first year new first year thesis seminars. We received many proposals, and from them approved six new honors thesis seminars. These are really important considering that in fall, 2021 the first cohort of students who will be required to perform a senior's honors thesis will be seniors.

   We also established an exemplary thesis subcommittee that was really important to select theses that will be used to show examples of good theses to students.

   This is because different departments have kind of different standards for what their thesis would look like, and this is something that's been really complicated and something we've worked on for a long a long time. To try and get out to provide students with examples of good thesis.

   That's it for the year.

   The report was received.

2. **Annual Report of the Health Council, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21-037.**

Tobias Baskin, Chair of the health Council:
Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Hello members of the Faculty Senate and administrative officers. I am delighted to present to you the annual report of Health Council.

First, I would like to apologize. This should have been done in September. Somehow it fell through the cracks and that's my responsibility and I'm sorry. But here it is.

I will call your attention to a few things. Health Council met seven times during the academic year, and we also met informally during the summer, because there was something important going on.

We have also continued to have robust and active participation from our undergraduate members through the Student Government Association and also through the Student Wellness Advisory Board, which is a kind of student version of Health Council and so that's been great.

I will say that we've had retirements among the staff members of the Council so now we have three staff openings both professional and classified staff of each. It's hard to recruit staff so if you know if anyone who's staff who might be interested in serving on Health Council please talk to them and maybe they can do that.

I think it's important to tell them that we only meet once a month, so for an hour so it's not perhaps an arduous task.

We talked about many things related to health and safety during the year, and one thing that came up in particular I want to call your attention to is menstrual supplies in the restrooms. There aren't any now and we feel that there should be, and so we're going to continue to work on that and find a way to make this happen. So, look forward to that going forward.

Another thing that I should say is that the University has not formally tasked Health Council with any specific things to do, related to the pandemic.

However, almost all of our members in their university capacities are involved in one way or another in planning for the pandemic. So if you have concerns, if there's something on your mind that you're not happy about, or you're wondering about, please contact me or contact Health Council.

Bring in any policy, you would like review or issues you'd like reviewed, we can certainly handle that I will put my email in the chat. Thank you very much. baskin@umass.edu

The report was received

3. **Annotated Report of the University Press, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21-038.**

Joel Wolfe, Chair of the University Press Committee:
The report that you've all seen is seven pages single space; it's very detailed and has a lot of great information if you're interested. The various awards, the press won and how its continued to work it's really worth reading. So, you can imagine, being done by the press it's very well written.

But first I'd really like to thank Jim Smethurst of African-American Studies who served for many years, as my co-chair before stepping down. The press director had a wonderful idea which was to bring in a co-chair from UMass Boston.

We're very fortunate that Sari Edelstein, who's a terrific member the English faculty at UMass Boston has agreed to serve on the press committee.

Members of the Faculty Senate may not be aware that we have an editor based in Boston and that we've always had at least one member of the UMass Boston faculty on our committee and before the era of Zoom those people used to drive out here for our meetings.

The press continues to overachieve. I think that's the main topic of the report, we had a wonderful outside review of press directors from some leading university presses who came for several days and their report is worth reading as well. It's very praiseworthy of our staff and our authors.

There's a lot of uncertainty, not just at the University, but in the publishing world in general. In the face of that the press continues to work away publishing books winning a lot of great publicity and also major awards.

They're very, very careful with their resources and they've been able to do all of that, despite the entire staff on like a faculty members, having to take furlough at some point. But they've been working very well remotely as a staff and the press committee, which approves all books, has continued to me remotely.

Vice Chancellor Malone:
I thank you I'd like to thank the Press Committee and the Press staff, it was a very trying year. Nevertheless, I think it was a good year and bodes well for the Press.

The Press has always enjoyed a very strong relationship with the Press Committee and I think that is essential for the quality of the work, and I thank you, Joel and the rest of the members of the committee if they're even if they're not on the call, I thank them.

Joel Wolfe:
Thank you very much. We've always felt strong support from your office as well.

The report was received.

E. NEW BUSINESS: AMENDMENT OF THE FACULTY SENATE CONSTITUTION
Proposals for changes in the Faculty Senate Constitution, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21-008. [Paragraph 9 of the Constitution specifies that amendments to the Constitution may be voted on at a regular or special meeting of the Faculty Senate after an initial presentation at an earlier regular or special meeting. This continues the required sequence.]

Secretary Peterson:
The Rules Committee did talk about the proposal to amend the Constitution in December. In light of comments from a number of people that the proposed amendments to paragraph four, in particular, raised very complicated issues and that they are very hard to think through in the conditions of enforced distancing that we have to follow during Covid times.

The collective proposal of the Rules Committee is that we postpone consideration of all the amendments to paragraph four of the Constitution, which are the ones that do raise big issues, but that we continue with consideration of the more "prose fixing kinds" of amendments to the other paragraphs.

So we will pick up the Constitution amendments again next meeting for discussion and I'm thinking that we would then vote, if people decide they want to go ahead with those other amendments, in April.

F. NEW BUSINESS: POLICIES
Secretary Peterson moved that the Faculty Senate approve the Policy on Satisfactory/Fail Grading of Graduate Courses for the Spring 2021 term, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21-039 & that the Faculty Senate approve the Policy on Satisfactory/Fail Grading of Undergraduate Courses for the Spring 2021 term, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21- 040.

Secretary Peterson:
The graduate policy is identical to the policy that was adopted for fall 2020.
As we learned collectively that's a very complicated policy realm and it seemed best to simply note that we're still in Covid, we're not quite out, let's just move forward one more semester with that policy.

There is a wrinkle in the undergraduate policy which President Epstein foreshadowed for you. It is meant to balance concerns about reducing stress for students, but also permit certain programs that are highly structured and use precursor courses as predictors of how well a student will do in major or in later courses to do so.

The idea behind the change is that the student can still take the course pass/fail. But the department will be able to use the underlying grade to determine whether the student can continue in the major, or should be advised to find to find a new direction, or advised about how to get their performance up, so the things will be better for them in later semesters.

I particularly want to credit Associate Dean Jack Wileden in Computer and Information Sciences for coming up with the phrasing of this compromise because it was very much his idea, first

expressed in a meeting that the SGA leaders, Associate Dean Connor and Associate Dean Wileden and I had back a couple of weeks ago.

Senator Vouvakis:
I am against this particular accommodation. I would support the University going back to its original model with respect to this issue. The reason being is that I feel that this hurts our student and in the long run, our institutions, even though this policy might be temporary.

Why is that? Because student do not stay highly focused on the grade. I understand what Secretary Peterson means about "highly structured majors", but that is true for all majors. In all majors, you need certain knowledge to learn first and then proceed to higher level.

I feel that we are not serving our student and we will end up having lower quality students and our reputation will get an impact. I think that we will have to act like parents do and the student will need to have grades for their classes.

SGA President Sonia Epstein:
I just like to speak to that comment as a student, as one of the students you are serving, and I would say that this policy, very much does serve students, we conducted a survey through the SGA to see how many students had utilized to pass/fail policy.

I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, I can find them, but a lot of students did, and this we have heard a lot of students advocate for at least three classes remaining to be pass/fail to have the ability to do that at the very least, because of the amount of stress caused by Covid and everything else.

There's financial burdens that come with the pandemic there's the stress of having a family member or yourself or family or sorry or friends get the virus and just all of those added responsibilities that come with it.

I think removing the policy would do a lot more harm to our students and that would cause a decrease in quality of work, and it would cause students to drop out and just have to carry so many more burdens on top of that.

I don't see it as a decrease in work. I don't see it as a lack of accountability. Students are dedicated to their studies, and this is just to ensure that we are protecting their well-being and making sure that they have a place in the institution, as they should.

Senator Calas:
I just want to talk about grades. Grades are a big discouragement to learning. We come upon a situation in which we end up so focused on grades that the students are stressed, they become more individualized, it creates competition in the classroom, creates situations in which even the question of whether there is a relationship between learning and the grade become very suspicious.

So, I am really happy that we have had this policy now, because at the end, we had to grade. The question is, what do we accomplish by having the constant focus of grades, as if that is what makes a difference.

I don't think that impact our quality of a student has diminished and the country our students are probably learning more that way, because they are less stressed by the question of the grade.

My student did great this semester, and the prior one year we've broken the middle and it was precisely because there was no you'll get pressure that grade and that will be much less we've hardly talk about the grade

 I think, we have to really recognize that often time the question of the grade itself is the question that we should be asking. Why don't we ever rate the students, we have a paragraph that talks about the student themselves in a way that is not that letter grade, whatever that letter may mean or not.

I have no problem with maintaining it this way this year.

Senator Katz:
I'm just wondering, this change the last semester that basically it's pass/fail that some courses that department can still use the grade in the course to determine whether the student can proceed forward in the program.

Seems to me to be the equivalent to giving a grade. I mean students is going to be just as stressed, or by having this this hidden grade still count towards their academic advancement. I don't understand what the purpose of that really is. If we really want to care about the students, in this extraordinary time, I think we stick with the policy as it was last semester.

Secretary Peterson:
There is a difference because, the policy specifies that the hidden grade can only be used for assessing progress in the major. The pass/fail will still be used for calculating the student's grade point average, and the GPA is a separate source of stress among students.

I know this because I've heard a good deal about it, including from some parents. The majors are worried about a specific population, because they found that among students who are not able to earn at least a C grade in the precursor course, the vast majority of them fail the next course.

They wanted to be able to have that stronger guidance signal. This was an effort to try to navigate a complicated space and come up with something that reminded the students that you're in such a highly structured major that your faculty really believe you have to be performing at this level to succeed.

At the same time, to assure some whose performance might drop to a C- that the C- would not go into their GPA, and the department itself is willing to think about the students individually. But they can do it now by identifying people according to the underlying grade.

Senator Vouvakis:
One other point that we need to be aware of is the notion of the hidden grade. Most students will not go and read all of the nitty-gritty language that is in the Senate documents and so forth. Most students will just see pass/fail and they will choose to fail and they will not realize that there is an underlying grade that will keep them back.

I feel that it will be much better to just be transparent and tell the students that we've had two semesters with this pass/fail policy and we are all adjusting to the situation but we're going back to the original mode. The pre-Covid mode when it comes to grade. It will be much better for the students from the perspective that they will not find themselves in a situation to say "Oh, I didn't know that".

Secretary Peterson:
I think at this point students do understand the policy situation pretty well.

Senator Webley:
There is no hidden grade. We should get that straight. Students are fully aware that when they make that choice for pass/fail, that there is an underlying grade. As an instructor, I tell that to my students that your underlying grade is in SPIRE. That's done by the records office it is not done by your professor giving a pass/fail into the system. Students are fully aware of that.

They're fully aware that they can change that pass fail up to six months after graduation. The notion that there's a hidden grade, I think is a little bit misleading because there's no such thing. Students are fully aware of this.

Senator Dori-Hacohen:
To be honest, I didn't know that there was an underlying great behind the pass/fail. When I taught my class, I assumed that it was a pass/fail, so if you choose a pass/fail you're going to get a pass. From my perspective, I need to grade 188 students and then they're going to get the grade, even though they take a pass/fail, I think that that strange.

I had to adjust my grading system because of the pass/fail and especially when they can declare it at the last day of the class. For me, I don't mind getting rid of all the grades and, to some degree that's what I did.

I said okay, the amount of work you did for the last day of class will get you a B or B+ or B-minus regardless of what you do after that because I teach large lectures.

If I need to grade everything that students do, and if my TAs need to grade everything the students do, and then the students say, "oh I don't want that great I will take a pass". Why did a great all that work? why would they do create all that work for us?

For me, if there is a pass/fail, I would rather have the pass/fail, with no hidden grade than to have the hidden grade. From my perspective, if we want to reduce the stress for the students, we need to tell them that, this is what you need to do to pass the class, regardless of the great that you're going to get.

Senator Vouvakis:
I would like to respond, a little bit to the hidden grade and students are aware of this by now. I happen to live with a person that works in the front lines with students, an advisor, that has met hundreds and hundreds of students over the past two semesters.

They do not know. They do not. I can tell you that my wife has met with more than 300 students and they do not know that about the hidden grade.

Senator Calas:
I don't think that the question here is about grading the student work. I grade all of my student work, and that is feedback for them to know how they are doing in terms of the activities that are happening in this semester.

That doesn't change anything. But the focus is on learning. The stress that grades cause some time in some environments in the classroom.

In this situation, everything that one can create in a in a classroom to create community is valuable. The question of not grading, no, I grade the students. It is a feedback grade. I write a lot in the feedback.

I don't think that we should be confused here about what is that we are doing. We are evaluating the students no matter what. In fact, they get grades. But they get grades that are pass/fail when they're transforming the classes that they choose to have it that way.

But in our records, does what we do. I still haven't otherwise. I don't think that people are clear about what is happening.

Senate Project Assistant Henrique:
I am a graduate student and I'm also a representative on the Graduate Student Senate.

With respect to this conversation about "do students know?", they very much do know. This generation of students, both in graduate classes and undergraduate classes are much more informed than previous generations.

They're much more willing to go in search for information and get into the nitty gritty of what's actually the rule and what is not. You see it everywhere. You're seeing it right now on Wall Street, where a lot of young people are looking at the rules and investing and they're getting blamed for following the rules.

It's the same thing with this.

Yes, many people might not know everything about the information, some people know some people don't. It's up to the Graduate Student Senate and President Epstein and the SGA to make sure that is publicized. You have to publicize that information.

That's the whole point of the student government. To be that representative and give the students that information. To give the students point of view. That we are very much aware about what's happening and the student governments are there to give the information for the students who don't.

SGA Secretary of University Policy Sarah McKenna:
I am the Secretary of University Policy for this Student Government Association and I just wanted to reiterate that I think this is a really important support for students.

I understand that we've gone through almost two semesters now through this pandemic, but with no days off for students in the fall and only two days off for them in the spring, I think that the support is really necessary.

Obviously, we've seen that cases are rising in Massachusetts and across the country and the vaccine distribution has been very slow. We're looking at the entire semester, being, as we had the fall semester and, potentially, even going into the fall 2021 semester conditions will still be similar.

I really would like to just stress how important this has been for students.

I used the pass/fail last semester and students are aware that there's a grade behind the pass. I removed my pass from my grades retroactively, because I had to do it for law school applications. But students understand that process, because they have to go through the initial process of masking their grade and they understand that can be unmasked.

I think that the communication from colleges and also from student representation will be important so that student to understand this new case around certain courses with prerequisites.

But I don't think that it's too hard, of a challenge to face for us. I think that the support is well worth it, with the additional challenge of that messaging. Thank you.

Senator Mangaliso:
Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer.

What I was going to say has been said by the students that have spoken just now, Lucas and Sarah, in terms of what we think this is doing to student's learning. We're hearing it from the horse's mouth, I mean no pun intended.

They know what's coming to the students and they're getting feedback from their friends and colleagues. From our faculty perspective, what I'm sensing, is a perhaps a lack of full awareness of what this policy is all about, among some of us.

I teach a large class, I mean double the number of the some of the faculty members, like 470 students in the fall, and I have a bunch of TAs that work with me.

But we worked on the class like it's a regular class. It's like the usual class, like Professor Calas was saying. We did all the grades, we did all the feedback, as if it's the normal class.

In December, I made a presentation to Faculty Senate that compared the way that my students performed before the pandemic hit in a live auditorium monitored the exam versus when they went online.

The difference was very, very insignificant between those two performances, which means to say that the students are taking well to the learning that's going on online. Even with the problems of learning online and the inconveniences of family and that sort of thing.

So, from our perspective as faculty, Senator Webley has also articulated this, we are supposed to report the grades they usually that will report to the grades.

We put in put them on SPIRE and report them to the administration and it's the administration, on request from student, then masks some of them as pass/fail versus leave them as a letter grade.

The pandemic is still on everyone. We can't operate like the pandemic has gone. We should wait until the pandemic has gone and then we can go back to the system that we've operated as on before.

Thank you.

Senator Beaulieu:
Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer.

I think that it may be helpful to include in your syllabi, a link to the policy if it's passed. I did this last semester, I sent a message to my students, I have between 400 and 600 students every semester. I sent them a link to the policy so that they knew.

They would ask me questions, and I would I would help them understand the policy. I think if we put t on our syllabus a link to the pass/fail policy, whatever it is then that'll help our students. I support this policy and I encourage everybody to support this policy, thank you.

MOTION 17-21 was Adopted

G. NEW BUSINESS: AMENDMENTS TO THE FACULTY SENATE BYLAWS

MOTION 12-21: That the Faculty Senate approve the By-Law Changes, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 21-016.

Secretary Peterson read the motion.

Secretary Peterson:
I want to take this opportunity, because it is the second reading which provides opportunity to have debate, to make a motion to amend the bylaws changes. This would add the provision regarding the Undergraduate Education Council that was distributed with the meeting materials.

This is a very technical kind of amendment. It is the usual thing that happens when the administration reorganizes itself, changes a title, and the title in the bylaws no longer matches the title in use.

This is to correct one title in the composition of the Undergraduate Education Council, to get rid of the now obsolete title "Associate Provost for Instructional Innovation" -- we still have instructional innovation but we're not using it in the title anymore -- and move to the current title, which is "Associate Provost and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning". I do propose this as an amendment to Sen. Doc. No. 21-016. It would be in addition.

Presiding Officer Brewer:
Does anyone object to making this friendly amendment to the motion? Seeing no objections, we will accept the amendment as a friendly amendment.

This is the second reading of the amendments to the bylaws. At the next meeting, we will have the final reading of this bylaw change motion and take the vote.

H. NEW BUSINESS: COURSES

MOTION 18-21: That the Faculty Senate approve the courses ANIMLSCI 425, ANIMLSCI 425L, ANIMLSCI 455V, ANIMLSCI 455VL, ANIMLSCI 465, ANIMLSCI 465L, ANIMLSCI 485, ANIMLSCI 485L, ANTHRO 394CI, COMPSCI 571 AND EDUC 697GG, as recommended by the Academic Matters and Graduate Councils.

Secretary Peterson read the motion.

MOTION 18-21 was Adopted unanimously.

I. <u>NEW BUSINESS: APPOINTMENTS TO FACULTY SENATE COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES</u>

MOTION 19-21: That the Faculty Senate approve the Nominations to Faculty Senate Councils and Committees, as presented in Sen. Doc. 21-035A.

Senator Berlin read the motion.

MOTION 19-21 was Approved unanimously.

Presiding Officer Brewer: Seeing that we have completed consideration of all items on the agenda, I declare the meeting adjourned. Good luck with the beginning of the semester.

The meeting adjourned at 6:14 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

MJ Peterson Secretary