

**2021-2022 University Senate
Minutes for the 6 Oct 2021 Meeting**

University Senate Officers: Presiding Officer Catherine Fowler, Presiding Officer Elect Jennifer Flory, Secretary Alex Blazer

PRESENT (39) Ashley Banks, Kevin Blanch, Alex Blazer, Robert Blumenthal, Linda Bradley, Hauke Busch, Rodica Cazacu, Benjamin Clark, Paulette Cross, Flor Culpa-Bondal, John Donaldson, Jennifer Flory, Jessie Folk, Brad Fowler, Catherine Fowler, Damian Francis, Greg Glotzbecker, Sabrina Hom, John Jackson, Julian Knox, Alesa Liles, Leng Ling, Catrena Lisse, Nadirah Mayweather, Lyndall Muschell, Frank Richardson, James Robertson, Gennady Rudkevich, Lamonica Sanford, James Schiffman, Liz Speelman, Costas Spirou, Mariana Stoyanova, Katie Stumpf, Rob Sumowski, Ashley Taylor, Jennifer Townes, James Trae Welborn, Diana Young

REGRETS (3) Cathy Cox, Amy Pinney, Sandra Trujillo

ABSENT (8) Justin Adeyemi, Laura Childs, Nicholas Creel, Hank Edmondson, Lee Fruitticher, Gail Godwin, Karl Manrodt, Molly Robbins

GUESTS (20)

Name	Role on University Senate or Position at the University
Shawn Brooks	Vice President for Student Life
Kell Carpenter	Volunteer on the 2021-2022 RPIPC
Aurora Castillo-Scott	Associate Professor of Spanish
Tsu-Ming Chiang	Professor of Psychology
Jordan Cofer	Associate Provost of Transformative Learning Experiences
Jolene Cole	Interim Associate Director for Instruction & Research Services
Shea Council	Administrative Assistant of the 2021-2022 University Senate
Carolyn Denard	Chief Diversity Officer and Member of the 2021-2022 DEIPC
Kerry James Evans	Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
Jennifer Flaherty	Associate Professor of English
Jane Hinson	Professor of Educational Foundations
Stefanie Jett	Parliamentarian of the 2021-2022 University Senate
Susan Kerr	Chief Information Officer and Member of the 2021-2022 RPIPC
Libby Murphy	Professor and Chair, World Languages & Cultures
Kerry Neville	Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
Laura Newbern	Associate Professor of Creative Writing
Holley Roberts	Interim Associate Provost of Academic Affairs and Director of The Graduate School
Katie Simon	Associate Professor of English
Shaundra Walker	Director of University Library
Edward Whatley	Instruction & Reference Librarian

CALL TO ORDER: Catherine Fowler, Presiding Officer of the 2021-2022 University Senate, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

AGENDA: A **MOTION** to adopt the agenda was approved by electronic vote with no further discussion, no dissenting voice, and only voting members of the university senate eligible to vote.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **MOTION 2122.FAPC.001.R REQUEST FOR BOARD OF REGENTS TO PERMIT NECESSARY DISCOURSE AND STUDY OF ITS PROPOSED CHANGES TO (1) PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL OF FACULTY MEMBERS, (2) INSTITUTIONS' AUTHORITY TO GRANT TENURE, & (3) POST TENURE REVIEW & ANNUAL REVIEW STANDARDS/PROCESS** On behalf of the committee, Sabrina Hom, FAPC Chair, presented the motion "WHEREAS at the September 9, 2021, meeting, the Board of Regents proposed new policies for adoption during the October 12-13, 2021, meeting that substantially alter (1) the procedures for the discipline and

dismissal of faculty members (8.3.9), (2) the authority of institutions to grant tenure (8.3.7.1), and (3) the standards and process for post tenure review and annual evaluations (8.3.5.1, 8.3.5.4, 8.3.6, 8.3.6.1, 8.3.7.1, and 8.3.7.3);

WHEREAS these proposed changes to the Board of Regents Policy Manual dramatically impact faculty conditions of employment;

WHEREAS these proposed changes have not been widely circulated to impacted faculty, and impacted faculty have not been given adequate opportunity to comment upon these proposed changes;

WHEREAS the members of the USG faculty council, whose mission is to “to promote and foster the welfare of system faculty through the combined creativity and expertise of faculty representatives from system institutions”, at a previously unscheduled last-minute meeting with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, expressed serious concerns about the proposals and their effect on academic freedom and tenure;

WHEREAS the USG faculty and faculty council must have an opportunity, on behalf of the system institutions’ faculty, to consider and comment upon the proposed changes; and now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty request that the Board of Regents table further action on these proposed changes so that impacted faculty and the USG faculty council may fully consider and comment upon these proposals.”

a. **CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION**

- i. At their September meeting, the Board of Regents released a set of proposed updates to USG policy regarding tenure. They plan to vote on these changes at the Oct 12-13 BOR meeting. (Hence, the Senate needs to meet early in order to respond before their vote.) The full text of the changes is provided as a supporting document [*Supporting_ProposedBORPolicyChange_2021-09-09.pdf*], but here is a quick summary:
 1. To explicitly link Post-Tenure Review to termination processes and accelerate the timeline thereof;
 2. To specify that faculty can be terminated as a result of the Post-Tenure Review process, “other than for cause” (that is to say, outside of the causes for termination currently outlined in BOR policy);
 3. To add a fourth element, “involvement in student success activities,” to tenure and faculty evaluations;
 4. To give the BOR the power to take over the tenure process at any institution deemed insufficiently rigorous.
- ii. These changes have the potential to significantly erode the protections of tenure and the academic freedom of USG faculty. I am attaching the AAUP’s statement on the matter [*Supporting_AAUPTenureAdvisoryLetter_2021-09-24.pdf*], and the USG Chancellor’s response [*Supporting_ChancellorLettertoAAUP_2021-10-01.pdf*].
- iii. The proposals have not been sufficiently discussed or explained to the stakeholders, and they are written in what *Inside Higher Ed* describes as “obtuse” language. There has already been one round of revisions to clarify the language (in mid-September) and it is possible that more tweaks are coming. Dr. Denley has just scheduled a Q&A for tomorrow (Tuesday) at 3:00, and I hope you will attend if possible. However, it does not seem to me that good policy can be made in such a great hurry, amidst last-minute meetings and changing drafts of the proposed updates.
- iv. FAPC has unanimously put forward this motion requesting that the BOR delay their vote and engage in a meaningful discussion with USG faculty and the Faculty Council. This motion closely resembles motions that have already passed at Georgia Tech, UGA, and Georgia State.
- v. Voting will take place virtually and will be available to all voting members asynchronously; Dr. Fowler will follow up with details.

- vi. According to Dr. Denley, in his meeting yesterday with GCSU faculty, student success is not a fourth element of tenure and promotion.
 - vii. I saw the emended language for the first time yesterday, Tuesday, October 5 [see *Supporting_EmendedBORPolicyLanguage_2021-10-05.docx*]. From a procedural standpoint, this does not give faculty across the state to understand and discuss the changes.
- b. **DISCUSSION** When Sabrina Hom called for questions and comments, many were forthcoming.
- i. Revision Procedure
 - 1. Comment (Voice): A number of USG institutions have passed resolutions similar to this one asking for the BOR to table the policy changes.
 - 2. Comment (Voice): It is troubling that less than two weeks before the BOR vote to change tenure and promotion policy, our provost has to explain to us what the BOR is voting on. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is emending documents after meeting with institutions. The call for rigor reads as a tenure quota.
 - 3. Comment (Voice): The wording of the policy changes is very confusing and needs to be debated before the BOR vote on it.
 - 4. Question (Voice): What problem does the BOR say they're trying to solve with these changes?
 - 5. Comment (Text): This policy seems to create solutions to problems that do not exist.
 - 6. Comment (Text): I think these questions illustrate the need to approve this motion. This should be tabled to encourage and allow discussions among the institutions.
 - 7. Comment (Text): An old policy is not necessarily a bad policy. I also do not understand why it is such an emergency to change a 25-year-old policy that we cannot take another month to discuss. I asked Dr. Denly the primary question: What is the hurry? Why can't we take the time to edit and discuss carefully? Those who were present can judge whether he gave a persuasive action.
 - 8. Comment (Text): Dr. Denley did not answer the question.
 - ii. Student Success
 - 1. Comment (Provost): My understanding of student success from yesterday's meeting with Dr. Denley is that GC faculty are doing a tremendous job. This is not something that we've never heard of before. For example, in an accounting class, student success is completing the CPA exam. Student success can also occur in scholarship, presentation, and publications. Faculty also serve as advisors of student organizations. Recent accreditation visitors have commended our institution on faculty dedication. It is to be determined whether student success will stand as a fourth evaluation criteria or be folded into advising. Some institutions have more difficulty with student success.
 - 2. Comment (Text): I don't think we should take a position on this matter using the logic that if a bad policy won't affect us, we shouldn't worry about it.
 - 3. Comment (Text): Some students participated in "activities" more than others. Does this mean they are more successful than other students? Getting a local or national championship in a sport is a student success. However, what if a student fails a class?
 - 4. Comment (Text): Dr. Denley stated yesterday that student success is not necessarily tied to DFW rates.
 - 5. Comment (Text): It would be up to each institution to define, qualify, and quantify student success based on the mission of the institution.
 - iii. Tenure and Post-Tenure Review
 - 1. Comment (Voice): Some of these changes, such as student success, are in response to the Post-Tenure Review Task Force, which has not been revised since 1996.

2. Comment (Provost): I was not involved in conversations with the BOR. One can extrapolate from Dr. Denley's comments that the last time PTR was evaluated was in 1996. This appears to be an effort to update policy. A committee, with faculty representatives, was active during spring and summer 2020. Prior to 2007, universities did not award tenure; instead, tenure decisions went from university presidents to the BOR and the BOR made the final decision.
 3. Question (Voice): Why does the policy revision associate PTR with termination? Is there a sense that faculty being reviewed during the PTR process are dispensable? Is this a numbers issue? This revision seems to do more than just update the policy.
 4. Question (Voice): Legislatures don't understand what faculty do. Are there any studies about PTR? This revision has disturbing language. How do other universities incentivize faculty and hold them accountable?
 5. Question (Voice): Has the BOR ever questioned GC rigor?
 6. Answer (Provost): I have never heard reference to or inquiry regarding our tenure and promotion process.
 7. Question (Text): How long is the remediation plan or performance improvement plan? Are they the same thing?
 8. Answer (Text): The policy does not specify how long remediation will take or how it will work.
 9. Comment (Text): If a professor is not active in research, he or she may need several years for enough publications with minimum required quality.
 10. Comment (Text): All the reassertions of reliance upon institutional post-tenure and promotion processes read like a smokescreen for the BOR's desire to insert itself more directly and assertively into the process, as the AAUP letter makes explicit. The confusion surrounding what constitutes "student success" and how it will be measured seems, again, to be a smokescreen for the larger, more troubling issue, that the BOR is inserting itself more expansively and directly into PTR processes across the USG with potentially punitive results that fundamentally undermine tenure itself. The AAUP letter cuts through the noise to emphasize this as the crucial point. It seems a clear power play by the BOR to erode tenure as a meaningful system. The rest of the convoluted language about "student success" obscures this fundamental point.
 11. Comment (Text): The rush and confusion around these changes have a tendency to obscure the key issues. As the AAUP points out, these changes make an explicit link between PTR and termination. The changes make PTR a "corrective" measure (and potentially a punitive one).
 12. Comment (Text): Dr. Denley said that quotas were not a suggestion of this plan; however, that is not in the policy, affirmatively or negatively.
- iv. Pre-Tenure Review
1. Question (Text): What about pre-tenure issues?
 2. Comment (Text): There is no change to pre-tenure processes.
 3. Comment (Voice): PTR expectations filter down to Pre-Tenure Review.
- c. **SENATE ACTION**
- i. A **MOTION** to call the question was made, seconded, and **APPROVED** by electronic vote with University Senators eligible to vote.
 - ii. A recording of Senate deliberation and an electronic ballot with a 6:00 p.m. deadline were emailed to University Senators directly after the meeting.
 - iii. Motion 2122.FAPC.001.R was **APPROVED** by electronic vote with University Senators eligible to vote (33 yay, 4 nay).

- iv. *Editorial Note: Acting Chancellor Teresa MacCartney's response to the resolution is included as a supporting document [Supporting_ChancellorLettertoUS_2021-10-14.pdf].*

ADJOURN

1. **ATTENDANCE AND THE SIGN-IN SHEET** Alex Blazer marked the attendance of those who joined the online video conference.
2. **MOTION TO ADJOURN** A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 12:46 p.m.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. There are five supporting documents.
 - a. *Supporting_ProposedBORPolicyChange_2021-09-09.pdf*
 - b. *Supporting_AAUPTenureAdvisoryLetter_2021-09-24.pdf*
 - c. *Supporting_ChancellorLettertoAAUP_2021-10-01.pdf*
 - d. *Supporting_EmendedBORPolicyLanguage_2021-10-05.docx*
 - e. *Supporting_ChancellorLettertoUS_2021-10-14.pdf*