

Dear Colleagues:

I write this to you in lieu of a report for the (former) March 25 faculty meeting.

The two threads I'm going to weave together in this email are first, that we've been dealing with so much in the last two weeks that it is not possible for us to recover our equilibrium quickly, but, second, that alongside continued teaching, we do need to continue our governance work through the end of this academic year.

Faculty Senate

We need to hold meetings. They must be virtual meetings. I am adjusting the meeting schedule of the Senate so that we will have four meetings across the rest of this semester, on the following dates:

March 23

April 6

April 27

May 4

We will meet at our normal time (12-1:30pm) on Zoom or GoogleMeet. Senate Secretary Chris Kendall will send out a link in addition to the agenda and, as normally as possible, the meetings will be open unless our business requires a closed session.

Chief among Senates concerns will be things that are fully in process or almost done, such as:

1. Elections for Faculty Senate Chair, new Faculty Senators, and new members of FAC and the Faculty Salary Committee
2. The timeline for implementation of the changed code language on promotion
3. Change to the IRB code language
4. The new Masters of Public Health program (the proposal for which has now been approved by the Curriculum Committee)
5. The report (completed) and recommendations from the ad hoc committee on the contingent faculty

See the section on [Spring 2020 Business and Processes](#) below for details.

Faculty Meetings

I am also adjusting the schedule for the full faculty meeting, cancelling the added meetings on March 25 and April 15, and moving ahead with plans for meetings on April 1 and April 29. The Provost, Faculty Secretary John Wesley, and I will work with Kaity Peake and our educational technologists to make a virtual platform work for these sessions.

The minimum requirement in our bylaws is that the Faculty meet as an assembly once a semester. We have cleared that bar, but I am still calling for two virtual meetings so we can vote on things that our faculty as a whole deserve to vote on. Our bylaws also provide that:

Article IV, Section 5A Responsibilities. A. Unless the Faculty is in session, the Senate shall have all the powers and duties of the Faculty and shall serve as a forum for discussion of University development. The Senate shall report to the full Faculty at least once a semester. By a majority vote of the Faculty present at a regularly called Faculty meeting any decision of the Senate may be altered.

This means that Senate can undertake business for the faculty as a whole. Faculty may also alter those decisions when we meet as a full body. We are colleagues in governance who strive to be transparent and communicative and that will continue. Senate will do appropriate business and report on it fully. Things that should be voted on by the full faculty will be brought to our virtual meetings. I will be attentive and responsive to faculty sensibilities about what we can and cannot reasonably agree to during this time of altered operations.

Virtual faculty meetings will necessarily be a different type of space for discussion and will perhaps not feel to us all as adequate space for some of our decision making. It is not my intention to rush us to finish business that we feel cannot be honestly addressed given the new conditions under which our work now takes place. The indeterminacy about what will or will not change with Covid-19 by May, much less what the summer and next fall will look like, pushes us towards finishing some work, but also suggests that some other work will need to wait.

Spring 2020 Business and Processes

Senate Exec and I have made a triage chart of items that have been on my anticipated agendas for rest of the year. We are consulting with Senate, the chairs of the Standing Committees, CTF, and other ad hoc committees Senate has charged. From that, we are defining what MUST be dealt with before the end of this academic year, what it would be useful to address if we can, and what can be held until next year.

Here are three important areas of focus now:

Academic Standards Committee:

You have already received updates from the Academic Standards Committee today about temporary policy adjustments given our shift to online classes this semester.

Professional Standards Committee:

The Professional Standards Committee is also discussing options and adjustments to the use of Student Evaluations of Teaching this semester and in evaluation files, especially those cases up for promotion in rank or tenure next year. We will be hearing from the PSC soon.

Curriculum Task Force

The Chairs of the Curriculum Task Force affirm that the group will continue its work and report recommendations fully to the Senate, but that no curriculum votes will come before the faculty this spring.

As we proceed, I will be asking Senate to think carefully about how we can use commentary periods and online discussions to allow the faculty to express its views before we take action in any virtual meeting of the Senate or full Faculty.

So, part of what I need to weigh, with Senate, is how best to take a few steps this year even with our shift to virtual operation and also how to appropriately reflect and weigh issues.

Please be in communication with questions. At some later date, maybe I will make a “the show must go on” joke. But not quite yet.

Sara