**LSUS FACULTY SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**February 10, 2025**

**11:00 A.M.**

**Webster Room, University Center**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** 11:04 a.m. President Williams called the meeting to order.

**II. PRESENT:** Senator Gifford, Senator Felice Williams, Senator Siska, Senator Shepherd, Senator Widmeyer, Senator Zhao, Senator Si Chen, Senator Yeh, Senator Cassandra Williams, Senator Noor, Senator Saleh, Senator Zaidi, Senator Mikaberidze, Senator Kim, and Senator Dunnavent. **Absent:** Senator White. A quorum was present.

**III.** **COMMENTS:**  President Williams opened the floor for comments from non-senators who signed up to comment, under prescribed time limits. Per parliamentary procedure, only those present in the room may comment. No one signed up for comments.

President Williams asked for a roll to be taken and asked senators to introduce themselves.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Senator Gifford moved to approve; Senator Siska seconded. Motion approved.

**V. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

President Williams opened the meeting by expressing gratitude to the faculty for participating in the Homecoming events held on campus from January 27 to February 1, 2025, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of LSUS's first graduating class.

President Williams invited the administrators to present their reports.

**V. ADMINISTRATORS’ REPORTS**

 **Chancellor:**

Dr. Robert Smith thanked everyone who contributed to making Homecoming Week a success and noted that "we are returning to hosting regular homecoming events" for current students and alumni, some of whom have not visited the campus since graduating.

He announced that three candidates for the Dean of Education and Human Development position would visit the campus and encouraged faculty to attend the open sessions with each candidate.

Dr. Smith reminded the senators of the upcoming Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) site visit scheduled for March 2025, emphasizing its importance for the institution.

He also shared promising enrollment figures, reporting increases across all categories. Last year, LSUS surpassed the 10,000-student threshold, and this year, the university is on track to reach 11,000.

The Chancellor expressed frustration over administrative hurdles delaying construction projects on campus. He noted that the bridge to Pilot’s Point has yet to be constructed, despite funding being appropriated several years ago. He also provided updates on the renovation of the third floor of the College of Business building and discussed the possibility of LSUS taking over the management of the Pilot’s Point housing complex, which is currently overseen by a third party.

Senator Mikaberidze inquired about the status of the LSUS greenhouse construction. Dr. Smith responded that the project is still in development.

 **Provost:**

Dr. Taylor opened her remarks by discussing the search for the Dean of Education and Human Development position and reminded the faculty to attend meetings with prospective candidates on February 12, 14, and 17.

She then reiterated the importance of the forthcoming SACSCOC visit and emphasized the need for faculty to familiarize themselves with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a vital component of the accreditation reaffirmation process. The LSUS QEP committee has selected a new theme for the next five years: "Navigating Student Success and Charting the Course for Teaching Excellence."

Dr. Taylor also highlighted the ongoing Meauxmentum initiative, launched by the Board of Regents. As part of this initiative, the Board of Regents has established a new attainment goal, aiming for 60% of all working-age adults (ages 25–64) in Louisiana to hold a degree or high-value credential by 2030. The third statewide Meauxmentum Summit will be held at the Cajundome and Convention Center on April 2–3, 2025.

Finally, Dr. Taylor discussed the schedules for the summer and fall semesters, reminding faculty that the final versions will be completed by March 1.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business.

**VII. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

President Williams invited Dr. Heather Carpenter to present recommendations from the Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Committee. Over the last few weeks, the committee reviewed materials on the history of course evaluation instruments at LSUS, best practices in course evaluations, and a literature review of course evaluations. Additionally, the IPD received a demonstration of the course evaluation platform in Watermark. Based on its review, the IPD made two recommendations:

* To validate the current course evaluation instrument. The committee acknowledged concerns that the current instrument does not accurately measure what it is intended to assess and does not provide meaningful feedback to improve faculty instruction. Additionally, the committee noted the low response rate for online evaluations. However, it recommends validating the existing instrument as the first step in a broader process of developing a new instrument that incorporates feedback from relevant stakeholders.
* Move all course evaluations online through the Watermark system to enhance functionality. The IPD emphasized that this transition would allow integration with the Faculty Success platform and provide colleges, departments, and individual faculty the ability to add customized questions. It would also enable more robust reporting features to help improve teaching effectiveness. The current platform lacks customization options and has limited reporting capabilities.

The Senators engaged in a lengthy and substantive discussion of the IPD recommendations. Senator Siska emphasized the importance of carefully assessing the questions included in course evaluations to ensure they capture diverse perspectives and experiences. He also expressed concern about low completion rates and stressed the need for students “to take ownership of their education.” President Williams joined the discussion, highlighting the importance of effective instruction and the need for appropriate evaluation tools to identify teaching challenges. She stated that implementing necessary reforms would help put our students and ourselves in a position to be successful. She also underscored the need for an evidence-based instructional design framework that accommodates different learning styles. In this context, she discussed Universal Instructional Design (UID), which is based on universal design principles to create accessible learning environments and provides “multiple means for action and expression as well as opportunities for engagement.”

Associate Provost Dr. Helen Wise was invited to contribute to the discussion. She and Senator Siska debated the nature, purpose, and scope of teaching and teaching evaluations. Dr. Wise noted that the current evaluation instrument was developed by LSUS faculty and approved by the Faculty Senate two decades ago, yet we have not done “a deep dive” into reassessing it since then. She also pointed out the high financial costs associated with maintaining the existing evaluation system.

After further discussion among the Senators, Senator Gifford moved to approve the IPD’s recommendation to validate the current teaching evaluation instrument. The motion was seconded and approved.

Following a discussion on the IPD’s second recommendation to transition course evaluations to the Watermark system for enhanced functionality, Senator Mikaberidze made a motion to approve the proposal. The motion was seconded and approved.

**VIII. OBSERVATIONS & CONCERNS:**

Senator Siska raised concerns about the office hour requirement, arguing that it impedes faculty *effectiveness and creativity.* He recommended revisiting the 10-hour office hour mandate, suggesting that, in the age of digital connectivity, faculty should have the flexibility to hold a combination of in-person and *flexible* office hours. These could be scheduled by appointment or conducted via online platforms like Zoom. The ensuing discussion included Senators Kim, Siska, and Shepherd, as well as Chancellor Smith and Provost Taylor. Senator Felice Williams highlighted two related issues—student engagement and faculty presence—arguing that faculty can effectively support student success through remote office hours. She emphasized that the key issue was not the “duration” of office hours as such but rather “the autonomy of these hours*.*” Senator Siska agreed, emphasizing the importance of granting faculty “space and flexibility to be creative.” Chancellor Smith concurred, noting that the administration does not expect faculty “to punch a clock” each day but is primarily concerned with ensuring faculty remain “available and accessible to students.”

President Williams then addressed the issue of Faculty Senate meeting attendance. She reminded the senators that, under Louisiana’s Open Public Meetings Law, in-person attendance is required. Participation via electronic means (telephone or video conference) is only permitted under specific emergency or disaster-related conditions outlined in RS 42:17. Senators attending virtually will be, therefore, marked as absent.

The discussion then shifted to the Faculty Research and Development Committee. President Williams noted that the committee’s schedule for soliciting, reviewing, and approving grants does not align with major conference schedules. Senators Noor, Felice Williams, and Gifford agreed, citing instances where LSUS faculty were unable to access funds in time to attend conferences. The Senators agreed that the committee should review its schedule and explore ways to better coordinate it with major conferences but then decided to table further discussion until the next meeting.

Senator Felice Williams moved to postpone the discussion of the Tenure & Promotion Policy changes until the March meeting. Second and approved.

Senator Gifford made a motion to postpone the discussion of Faculty Retention until the March meeting. Seconded and approved.

Senator Felice Williams also moved to postpone the discussion on transparency in administrative hiring.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:** Senator Noor motionedto adjourn the meeting; Senator Zhao seconded. The motion was approved, and the meeting wasadjourned at 12:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander Mikaberidze

Secretary