**LSUS FACULTY SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**March 13, 2025**

**11:00 A.M.**

**Assembly Room, Noel Memorial Library**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** 11:02 a.m. President Williams called the meeting to order.

**II. PRESENT:** Senator Gifford, Senator Felice Williams, Senator Siska, Senator Widmeyer, Senator Zhao, Senator Si Chen, Senator Yeh, Senator Cassandra Williams, Senator Saleh, Senator White, and Senator Dunnavent. **Absent:** Senator Shepherd, Senator Kim, Senator Zaidi, Senator Noor, Senator Mikaberidze. 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 Dunnavent moved to approve; Senator Gifford seconded. Motion approved.

**V. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

President Williams opened the meeting by requesting volunteers to accompany her to the upcoming Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates (ALFS) meeting, which will be held in Alexandria, Louisiana, in April.

President Williams invited the administrators to present their reports.

**V. ADMINISTRATORS’ REPORTS**

**Chancellor:**

Dr. Robert Smith was not present at start of the meeting so Provost Dr. Helen Taylor included some of remarks in her report.

Dr. Smith, however, arrived near the end of the meeting to deliver his report. He began by sharing preliminary enrollment figures, noting the “remarkable achievement” of 11,528 students enrolled for the Spring semester. He provided an update on the upcoming SACSCOC site visit scheduled for March and announced that LSUS has received final approval for the long-anticipated construction of the pedestrian bridge to the Pilot’s Point Apartments; originally funded in 2017, the project is now moving into the construction phase. He also announced upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremonies for both the Business Engagement Center and the Science Research Annex.

Dr. Smith concluded his remarks with an update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. He referenced a recent Dear Colleague Letter from the U.S. Department of Education asking universities to “assess compliance with the applicable statutes and regulations." He then explained the steps that LSUS has taken to ensure compliance with evolving federal and state guidelines.

Senator Dunnavent inquired about the potential impact of the proposed dissolution of the U.S. Department of Education. Chancellor Smith responded that while many details remain uncertain, he anticipates that federal financial aid programs for students will likely be transferred to the U.S. Treasury or another federal agency and are expected to remain relatively unaffected in the near term.

**Provost:**

Dr. Helen Taylor opened her remarks by addressing recent legislation passed by the Louisiana State Legislature, as well as a resolution from the LSU Board of Supervisors regarding DEI. She discussed LSUS’s ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with these directives. She then noted that the schedules for Summer and Fall 2025 were due on March 1 and will be released to students on March 15. Dr. Taylor emphasized the importance of offering a diverse range of courses and flexible scheduling options to meet student needs.

Dr. Taylor reminded the Senate of the upcoming Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) site visit, scheduled for March 17–19, 2025. She stressed the significance of this visit for institutional accreditation and urged faculty to familiarize themselves with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), including the new five-year theme: *“Navigating Student Success and Charting the Course for Teaching Excellence.”*

In response to a question from Senator Dunnavent regarding whether SACSCOC representatives might interview individual faculty members, Dr. Taylor confirmed that it was a possibility and encouraged faculty to be prepared for such interactions.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business.

**VII. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

No Continuing Business

**VIII. OBSERVATIONS & CONCERNS:**

**Faculty Retention Report:**

President Williams addressed the ongoing issue of faculty retention at LSUS and emphasized the importance of collecting comprehensive data on faculty promotion, tenure, and departures. She invited Mr. Rob Lindsey, Director of Human Resources, to present a report on the matter. Mr. Lindsey noted that Human Resources had not previously tracked faculty retention or turnover systematically. However, he was able to compile sufficient recent data for the senators. He reported that the turnover rate among full-time faculty—both tenure and non-tenure track—was approximately 9.7% in 2024. He pointed out that this figure is slightly lower than the turnover rate among full-time staff and is consistent with other institutions reviewed by the HR department. He also clarified that the 9.7% figure includes retirement and “no retention efforts made” cases; when these cases are excluded, the turnover rate drops to 5.2%. He concluded by saying that the HR intends to start compiling data by semester or quarter.

**Discussion of Tenure and Promotion Policy:**

President Williams initiated a discussion of the Tenure and Promotion Policy (PS No. 02.01.06). Senator Gifford clarified that the focus was not on the overall tenure and promotion process, but specifically on Appendix A, which outlines the types of materials that may be included in a faculty member’s promotion and/or tenure portfolio. Senators discussed the variation in requirements across different colleges and whether the policy’s addendums should provide more detailed guidance on college-level expectations. President Williams proposed the development of a more objective measurement system—potentially a points-based model—that could provide a clearer, fairer, and more standardized framework for evaluating promotion and tenure candidates. Provost Taylor joined the discussion, emphasizing the importance of department chairs clearly and proactively communicating promotion and tenure requirements and expectations to faculty early in the process. She also noted that the transition to the Faculty Success platform should assist faculty in more easily tracking their progress toward meeting those requirements.

**Transparency in the Increased Administrative Hires**

President Williams asked Provost Taylor to explain the recent increase in administrative hires. Provost Taylor responded that all new position requests are reviewed by the LSUS Planning Council (LPC). These requests originate from department chairs, pass through the deans and vice chancellors, and are then presented to the LPC. Each vice chancellor submits data supporting the need for specific positions, and the LPC evaluates and discusses these proposals before making a recommendation to the Chancellor.

Senator Siska expressed concern about the role of the LPC, suggesting that it was created and primarily staffed by members of the administration. President Williams took issue with that characterization, emphasizing that faculty are indeed represented on the LPC. She cited her own service as both Faculty Senate President and a representative from the Department of Education; other faculty representatives include Dr. Amin Saleh (College of Business) and Dr. Marisa Connell (College of Arts and Sciences). Senator Siska reiterated the importance of shared governance and called for greater involvement of the Faculty Senate in hiring discussions. Provost Taylor responded by reaffirming that both faculty and staff representatives serve on the LPC while President Williams encouraged Senator Siska to attend LPC meetings to observe the public discussions, review the rationale provided for new position requests and offer feedback during comments. Senator Siska acknowledged the importance of faculty involvement in governance but reiterated his concerns about the “growing administration” at the university and noted that “about fifteen administrative positions” had been created over the past two years. He emphasized the need for greater investment in faculty positions and urged the administration to consider not only maintaining “a balanced budget,” but also aligning spending priorities more closely with the university’s academic mission.

President Williams and members of the Senate engaged in a discussion about the role and scope of the LPC in hiring decisions.

Senator Williams asked what factors determine whether a search is conducted internally or externally. President Williams responded that, according to guidance from the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates, universities are expected to conduct external searches for all administrative positions. She also emphasized the importance of strong faculty representation on administrative search committees. Provost Taylor agreed, affirming that all but two administrative searches conducted by the university have followed the external search protocol.

**Support for Graduate Students**

Senator Siska spoke on the need for increased support for graduate students. He highlighted the ongoing challenges in facilitating graduate student research at LSUS and stressed the importance of allocating resources to maintain the university’s “a good reputation for graduate programming.” He also announced a new 5K race to be held at LSUS, aimed at raising additional funds for graduate students while also promoting a healthier lifestyle within the campus community.

President Williams invited Dr. Sanjay Menon, Dean of Graduate Studies, to comment on the matter. Dr. Menon agreed that graduate students require more support but noted that LSUS has gradually increased its annual graduate student funding from $5,000 to $7,500; as a result, the minimum monthly stipend for graduate students has risen from $782 to $1,172. He acknowledged that while some other institutions may offer higher stipends, they often do so without providing the level of tuition assistance that LSUS offers. For example, he cited LSU Alexandria and Louisiana Tech as institutions that allocate larger annual stipends but do not include comparable tuition support. Dr. Menon emphasized the continued need for increased funding, particularly in the area of travel support, to enable graduate students to attend regional and national academic conferences.

Senators and Provost Taylor engaged in a discussion on potential strategies to increase funding for graduate students, exploring ideas to enhance financial support and expand opportunities for academic and professional development.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:** Senator Gifford motionedto adjourn the meeting; motion was seconded and approved. The meeting wasadjourned at 12:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander Mikaberidze

Secretary