

MUW FACULTY SENATE  
November 8, 2024  
Via Zoom

Present: Kristy Alpe, Haley Bailey, Jianwen Crump, Andrew Nyguen, Mary Helen Hawkins, Jon Fessenden, Jessica McDill, Chad Murphy, Jared Quist, Chanley Rainey, Melissa Smith

1. Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.
2. Approved (Ford, Baker) Minutes from September.

3. Committee Reports

a. Administrative Council Report (Murphy)

University Staffing Updates

The University will hire an external auditor—Brandie Branch—working remotely from the IHL campus. This is similar to what is done by MVSU and Delta State.

Jill O'Bryant is retiring at the end of December and Karen Clay is leaving January 10. Administration plans to begin a search for Clay's replacement in the spring, keeping an in-house attorney for the university; while the hiring process is ongoing, we will rely on IHL legal staff for support.

Curricular Updates

The University is signing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with East Central Community College (ECCC) and Itawamba Community College (ICC) to offer accelerated pathway programs. We will have a 3+1+1 program with ECCC leading to a BAS (17 different degree options) and an MBA. We will also have an agreement with ICC that streamlines entry into and completion of the BS in Elementary Education and the Endorsement in Special Education.

Other Updates

Carla Lowery reminded everyone that it is time to complete annual cybersecurity training and alerted us that there won't be a certificate this time, so we will need to save a screenshot for our records. We should have received an email inviting us to complete the training.

David Brooking announced that Admissions has plans to attend college fairs statewide and will finalize the enrollment head count in Nov.

b. Meeting with the President (Murphy)

Discussed the ICC and ECCC MOUs and planning for a campus LEAP event in mid-November for those that are unable to attend off-campus community events and want to know what is being planned for the upcoming legislative session.

c. Academic Council (Murphy standing in for Alpe)

Grading Policies

A change is being proposed to the undergraduate bulletin's 7.7 Grading Policy to comply with federal law. This would remove the WP option and allow only W or WF options.

The council also discussed creating a uniform policy for reporting attendance in online asynchronous courses. The question is whether or not to count students as present when all they are doing is logging into the course and viewing pages without completing any work. This has implications for federal aid, because students that fail a course must have attended at least 60% of the semester to keep their full aid.

#### Publicity & Commencement Speaker Planning

The council discussed press announcements for the new MOUs with ICC and ECCC. Discussed bringing in a speaker from Shatter the Silence for the spring convocation. Tollison has also been analyzing savings that transfers enjoy because we allow them to transfer up to 90 hours.

#### d. PIE Council (Rainey)

PIE Council met Sept. 27 and Oct. 25.

#### Graduation Survey Results

In its Sept. meeting, the council reviewed the 2023-2024 Graduation Survey results, which were generally positive. We maintained strong results for general quality and effectiveness, and we were especially happy to see that issues with the FAFSA did not lead to an increase in negative ratings of our financial aid process. Unfortunately, we still had very few students (3.11%) saying that they chose The W on the recommendation of high school staff. We were happy to see increases in the share of students employed full time in their field of study and in higher starting salary ranges.

#### Gainful Employment Reporting

The council also discussed the US Dept. of Education's Gainful Employment initiative. The W and all other institutions receiving Title IV funds are reporting data right now which the US Dept. of Ed. will use to create financial profiles of each institution. Average student debt-to-earnings ratios will be highlighted, and while we are concerned about our numbers being impacted by the gender gap in wages, we are also confident in our low average debt and loan default numbers.

#### New Budget Process

In its Oct. meeting, the council reviewed feedback from budget managers on the changes to the budgeting process used in creating FY 2025 budgets. Overall, managers approved of the modified zero-based budgeting (ZBB) process and the simplified spreadsheets used. They were glad that salaries were excluded from the ZBB, and some found that justifying everything in their budget led them to request less money than they had in the past, which allowed the university to reallocate toward units with requests for new initiatives. Criticisms of the process centered on the decision to make academic excellence a secondary priority and a lack of transparency around how budgeting priorities are determined. Council would like Faculty Senate to know that PIE issues recommendations to the President about how university priorities ([muw.edu/priorities](http://muw.edu/priorities)) should be factored into the budgeting

process, and it will do so again in its January meeting. Anyone wishing to provide input on this decision should contact Rainey, PIE Council Chair Brian Anderson, or another member of the council before January 24, 2025.

4. Unfinished Business

a. Faculty Salaries Committee

Murphy, Alpe, and Rainey will represent Faculty Senate in the working group with Dr. Tollison.

b. Summer Advising

Murphy reported back from meeting with Dr. Tollison, who said he is working with the Student Success Center to ensure all parties involved are aware of the procedures that should be followed, and we expect to have additional guidance for us when Academic Council meets next week.

5. New Business

a. Policy Statements

- i. Approved PS 1202 Non-Credit Activities (Rainey, Smith)
- ii. Approved PS 1303 Promotion of Faculty (Smith, Quist)
- iii. Approved PS 3547 Campus Technology (Alpe, Baker)
- iv. Tabled PS 3548 DEI so that Chad could request that additional work be done to clarify the following language in Article 1: “advocating for accessible means within fabric of the institution.”
- v. Approved PS Zero Credit Hour (Rainey, Alpe)

b. Campus Parking

Murphy has heard complaints about the difficulty of parking around campus and it causing students to be late for classes. Open discussion followed. Baker shared that nursing struggles especially on Mondays and Wednesdays because their building is fully utilized at that time. There is congestion and also trouble with people parking in places that are not designated for parking. Smith and Murphy shared that students are parking in places that are clearly not appropriate all along 11th street, blocking fire hydrants, parking facing the wrong way. Quist and Rainey noted problems related to faded paint striping, with Quist pointing to parking in undesignated spots in the lot across from Hogarth and the library while Rainey pointed to frequent parking across parallel parking lines around Painter.

c. Stark Recreation Center

The bathroom facilities in Stark are outdated and in need of maintenance repairs. Murphy visited and said that it looks like some issues appear to be due to neglect—rusting around faucets and shower heads--while others are just due to heavy use by the public resulting in more wear and tear.

d. University Faculty Senate Association of Mississippi

Approved UFSAM Resolution on Academic Freedom being sent to all university presidents and chancellors of IHL institutions (Alpe, Rainey).

This came out of the Faculty Senate at MSU and grew out of the back and forth between an MSU professor and MS Auditor Shad White on social media. The faculty senate presidents from all of the IHL institutions in MS approved of a resolution stating that faculty must have academic freedom and that attacks on faculty independence will harm efforts to recruit talented faculty to the state.

Smith added that the Chronicle of Higher Education has a number of reports on this very issue and how it is impacting conservative states, particularly across the South.

6. Meeting adjourned (Rainey, Heda) at 1:27 pm.

Next Meeting: December TBD/ January 10<sup>th</sup> (if needed)