Inter-Office Correspondence

TO: Rodney Bennett  
President

FROM: Steven Moser  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Faculty Handbook Recommendations

DATE: August 3rd, 2020

Below you will find recommendations from the Office of the Provost regarding changes to the Faculty Handbook as submitted by the Faculty Handbook Committee. Upon receipt of these documents, I engaged General Counsel in a review to assess for conflicts or potential risk factors. Ms. Coopers’ advice is reflected in my recommendations.

Item #1 (Appendices): APPROVE. Vision 2020 reorganization of materials in the Faculty Handbook.

Item #2 (1.8): APPROVE. Vision 2020 organizational changes in the Faculty Handbook.

Item #3 (4.5.2) APPROVE. Date change.
David Holt proposes changes to Faculty Handbook Committee Changes Concerning Chapter 8 being split into an appendix and faculty handbook on February 10, 2020, Tabled until March

First Vote Date: March 9, 2020

First Vote Results: Passes

Majority Opinion: 

Minority Opinion: 

Length of Review and Potential Second Vote Date: 1 month, April 13

University Counsel Opinion: 

Employee Handbook Opinion: 

Faculty Senate Opinion: 

Council of Directors Opinion: No Concerns

Deans Opinion: 

Vice President of Research Opinion: 

Provost Opinion: 

Second Vote Results Passes

Majority Opinion: 

Minority Opinion: 

Presidential Approval or Rejection with date: 

The original language from the handbook

I move that the following section:

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APPENDIX A. WORKLOAD ALLOCATION GUIDELINES 57

APPENDIX B. SAMPLE ANNUAL EVALUATION RUBRIC 59

APPENDIX C. SAMPLE ANNUAL EVALUATION RATING CRITERIA 63

Be changed to: (Changes in Blue and reflected in the appendix and text accordingly)

Move 8.2.5 to 3.6

8.2.5. Academic and Other Leaves of Absence 59

3.6 Academic and Other Leave of Absence

Academic personnel may qualify for academic leaves of absence, including leave for graduate or postdoctoral study, otherwise enhancing academic credentials, professional leave, and sabbatical. School directors and deans are responsible for ensuring that classes are reassigned to existing faculty when faculty are awarded leaves of absence. The employment of additional academic personnel for this purpose will be approved by the Provost only upon the demonstration of substantial need.

Academic leaves of absence are distinct from those to which university employees are entitled under the terms of contracted employment, such as annual leave and medical leave. For more information regarding types of leave see Employee Handbook Chapter 6. Academic leaves of absence, including sabbaticals, are not entitlements but privileges conferred by the Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the President. With the approval of the Board, faculty may receive creditable University service for a period of academic leave not exceeding 2 years during any 10-year period of University employment. Each classification of leave is subject to additional terms and conditions mandated by state law and Board policy.

3.6.1 Leave for Enhancing Academic Credentials

Academic personnel may be extended educational leave with or without pay for purposes of improving qualifications, for example, graduate or post-doctoral studies, for promotions in rank or appointment to new positions. Leaves of absence without pay may be granted by the Provost for an academic year, a semester, or (under unique circumstances) part of a semester.

3.6.2 Professional Leave

Professional leave is uncompensated absence from regular university employment for the purpose of external employment directly related to normal professional functions at the University. With the approval of the Board, faculty may receive creditable university service for a period of professional leave provided that: leave is for the purpose of full-time employment with a state or federal agency for a
period of time equivalent to the period of professional leave granted; leave accrues to the professional
benefit of the faculty member and promotes the interests of the University; the faculty member pays to
the state retirement system the actuarial cost as determined by the actuary for each year of
professional leave; and the faculty member serves the University on a full-time basis for a period of time
equivalent to the professional leave period granted immediately following the termination of the leave
period.

3.6.3  Sabbatical Leave

At the completion of six or more regular semesters of continuous, full-time university employment,
faculty members are eligible for one semester of sabbatical leave (4 1/2 months). Sabbatical leave is
granted for the sole purpose of professional improvement and is not necessarily earned by the required
duration of employment at the University. Sabbatical leave is intended to assist faculty to achieve
promotion in academic rank or enhance their professional development and scholarly reputation.

At the completion of 12 regular semesters of continuous, full-time university employment (sabbatical
not being taken within that time), faculty are eligible for 2 semesters of sabbatical leave (9 months).
Under no circumstances may sabbatical leaves of more than nine months' duration be granted.
Sabbatical leave normally coincides with fall semesters, spring semesters, or both, exceptions allowable
only in exceptional circumstances. In no case may sabbatical leave periods extend to summer
semesters.

Refer to the Provost's website, sabbatical and leave requests, for sabbatical guidelines, requirements,
and application procedures.

CHAPTER 8. APPENDIX A: RESOURCES  48

8.1.  RESOURCES RELATED TO TEACHING AND MENTORING STUDENTS  48

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8.2.6. Summer Grants for the Improvement of Instruction 51

8.2.7. Subventions 52
Rationale:

This chapter is a laundry list of URLs and not really part of the handbook. They are reference materials that are more appropriate in an Appendix.

Further, this list should be housed on the Provost's web page with all URLs.

Academic Leaves of absence does need to remain in the body of the handbook and chapter 3 is the best fit.

Perhaps some of the research items could be added under faculty responsibilities?
David Holt Proposes changes to Faculty Handbook Committee Changes Concerning 1.8, the definition of University Governance Committees and multiple elected positions, on January 13, 2020.

First Vote Date: 1/13/20

First Vote Results: 5 aye - 2 nay

    Majority Opinion: Follows V2020 Recommendation

    Minority Opinion: We believe there should be no restrictions on service

Length of Review and Potential Second Vote Date: 3 months – April 13

University Counsel Opinion: ______________________

Employee Handbook Opinion: ______________

Faculty Senate Opinion: ______________________

Council of Directors Opinion: 4-7-0-0 (Comments below)

Deans Opinion: ______________________

Vice President of Research Opinion: ______________

Provost Opinion: ______________________

Second Vote Results 8-0-0-0

    Majority Opinion: Advisory bodies defined

    Minority Opinion: ______________________

Presidential Approval or Rejection with date: ______________________

The original language from the handbook (with working edits from 11/19)

I move that the following section:

1.8 University Representative and Advisory Bodies

The University operates under the principle of participatory or shared governance, with many institutional decisions being made with the advice and input from advisory bodies to the President. The President has the discretion to approve, appoint, dissolve, and convene advisory bodies as necessary. Depending on their specific charge, the University's advisory bodies may be composed of faculty, staff, students, and in some cases alumni and friends of the University.

The following representative and advisory bodies are the most important institutionalized forms of faculty input to shared governance. The bylaws or constitution of each committee can be found on the Committee on Committees' webpage.

1.8.1. Councils of Academic Excellence
1.8.2. Councils of Academic Excellence

While each council of academic excellence has its own mission, collectively they drive distinction and quality and ensure programs meet and exceed national standards. They provide recommendations regarding academic affairs and program delivery.

1.8.2.1. Executive Academic Leadership Council

The Executive Academic Leadership Council is comprised of chairs and chairs-elect of Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, Council of Directors, and the Dean of the Graduate School (ex officio). This committee facilitates communication between faculty governing bodies and administration.

1.8.2.2. Graduate Council

The Graduate Council is responsible for graduate degree offerings, curricula, and assessment. It reviews, endorses, or rejects proposed changes in the graduate curricula (such as proposals for additions, modifications, and deletions of courses, majors, minors, and certificate programs), verifying compliance with University policies. Graduate Council provides recommendations on policy and practices for graduate student recruitment, admissions, and retention. It evaluates and grants graduate faculty status.

1.8.2.3. Professional Education Council

The Professional Education Council (PEC) ensures professional education programs at the University comply with standards of professional accrediting agencies and the Mississippi Department of Education. The Council reviews and recommends actions regarding the development, administration, evaluation, and revision of all licensure programs to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences. This Dean is the designated University official charged with providing direction and leadership to the Professional Education Unit, defined as the College of Education and Human Sciences and the professional education faculty located in other colleges.

1.8.2.4. Undergraduate Council

The Undergraduate Council is responsible for undergraduate degree offerings, curricula, and assessment. It reviews, endorses, or rejects proposed changes in the undergraduate curriculum including proposals for additions, modifications, and deletions of courses, majors, and minors, verifying compliance with University policies. It provides recommendations and oversight on policy and practices for recruitment, admission standards, and retention. Subcommittees of the council will make recommendations to the Undergraduate Council on matters related to the General Education Curriculum (GEC) and licensure requirements.

1.8.3. Council of Directors

Directors of schools fulfill certain administrative and evaluative responsibilities; thus, they should not serve on faculty governing bodies. The Council of Directors (CoD) ensures that administrative faculty have a means of communicating with administrators. The CoD will include all school directors and a representative from the University Libraries. The full CoD will meet with the Provost monthly. An elected executive committee of the CoD will serve as the primary point of contact between directors and the Provost.
1.8.4. Faculty Handbook Committee

The Faculty Handbook Committee considers proposals, modifications, and amendments to the Faculty Handbook brought to it from an official university governance body or administrative office. If approved by the committee, changes are formally recommended to the University President for a final decision.

1.8.5. Faculty Senate

As a key partner in institutional shared governance, Faculty Senate provides a collaborative forum where faculty advise the administration on policy, development, resources, and operations of the University, thus ensuring faculty representation and input to the administration. The executive committee of the Faculty Senate is the primary point of contact between the Senate and the administration.

1.8.6. Grade Review Council

The University Grade Review Council hears and adjudicates at its discretion the appeals of grades filed by petitioning students. The jurisdiction of the Council does not include allegations concerning the competence of a faculty member, the fairness of examinations, the difficulty of a course, or matters of a purely academic nature. Rather, its sole charge is to determine whether the assignment of a grade was arbitrary or capricious.

1.8.7. Ombudsmen

Two standing ombudsmen will be selected each academic year. At the beginning of the academic year, each dean of the degree-granting colleges will appoint five faculty members of professorial rank to serve on the ombudsman candidate pool. In making their selections, the deans will give due consideration to diversity. The two ombudsmen will be selected by the Provost, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, from the pool of candidates selected by the deans of the degree-granting colleges.

1.8.8. Promotion and Tenure Committee

The University Promotion and Tenure Committee is composed of two members from each of the college promotion and tenure committees plus one member from the University Libraries. The two members from each college promotion and tenure committee consist of the committee's chair, plus one additional member. Both will be elected by a majority vote of the members of their respective college promotion and tenure committees. The chair of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee is elected by a majority vote of the committee members.

The Provost may seek the assistance of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee in any personnel matter. However, the normal function of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee is to make recommendations for promotions in rank and tenure after review of the candidate's dossiers and decanal, college, director, and school recommendations.

Faculty members who are candidates for promotion cannot serve as members of this committee during the academic year in which they seek promotion. School directors, assistant and associate deans, deans, and assistant, associate, and vice provosts may not serve on the University Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Members of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee must recuse themselves from any personnel matter concerning a faculty member of the college they represent. In this and all other
matters, the committee is subject to the same policies that govern school and college promotion and tenure committees.

1.8.9. Research Council
The University Research Council serves as an advisory body to the Vice President for Research on matters pertaining to research and creative activities.

Have its language changed to: [new changes in green]

1.8 University Representative and Advisory Bodies
The University operates under the principle of participatory or shared governance, with many institutional decisions being made with the advice and input from advisory bodies to the President. The President has the discretion to approve, appoint, dissolve, and convene advisory bodies as necessary. Depending on their specific charge, the University’s advisory bodies may be composed of faculty, staff, students, and in some cases alumni and friends of the University.

The following representative and advisory bodies are the most important institutionalized forms of faculty input to shared governance.

[In an effort for shared and diversified governance, faculty members may only be elected to serve on one of the major governing bodies (Faculty Senate, Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, Research Council, or Faculty Handbook Committee) at a time unless no other faculty are available or willing to serve. Ex officio and appointed positions are not elected positions; therefore, a faculty member can serve on two major governing bodies if directed by each council’s bylaws.]

The bylaws or constitution of each committee can be found on the Committee on Committees’ webpage.

Rationale:
Vision 2020 recommended that no faculty member should serve on more than one elected position of any “University Governance Body”, but they failed to list what those UGBs are. In the spirit of shared governance, the V2020 committee proposed and had approved this concept of not having individual faculty holding many elected positions. Conversations led to a general understanding that UGBs were Faculty Senate; Undergrad, Graduate, and Faculty Handbook committees; and Research Council.

Faculty Senate – elections
UGrad Council – elections
Grad Council – elections
Faculty Handbook Committee – elections
Research council – elections
Not on this list, but included in 1.8 are:

Executive Academic Leadership Council (not elected, but appointed or ex-officio)

Professional Education Council – run by Dean of College of Education and Human Sciences – not elected? Or ex officio

Council of Directors – all members are ex officio

Grade Review Council – elected by the faculty

Ombudsman – Deans pick candidates and 2 ombudsmen are selected by provost with consultation from executive committee of faculty senate

Promotion and Tenure Committee (University) – elected from college P&T committees and one from the library.

The outlier here is GRC, which is elected by a general faculty election.

I recommend any committee listed in 1.8 be a hold one position only category unless the position is an ex officio or appointed position, or no other candidates are available. This recommendation is the only solution to true shared and diversified governance.

Pulled from the website. Point in green was not in the original language – actually it seeming to aim at SDs? We clearly have more than 4 major governing bodies. Point in yellow recommends no resignations – I don’t remember that in the original.

From Initiative #6 part II from V2020 – approved by provost and president:

Discuss how ARSC Recommendations were integrated into Initiative. The ARSC did not agree with our initial proposal’s recommendation that junior faculty not be allowed to serve on faculty bodies. In order to respond to this recommendation and ensure that service across faculty types was parallel, the proposal was revised to recommend that all faculty members, whether teaching faculty or tenure-track faculty, must have served in their positions for three years prior to serving on a governing body. In addition, the implementation team made the following revisions (highlighted in green) based on feedback from Faculty Senate, AAUP listening sessions. University Libraries, Gulf Coast Faculty Council, Council of Chairs, Institutional Research, and Elections Chairs: Committee Recommendation:

- Individual faculty members may only serve on one of the major governing bodies [faculty senate, undergraduate council, graduate council, or council of directors] at a time. By default, this means that currently-serving directors cannot serve on the other three representative/governing bodies. (The implementation team recommends that currently elected members and leadership-elect be allowed to serve in these positions through the next academic year to ensure seamless transition.)
Council of Director Opinions:

Of the directors that submitted a vote 4 supported it and 7 opposed.

Feedback of those who were "for"

I support the original intent of this change which was that no one should be serving on more than one of the main representative councils -- Graduate Council, Academic/Undergraduate Council, Faculty Senate -- at the same time. The other elected bodies -- Grade review, P&T, etc -- were considered to have a qualitatively different function and were not included under the original intent. Although, I wouldn't mind if they were. If the same few people are on all committees, it decision making becomes concentrated in the hands of a few. Service also needs to be viewed as something important that everyone does, not just the few that you can get to do it.

Feedback of the "against"

The language says you can and you can't serve on 2 major governing bodies, plus, as Ward points out, the rule would be hard to enforce for councils whose membership is secret.

Would it be so hard to simply state "Individual faculty members may only serve on one of the major governing bodies (faculty senate, undergraduate council, graduate council, or council of directors) at a time."

I do not support the overly restrictive limits on service given the extensive list of councils listed in section 1.8. I agree with the spirit of the Vision 2020 suggestion that there not be overlapping membership on 4 or 5 major councils (e.g., Fac Senate, AC, GC, Handbook Committee, RC). I'm not sure Directors need to be serving on any of these either given their supervisory role/power differential, as this has the potential to unduly influence or impact what are intended to be faculty led committees.

The prohibition seems rather cumbersome and vague.
**Motioner Compromise:**

Adding the specific governance bodies to the list. But FHC and RC need to be on that list as well. I am not sure why CoDs are specifically mentioned, but it is in the V2020 document, so I left it in, but can see it being removed.
The Faculty Senate proposes changes to Faculty Handbook Committee Concerning 4.5.2, Faculty Evaluation Meetings, on March 9, 2020.

First Vote Date: ___March 9, 2020_________

First Vote Results: _____Passes___________

Majority Opinion: ________________________

Minority Opinion: ________________________

Length of Review and Potential Second Vote Date: __1 Month, April 13________

University Counsel Opinion: __________________

Employee Handbook Opinion: __________________

Faculty Senate Opinion: ______________________

Council of Directors Opinion: __No Concerns________

Deans Opinion: ___________________________

Vice President of Research Opinion: ________

Provost Opinion: ___________________________

Second Vote Results ________passes_________

Majority Opinion: ________________________

Minority Opinion: ________________________

Presidential Approval or Rejection with date: ________________________________

The Faculty Senate moves that the following section:

4.5.2 Faculty Evaluation Meetings

The annual evaluation process offers an opportunity to review activities from the previous year, for faculty to discuss professional objectives and goals for the year ahead, and to request necessary resources with their directors.

Evaluation meetings should be scheduled annually between June 1st and August 31st. Two distinct meetings are generally necessary to complete the annual evaluation process for each faculty member: (1) review and discussion of the previous year’s activities and (2) establishment of professional objectives and workload allocation for the year ahead.

Have its language changed to: [Changes in Yellow]

4.5.2 Faculty Evaluation Meetings
The annual evaluation process offers an opportunity to review activities from the previous year, for faculty to discuss professional objectives and goals for the year ahead, and to request necessary resources with their directors.

Evaluation meetings should be scheduled annually between June 1st and August 31st, September 30th. Two distinct meetings are generally necessary to complete the annual evaluation process for each faculty member: (1) review and discussion of the previous year’s activities and (2) establishment of professional objectives and workload allocation for the year ahead.

Rationale:

The deadline is extended one month to allow faculty to perform annual evaluations during the contract period. The August 31st deadline serves no logistical purpose since all workloads have been assigned and classes have already begun by that date.