

GSW Faculty Senate Minutes
01/29/2021

1. The GSW faculty senate met on Friday, January 29, 2021 at 10:00 AM via Blackboard Collaborate. Dr. Sam Peavy, president of the Senate, called the meeting to order. The first agenda item was to approve minutes from the 11 January 2021 meeting. Dr. Michael Moir noted a clarification of the original record: “Dr. Moir noted that the English and Modern Language faculty universally favored maintaining a reading day.” This line should be changed to the majority of English and Modern Language faculty favored maintaining a reading day.” The amended minutes were approved.

2. Dr. Sam Peavy introduced a discussion of student masking and social interaction on campus that seemed to conflict with campus Covid-19 regulations. Dr. Gary Fisk noted that social media images represented unmasked students celebrating in close contact at a recent basketball game. Dr. Benjamin Meador and Dr. Suzanne Smith both responded to clarify that these images depicted athletes who had undergone Covid-19 testing. The general student population in attendance at the basketball game were required to wear masks.

3. The Faculty Senate discussed the recent circulation of a set of questions from Republican legislator Emory Dunahoo, seeking to gain information about educational content in USG courses. Dr. Debby Palmer noted that, based on her experience from other campuses, this was an unusual politically charged request. Dr.s Joseph Comeau and Michael Moir brought attention to an article in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (29 January 2021) that identifies the partisan context of this request and efforts by the AAUP to resist such political interventions. Dr. Susan Bragg questioned why administrators at various levels of the USG system sanctioned the circulation of this question set.

Dr. Susan Smith responded to these concerns by noting she is in the process of crafting an official response but promised that she would reject any effort to identify specific individuals or specific classroom educational content to aid a political agenda. She noted that provosts at other USG systems are responding similarly.

Dr. Liz Gurnack presented information regarding discussions of these questions in the USG Faculty Council. This body has not acted formally yet but the consensus is that the questions are inappropriate and problematic.

After brief discussion, it was agreed that GSW faculty senate should delay any potential response as we wait for USG administrators and the USG Faculty Council to represent faculty concerns about this request.

4. Dr. Gurnack noted that the USG Faculty Council is also seeking information about campus responses to Covid-19 during the Spring 2021 term. She directed a series of questions about GSW's policies to Dr. Smith. These questions include whether there has been an effort to expand face-to-face teaching and questions over accommodations for faculty members with health concerns. Dr. Smith noted that GSW has sought to expand face-to-face courses on our campus but has also granted accommodation based on specific health issues to faculty. A USG system concern about campus-based classes shifting informally to an online format has not been an issue at GSW.

5. Dr. Gary Fisk suggested members of the GSW community evaluate safe masking options. Some individuals are suggesting that with new variants of Covid-19, it may be necessary to double-mask or to ensure that individuals are wearing N-95 masks. Dr. Smith asked faculty to make requests for N-95 masks or any other PPE needs. There are a limited number of N-95 masks available for faculty on request but more can be ordered.

A discussion of faculty hygienic practices followed. Dr. Palmer shared a student report that another faculty member did not wear a mask during class lectures. Dr. Smith noted that GSW policy allows flexibility on masks if there is appropriate social distancing in certain contexts. Dr. Sam Peavy noted that the aerosol threats of spreading the disease are significant and thus he wears a mask even in larger rooms. To ensure that students hear his voice effectively, he uses a small microphone device. Dr. Smith suggested that faculty interested in microphones and other technology also contact her, promising support to ensure appropriate teaching resources at GSW.

6. Dr. Chadwick Gugg raised a concern about policy regarding a student death. In a recent case, the faculty advisor learned about this death through RAIN. There has been more formal campus response to this situation but the policy for clear and thoughtful communication about such issues is unclear to faculty members.

Dr. Debby Palmer noted that members of the administration did not provide clear responses regarding her concerns over a student health situation in Fall 2020. Dr. Carol Bishop also noted that in a different situation, faculty in the School of Business informally shared information about a student death, as they felt necessary. Dr. Gary Fisk also reported a previous experience where a student's death triggered campus gossip. Dr. Comeau endorsed developing a formal GSW policy to both inform appropriate individuals and to ensure respectful responses.

Dr. Michael Moir also suggested returning to review GSW communication policy regarding student quarantine requirements. Faculty receive official notices about quarantines late in the process and this limits efforts to provide academic adaptations appropriately. This is a concern of other GSW faculty as well.

7. Dr. Peavey asked if members had other items of business to introduce. With no responses, he concluded the senate meeting at approximately 10:45 am.

Attendance: Sam Peavy (President), Susan Bragg (recording secretary), Carol Bishop, Queen Brown, Joseph Comeau, Suzanne Connor, Gary Fisk, Chadwick Gugg, Kim Hasbach, Benjamin Meador, Michael Moir, Debbie Palmer, Becky Short, Chuck Wells, and John Wilson.

Dr. Suzanne Smith attended as ex-officio member of the GSW Faculty Senate. Dr. Elizabeth Gurnack attended as GSW's USG Council delegate.