

GSW Faculty Senate Minutes  
01/11/2021

1. The GSW faculty senate met on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 10:00 AM via Blackboard Collaborate. Dr. Sam Peavy, president of the Senate, called the meeting to order. The meeting reviewed GSW's planning and preparation for the Spring 2021 term, particularly concerning COVID-19 concerns. Members of the Staff Senate also attended to share experiences or concerns.

2. Dr. Gary Fisk raised several issues relating to GSW's COVID-19 responses. The meeting reviewed GSW's planning and preparation for the Spring 2021 term, particularly concerning COVID-19 concerns.

Dr. Fisk noted that Dr. Laura Boren has recently updated the campus community on developing plans for vaccination access. Currently, Georgia's Department of Health includes educators in Phase 1B of vaccination scheduling. It is hoped that GSW can provide mass vaccinations on campus but these plans are developing.

Dr. Fisk also noted concerns about increased campus risk during the Spring term. Other faculty members reinforced the importance of speaking to students about practicing safety in the classroom through masks and hygiene. Dr. Debby Palmer noted that it is difficult for faculty to clean classroom spaces during the term. Mr. Bob Slender of the Staff Senate noted that IT staff members have been working on social distancing but have limited janitorial services. Dr. Sam Peavy and Staff Senate member Angie Christmas both noted a need to request expanded cleaning services.

Staff Senate member Christie Barry raised the issue of plans to move some staff from Student Accounts to the updated ACE building in February or March. There are concerns about the open space as incompatible with social distancing requirements. There is also concern about managing a move during the Spring term. Dr. Sam Peavy noted that the Faculty Senate can send a request to delay this transition briefly to support GSW's commitment to COVID-19 healthcare standards. Staff Senate member Angie Christmas also stated her intention to communicate with the Physical Plant about this concern.

Dr. Fisk's final point about campus responses to COVID-19 was to ask about campus responses to expectations of student travel during the spring break. It may be too late to delete the break from the calendar and many faculty are in favor of maintaining the break. But Dr. Fisk and others spoke to the need to reinforce messages about healthy behavior with students. It is important to remind them to limit unnecessary travel and large groups.

Questions were raised about formal "Back on Track" plans for Spring '21. The GSW website defines some campus goals and policies regarding COVID-19 health protections. Dr. Fisk suggested more specific updates to this plan are necessary to ensure confidence that we are maintaining focus on hygiene. Staff Senate member Christie Barry noted that members of the Communications team at GSW have reached out to communicate with departments about specific policies.

3. The Faculty Senate also discussed responses to cutting the traditional “reading day” between the end of regular classes and the start of the final exam period in a semester. Dr. Suzanne Smith requested feedback on this schedule issue in Fall '20. Dr. Moir noted that the English and Modern Language faculty universally favored maintaining a reading day. Dr. Fisk responded that the Psychology and Sociology division was not committed to a reading day.
4. Dr. Susan Bragg raised concerns about the closure of the GSW Library during the Winter session. This closure suggests that the campus does not identify the library as a critical resource to student success. Despite budgetary concerns, Dr. Bragg argued that some online or in-person access is important during any academic term. Dr. Moir also noted that faculty research is significantly impacted by this closure.
5. Dr. Sam Peavy reiterated a plan to draft a statement to Dr. Weaver about maintaining and supporting COVID-19 safety measures. The Faculty Senate meeting came to a close at approximately 10:50 am.

Attendance: Sam Peavy (President), Susan Bragg (recording secretary), Carol Bishop, Queen Brown, Joseph Comeau, Gary Fisk, Kim Hasbach, Benjamin Meador, Michael Moir, Debbie Palmer, Becky Short, Charles Wells, and John Wilson. Members of the Staff Senate in attendance included: Donna Tissue, Michael Lewis, Bob Slenker, Darcy Bragg, Gena Wilson, Yolanda West, Polly Conger, Christie Barry, and Angie Christmas.