

**Notes from Executive Committee Meeting with President Newsom and VPAA Golden
Monday, February 22, 2021, 2:00 p.m. CT, via Zoom**

Attending: Stan Alluisi, Dan Althoff, Randy Clark, Kay Daigle, William Fridley, Teresa Golden, Thomas Newsom, Kate Shannon

FS President Clark thanked VPAA Golden for her emails encouraging faculty to reach out to students during the weather event to check on them and let them know that we will be supportive of them and are invested in their success. VPAA Golden shared that campus was effectively closed for 7 days total.

Discussion Items:

1. Shared Governance Forum – The Forum was cancelled last week due to the weather event. The next Shared Governance Forum is scheduled for April 5th, 2021. President Clark suggested that the cancelled forum be moved to the April date. FS Chair Clark stated that the Executive Committee is still very interested in discussing the review of instruction tool – Anthology. VPAA Golden stated that she would like to know what people think and be able to address questions. President Newsom thinks he is in favor. All attendees nod in agreement.
2. Senator Shannon asked if Academic Affairs would consider extending the timeline for submitting grades for the Term 1 – seven-week courses. VPAA Golden shared that Chair McCraw had already requested that Academic Affairs provide flexibility or an extension for grade submissions. VPAA Golden is working to find the timeline dates for a reasonable extension.

President Newsom addressed chatter that has been going around that the weather event might replace Spring Break. He assured the group that it WILL NOT replace Spring Break.

3. FS President Clark Randy introduced a recommendation that had recently come out of the FS Budget Committee chaired by Senator Alluisi and offered for comment and review by the Faculty Senate before being delivered to President Newsom. FS President Clark read the recommendation (inserted below) aloud. Dr. Clark provided some rationale for bringing the recommendation given our progress through the current school year.

Southeastern Oklahoma State University has developed a well-earned reputation as Oklahoma's premiere regional university in the way it supports and pays its faculty and staff.

This declaration has been promoted by the President as a worthy goal for our University. We agree.

In pursuit of this “worthy goal,” and in the spirit of a collaborative and intentional partnership to build a realistic budget, the Faculty Senate requests that the following expectations be established as axiomatic for all future budgets:

- 1. That the University “pay itself first.” By this, we mean that it should be an assumption of every annual budget that faculty & staff salaries, including step increases and any future cost of living adjustments, be treated like mandatory costs – something to be paid first, not paid out of any funds left over at the end of the process.*
- 2. That the goal of improving faculty & staff salaries to match a regional metric, to be agreed upon by the administration and the Faculty Senate, be established and published.*
- 3. That during every budget year, if these salary metrics cannot be met, the administration explain why they could not be met.*
- 4. That faculty be actively included in the annual budgetary process.*
- 5. That the administration makes all relevant budgetary documents easily available to the faculty & staff at large.*

As a first step, and as a show of good faith in this collaborative and intentional partnership, we also request that the administration build into the next budget, at a minimum, the three years of skipped step increases totaling \$1,638 (as proposed by the Senate in December).

We look forward to working with the administration on future budgets for the benefit of our university and our students.

FS President Clark offered this recommendation offers clarification for SE leadership regarding the mindset or frame of mind of the Faculty Senate and asked for thoughts, comments, concerns:

President Newsom thanked FS President Clark for the recommendation stating it is intentional and specific. He stated that he would like to think of the points of the recommendation as five tenets to guide the university. President Newsom agreed with the points and would like to see them addressed in the budgeting process for the future. He stated that “he is on the same page as the faculty senate,” but also offered that with regard to next steps, nothing has changed. He shared that VPBA Westman will provide information at the first of March regarding the budget process for 2021-2022. The President feels he will be able to accommodate the Faculty Senate’s requests for a transparent process with regard to the budget process which will be presented by VPBA Westman in the next weeks.

Senator Fridley stated that he is glad to hear that President Newsom is in agreement and asked: What would be involved to make this happen for our upcoming budget? Can we plan to provide more than the suggested \$1600+?

President Newsom responded that yes, that is how we will approach it. And offered that we need to see what the numbers are as there are other considerations. He agrees that this is a priority, but states we have to know more about the actual numbers. He is concerned that if we put this into place first and then if other items come up, he may not be able to stay true to the commitment to salary.

Senator Fridley asked if we could set the increase a bit higher than \$1,638?

President Newsom shared that “more” to him is not just the step increase, it might be off-setting healthcare cost increases or other costs related to compensation. It might be “more” across the full employment package. Staff compensation packages should be considered as well. We don’t want to add the step increases and then have the money absorbed somewhere else for the faculty member.

Senator Fridley offered a historical perspective on the budget process stating that a [Shared Governance Forum \(4.11.2017\)](#) led by Dennis Westman included a budget timeline discussion. That timeline indicated that from December – March fees and the fee structure are considered. After that forum Senators Althoff and Fridley spoke to him about standardizing fees. Later the decision was made to standardize the fee structure (either 2018 or 2019).

VPAA Golden was asked if this change to the fees generates more money. Dr. Golden shared that fees are addressed across the year/at different times of the year, which is problematic. She shared that graduate enrollment has been good, thus fee revenue has been good. She shared that she anticipates that we will have some fee money to put back into the system from Academic Affairs.

Senator Fridley returned to the budget timeline information from 2017, asking if department/units still send their budgetary priorities in February and early March. He also inquired about the March budget scenarios that are noted to be due if the state regents request them.

President Newsom offered that the budget scenarios provide big picture numbers including overall revenue and expenses. This is also a time to request potential fee adjustments through the state regents. He also discussed the impact of standardizing fees last year. The latest adjustment spread the fees across all student groups and kept the fee revenue flat. As fees increase, we should see a greater revenue generated due to the increase in number of students (all) paying fees. In the past fees were not paid by all students. President Newsom noted that adjustment to non-academic fees will not need to be addressed until we have the budget process information from VPAA Westman. After we have this budget information we can determine if we need to increase fees or tuition. We have had a recent request to the regents to potentially raise academic service fees by \$2. This grants permission, to allow us to consider this option.

President Newsom added, the timeline given from 2017, is what Westman is working on and will release in March – at that time a timeline revamp will be provided.

FS Chair Clark reiterated the Faculty Senate’s position saying, it was important to put these recommendations before you. We have made ourselves clear about our thinking on the budgetary process. We as a Faculty Senate are asking the university to live up to the policies in place. The response from administration will give us a chance to know your soul (Newsom). Our next Executive Committee meeting with President Newsom and VPAA Golden will be in April. We want to give you the time you have asked for to go through the budget cycle. We will wait and see your response and to know your soul after we move through the process.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMENCEMENT PLANS: President Newsom shared that an announcement will come out this week regarding a Spring Commencement. The plan is to have 3 ceremonies outside in the football stadium. There are several 2020 graduates who have expressed an interest in participating. He anticipates having one morning ceremony and two evening ceremonies. If weather is an issue the event will be cancelled. He added that a Summer Commencement is also planned. VPAA Golden added that faculty will not be obligated to attend if safety is a concern. It has not been determined who will attend each the three ceremonies.