Minutes of the April 13, 2018 FCSM College Council Meeting.

The FCSM College Council met in Smith Hall, Room 306 at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Michael McGuire, Chairperson, presiding.

Member Attendees: FCSM: Vonnie Shields, David Vanko; At large: Shuhua Ma; Biological Sciences: Jacqueline Doyle, Elizabeth O’Hare; Chemistry: Ana Maria Soto, Shannon Stitzel; Computer and Information Sciences: Michael McGuire; Physics, Astronomy, & Geosciences: Wendy Nelson, Jennifer Scott; Mathematics: Sergiy Borodachov, Yunwei Cui; Student Representatives: Claire Glenn (Undergraduate Student, Computer and Information Sciences).

Special Guests: Gary Levy (Associate Provost for Academic Resources and Planning), Tim Bibo (Director, Office of Institutional Research).

Absentees: Notified in Advance: Dawn Myers (Graduate Student, Mathematics), Josh Dehlinger (Computer and Information Sciences)

Chairperson Michael McGuire called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes
   The minutes of the March 9, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously.

2. Discussion of Student Evaluation’s Instrument (Special Guests: Tim Bibo and Gary Levy)
   In previous meetings, faculty expressed concerns about the student’s course evaluations for classes with multiple instructors (e.g. lecture-lab courses). The main concerns were related to the accuracy (students mix up instructors in their evaluations) and confidentiality (faculty have access to the evaluation results of another faculty) of the survey. Tim Bibo and Gary Levy visited the council to explain some details about the student evaluation procedures and to get feedback about the problem.

   Tim Bibo explained that course evaluations include “course” questions and “instructor” questions. The course questions include multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions where the students can write comments. The instructor questions only include multiple-choice questions. When a course has two instructors, students taking the survey see the course questions one time but they see the instructor questions two times (one set of instructor questions per instructor). When results are available, each instructor receives their “instructor” results but both instructors get a copy of the “course” results, including all comments.

   Faculty members are concerned about this setup because students include comments about the lecture instructor in the open-ended questions. Faculty believe that it is not appropriate for these comments to be available to both instructors.

   The remaining discussion included proposed solutions and their potential disadvantages. It was proposed to separate lecture-lab courses into two courses but it was argued that student evaluations should not drive pedagogical changes. It was proposed to create zero-credit lab courses associated with four-credit lecture courses but it was argued that this may be confusing for students and that students may not like taking a course for zero-credits. Student confusion could be avoided by splitting the class into zero-credit labs and four-credit lectures after the students have enrolled but it was not clear whether this was possible in PeopleSoft. It was proposed to have evaluations only for the lecture portion and do something less formal for lab (such as paper evaluations) but it was argued that student evaluations are very important for tenure and promotion and less formal evaluations may not be acceptable by PTRM and Merit committees. It was proposed that it should be computationally easy to separate the evaluations for each instructor (students will see two separate links, one for each
instructor and they will answer course and instructor questions for the lecture as well as course and instructor questions for the lab. Many faculty favored this solution but it was pointed out that this will increase the number of questions students have to answer, which could decrease the number of student responses.

Gary and Tim also clarified that any changes need to consider how other courses would be affected as all courses at Towson University use the same evaluation instrument. Each department is allowed up to five optional department-specific questions but the rest of the survey is the same for the whole university. They also clarified that any content changes to the questions has to be approved by the University PTRM committee. Gary and Tim plan to look more into some of the suggested solutions.

2. Announcements from the Dean.
   2.1. FCSM Honors Convocation, April 22nd, 1:00 pm, Chesapeake Rooms/Union. In this event, the college recognizes students who have earned scholarship and awards.
   2.2. FCSM Dean’s Office will welcome a new Executive Administrative Assistant I on Wednesday, April 25th. Grace Nicholl, our previous EAA, left on March 3rd. Thanks to Amber Lee for voluntarily helping to fill in during the interim. Amber has done great work with the honors convocation that will take place on April 22, 2018.
   2.3. The Request for Proposals for FCSM General Endowment funding was released. Proposals will be due on June 1, 2018.
   2.4. Requests for applications for the Fisher Endowed Chair in the Biological and Physical Sciences, and the Fisher Endowed Chair in the Mathematical and Computing Sciences, were released. Applications will be due on June 1, 2018.
   2.5. From the FCSM Success Log:
      • Dr. Francis McCubbin (Geology ’04), astromaterials curator in the NASA Johnson Space Center’s Astromaterials Research and Exploration Science Division, received the Nier Prize, awarded to a young scientist in the field of meteoritics by the Meteoritical Society. The award was in recognition of McCubbin’s contributions to our understanding of volatile elements on the moon.
      • Applied mathematics graduate student Karel Marshall was awarded the 2018 Delta Decisions IQA Fellowship by the Northern Virginia Delta Education and Community Service Foundation. The fellowship includes a $2000 scholarship.
      • Mathematics major Yitzi Turniansky took first place in the student essay competition run by the MD-DC-VA section of the Mathematical Association of America.
      • Applied mathematics graduate student Tylynn Pettrey was accepted to a fully paid, highly competitive training program: the National Institutes of Health “BRAIN Initiative” Summer Course. The topic will be interdisciplinary computational neuroscience and it is entitled “Models and Neurobiology.” It will be held at the University of Missouri-Columbia from June 4 through June 15, 2018. Tylynn is studying in the Differential Equations/Optimization concentration, and has been working with Dr. Svetlana Gladyscheva (PAGs) on problems in computational neuroscience.

3. Remarks from the Dean.
   3.1. Remember – FCSM’s Top Three Focus areas:
         Student Success and Assessment
         See FCSM Success Log items above.
Research and Scholarship
The updated numbers on grant submissions and awards are listed below. More than half of our faculty are generally involved in grant writing in any given year.

YTD Grant Submissions: $11.7M / 67 faculty. (Same date last year: $21.0M / 65 faculty)
YTD Grants announced: $7.9M / 36 faculty. (Same date last year: $3.3M / 23 faculty)

Diversity and Inclusion
Mathematics concluded an assistant professor search and will be welcoming a new African-American faculty member this August.

3.2. New Science building update:
The ceremonial groundbreaking will be on Tuesday, April 17th at 10:30 am, with invited guests including State and local government officials, local politicians, donors, and USM leaders. A tent and boxes with ground for the shoveling ceremony will be installed at the top of the Glen Garage, which is a nice viewing area of the whole construction.

4. Remarks from the Council Chairperson.
4.1. The new council members will attend the next College Council meeting.
4.2. Laura Gough, Chairperson of the Department of Biology, will be a guest at the May College Council meeting. Laura will be presenting the results from the Pilot Workload System tested by the Biology Department.
4.3. The University Senate is currently discussing a motion to have a task force to implement trigger warnings for sensitive topics in classes. The Senate is also discussing a motion to have university wide health & wellness access, including free membership to the Burdick Facility.

5. Updates from FCSM Departments
Members from each FCSM department updated the Council on departmental news and activities.
5.1. Biology: The department has completed two searches for Clinical Assistant Professors (CAPs) and they are ready to make recommendations. The department is also working on developing different workload tracks for faculty, which will include research intensive, balanced and service oriented tracks.
5.2. Chemistry: The department has completed the search for a Physical Chemistry faculty. The department made a recommendation and is close to making an offer.
5.3. Computer & Information Sciences: The department has completed the search for a Data Science faculty. The candidate they plan to hire is from Case Western University and his research on big data security complements several needs in the department. The searches for Clinical Assistant Professors are going well; for one search they have narrowed down the applicants to two candidates. The department is also working on their 7-year plan for all programs. They plan to complete a draft by the end of May and discuss it during their summer retreat. The induction ceremony for Upsilon Pi Epsilon Honor Society in Computer Sciences was today.
5.4. Mathematics: The 2018 Undergraduate Mathematics Research Conference was a success; there were many participants and invited speakers. The department also held a successful Seminar on Numbers, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the Number Theory Foundation, and the Math department at Towson. The department finished their search for a faculty position, with a hire who is likely to enhance the computational mathematics area in the department.
5.5. Physics, Astronomy & Geosciences: The department hired two faculty for sabbatical replacements. They also awarded two undergraduate student fellowships and are planning to have the induction ceremony for their Sigma Pi Sigma Honors Society in May. The department is hosting an event in May featuring science fiction writer Dr. Catherine Asaro, who will present a talk entitled “Science Fiction Media: The Good, the Bad, and the Amusing!” Dr. Asaro holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Physics and her husband and father are also renowned scientists.
6. **Old business.**
   Shannon Stitzel, College Council Corresponding Secretary, contacted the Senate President to inquire about the role of the steering committee. The Senate president was thankful for the feedback and indicated that the steering committee has been removed from the document. From the email response, it was not clear if the idea for a steering committee was abandoned or if it was only removed from the document. Some faculty pointed out that usually when a university has a Faculty Senate, it carries the largest weight and that the other committees will likely have avenues to come to the Faculty Senate meeting when necessary.

7. **Additional Business.**
   7.1. We hope to have a list of potential nominees for the Regents’ Awards in May. Mike requested that council members should ask faculty in their corresponding departments if they are interested in being nominated. Some potential candidates include the recipients of FCSM Outstanding Faculty Awards, and the faculty who submitted application last year but were not ultimately nominated since these faculty members have applications ready to submit. Last year, our nominees were awarded 4 out of the 5 awards earned by Towson University Faculty and represented 4 out of the 16 total awards given by University System of Maryland.
   7.2. We need to elect new officers. The positions available include Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair. These members meet on the first week of the month for the Executive Committee Meeting. Elected officer also get a chance to participate in the Commencement as VIP Marshalls and as guests to a lunch following the Commencement.

8. **Adjournment.**
   The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ana Maria Soto
Recording Secretary