Minutes of the November 12, 2021 FCSM College Council Meeting

The FCSM College Council met in the Science Complex, Room 4230 at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Pamela Lottero-Perdue, Chairperson, presiding. An option to Zoom into the meeting was made available; one participant attended via Zoom.

Member Attendees: FCSM: David Vanko, Vonnie Shields; Biological Sciences: Angela Cox, Anne Estes; Chemistry: Stephen Hancock, Henderika van Huizen; Computer and Information Sciences: Joyram Chakraborty, Yeong-Tae Song; Mathematics: Min Ji, Melike Kara; Physics, Astronomy, & Geosciences: Michelle Casey, Raj Kolagani; At Large: Faith Weeks (Biology), Pamela Lottero-Perdue(PAGS); Students: Kyle Hurley (Graduate), AlexandraReifer (Undergraduate)

Chairperson Pamela Lottero-Perdue called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Minutes from the October 8, 2021 FCSM Council meeting were approved unanimously

2. Announcements and remarks from Dean Vanko
  
  2.1. FCSM Fall Forum is Friday, December 3, 2021, at 2:00 pm.
  
  2.2. “Diverse Issues in Higher Education” released national rankings of programs that graduate minority students. For the 2018-2019 academic year, FCSM programs achieved the following NATIONAL ranking for graduating African American students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>National rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  2.3. “Best Accredited Colleges” ranked the FCSM’s Master’s Degree in Forensic Science as #9 NATIONALLY.
  
  2.4. Continuing projects: FCSM Strategic Action Plan; Deans’ R2 Strategic Action Plan
  
  Key proposed R2 actions:
  
  2.4.1. PhD in Sustainability and Environmental Change.
  
  2.4.2. Change DSc in IT to PhD in IT: Timeline is unclear but expected within the next year.
  
  2.4.3. Increase graduate RA/TA support, marketing, and library programs.
  
  2.4.4. Seven new lab tech/IT support positions for FCSM.
  
  2.4.5. “61 new faculty lines (10 in FCSM) *this is subject to change and should reduce the university wide course rate by 1.
  
  2.4.6. Create $35,000 doctoral fellowships for PhD programs -- plus full tuition and benefits.
  
  2.4.7. Adjust teaching load expectations for R2.
  
  2.4.8. Increase SET funding.
  
  2.4.9. Formalize postdoc hiring mechanism including a Pilot DEI focused transitional postdoc position to be advertised in FY 2022.
  
  2.4.10. Transition from ten-month to nine-month contracts is imminent.
2.4.11. Dean Vanko and the council discussed different models to distribute workload and reiterated that the goal for the R2 transition is to increase the magnitude and scope of research and to maintain a dedication to teaching excellence.

2.4.12. The Dean and the council discussed the need for transparent evaluation regarding P/T for faculty with diverse workloads.

3. **Announcements and remarks for Associate Dean Shields**
   3.1.1. An FCSM open house will be held on Saturday November 13th.

4. **Announcements from the Council Chairperson**
   4.1.1. Dean Vanko noted that withdraw rate this semester is the same as previous semesters.
   4.1.2. The council discussed effective ways to further support student achievement through increased staffing in the student success center, increased use of Learning Assistants, and workshops for academic coaching.
   4.1.3. The council noted that DFW rates for MATH 273 have decreased relative to F2019, which may correlate with math boot camp initiatives.
   4.2. Impacts of COVID on faculty mental health and services that are available or needed. The council discussed a desire for increased support for academic advising.

5. **Announcements and updates from FCSM Departments**
   5.1. Biological Sciences
   5.1.1. Ecology positions: department will bring 5-6 candidates to campus for interviews beginning in November. Integrative Biology positions: phone interviews later this fall and on campus interviews in February.
   5.1.2. CAP position: anticipate interviews in March.
   5.1.3. Curriculum Revisions: Proposal being reviewed by Registrar’s office and will be discussed and voted on.
   5.1.4. Visit from Adam Melfa, Case Manager from Student Affairs to discuss CARE referrals.
   5.1.4.1. They are short staffed—Adam is currently the only case manager for the campus.
   5.1.4.2. They are the first point of contact for students who are having any kind of difficulty, such as financial, academic, personal, family, and mental health. They determine how they can help and often then refer to the student to the appropriate resource.
   5.1.4.3. If Faculty sends in a CARE Report and needs to consult with someone regarding the student, they will call you back. There is a new box to check on the CARE form indicating you would like a call back.
5.1.4.4. They are here to support and are looking at some changes to the process in the near future.

5.1.4.5. CARE Report vs. CARE Team—CARE Report could be anything; the CARE Team meets weekly to discuss and manage the most serious cases.

5.1.4.6. Instructors may be contacted by Student Affairs regarding a student who was absent for medical reasons, but this does not mean the student is excused from any missing work. These situations should be handled by the instructor as they would handle a student who provides documentation directly to them.

5.1.4.7. Their office processes medical withdrawals. If a student receives a medical withdrawal, they are asked to inform the instructor (but this doesn’t always happen).

5.1.4.8. Question: If a student reports a sexual assault to a faculty member, and the faculty member fills out a CARE form, is that fulfilling the reporting requirement? Answer: If the student is explicit about this, best to notify OIIE (on-line Title IX reporting form is here: https://www.towson.edu/inclusionequity/titleix/) Can also submit a CARE form, but OIIE staff will reach out to determine resources needed similarly to the case manager.

5.2. Chemistry

5.2.1. The Department of Chemistry is preparing for new chair elections in Spring 2022 to elect a new Department chair that will assume responsibility in Spring 2023. Preparations include finalizing our chair election process and procedures to clarify procedures for ballot submission and reconciling vote distribution.

5.2.2. The Department of Chemistry continues to search for a temporary organic lecturer to cover the teaching load we are missing with Clare Muhoro’s appointment in the Provost’s Office. We are still accepting applications for this position. Please reach out if you would like to share the announcement with your personal networks. This search is being handled in an expedited manner due to timing and the temporary status of the position.

5.2.3. The Department of Chemistry is still accepting applications for the TT position in organic chemistry. Application review will begin December 31, 2021 and continue until the position is filled.

5.2.4. The Department of Chemistry is planning a retreat for January 2021 to discuss such topics as major recruitment and retention, diversity equity and inclusion, and impacts of the R2 transition among other topics.

5.2.5. Sarah Stokes announced that she has accepted a new position at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. Sarah has served the Department of Chemistry and FCSM in various roles since 2010, most recently as an assistant professor. Congratulations, Sarah, and best wishes on the new job!
5.3. Computer and Information Sciences
   5.3.1. We have started the searches for four tenure track faculty positions.
   5.3.2. One lab manager position (Sam Houston’s ex-position) is now available for us to fill.
   5.3.3. The new major in Computer and Mathematical sciences (in collaboration with Mathematics and the UTeach program) has been approved by MHEC. Waiting for MSDE approval. It will start in Fall 2022.
   5.3.4. Grant submission activity remains high.

5.4. Mathematics
   5.4.1. The new share point for the department was announced.
   5.4.2. The department chair shared the announcement that faculty who intends to teach online/hybrid courses in Spring 2022 or later must complete training through FACET (both synchronous and asynchronous).
   5.4.3. We discussed the Strategic Plan items.
   5.4.4. One important information shared: For most of the courses (university-wide), the DFW numbers have increased. We were informed that the numbers of calculus courses (MATH 273) are lower compared to the numbers two years ago. We have this information because we collect data to measure the effectiveness of Boot camp (which included summer camp and companion courses). We think this must be related to the MATH Bootcamp.

5.5. Physics, Astronomy, and Geosciences
   5.5.1. PAGS is currently in the process of preparing for the department chair transition as the term of the current chair ends in Spring 2023. Plans are underway to elect the new chair in spring 2022 to allow for a smooth transition next year. A revision of the election process and policies including redefining the electorate eligibility, is underway.
   5.5.2. There has been significant concern among faculty about poor student academic performance including attendance and learning. Mental health challenges and other adverse situations impacted by the pandemic seemed to be playing a role in this. There are plans to work with FACET representatives in identifying broader measures to alleviate some of the issues.
   5.5.3. PAGS Diversity Committee conducted a survey of all faculty to gauge attitudes, and stances relating to DEI issues. A department-wide meeting is planned on December 14 to discuss DEI issues.

6. Old Business:
   6.1. Town Hall with the Provost (November 5) – see discussion RE: student success above.
   6.2. Progress on FCSM Strategic Action Plan – see Dean Vanko’s comments above.
7. **New Business**

7.1. The council discussed questions and concerns to pose to safety authorities regarding active shooter training and shelter in place procedures.

7.1.1. Active shooter – questions and concerns

7.1.1.1. TU has produced a video with instructions for active shooter protocols. ADD (Avoid, Deny, Defend). The council discussed that faculty should watch and consider a plan frequently and questions whether students/faculty are required to watch the video?

7.1.1.2. What specific precaution need to be taken when occupying rooms with many windows (e.g., 4320)?

7.1.1.3. What is the feasibility of more frequent or Real-time updates that may even include a Surveillance camera feed?

7.1.1.4. What is the scope of the evaluation and prevention planning done by TUPD – how does this account for the access road, proximity to the glen, etc.?

7.1.1.5. What are the recommended classroom items that can be used to protect / defend?

7.1.1.6. Is there a need for yellow stickers above doors that indicating that they can be locked from the inside: If so, what is the timeframe for their deployment, and should they be referenced in the video?

7.1.1.7. Should the emergency alert phone system be changed from a 2-year to a 4-year expiration cycle?

7.1.1.8. What to do in the Commons area if there is an issue? Faculty should have a plan to lead students to a safe location.

7.1.1.9. Should we have active shooter avoidance drills among faculty to and who would generate the plan?

7.1.1.10. Faculty should consider regular discussions with students at the beginning of the semester in the classroom. The council discussed that a room specific action plan could be put in the syllabus for specific rooms and raised the concern that this discussion could be a trigger for some students.

7.1.1.11. Instructors can be trained how to talk to students about what to do to prepare or could bring in an expert to discuss the issue in an informative and accurate way that is not triggering.

7.1.1.12. The council discussed a need for real-time information and the utility of a phone app that would allow more direct communication to college/university/community authorities. For faculty and staff but not students (different opinions about this)? Here is what is happening and here is what to do. Video sharing.
7.1.1.13. Active shooter preparedness language in our syllabus should be standardized and approved by university and community safety authorities.

7.1.1.14. Are there security concerns with emergency alert systems that could be by bad actors to cause harm? How secure are these systems (CIS perspective)?

7.1.1.15. The council discussed the need to have experts contribute to active shooter plans. This is a best practice and supports for faculty and students.

7.1.1.16. The Executive committee will work on formalizing these topics for presentation community safety offices (TUPD, BCPD).

7.1.1.17. TUPD Police Chief Charles Herring will address the council at the December meeting.

7.1.2. Tornado/weather emergency

7.1.2.1. What are the building-specific ratings for sheltering in place and what are the appropriate rooms that can be used? The council discussed the importance of communicating these to the community.

7.1.2.2. What is the impact of all of the windows on disaster procedures?

7.1.2.3. The council discussed the need to communicate different procedures for different events (active shooter vs. Tornado/weather event), clarify the terms of shelter in place, and identify which part of campus is impacted. The emergency alert communications should be able to do this if instructions are clear.

7.1.2.4. The council identified the need to distinguish “shelter in place” vs. seek appropriate shelter.”

7.2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities: Brainstorming prior to December discussion

7.2.1. The council discussed speaking to colleagues and getting ideas about what professional learning opportunities would be useful to them regarding DEI issues.

7.2.2. Issues brought forth by the council include Inclusive Blackboard course design, lateness policies, syllabus format and content, faculty hiring and retention, and research mentorship.

7.2.3. Council chairperson Lottero-Perdue noted that there is a broad range of perceptions regarding how faculty perceive the relevance of DEI issues highlighting the need for a range of workshops to accommodate diverse interests.

7.2.4. FCSM diversity action committee is investigating the possibility of providing voluntary brown bag/workshops.
7.3. The council discussed the need for an interim Vice Chairperson of the FCSM College Council for January through May while Melike is on parental leave. The council was asked to consider serving in this role in preparation for a December vote.

8. A motion to adjourn was seconded. All were in favor of adjournment and the meeting concluded at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen P. Hancock
Recording Secretary