Minutes of the September 10, 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), Alexandra Reifer (Undergraduate)

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

1. Member introductions and comments
   1.1. New members: Yeong-Tae Song from CIS and Kyle Hurley – graduate student in ENVS.
   1.2. A member of the council pointed out that FACET will print your research poster for free.
2. Minutes of the May 14, 2021, FCSM Council meeting were approved: in favor (9), opposed (0), abstain (6)
3. Announcements and remarks from the Dean and Associate Dean
   3.1. FCSM initiatives for 2021-2022
      3.1.1. Improve student success for ALL students (transfer students, first-time first-generation, Pell eligible or not, etc.).
      3.1.2. Implement processes and programs to advance the common shared imperatives of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Examples are Inclusive Excellence in biology, Hill-Lopes, STEM RLC, Women in Computing, and many others.
         3.1.2.1. Find a way to integrate what we are doing and ensure that there is synergy, but not unnecessary duplication, between these programs.
      3.1.3. Enhance the research portfolio.
         3.1.3.1. Increase NSF, NIH, NSA, and other major support.
         3.1.3.2. Cyber4All: TU Center for Innovative and Interdisciplinary Cybersecurity
         3.1.3.3. Endowed E-Nnovation Chair in Cybersecurity.
            3.1.3.3.1. The first occupant of the endowed chair will be Sidd Kaza. It is funded with a$1M endowment, which combines $500k from TU (philanthropy) with $500K from the MD Department of Commerce!
      3.1.3.4. Maintain importance of undergraduate research; as we transition to an R2 we want to ensure that we maintain opportunities for UGR support!
      3.1.3.5. Increase graduate research.
3.2. Up to 85 FCSM majors will be disenrolled on Monday, September 13, due to non-compliance with TU’s and USM’s vaccine mandate. To avoid being disenrolled, they would have had to (a) be vaccinated, (b) obtain an approved religious or medical waiver, or (c) be taking steps to get vaccinated, by noon today (September 10).

3.2.1. Following contact from Dean Vanko approximately 15 students responded and 12 were cleared.

3.2.2. A member of the council asked if faculty will be alerted to disenrollment. Dean Vanko is not sure. Students may just disappear from Blackboard class roster.

3.2.3. A member of the council asked what religious exceptions are afforded to students. Dean Vanko mentioned that if a student requests a religious exemption but has prior vaccinations, the exemption will likely be denied.

3.2.4. A member of the council asked if we would know if students are vaccinated. Dean Vanko answered no, faculty will only know if the students are cleared to be on campus. Exempt individuals must test two times per week to maintain clearance.

3.2.5. Testing positivity rate this past week was 0.4% - we have a mission and are doing good work which is much appreciated.

3.2.6. A member of the council asked if the testing center communicates with faculty regarding student’s status. They do not.

3.3. Enrollment: There are 4,228 FCSM majors, compared to 4,416 last year, a 4% drop. The largest deficit is in the sophomore class. Overall, TU has about 1,000 fewer students owing to the pandemic – 1,000 lives missing an opportunity to be transformed.

3.3.1. Encouraging students to enroll is more about student opportunity not revenue.

3.3.2. A member of the council discussed if this deficit typical among USM/peer institutions? Dean Vanko answered that this is on par with peer institutions; we are in better shape than smaller institutions.

3.3.3. A member of the council asked if we have data on why students didn’t return. Dean Vanko answered that many students apparently were dissatisfied with their freshmen experience.

3.4. Faculty and staff hiring should soon resume at a moderate pace, as there are many open positions and many needs. There are many open positions that won’t all be filled immediately until the deans have prioritized hiring.

4. Announcements from Associate Dean Shields

4.1. Undergraduate Research Grant awards

4.1.1. Awards upped from $500 to $700.

4.1.2. The need to have a written signature on the application has been removed.
4.2. Undergraduate open house – chairs should have this information.
   4.2.1. Dates were sent to chairs (9/25, 10/22, 11/5, 11/13) – each with 9, 10, and 11 a.m. times.
   4.2.2. Students can be sent if they are suitable representatives for the department.
   4.2.3. Concerns regarding density indoors at west village commons.
   4.2.4. Table displays are from 9-12.
   4.2.5. Department banners should be displayed.

5. Announcements from the Council Chairperson
   5.1. A general appreciation for patience.
   5.2. No paper copies of agenda.
   5.3. Departmental announcements to be shared with the council will be generated and deposited in OneDrive and pasted into minutes.
   5.4. If there is additional discussion needed, it will be had.
   5.5. Wraps or Pizza will alternate every other meeting. Wrap requests will be submitted to Amanda and will be immutable for the year.

6. Highlights from FCSM Departments (note that general updates are in the announcements folder in OneDrive)
   6.1. Biological Sciences
      6.1.1. Biological Sciences will be hiring for four positions Fall 2021, two ecologists and two integrative biologists. A Cell and Molecular Biology Clinical Assistant Professor position will be filled in Spring 2022.
      6.1.2. Barry Margulies has taken a position at NIH beginning on January 1st. Alondra Diaz-Lameiro took a tenure-track position in Puerto Rico. Catherine Scollick was hired as a full-time lecturer (formerly a temporary lecturer.)
      6.1.3. At the final faculty meeting last year a list of resources that would be needed to increase research productivity was produced.
      6.1.4. The department is also discussing curriculum changes and some possible changes to concentrations:
         6.1.4.1. Creating a core concepts/competencies framework of classes for underclassmen.
         6.1.4.2. Combining the FBA and CMB concentrations.
         6.1.4.3. Creating a new ‘Integrative Biology” concentration.
6.2. Chemistry

6.2.1. Dr. Gus Bakhoda has joined the chemistry department as an assistant professor in the organic chemistry area.

6.2.2. Dr. Shannon Stitzel was elected to the assistant chair position in May of 2021.

6.2.3. Dr. Clare Muhoro, Professor of Chemistry and Director of Competitive Fellowships and Award, has agreed to serve as the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.

6.2.4. TU Curriculum Committee has approved a split of CHEM 210 lecture and lab courses. CHEM 210 will now be implemented as CHEM 220 and CHEM220L as of spring 2022. Registrar is updating major-requirements and pre-requisites across all areas.

6.2.5. The Chemistry department has been discussing how to provide students the opportunity to acquire the chem lab skills that they missed because of online labs. Solutions considered include implementing a weekend or one week lab skills “boot camp” (thanks for the idea from Mathematics) and adding a short “boot camp” module at the beginning of analytical labs.

6.2.5.1. Several members suggested that reinforcement of these lab skills is already baked into the current curriculum and extra training may not be necessary.

6.3. Computer and Information Sciences

6.3.1. Our doctoral program is preparing to submit a name change to Ph.D. through MHEC.

6.3.2. We are in the process of redistributing office spaces on the 2nd and 4th floors of the 7800 York Rd building to accommodate our increasing faculty and staff as well as the graduate labs and student spaces.

6.3.3. Our enrollment numbers are up for CS and IS and down slightly for IT. Overall, we are at over 1800 students in our majors.

6.3.4. The department has done well with new grant activity and doctoral graduations.

6.3.5. We are looking forward to searching for new faculty in fall.

6.3.6. Sam Houston, Alfreda Dudley, and Gaby Meiselwitz have retired.
6.4. Mathematics

6.4.1. Math Bootcamp related updates:

6.4.1.1. Launch parties: 4 scheduled launch parties were held. Total attendance was around 50 (out of approximately 500 students e-mailed). Bootcamp had 4 components: Summer Courses, ALEKS tutoring, One-week-long Bootcamp, and Companion courses offered during regular Fall semester.

6.4.1.2. ALEKS tutoring was provided June 14 to August 13.

6.4.1.3. One-week-long Math Bootcamp has been held. Below are some details:

6.4.1.3.1. Registration closed Sunday, July 18. About 74 students registered. Students moved onto campus early for Bootcamp.

6.4.1.3.2. Eight ULA’s hired. Mix of Math majors (including most concentrations) and Computer Science majors who are also Math minors.

6.4.1.3.3. Weekday academic activities included:

6.4.1.3.3.1. Two lessons from faculty (one morning, one afternoon)

6.4.1.3.3.2. Two challenge problems to be worked on under ULA supervision (one morning, one afternoon)

6.4.1.3.3.3. Study skills session (afternoon)

6.4.1.4. Companion Courses (ORIE 101):

6.4.1.4.1. One section for MATH 119 and two sections MATH 273/283.

6.4.1.4.2. Will still likely add second 7-week sections to pick up students who don’t realize they need extra support until later.

6.4.2. Evaluation of the Bootcamp:

6.4.2.1. For evaluation of summer courses, and ALEKS tutors, due to small size, first-year students will be reached out and asked for meeting in-person or via Zoom or asked questions via e-mail.

6.4.2.2. For Bootcamp the evaluation team will meet with focus group after conclusion of Bootcamp. They will also send pre- and post-semester surveys to all participants in any of the components and to those who received advertising for any of the components (e.g., all students in MATH 119, MATH 273, and MATH 283).

6.4.3. Successful search two new faculty.
6.5. Physics, Astronomy, and Geosciences

6.5.1. Alex Storrs has retired.

6.5.2. The tenure-track faculty searches for Biophysics (1) and Science Education (1) are currently on hold. Hopefully they will be advertised this year. These searches constitute one new and one replacement position. They do not include Alex Storrs’ replacement in Astronomy.

6.5.3. PAGs has created an Assistant Chair position. Ron Hermann has officially started as the PAGs Assistant Chair.

6.5.4. PAGS has created a leadership council consisting of the chair, assistant chair, group coordinators and graduate program director

7. Old Business: Update on Faculty submitting Regents Awards

7.1. **Five-page long applications due September 30th** to Ms. Jasmine Nance’s attention in the Office of the Provost. The nominee will submit a packet (maximum of five pages) that includes the following items: (1) summary resume; (2) a one-page essay from the nominee describing how they have contributed to excellence in the category of the nomination; (3) a letter of recommendation from the department chairperson or dean, and (4) brief documentation of exemplary achievement summarizing the materials listed below for the category.

7.2. **Full applications for those selected to be submitted to the USM will be due on October 25th** to Ms. Nance’s attention in the Office of the Provost. This will allow for internal review by the Provost and President and submission by us to USM by the November 12th due date.

7.2.1. Some possible nominees being encouraged by the College Council:

7.2.1.1. Mary Devadas – Research – reach out to past nominees.

7.2.1.2. Sandy Spitzer – considering postponement due to many obligations including organizing the mathematics education conference and appointed to be the Director of the STEM Education Center.

7.2.1.3. Regents consider the past three years of productivity. But they may consider broader scope within curriculum vitae.

7.2.1.4. Peko Tsuji – mentoring – grad director

7.2.2. Dr. Lottero-Perdue requested that college council members reach out to your colleagues. She reiterated that all are welcome to nominate people, independent of those being encouraged by the College Council.
8. New Business

8.1. Discussion about COVID-related issues

8.1.1. Dr. Lopez, Interim Director of the TU Health Center, can answer prevailing questions via an email that the council will generate.

8.1.2. A member of the council identified a concern regarding testing of vaccinated folks – will we catch a breakthrough breakout – good questions for the health team.

8.1.2.1. A member of the council noted that Institutional decisions come from the Towson University health team which includes experts from outside TU.

8.1.2.2. A member of the council stated that this could depend on community level transmission but data on prevalence of breakthroughs is lacking.

8.1.2.3. It was noted that the University will pivot if necessary.

8.1.3. There were considerable questions and discussion about the process if a student or faculty member is exposed to someone with COVID-19. Dr. Lottero-Perdue and Dr. Estes will try to draft questions and send them to Dr. Lopez in the Towson University Health Center.

8.1.4. What is the protocol if a student tests positive? Dean Vanko answered that the student will need to report to the TU health team (professor should do the same.) – the health team will handle the rest. If there is an action that the instructor needs to take the health team will let you know.

8.1.5. A member of the council asked if we know what the air turnover in the classrooms and labs. Air handling is designed to respond to the room’s occupancy. It was noted that the teaching labs also have CO₂ readings.

8.2. To prepare for our next meeting: Please be prepared to discuss issues related to the Science Complex and Smith Hall, working across both buildings, etc.

8.2.1. Guest will be Josh Wihide, the new SC building manager.

8.2.2. What are the challenges and are they being addressed?

8.2.3. Disability access for the restrooms, etc.

8.2.4. Night class instructors are having trouble verifying room availability.

8.2.4.1. Access through the Glen.

8.2.4.2. Wireless access in the Science Complex.

8.2.5. Second floor block 3 to the terrace – slippery when wet.

8.2.6. No hygiene disposal bins in men’s room for nonbinary and trans students/colleagues.
8.3. Suggestions for future meetings:

8.3.1. Individuals to invite to future meetings: Tabathea Beck and Elizabeth Scarborough of the tutoring and learning center, someone from the Counselling Center related to mental health.

8.3.2. Other topics: Health Center, Honors College, Active Shooter response, Undergraduate Learning Assistants, and student tutors.

9. Adjournment: Dr. Estes moved for adjournment and Dr. Casey seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Hancock

Recording Secretary