

Report to the Faculty
Sara Freeman, Chair of Faculty Senate
March 25, 2020

Dear Colleagues

I won't purport to say we're adjusted to our virtual operations, nor will I suggest that we've fully found our ways to manage how to both stop and keep going this spring, but we're all working on it, I know. I value you all as colleagues: especially the humor, ingenuity, irascibility, and persistence I see in our online conversations and video meetings.

Senate has had one virtual meeting since our shift to online operations. I hope you will join me as we attempt to have a virtual full faculty meeting on April 1. I have set the agenda for the meeting and have a vision for how to use technology to do it, but we are still working on the exact procedures, so this week you will continue to receive updates via faculty coms about the tech interface and process for the meeting.

PHILOSOPHY FOR THIS MOMENT

My philosophy in this moment is that Senate is going to sort and process as much business as it can, and that we will use the virtual full faculty meetings in a targeted way. We can't be very ambitious with a virtual setting for a meeting that 150+ people have rights and reasons to attend. See below on how I think we can proceed on April 1 and April 29.

ELECTIONS and the WALTER LOWRY AWARD

The two pieces of business Senate does in the spring that we can carry out pretty much as normal is hold elections for next year's open positions and to call for nominations for the Walter Lowry award and select the recipient. You have received the call for nominations for elections. Please nominate people! Please also find it in your heart and ambition to accept nominations: imagine yourself in those places your colleagues see you doing well. It is especially imperative for us to have enough candidates for FAC, because we must present a slate of double the number of people needed to the Provost.

The call for nominations for the Walter Lowry Award will come out mid-April. Watch for it.

SENATE WORK

On March 23, in our first ever Google Meet Senate, we followed up on the short term policies ASC and PSC are putting in place because of how this semester is impacted by a national emergency and public health crisis. We also received the report from the ad hoc committee on non-tenure track faculty.

Senate is doing work related to the standing committees as much as possible by email. We will use our meeting time on April 6 to consider endorsing the report on NTT faculty, to review the code's designation of Senate's responsibilities in the case of financial exigency, and to discuss how to proceed with the changes to code language about promotion, about which I say a bit

more below. Our last two virtual Senate meetings will focus on receiving end of year reports from the Standing Committees and clearly outlining transition plans and carry over for next year's governance leaders.

Regarding the change to code language about promotion: the faculty split the motion, passed the part related to changing the language and needed to return to the part about timeline for implementing the changes. This motion is one that will be very hard to parse and discuss and potentially amend in a virtual full faculty meeting set up, so I am asking Senate to consider how we can address this business on the faculty's behalf and keep the faculty notified should they want to alter or amend what we have done.

This approach contrasts to how I am asking us to proceed in relation to the proposal to create a Masters of Public Health program. The working group framing the MPH curriculum has completed its proposal and CC has reviewed and approved it. With the OTD program, once CC approved it, we took it directly to the full faculty. Senate and the working group are exploring a plan for making the MPH proposal available to the whole faculty and using an online comment period to answer questions and allow for arguments about approving this addition to our curriculum. If possible, we can then vote on the MPH as part on of the April 29 full faculty meeting.

I think we need both approaches to manage this spring: we need Senate to handle some things and we also need to weigh some decisions in full faculty votes. I also think it is worth it to address the MPH proposal rather than letting it linger. We are going to need to find our ways forward after the Covid-19 pandemic and proposals like this are part of that conversation. This is in balance with our choice to not try to vote on any changes to the undergraduate graduation requirements this spring, given the complications of online deliberation. The work of undergraduate curriculum reform is also part of finding our way forward, and will continue this semester, but with advisement of the CTF and Senate, we will not attempt a comprehensive vote on graduate requirements this spring.

Next, I will give a brief overview about what I think we can accomplish in the virtual full faculty meetings.

FULL FACULTY MEETING

We are all on a steep learning curve related to online meeting technology right now. I am working on a way for us to have a hybrid format for our faculty meetings that features a live stream, but also ways for those logged in to the meeting to be recognized to ask questions or make statements. I will need to update you all over Faculty coms during the rest of the week about exact procedures.

It is my analysis that we can handle discussion about one strictly framed motion each meeting, and use a Qualtrics survey after the meeting for the vote in the way we have (very occasionally) done before. The tricky part is the possibility of amending a motion during the meeting. I am working out how to carefully manage that in virtual space, because it has to be a possibility.

Hearing/reading comments in a virtual meeting is possible, but it is the voting in the moment to adopt an amendment that is more complex. My true tactic there is that things we vote on need to be quite straightforward motions that don't invite a lot of 'smithing' in the meeting. So, my goal is for us to practice on April 1 with the motion to change the IRB's standing charges in the Bylaws that got its first reading on March 4. Then we will be able to see what we can do on April 29.

I hope we will exercise good will with each other in our governance work. I realize that even this radically curtailed agenda for spring governance feels like a lot given our circumstances and worries about the health of our loved ones, community, and world as well as the economy and the state of higher education. Yet, we have a huge responsibility to each other and the institution. It is our responsibility to not just set everything down and say 'come what may.' Faculty are active determinants of ways this institution handles the crisis and have been key voices in shaping choices so far, I think for the good of our students and staff in particular. Our continued attention to curriculum, finances, and policies matters enormously to how we band together and support each other in circumstances none of us wanted.

Yours in a state of perpetual adjustment and indeterminacy, but also with hope,

Sincerely,

Sara