

MISSOURI SOUTHERN

STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE

October 30, 2024

The Faculty Senate met twice since my last report. Below I outline some of the highlights from these two meetings. I'm also including a new feature in this report that emphasizes some of the excellent work our faculty do on campus from day to day.

During the September meeting, Dr. Tamika Harrel presented information about academic integrity violations and their consequences. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee had been discussing the possibility of adding special transcript notations for academic dishonesty cases.

Dr. Harrel outlined the current three-strike disciplinary process:

1. First violation: Student must complete an educational module
2. Second violation: Student can present their case and instructor input is gathered; if found guilty, results in one year of academic probation
3. Third violation: If found guilty, leads to one-year suspension

Faculty members maintain independent authority to assign failing grades, separate from conduct office penalties, creating parallel academic and disciplinary consequence tracks. The Graduate Council has already implemented an "XF" grade designation, and Professor Garoutte's motion for UCPC to investigate similar transcript notations (FX/WX grades) passed unanimously.

The Faculty Welfare Committee is currently addressing two significant issues: adjunct/overload pay and promotion compensation, neither of which has seen increases in recent years. The committee will update their previous report comparing MSSU's adjunct/overload pay to peer institutions, review promotion compensation, and complete their triennial pay equity evaluation. Their findings will be presented to Faculty Senate and university administration.

Some faculty have recently raised concerns about advisee load imbalances, where disparities exist both within and across departments. While the faculty handbook addresses advising under teaching and service categories, small departments face unique challenges due to limited faculty. Proposed solutions include treating excessive advisee loads as a one-hour course overload. Though a previous Academic Advising Council report explored various models, including a centralized staff approach, no simple solution has emerged. Despite these challenges, our faculty continues to provide excellent advising.

The International Studies Committee has reviewed and refined their pre/post-travel survey for students participating in study abroad programs. Additionally, they'd like to increase both student and faculty travel grants by \$500 each. Currently, these grants cover only 20% of total expenses, down from 30% in previous years. With an annual travel budget averaging \$49,000 based on seven years of data, these programs are particularly valuable for our first-generation college students. For many of these students, their time at Missouri Southern represents their first – and sometimes only – opportunity for international travel.

Rather than focus solely on quantifiable deliverables this early in the academic year, I wanted to highlight the exemplary daily work of our faculty through student testimonials. These comments from

Outstanding Teaching Award nominations - representing 52 different instructors - demonstrate our faculty's dedication to student success beyond mere knowledge transfer. Such commitment to student engagement and support directly impacts retention and graduation rates.

"It is abundantly clear just how much Dr. X cares about her students' learning, and how passionate and knowledgeable she is about the subject she teaches. Her feedback is always extremely helpful, thoughtful, and balanced. She uplifts and encourages her students while still highlighting what needs improvement and providing us with great suggestions. Her teachings are inspiring and thought-provoking. [...] This semester has provided me with a unique set of obstacles, and when I brought my struggles to Dr. X's attention, she showed me kindness, grace, encouragement, and support without hesitation. Without a doubt, Dr. X is a gem, and MSSU is incredibly lucky to have her."

"I nominate Dr. Y because of the amount of effort he puts into helping his students. Dr. Y maintains professionalism as well as personality, expressing consideration and empathy for his students. A lot of students struggle to find help but Dr. Y helps before being asked. He genuinely cares about his students struggles towards personal struggles, work, extracurriculars, and school related things and listens to those concerns while providing aid. If it were not for him, a lot of students (including me) may not of continued school. What some people do not realize about students is the some that are struggling, is not because they do not want to try or do not care about their lives. Some students were not given or taught or have the knowledge of certain tools required to do the bare minimum in college. As well as some students could potentially have a toxic home life/irregular home life/lacked past schooling from the providers. So it is difficult to find ways out of those environments when students do not possess the necessary tools or barely experienced anything about the outside world. Dr. Y not only provides ways to learn tools like properly studying, financial concerns, individual concerns, path of course continuation, how to ask questions/send emails, and etc. But going above and beyond like introducing extracurriculars a student might be interested in. Dr. Y does not have to do anything for his students but the fact that he goes above and beyond to help his students is the reason why I believe he deserves the Outstanding Teacher Award."

"She is extremely invested in each of her students and cares deeply in their education. She puts in so much of her own effort, free time, and money into the littlest of details so her students enjoy themselves and are happy and comfortable. Dr. Z explains very difficult topics extremely well. Even though I have not known her for more than a year, we have become fast friends. I've never had a professor that has cared so much about my success and pushes me into new environments so I can get more experience."

I welcome your suggestions and look forward to continued collaboration with administration and staff in the coming year.

Thank you,

Michael Beilfuss
Faculty Senate President
Assistant Professor, Language and Literature