



February 2024

Dear Senators,

I hope that you have settled into your Spring semester. Since our last meeting, the Faculty Senate leadership was involved with several important initiatives.

1. ORP/TRSL

A bill has been filed for the upcoming regular session of the Louisiana Legislature addressing the ORP and TRSL defined benefit retirement plans. This bill is largely in response to the resolution passed at the LSU A&M Faculty Senate and Staff Senate and represents the beginning of the legislative process. Faculty Senate leadership, along with representatives of the Benefits Committee, has been involved in discussions with our Governmental Relations team and others integral to the successful passage of the bill. The discussion was very positive, and it involved possible amendments to bring the proposed legislation into closer alignment with the objectives expressed in the resolution. Though the legislative process is always subject to surprises, we are optimistic that we will reach a desirable result that improves the options available to faculty and staff in higher education across the state. This is an ongoing process, and we will be sure to keep you updated as things progress.

2. Parental Leave Policy

At our Faculty Senate meeting on November 29, we were told by HR that Parental Leave Policy will be in place starting January 1, 2024. I recently learned that the necessary policy revisions have been drafted but are not yet in force. This means that parental leave is not available to unclassified employees on campus at this time. I have reached out to the upper administration for updates and as I obtain more information, I will be sure to let you know.

3. Grammarly

Due to a strong demand by some colleges, ITS has purchased Grammarly licenses for faculty and staff. As part of the acquisition process ITS contacted Faculty Senate leadership regarding the question of whether the licenses should be also available for students. The FSEC understands students' interest in this option but believes that the nature of the program means that it could impact academics. Therefore, before making a final decision, this merits further discussion involving the faculty. I also communicated to a number of stakeholders at a meeting on January 29 that this could be part of a broader discussion on AI use in our classrooms especially since there currently aren't any such guardrails in place. I look forward to continuing this important process and believe it is of the utmost importance given the quickly evolving role of technology, and particularly AI, in higher education.

4. Remote Participation in Defenses

The ASH committee recently approved a proposal from the Graduate Council that would adopt the policies for remote participation in Masters and Doctoral defenses developed during COVID. The language of the proposal which is to replace existing guidelines in the Graduate Catalog is as follows:

“The Graduate School and Graduate Council strongly encourage for all Defenses that the participants are present in person; however, remote participation can be used at the discretion of the advisory committee and in consultation with the student.”

ASH proposals require the signature of the Faculty Senate President prior to adoption, and the FSEC has developed a practice where requests from an individual unit relating to policies solely of that unit should be granted approval if supported by the ASH committee. In the case above, given the popularity of the remote participation option and the fact that it still allows for and encourages in-person Defenses, we thought it would be uncontentious to approve it; I have signed the proposal and forwarded it to Academic Affairs. Should anyone have concerns about this new policy please let me know.

Alternatively, our preference is to bring policies which affect the entire campus and could have different impacts upon various units, or which may be subject to differences of opinion among the faculty as to their desirability, to the full Senate for its consideration. We have two such proposals on the agenda for the meeting on February 20th.

5. Nominating Committee

The FSEC has begun the process of creating the Nominating Committee for the April FSEC elections as required by the Senate Bylaws. I will let you know once the committee has been finalized and communicate the next steps in the process at that time.

6. Faculty Technology Survey

Thank you for responding to the Tech survey jointly sponsored by the Faculty Senate, ITS, and the Office of Academic Affairs. For those who have not yet participated in the survey, we strongly urge you to submit your responses by February 23. Please follow this link:

https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6nhNHylU9ayTGOG?Q_CHL=email

The incentives for filling out the Faculty Tech Survey will be given out at the Faculty Council meeting.

7. Faculty Council Meeting

Mark your calendars! The Faculty Council meeting has been scheduled for Monday 22 April at 3pm at the Royal Cotillion Ballroom, Student Union. Details will follow about the registration.

8. Faculty Senate Meeting – 18 March 2024

Due to roof maintenance work at the Dalton Woods Auditorium, the March meeting of the Faculty Senate will take place at the Law Center. Faculty Senate Coordinator Tricia Cobb will send calendar invitations to that location, so that it is added to your calendars.

Please continue keeping us informed about pressing matters and issues on campus. We are stronger together.

Sincerely,



Inessa Bazayev
President, LSU Faculty Senate