Minutes
Faculty Affairs Committee
April 22, 2021
WebEx Meeting

Members Present
Amy Stalker            Isabelle Monlouis            Nicolle-Parsons-Pollard
Annette Butler         Jared Poley               Nilm Fernando
Birthe Reimers         Jelena Subotic            Owen Cantrell
Blake McGee            Jennifer Barker           Rafaela Feresin
Candace Kemp           Jennifer Miller            Rebecca Weaver
Charles Fox            John Weber                Robert Maxwell
Cynthia Puranik        Laura Carruth             Shelby Frost
David Cheshier         Leslie Meadows            Song Qi Liu
David Houchins         Lia Bascomb               Susan Richmond
Eddy Nahmias           Marc Zayac                Tonia Durden
Elizabeth Lim          Mark Hollier              Tracienne Ravita
Emily Whaley           Marta White              Volkan Topalli
Erin Morrey            Michael Bradley           Wendy Hensel
Gerald Gay             Michael Galchinsky        Yusen Xia
Greg McLean            Michael Sanseviro
Hongyu Qiu

1) Welcome to new members
2) Approval of Minutes
3) Election of FAC Chair
   • Robert Maxwell, Chair for 2021-2022 Academic Year
4) Guest Speakers: Centralized Academic Integrity Process Proposal
   • Work done by the Academic Integrity Taskforce
   • This is a conversation that will continue in the fall.
   • Please Review (this is in our shared FAC folder)
     • https://tinyurl.com/4snbd3r
5) Introduction of Committee Structure
   • Review of Old Business
   •
6) Adjourn
Webex meeting recording: FAC Meeting - April 2021-20210422 1829-1
Recording link:
https://gsumetings.webex.com/gsumetings/ldr.php?RCID=1014a30b32a753287288e8ceb231c80
TRP-ORP Background (email from David Cheshier)
A joint subcommittee of Budget and Faculty Affairs put together a draft report in 2018 to address concerns about the growing imbalance in state investments in TRS (which have grown significantly) and ORP (which have stayed steady). In the two years since, the report has been discussed and reviewed, and suggestions made to strengthen it as an advocacy document, in both committees. In Budget, Unil Perera opened discussions with Robert Elmore and Jerry Rackliffe to get their feedback. Last year that produced something of a two-track Budget committee conversation: Track 1 had Budget nudging HR and Benefits to get going to improve GSU employee orientation and website materials; Track 2 envisioned some modest updating and polishing of the full 2018 report given input from the two committees. Joann Joyner led both efforts (she was on the original subcommittee; I agreed to add since my two committee assignments are FAC and Budget; Jaye Atkinson had been on for the same reason but, since she has since come off Budget, hasn’t recently connected to this project).

The website and orientation conversations have been productive. The original subcommittee report had some specific suggestions (such as providing GSU new employees with a comparison chart that clarifies the TRS vs. ORP choice) that are either being implemented or are under Legal review. In the February Budget meeting, Jerry made a presentation where he committed to specific steps to improve new employee orientation and the associated websites. All good.

We have worked in the meantime to revise the document, and that revision was discussed at the same February Budget meeting. Since then, some additional edits have been made given input there. Budget approved the document, trusting the revisions they suggested to be made (and they were). With FAC approval this can move to the Executive Committee as a potential information item to the full Senate.

Here is a summary of the revisions made to the document since it was first drafted:

Several small edits were made just to clean up the prose a bit and to update in obvious cases given changes since 2018 (such as reference to the budget challenges created by COVID).

The very specific suggestions about website and orientation improvements have been updated to the current conversations and been generalized into a call that these receive continuing improvement.

An argument has been added, advocating the idea that USG should boost its employer contribution to ORP. The idea is that even though upping the USG contribution to ORP costs the state money, it’s in the state’s fiduciary self-interest since higher ORP employer contributions are likely to lure new employees away from TRS, which is a much more expensive system for the state to run (this was an idea suggested first by Jerry and fleshed out by Joann and Unil). A small bump in the USG employer contribution might therefore save much more money in TRS...
savings, while allaying faculty concerns about the now-huge TRS-ORP gap and increasing the USG’s benefits competitiveness for best talent.

The original report slammed the door shut on advocating for a mechanism where employees might have a one-time chance to make a shift from TRS-to-ORP or ORP-to-TRS. The original committee argued the idea was futile since it had been twice attempted and failed in the legislature. This draft restores the recommendation that employees be provided this option despite the true account of the past tries. Our thought is: An opportunity to shift is much desired by GSU employees, is supported to this day by Jerry and President Becker and enjoys the support of the Chancellor (and was backed by the previous Chancellor) and the head of the higher education committee in the legislature. So why put GSU staff and faculty on record as opposed to the suggestion in this report? Meanwhile, Jerry suggested there might still be ways to get around the legislative objection (which was that a one-time-shift would not be revenue neutral). So this draft keeps the history language but argues that a one-time shift option remains something to work for.

Teachers in the state K-12 system have, for several years, had access to a blended system that lets them get the benefit of both a TRS-style and ORP-style pension mechanism. This draft adds the argument that such a blended option should also be available to USG employees.

There was a sense that the data- and argument-driven focus of the subcommittee report would be strengthened by humanizing the document with some specific examples. Some of those had already been collected by the subcommittee and have been added to the core narrative.

When FAC has first looked at this, the suggestion was made that the report could be strengthened by arguing that the USG 9.24% employer contribution lags other peer and aspirational peer institutions. Some efforts were made to track those numbers down. We ended up not making that argument in the attached revision since the available data did not make a clear and convincing case. While USG contributions lag compared to some national peers, the 9.24% rate is not out of line with regional peers (and is higher that some, for example, Emory).

The subcommittee also organized an employee survey, the data from which formed part of the case of the report. While now a bit dated, that full survey is also attached since it provided still-helpful context.