

Summary of Faculty Fora 2/22/22 and 2/23/22

Concern: being told that we cannot hire tenure track faculty

- The faculty to student ratio is not advantageous for the students.
- Adjuncts are hired, but this places burden on tenure track faculty to ensure that adjuncts are teaching well and to handle the other responsibilities.
- Having a lot of adjuncts does not provide consistency in the classroom.
- A study by institutional analysis looking at ratios of students, faculty, and AP staff would be useful.
- From the Provost/Provost's Office:
 - We aren't in a position in which we are not hiring tenure track faculty, but there is a need to be judicious about where the hires are made, and the Provost is working closely with the deans to determine the needs.
 - We could charge FSBC to look at these data.
 - Staff hires have largely been replacements for staff who resigned or retired.
 - Resources have been added to IT because we have been understaffed in IT for providing the support we need.

Concern: Salaries may be lower than salaries at other Michigan universities, which can adversely impact recruitment and retention of faculty and staff.

Question: Excited about RH 2025 approval. How will this be operationalized?

- Provost's Cabinet is working on a plan for Academic Affairs, which will be finalized this semester. Colleges are working on their plans.
- In the past, we had a University-level plan with operationalized components, in RH 2025 the operationalized components will occur at the college and unit levels.
- President's Council is working on vetting KPIs, which will be finalized this semester. These will be high-level metrics.
- RH 2025 sets a framework for the next few years and where we will prioritize our energies.

Question: What would happen if UAS is convinced that a resolution should go forward to the Provost/President's office and the Provost/President does not agree?

- UAS would receive an explanation of why the recommendation is not acceptable and why the administration's plan should be the right path. The hope would be to come to a shared understanding or compromise. If this cannot happen, for things that go to the BOT the UAS Chair would go to the BOT to present UAS's position. This has never happened.

Suggestion on something to improve: how do we help faculty understand the finances of GVSU?

Concern: Student mental health

- Students sometimes take out frustration on faculty.
- Those who handle CARE reports and work in DSR are appreciated.

- Graduate Council and the Graduate School are taking the lead on student mental health, which is appreciated. A taskforce has surveyed graduate students on mental health.
- FTLC has provided seminars on working with students with mental health concerns.
- There are concerns about faculty mental health, too. Some have experienced contentious meetings.
- Interim Provost Plouff agreed with concerns about students, faculty, and staff.
- There was an article in the Chronicle about the “Great Disengagement,” which suggested that there is a side to being a professional that is draining and a side that is refreshing. The pandemic seems to have curtailed the replenishing side and extended the draining side. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-great-faculty-disengagement>.
- There are FLCs focused on mindfulness. There is a new 1-credit course approved by UCC for students on mindfulness. Contact Karen Gipson if you would be interested in being trained to teach the course.
- Managing relationships with students is difficult, trying to maintain healthy boundaries and also trying to help them.
 - School counselors in elementary schools follow up with students, something like this at the university level could be helpful.
- Do faculty and students understand each other?
 - Grateful that faculty senate has a student rep, we may need more opportunities to communicate about policy that concerns faculty and students.
 - Chair and VC of ECS/UAS will be presenting to student senate on shared governance.
 - Student Senate now has an advisor.
- Do faculty and administration understand each other?
 - We have the Provost and AVP attend our meetings in senate.
 - We get feedback from deans which can result in standing committee charges.

Concern: there seem to be more and more administrative types of tasks piled on and fewer faculty are running for committees.

- Could ECS/UAS help with this?
- Are there some things that some committees don't need to do anymore?
 - During the pandemic committees have focused on critical work and many have cut back on meetings.
- Over the last few years the lines between work and life have been blurred due to a lot of working online.
 - Students seem to expect immediate replies.
 - Maybe we could develop some GV expectations. We could role model setting boundaries for students so they can think about boundaries they will need to set in their lives.

Concern: ECS/UAS communications, while appreciated, can be hard to digest.

- Links go to general sites, not exact memos.
 - Memos can be found in the SHORE system. Once the provost approves memos, they become official. We can share the official SHORE links.

Concern: faculty feel as though the student engagement problem is being blamed on them. Receiving information about how to be more engaging in class implies, “If you were more engaging, student attendance would be better.”

- Some students have stopped coming to class and do everything online.
 - The Provost is sending a message about the importance of attendance.
- Some students do not have the prerequisite knowledge expected in upper-level courses, possibly due to taking prerequisites online.
 - We need to figure out how online and face-to-face pedagogies merge and stack.
 - We are seeing the difficulties of a flexible curriculum.
 - Small group interactions and in-person skills are expected in face-to-face classes and some students are having difficulty with these.
 - We need to find a new normal that faculty can accept and students will comply with

Concern: there is a lack of compliance with the mask mandate in public spaces.

Concern: There has been a lot of new technology to learn. It seems we are choosing between platforms that do not do what we need them to do. How can we make technology helpful for our work and not a hinderance?

- IT advisory committee has 6-7 faculty members and tries to elicit feedback from faculty.
- We are between reactive (level 2) and proactive (level 3) on our GVSU IT maturity assessment, we want to go past mature and to strategic (level 5, the highest). At least we aren't in level 1 (disarray).
- Library joined a consortium to build an open-source platform, but this wouldn't work for things like personnel, grades, etc.
- Bb will be down May 3-7, which requires prep for spring/summer courses early, and people need to know this! Remind people to tell their faculty.

Justic Melick and his team have been helpful as faculty adapt to online environments, and this should be acknowledged.

The Children's Enrichment Center (CEC) is appreciated. They are at capacity for their space and need support.

- The CEC will now be under the Division of Student Affairs. The new VP would be a good person to address these concerns.

There were expressions of gratitude for the ECS/UAS Chair and members and Interim Provost Plouff for their leadership.

Leadership discussions have been opportunities to share what's going on in our areas and provide input and get feedback.