

Dr. Leonard Githinji, Faculty Senate Chair's Remarks

Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

Dear colleagues, I'd like to start by welcoming you back for the fall 2022 that also marks the beginning to the academic year 2022-23. During the last academic year, we accomplished a lot, particularly on matters pertaining policy documents and recommendations. We discussed, voted for, and subsequently forwarded to the University Administration the various policy documents for action. These included: 1) Faculty Senate Strategic Planning Committee Recommendations 2021-2022; 2) Department Chair Credential Policy; 3) Sabbatical Leave Policy (which was reaffirmed); and 4) Expectation of Continued Employment; among other policy documents.

The Faculty Senate voted for a resolution urging the University President and Board of Visitors to affirm and protect the academic freedom for all faculty. The Faculty Senate also actively participated in the formulation of the Climate and Pay Equity surveys, and we now look forward to seeing the University Administration implementing them accordingly. Colleagues, all this progress would not have happened without your tireless effort and dedication.

For this academic year, I wish to encourage all of us to continue with the same momentum as we continue serving our esteemed students and impacting the lives of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia through our outreach activities. This fall, the University is recording a historical level of student enrollment and validation. These are great news for our University, but it also comes with some challenges that we have to overcome together. For instance, our class sizes will likely increase, stretching the resources that we currently have in place, such as classrooms and technology. Also, our ability to socially distance will also likely be affected. This comes at a time when the Covid-19 guidelines have been relaxed by the CDC, while the coronavirus is still out there.

During the Fall Opening Conference last week, FS Vice Chair Tracy Jackson and I facilitated a workshop entitled "*The Role of the Faculty Senate in Enhancing the University's Shared Governance*". The goal of the workshop was to create awareness among our faculty, especially the new faculty, about the Faculty Senate and encourage them to consider being active members. The workshop slides were uploaded on the FS Blackboard page for those who couldn't make it. We plan to continue offering such workshops to encourage faculty participation.

Colleagues, during today's Executive Committee meeting, we will discuss ratification of the new FS Secretary and FPC Chair. We will also outline some priority issues for the Faculty Senate including, but not limited to the following: i) New Covid-19 isolation guideline; ii) Climate survey and pay equity implementation guideline and timeline; iii) Progress of the previously approved policy documents office (Chair's credential Policy, Expectation of Continuous Employment, and Faculty Evaluation); iv) Strategies to remove VSU from AAUP Censure; v) Title IX and Mental Health Counseling statements on course syllabus; and vi) Plans to roll out the electronic system for A21s.

I'd like to request each Chair of the Standing Committee to briefly discuss the priority or action items they have proposed for this academic.

Thank you.

Leonard Githinji