



NEWS & NOTES

OCTOBER 6, 2020

Note to the Faculty:

This newsletter contains a brief summary of the proceedings of the Faculty Senate Meeting held on October 2, 2020. As a reminder, faculty can view the full details of Senate meetings by reviewing the minutes found on the Faculty Senate Website. facultysenate.lehigh.edu/meeting-minutes

COVID-19 Concerns

The Faculty Senate voiced concerns about lack of availability of COVID testing on campus for students, and the current lack of clarity around numbers of those who have been tested, who have tested positive, how many are quarantined, etc.

The Provost reported an uptick in positive COVID tests among students this week. This result then increased the number of potentially exposed people identified through contact tracing and the need to quarantine. The recent uptick included about 16 new cases a day, each of whom have an average of 15-20 contacts. The Bethlehem Health bureau is involved in supporting contact tracing.

The university has therefore announced new policies moving all classes to remote operations (likely for ~2 weeks), closing Taylor gym, moving dining halls to grab and go only, closing the UC, and closing the libraries to entry but permitting curbside pickup.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on November 6, 2020 via Zoom.

Student Attrition, Retention, and Recruitment

The administration presented an examination of student attrition for the year. We have more student attrition this year both in general and among first year students in particular. Based on surveys of the non-returning students, the most common reason for not returning is either transferring out of Lehigh or taking a leave of absence.

With a focus on recruitment, admissions is doing prerecorded, on demand tours online, holding online information sessions, conducting virtual interviews, and holding virtual open houses. They are also doing virtual high school visits and attending virtual college fairs.

The admissions office encourages faculty to assist with retention efforts by reaching out to current students and checking in. Many current students have voiced unhappiness with the current amount of isolation and disconnection from the rest of the community. We should note that the existing tents are available for both academic and socially distanced social activities. Use of the tents is scheduled by Campus Events, not RAS.

Faculty Ranks Proposal

There have been additional updates since the last circulated version of this proposal. The discussion at this meeting focused on the ranked levels of teaching and research faculty, where promotions after fixed teaching times come with additional job security, in the form of longer required notice time before any nonrenewal of a current appointment. The second reading for this proposal is planned for the Nov 6 senate meeting.

New Business

There will be new upcoming discussions about how should we as faculty start thinking about long-term university priorities.

We discussed what steps can we take to relieve the current faculty burden. One option raised was canceling the 2021 PAR process.

The University faculty meeting will be November 19, 2020 from 4:30-6pm. Nathan Urban and Pat Johnson will present the FY2020 budget and will priorities around setting the FY2021 budget.