

# Update from At-Large Members

Vice Chairperson Anna Pegler-Gordon

August 2020



Following are some of the key issues that Faculty Senate considered during our July 21 and August 11 meetings. In addition, this report addresses issues covered in other areas of Academic Governance, including the Steering Committee and at-large members.

## **Policing**

The MSU police provided a very detailed report in response to the questions raised by members of Faculty Senate. The PowerPoint can be found [here](#). A recording of the presentation can be found [here](#).

We did not have time for follow-up among faculty, but will take time for deliberation and discussion on these topics at a future meeting.

## **Reopening**

Reopening continues apace. A proposed resolution to make online courses the default mode of instruction with faculty being able to opt to choose in-person or hybrid courses was not approved at University Council. The goal of the resolution was to ensure that no faculty were pressured, implicitly or explicitly, to teach in person. University Council members expressed concerns that the resolution did not account for the ways that some courses needed to be offered in person or for students' need for stability.

## **Budget**

The President reported that individuals earning less than \$50,000 would be exempted from the salary cut. This would include most post-docs, following concerns raised about cuts to grant-funded positions, as well as those who earn less.

## **Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Faculty Senate continues to center concerns about anti-racism and DEI, collecting suggestions from faculty and academic staff and devoting the August meeting to these issues.

## **Vice President for Research and Innovation/RPT Decisions**

Some faculty raised a set of questions about how the Vice President for Research and Innovation is involved with tenure and promotion decisions. These questions were raised in part because of concerns about former VPRI Stephen Hsu's involvement in such decisions. As Provost, Lou Anna Simon

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introduced the VPRI providing guidance on a limited number of cases (roughly 25-30 out of 150-180 total cases); however, the decisional authority remains fully with the Provost.

Hsu noted that there were no complaints about bias during his tenure; nonetheless, faculty requested a report that compares percentages of faculty advancement by race and gender before and after his appointment. Notably, the number of black faculty have declined at MSU, and it is important to explore the possible reasons.

There was also discussion of the process of appeal in research integrity office cases, as all appeals have upheld the RIO decision. Should the university consider other channels for potential appeal? If not, might there be concerns about the independence of this review process?

## **Academic Governance**

After a search process, Tyler Silvestri was selected as the new full-time Secretary for Academic Governance, reporting to the Chair of Faculty Senate. Previously, this was a half-time position reporting to the Provost. We hope that this new position will allow for stronger support of Academic Governance at MSU.

The at-large faculty members of the Steering Committee continue to work to ensure that the Chair of the Steering Committee/Faculty Senate has the ability to communicate directly with the entire faculty, on the limited occasions when direct communication is needed.

New faculty senators started on August 15. Although some are still pending, new senators can be found [here](#).

## **International Students**

MSU joined various amicus briefs opposing the Trump administration's decision to strip visas from international students enrolled entirely in online classes. The Trump administration then rescinded its decision, although some concerns remain, which the university is watching carefully.