

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE MINUTES for March 24, 2022; 4:30 pm

Members: M. Cameron, T. King, J. Li, B. Sanft, E. Adell, M. Bettencourt, J. Butera, R. Chapman (alternate), D. Clarke, A. Cossette, A. Dunn (alternate), B. Hook, C. Kennedy, J. Pisano, T. Ruffin, L. Ward, S. Williams, J. Zunguze, G. Campbell.

Members V. Frank, R. Tatum.
Excused:

Visitors: N. Cable, M. Acker, P. Bahls, V. Barnwell, J. Beck, A. Boakye-Boaten, L. Bond, L. Braswell, S. Broberg, K. Brown, K. Cole, S. Donnelly, J. Dougherty, R. Dunning, D. Evatt, M. Galloway, E. Greene, B. Hale, B. Hart, S. Hirsh, H. Holt, B. Jones, K. Kauer, K. Kessar, A. Laughlin, L. Linton, B. Lundgren, M. Mahoney, J. Maxwell, K. Mosley, C. D. Moss, M. Okoro, E. Pearson, M. Pugh, T. Rizzo, A. Shope, G. Tea, D. Thomas, D. Traywick, D. Weldon, J. Wihelm, A. Wolfe, C. Woods, N. Yeager.

I. Call to Order and Welcome by Faculty Senate Chair Marietta Cameron

Marietta Cameron thanked everyone for coming on very short notice to a special session of Faculty Senate. She thought it was important for us to have this discussion that is a result of requests coming from our students during this period of nonstop challenges. We want to acknowledge that we as a community are definitely resilient and persevering. We definitely care about each other. Of recent events that have caused trauma, we have some students, colleagues, faculty and staff that have definitely been affected; some more directly than others. She has definitely been affected by the various events that have been hitting us. We do not push it to the side. We, as a community, find a way to outreach and embrace each other. Part of the discussion today is to see how we can go beyond words in terms of our compassion, our care for our students and for each other. It is in this spirit that we gather to have the discussion regarding a request from our students through the SGA and their meeting with the Chancellor and Provost. She asked the newly inaugurated SGA President Lauren Braswell to speak.

II. SGA Request

Lauren Braswell, SGA President thanked Dr. Cameron and Faculty Senate for meeting on short notice. Yesterday, at her meeting with the Chancellor and Provost, they discussed a rest day. The rest would be for students and faculty, of course. Overall, this semester has been rough on faculty and students. Taking a day for self-preservation and mental health care is important. She understands there is the syllabus and timelines that you would like to stick to, but please look at this as a rest day for you as well to take care of yourself. It is just one day. There is going to be events on campus to offer students and unite the community.

Marietta Cameron thanked Lauren Braswell for speaking to Faculty Senate. The Executive Committee met this afternoon, as we usually do, and we had a discussion with both our Chancellor and our Provost. We understood that in meeting with the students, there was a request for a day of rest, we are calling it rejuvenation and renewal.

Before the Faculty Senate is a Sense of the Senate that has two options. These two options were discussed in EC this morning. One option says we will look at Wednesday, March

30, as being such a day and that there will be no classes while understanding there may be scheduled field trips and other special events. Those activities could be considered as a rejuvenation activity. Another option would be that we could have an opt in path, where on this day the faculty will be asked to excuse students from class activities or a faculty member may opt to cancel classes.

Lauren Braswell, SGA President asked the day be Thursday, March 31. We already have some campus events going on that are being held Thursday, that would just be perfect for the Day of Rejuvenation.

Marietta Cameron replied that when we open this up for discussion, there would be a time to consider alternative dates.

EC 1 Sense of Senate in Support of a Day of Rejuvenation and Renewal

Marietta Cameron asked for a motion to accept Sense of the Senate EC 1 with the understanding that we are going to amend it. A motion was made to accept EC 1 pending amendments, which was seconded.

Marietta Cameron asked the Provost and Chancellor whether they wanted to make some remarks.

Provost Campbell said he thinks everyone is acknowledging that we have endured quite a bit. There has been a lot going on and many challenges. He is in favor of stepping outside of the norm, stepping outside of what we think of ourselves as having to do and saying that one of those things that we have to do is to take care of ourselves. He believes Lauren Braswell has said this as well. This is about the whole community taking a moment and acknowledging the challenges and having a moment of reflection. In doing that, we actually may be better able to focus and do the work that we have for the remainder of the semester. He understands and appreciates this is not easy and disruptive to the plans that we have made. He thinks it is important enough to figure out a way to do that. He wants to encourage us to be open, creative, and thoughtful and he knows you all will. He believes this can be inclusive of the entire community of faculty, staff, and students is incredibly important. He wants to make sure that we are inclusive of everyone, in this moment, as we consider this moment.

Chancellor Cable asked to make to comments very quickly. As all of you know, this entire year has challenged all of us. It has been uniquely hard in many ways on our students themselves. Recent events, including those local and those global, are affecting our students. She spent two hours with Demon Thomas, Lauren Braswell, and Miracle Okoro yesterday. They are asking sincerely and respectfully for us to step out of the normal in order to give them the opportunity to take a breath, get their resilience and move forward toward the end of the semester. They have heavy plates of responsibilities, just as all of you do. She is also very aware that this is disruptive to syllabi and teaching and pedagogy plans that you have in place. She understands to take one day can be disruptive. In her view, this is one of those times, among others, perhaps we can honor and respect students' stated needs as a unifying sense of faculty and staff caring for our students. That is why the Chancellor wanted to speak with you and advocate on behalf of their request. This is truly their need that will make a great deal of difference for all of our students.

Discussion.

Emily Greene, Vice Chair for Communications and Staff Council, asked staff be able to participate in this day of rest and rejuvenation. They have also been helping students

throughout this process that has been draining mentally and physically. They want to know they are included in this as well.

Marietta Cameron deferred to the Chancellor and senior leadership terms of jurisdiction. She acknowledges the importance of the work of staff and advocates for tangible ways to include staff as well.

Chancellor Cable replied that from the very beginning of this discussion, even with the students, there is a recognition on the part of the senior staff, obviously, your Faculty Senate colleagues, as well, and certainly Staff Council colleagues, that this is something that ought to be offered to the staff as well, but perhaps not on the same day. She promised that we would do something for staff as well.

Jessica Pisano brought questions and concerns from her colleagues to bring up. The first question is what would this rejuvenation signify?

Marietta Cameron replied we are recognizing that there has been various stress points that have happened.

Lauren Braswell said it is about self-care and being intentional with yourself, I think we all deserve a healthy place for our thoughts. We all have those days where our plate or pile keeps getting higher, and we do not take a moment for ourselves. We have different ways of taking care of ourselves.

Jessica Pisano replied understands the intent. The question is more like are we having counseling available? Are we talking about any type of specific community building or trauma informed activities? They want the scope of what the plans were for that day or is it just a pause - just a day off from classes, meetings, and all things.

Lauren Braswell some things like Resharia Keller does. She is part of our Multicultural Center. She is doing some things that involves Women's month and empowering women that will happen next Thursday and why she asked for next Thursday. We could do something with yoga, a worship night, and different activities that they have held during the semester. She knows we have support with SGA and other organizations that would be more than happy to run this. Her understanding is it is a rest day for us. In her my eyes, this is also a time for us to unite as a whole community. She believes that it is very important to build bridges.

Marietta Cameron said that it was her understanding from a discussion that we had this morning that there was a request that there not be any specific programming because people have different ways to deal with rejuvenation and renewal. Also, remember that if there is some programming that is happening means that somebody has got to do the work of that. Those who are working on programming are definitely not having a day of rest and rejuvenation. She is thinking about our staff colleagues who are already asking to be included.

Dustin Evatt shared that the Highsmith team are happy to support as needed. He thanked Marietta Cameron for her comment; however, if we are going to have community building activities, someone has to run it. Highsmith Union still has to function regardless that day so our staff will be here working. As a possibility regarding the types of programming, he thinks there is a way to do this thoughtfully and intentionally in collaboration with students. He thinks it is more about creating space for connection and there does not necessarily have to be an active programming, just creating space for connections on the quad. For you know, eating outside, having some music, doing some yoga on the quad, or just something a little bit more passive that creates space for folks to come together – those are activities he is offering.

Jessica Pisano's colleagues last question involved the latest event.

Marietta Cameron responded there is a process that the university is following. This community is committed to protecting students. She asked if David Weldon would like to say anything.

David Weldon said they are working closely with senior staff and John Dougherty to make sure we are keeping our campus community safe as we would do when any incident that occurs on campus.

Scott Williams brought up the issue in order to be inclusive of all faculty and students. People who take or teach classes on MWF would receive a day but not those who teach TR. Perhaps two days of rest, one on MWF and one on TR.

Tiece Ruffin supports the student's request not only for their sake but also for faculty who have pivoted and survived a paradigm shift in pedagogy due to COVID.

Jake Butera agrees that having a day of respite is not a bad idea at all. What has EC discussed about the issues caused by condensing of schedules? He asks because night classes that only meet one night a week will lose an entire week.

Marietta Cameron said when EC discussed this, the original date suggested was April 1. One of the reasons they turned from that suggestion was the concern that would into an extended weekend. Upon reflection, they wondered if activities defeated the purpose. They are also concerned about putting it off until later since the trauma is occurring now.

Jake Butera relayed that moving to April 1 would allow us to keep the kind of immediacy called for while also bearing in mind that the loss of the day for those night classes means the loss of a week that does create a different kind of preparatory burden for faculty teaching those classes. He understands the concern about a three-day weekend outlined, but respite and rejuvenation works in that model as well.

Marietta Cameron asked if he wanted to make a friendly amendment that we select option one and instead of March 30 to go to April 1.

Jake Butera said he would make that motion, which was seconded by Caroline Kennedy.

Caroline Kennedy also relayed concerns from her departmental members. While everyone is concerned about student well-being, the main concern she hears from the Natural Sciences is there are courses that have multi-day sections or sections that meet every day of the afternoon for labs. Missing a day shift an entire week or weeks of labs. She wanted to point out that it is not as simple as just missing a day of class for many faculty.

Toby King voiced a contribution from a colleague of mine: "To my senators, I strongly support next Wednesday as a day of rejuvenation. And I say that as someone who has a class that meets on Wednesdays,"

Kim Kessarar asked that we have an AVID trip planned on April 1 and April 2 where high school students will be here. What would happen with visitors to campus that day?

Marietta Cameron said she is looking at our statement that scheduled field trips are considered a rejuvenation activity. She would imagine that visitors would be able to come to campus. She wonders if we should choose option 2 and reword to make it an opt in.

Lauren Braswell said she was an AVID student and she does not think that should be taken away.

Agya Boakye-Boaten said he would volunteer his services for a day of rest does not mean the university shuts down. We have investors coming on campus.

Miracle Okoro, as an Avid Tutor also volunteers to help by attending a mock class like Dr. Agya Boakye-Boaten spoke.

Britt Lundgren echoed what Caroline Kennedy said to remove any day of the week, at this point in the semester is really disruptive to the physical sciences. On Friday, for instance, she teaches a lab that meets only one day a week. It is a two and half hour lab. She is not saying this isn't important and she completely understands where everyone's coming from. She completely shares the feelings that have led to this request in every way. At the same time, personally this burdens her as faculty member and is very is disruptive to her labs and courses. She knows that sentiment is shared other science faculty.

Linnea Linton asked if it would be possible to consider moving this Saturday for the fact that NC State classes cannot be canceled. That move would solve the issues with labs. She understands the goal is to stop a day of classes to give people a break. If we made it happen on the weekend, it seems like it would remove many obstacles we have been discussing.

Marietta Cameron thanks Linnea Linton for her suggestion and understands what she is saying. However, technically, the weekend is already considered a break. That would not show anything. That could turn into more work for people who do not normally work on the weekend. In terms of NC State and UNCA, the partnership and the relationship, she is hopeful that both institutions could find a way to support each other in the experiences that they are trying to endure and trying to navigate.

Toby King appreciated the elegance of Linnea Linton's suggestion. It does solve many problems even though he does not think it is a good idea. He does appreciate the elegance of its creativity. He encourages that if we do take option 2 and make an opt in that we explicitly include in that opt verbiage that if you "opt out", we would encourage you to include rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation in some other way of your choosing so that the professor would feel comfortable being flexible, suggesting things on their own and maybe even encouraged to do so in a way that was not quite so destructive to their schedule.

Marietta Cameron asked Toby King to make those changes to the Sense of the Senate option 2.

Marietta Cameron said that she promised her colleagues that she would read the email that they sent so it could be in the minutes. Some things in these emails have been expressed; she does see something that was not expressed in this meeting. A colleague said:

"I cannot join a special meeting today. But I'd like to strongly voice opposition to taking a previously unscheduled day out of our semester with such little notice. Attendance has been my number one problem this semester, surely as a result of the continuing pandemic, and other stressors, but also due to what seems to be a continuing deterioration of norms regarding attendance, and the timely completion of work. I need a break as much as anyone else for sure, but removing a single Wednesday that has been addressed from our remaining class days will throw a terrible wrench into lab and class schedules. This will only further complicate the work of the faculty who are already working overtime to accommodate 20% of students missing every class and assignments as is. Thank you for your consideration."

"I would like to register my strong support for the day of rejuvenation proposed by our students. I say this as a person that teaches class that meets on Wednesdays; I also understand

the concerns raised by our colleagues on the forums. But I would suggest that we are ethically obliged to make necessary adjustments for a greater good, the timing of rest is not arbitrary. Providing respite is especially helpful when it is proximate to a community trauma, not three weeks later. Our students have proposed a reasonable strategy to acknowledge the pain of recent events and hopefully will take some of the edge off. I hope fervently that we will respond to them affirmatively.”

Sam Shepard wanted to speak on behalf of the Student Health Ambassadors. They support the Day of Rest and Rejuvenation. I think it would be very helpful and necessary for our students who have all four voiced burnout exhaustion.

Marietta Cameron asked if there was a motion to accept the friendly amendment to strike option 1 and accept option 2 with edits by Toby King. A motion was made and seconded. Marietta Cameron asked Lisa Sellers to strike option 1 from the Sense of the Senate.

Marietta Cameron read the resolution:

“So therefore be it resolved that the UNC Asheville Faculty Senate joins with our senior leadership in their call for support and solidarity for our students, faculty and staff within the UNC Asheville community by declaring Friday, April 1 2020, a Day of Rejuvenation and Renewal. On this day, we will ask faculty to excuse students from class activities. Faculty may opt to cancel classes if canceling classes produce onerous and burdensome. This is counter to the intentions of EC 1. Faculty are thus encouraged to engender rejuvenation and renewal in another way that they see fit.

Lauren Braswell asked to add one last thing and thank you for just being open to everything she has had to say today. As a student leader on this campus, she would like to remind the group that one of our core values is sustainability. She share part of her inauguration speech:

“This year is about being mindful and present. The changes we make now are going to welcome new and positive aspects of life and our fraternities, we are stepping forward not intending to take risks, but to take leaps of faith. We must all carry attributes of courage, motivation, imagination, and curiosity. By doing so, we continue to reconstruct a solid foundation that will allow us to achieve the goals and aspirations we set for ourselves and our community. There is plenty of opportunity for growth and expansion on all levels, but we must work together.”

Earlier, she felt like there was a divide happening and she does not want that. She is about unifying our community between peers, faculty, students and administration. She wants us on the same side so we all share the same goals.

Marietta Cameron relayed appreciation for Lauren Braswell’s comments and the Faculty Senate does appreciate her energy. We appreciate you bringing this request before us.

Marietta Cameron called for the vote.

Lisa Sellers relayed the vote results, “Sense of the Senate EC 1 passes without dissent.”

Marietta Cameron thanked her colleagues for staying and for their time and deliberation. She thanked our students for bringing this before Faculty Senate. She also thanked our senior leadership for their support.

III. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.