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COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING FACULTY ORGANIZATION (CEFO)

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 11:30 AM

Lunch available at 11:30 AM

EPIC G287

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The following individuals signed the attendance sheet:

Sid Alvis, Yawo Amengonu, Yamilka Baez-Rivera, Jonathan Beaman, Jaime Berez, Cathy Blat, Nan BouSaba, Nicole Braxtan,Aidan Browne, Shen-En Chen, Jim Conrad, Michelle Demers, Gretchen Dietz, Mahmoud Dinar, Terence Fagan, Kosta Falaggis, Wei Fan, John Hall, Meg Harkins, Mohamad-Ali Hasan, Tao Hong, Simon Hsiang, Christoph Kossack, Lisa Lattinmore, Kevin Lawton, Churlzu Lim, Kevin Lindsay, Dipankar Maity, Glen Moglen, Edward Morse, John Nettles, David Newell, Jaewon Oh, Ertunga Ozelkan, Belinda Parker, Jeff Raquet, William Saunders, Steve Schmid, Ron Smelser, Kamia Smith, Stuart Smith, Tyler Stover, Mei Sun, Brett Tempest, Lufti Tunc, Regina Vrikkis, Cory Wang, Dave Weggel, Qiuming Wei, Matthew Whelan, Wesley Williams, Terry Xu, HaiTao Zhang

(53 attendees)

AGENDA:

1. Welcome from CEFO President Jim Conrad

CEFO president Jim Conrad initiated the meeting at 11:38 AM. He swiftly moved to review the agenda, which was unanimously approved without modifications.

2. Minutes from the last CEFO meeting (February 26, 2024)

CEFO Secretary Kosta Falaggis presented the minutes from the last CEFO meetings. He confirmed the distribution of the minutes from the February 26, 2024, meeting. He received one comment from a faculty member who was missing from the list of attendees. He made that correction, and noted no other comments were received. Because there were no objections to the minutes, the minutes were approved as presented.

3. Short remarks from CEFO President Jim Conrad

CEFO President Jim Conrad emphasized the importance of shared governance at the university and college levels during his opening remarks. He reminded attendees of the constitutional mandate for regular meetings, noting the commitment to continue this practice into the next academic year, though the exact number of meetings would depend on the workload. He highlighted upcoming discussions on an open access policy, which had received some feedback but not significant opposition, and mentioned it would soon be voted on by the faculty council. This policy, once approved, would become mandatory for the faculty.

President Conrad also touched on the decision to defer discussions on the honors program to a later meeting to allow for a more comprehensive review, particularly considering its potential integration with the Common First Year curriculum. Additionally, he announced upcoming CEFO elections, with positions for Secretary and President-elect soon to be open for nominations. He encouraged faculty

involvement in various university and college committees, noting the importance of these roles in governance.

The update concluded with a reminder for faculty to stay engaged and consider participating in upcoming elections or serving on committees, underscoring the importance of faculty involvement in shaping the academic and administrative landscape of the university.

4. **Deans Update presented by Dean Robert Keynton (with CFY update by Brett Tempest, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs)**

Dean Robert Keynton opened his update by acknowledging the faculty's presence and expressing appreciation for their efforts during a busy semester. He then provided an update on the Common First Year (CFY) initiative, confirming that the structure and format had been approved by the faculty, as communicated earlier via email. The dean announced that Brett Tempest would lead the next phase of the CFY, which involves forming new committees to move the project from planning to implementation. He clarified that the focus at this stage would not be on revising the already decided topics but rather on driving forward with the implementation, emphasizing innovation and creativity in course development.

The dean expressed the ambition for these courses to not only enhance the appeal of the university to prospective students but also to support current students in their academic journey. The goal, he highlighted, was to establish these courses as a national model of educational excellence. With these points made, he handed over to Brett Tempest to further discuss the specifics of the upcoming committees.

Brett Tempest then gave update on the CFY:

Brett Tempest elaborated on the organizational structure for the committees that will steer the Common First Year (CFY) program into its next phase. He clarified that there is no hierarchical order to how the committees are structured or presented but outlined several specialized groups to address different aspects of the program's implementation:

- Logistics and Resources Group: This committee is tasked with addressing the logistical challenges associated with the CFY program, such as arranging for specialized classroom spaces and managing the logistics of potentially team-taught classes. This involves coordinating shared responsibilities across different departments, ensuring that the practical needs of delivering the CFY courses are met efficiently. Each course team will be represented in this group by one member who will articulate and advocate for the specific logistical needs of their course as the program develops.
- Input from former Common First Year Committee: Previously, this committee included both the undergraduate program directors and members from the College Faculty Organization (CFO). Going forward, it will consist solely of the undergraduate program directors, ensuring a streamlined approach while retaining essential decision-making capabilities. To preserve the continuity and institutional knowledge from the program's initial phase, Aiden Browne will remain an active member of this committee.
- Subject Coordination Teams: Two specific coordination teams are established to enhance the integration of critical subjects within the CFY curriculum:
  - The first team focuses on aligning the math and physics components more effectively, with Matt and Aiden tasked with leading this coordination effort.

o The second team, involving Glenn and Ola, is responsible for synchronizing the civil engineering and chemistry curricula. This effort recognizes the interdependencies of these disciplines and aims to create a cohesive learning experience across these areas.

Brett Tempest's detailed explanation of these committees underscores the complexity of implementing the CFY program and highlights the collaborative framework designed to address various educational and logistical challenges. This structure aims to foster a coordinated effort across departments and disciplines to ensure the CFY's successful integration into the university's broader educational goals.

Brett Tempest further detailed the structure and objectives for the development teams associated with the Common First Year (CFY) program. Each course within the CFY will have its own development team consisting of one representative from each department. This inclusive approach ensures that every departmental perspective is considered in the course development process. These teams are tasked with submitting curriculum proposals not only for the new courses but also for any necessary adjustments to existing departmental curricula to accommodate the CFY. All proposals need to be finalized and submitted by September as part of a detailed timeline established for the CFY rollout.

Looking ahead, Tempest outlined an immediate plan to form these committees. An email recruitment drive was set to commence, inviting faculty members to sign up for one of four committees, with options for indicating their preference. The aim is to balance committee compositions appropriately, ensuring diverse departmental representation.

Additionally, a significant emphasis was placed on fostering innovation and creativity through the CFY's curriculum development. To facilitate this, a two-day workshop termed the "Brains on Fire" workshop is scheduled for May. This event is designed to integrate "key themes" like entrepreneurship and making into the CFY, with speakers such as Meg Harkins on entrepreneurship in education and Terrence Fagan on developing a makerspace. This workshop aims to transform the CFY into a national model of first-year programs, attracting and retaining students.

The workshop is intended to occur during what was referred to as Institute Week, the period after final grades is submitted. Participation in this workshop may be incentivized with a stipend, the amount of which is yet to be determined. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to engage faculty creatively in the development of the CFY, ensuring the program's success and alignment with broader educational trends and needs.

Robert Keynton continued with his update:

The Dean provided an update emphasizing the need for integrating advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the curriculum, reflecting on discussions from a workshop attended by colleagues. He highlighted that other universities are already incorporating AI, underlining the urgency for our institution to follow suit to ensure students are well-prepared for emerging technological fields.

Additionally, the Dean shared progress in the specific area of curriculum development related to chemistry and civil engineering. A new, separate course specifically designed to meet the needs of civil engineering students is being developed in collaboration with the Chemistry Department. This initiative has reached an agreement in principle and has received approval to proceed, though some details are still being finalized.

The Dean continued his update by highlighting key recruitment and staffing initiatives aimed at strengthening the university's engagement and support for incoming students. He announced successful hires, including an in-state recruiter and a community college recruiter, signaling a targeted approach

to enhancing student outreach. Additionally, interviews are underway for two full-time professional academic advisors within the Office of Student Diversity and Success (OSDS), explicitly geared towards supporting the Common First Year and broader first-year experiences.

He also mentioned the preparation of a job description for an engineering education position within OSDS, further underscoring the department's commitment to educational excellence. A significant organizational change is underway with plans to move recruitment activities under the dean's office, led by Brett, to centralize and streamline these efforts, though the details of this new structure are still being finalized. Nevertheless, wanted to make sure to emphasize, that both the Chancellor and the Provost said that we are all of us are responsible for recruitment and enrollment.

Highlighting the importance of community and personalized engagement in recruitment, the Dean shared positive feedback received from a prospective family. This feedback praised the welcoming and personable nature of the university's community, as experienced during a campus tour and open house. Such interactions, he noted, significantly influence prospective students' decisions, with the family in question placing the university as their top choice due to the positive impressions formed during their visit.

The Dean highlighted the university's distinctive, personable approach to student engagement, particularly during open houses, contrasting it with other institutions like NC State, which some found less welcoming. He shared other positive feedback from prospective students and their families, who appreciated the warm and genuine interactions during their campus visits.

He then shifted to discuss significant administrative changes affecting the graduate school. Due to the growth in the graduate student body—from about 30 to over 360 supported by the grant assistance for students (GAS) program—the existing funding levels proved insufficient, creating a substantial shortfall. To address this, the university will now require full out-of-state tuition on grants to offset these deficits. Additionally, all PhD graduate stipends will be increased by $1,500 to cover mandatory fees, a measure designed to equalize the net benefit to students after taxes. The Dean expressed concerns about these financial changes, noting they would increase overall costs to the university and its colleges. He emphasized ongoing efforts to negotiate these changes to minimize financial impact while maintaining support for graduate students. The Dean discussed efforts to address financial challenges related to changes in federal guidelines affecting graduate funding. He expressed a desire to revert the required stipend increase from $1,500 back to $957, which was the original cost of the fees being covered. This change had led to a 60% increase in financial commitments per student, significantly impacting the college's and department's budgeting. He noted that even seemingly minor cost increases could affect their ability to fund other resources, such as postdoctoral positions or additional supplies. Although not optimistic, he mentioned that attempts were being made to negotiate these terms with the relevant authorities.

Additionally, the Dean updated on developments in philanthropy, highlighting successful negotiations with an industry partner for a major gift, which was awaiting final approval from their headquarters. He also mentioned ongoing discussions with another local company interested in supporting university projects and programs. These potential partnerships were positioned as promising, with formal announcements pending official agreements. The Dean emphasized the importance of caution and confidentiality until these negotiations were finalized and officially confirmed.

5. **Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network (KEEN) (presented by Meg Harkins, Associate Professor)**

Associate Professor Meg Harkins focused her update on the strategic integration of the KEEN initiative, which aims to blend traditional engineering education with an entrepreneurial mindset. KEEN, backed by the Kern Family Foundation, emphasizes not just imparting technical skills but also fostering a mindset that enables students to apply these skills innovatively to solve problems and add value. This approach aims to differentiate the university's graduates from those of other institutions by embedding a proactive and problem-solving approach in their educational journey.

She highlighted that Engineering Unleashed, KEEN's platform, provides faculty with extensive resources to help transform their teaching methods. These resources are designed to make engineering education more engaging and practical, with ready-to-use tools including lesson plans, grading rubrics, and class slides. These materials are complemented by access to a community of educators who share insights and adaptations of the resources, enhancing peer support and collaboration.

During her presentation, Meg Harkins announced a critical upcoming meeting intended to solidify the faculty's commitment to adopting KEEN's methodologies. This meeting is crucial as the success of the partnership with KEEN hinges on broad-based faculty support, beyond mere administrative endorsement. She stressed the importance of faculty participation in demonstrating to KEEN representatives, particularly Doug Melton who plans to visit, that there is a strong, institution-wide commitment to this innovative educational approach.

Meg Harkins also mentioned the "golden tickets," which are opportunities for faculty to attend KEEN workshops fully funded. These workshops are aimed at further educating faculty members about KEEN's methods and integrating these into the university's curriculum. The expectation is that these experiences will enrich the faculty's teaching practices and help them implement new ideas into the common first-year courses and beyond.

She concluded by encouraging faculty to actively participate in next week's meeting and to sign up on the Engineering Unleashed platform to explore and utilize the available resources. This engagement is seen as pivotal in ensuring that the initiative gains the necessary momentum and support within the university.

After Meg Harkins' presentation on the KEEN initiative, there was a brief Q&A session where some faculty members sought clarification about what KEEN actually is. The discussion highlighted that KEEN, supported by the Kern Family Foundation—a philanthropic organization that earned its wealth through manufacturing generators—aims to enhance engineering education. The foundation believes that engineering education can be improved by making it more engaging, thus preparing students to be proactive and skilled problem solvers who are motivated to learn and succeed in their careers.

The term "KEEN" stands for Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network, and it focuses on instilling an entrepreneurial mindset in engineering students. This mindset encourages students to think creatively and innovatively about problems, which is a skill highly valued in the professional world. The KEEN network provides resources through the "Engineering Unleashed" platform, where educators can access a wealth of materials to integrate into their courses. These resources include detailed teaching materials developed by other educators which can be directly implemented or adapted to enhance the existing curriculum.

The conversation concluded with an encouragement for the faculty to attend a subsequent meeting where they could meet Doug Melton from KEEN and learn more about integrating these resources and approaches into their teaching. This meeting is seen as an opportunity to further understand and commit to the KEEN philosophy and its potential impact on the university's engineering program.

6. Leadership Academy presented (Professor Sid Alvis)

Sid Alvis initiated his presentation by emphasizing the unique position of the College of Engineering's Leadership Academy compared to other universities. He elaborated on the Engineering Leadership Academy's structure, designed specifically for rising sophomores and juniors. This two-year program consists of multiple modules, including three off-campus and one on-campus session, facilitated by both faculty and industry executives to merge theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

Sid Alvis dove into the curriculum details, which encompass team building, communication, ethics, values, strategic planning, and critical thinking. He highlighted a recent module on crucial conversations sponsored by Framatome, illustrating the program's relevance and immediate application to current industry standards.

Turning to recruitment and admissions, Alvis noted the academy's goal to enroll about 30 students annually, though typically only about 24 complete it due to natural attrition. He detailed the eligibility criteria: applicants must be studying engineering or engineering technology, maintain a minimum GPA of 2.75, secure two non-family recommendation letters, and pass an interview. He urged faculty to identify and recommend potential candidates who could significantly benefit from this advanced training, with applications opening soon.

The discussion shifted to the objectives of the program, where he emphasized its focus on developing adaptable leadership styles and emotional intelligence. This preparation aims to bridge the typical communication gaps found in engineering roles within the industry, thereby preparing students not only to lead teams but also to manage and supervise effectively.

He closed his update by stressing the importance of faculty involvement in student selection and the promotional efforts for the academy. He also mentioned "Niner Nation Gives," a related fundraising event designed to build community support and enhance various university initiatives, including the Leadership Academy. He concluded by reiterating the critical role of well-prepared leaders in their professional and community engagements, underscoring the academy's contribution to enhancing the College of Engineering's educational offerings.

7. Open Access Policy presented by Jim Conrad

Jim Conrad brought up the topic of the proposed open access policy, a subject he had previously solicited feedback on via email due to its upcoming discussion in the faculty executive council. He presented the main elements of the policy, notably its requirement for faculty to grant UNC Charlotte the rights to make their scholarly articles publicly available as part of their employment conditions.

The discussion that ensued centered on clarifying what "making available" meant. Concerns were raised about the implications for faculty who might not comply, with Jim Conrad seeking clarification on what consequences such non-compliance could entail.

One faculty member expressed confusion over the terms used in the policy, particularly how it would interact with existing copyright laws.

Another faculty member highlighted potential conflicts with publishers like IEEE, which maintain copyrights over their publications. Jim pointed out the lack of clear answers he had received when querying these aspects with the policy makers, emphasizing the need for clarity especially in terms of copyright ownership. The discussion broadened to consider the policy's alignment with federal open access mandates for publicly funded research, yet concerns remained about its broader application and the implications for privately funded research.

Another faculty member interjected, worrying about how the policy would handle intellectual property such as patents and the broader ramifications for academic freedom. This sentiment was echoed by others, with one pointing out the risks of adopting a policy that seemed to conflict with established academic and publishing practices.

As the debate continued, faculty discussed the practical steps of implementing such a policy, questioning how it would affect their daily academic duties and the potential legal entanglements. The conversation turned technical as they dissected the policy's language, seeking to understand the precise obligations it would impose.

In an effort to move forward, Jim suggested that more detailed information and guidance were crucial before any adoption could be considered. The faculty agreed on the need for a more thorough examination of the policy's implications. This culminated in a collective call for further study, reflecting a consensus on approaching the policy with caution until more definitive information could be provided.

The meeting closed with a motion for further study and a clearer explanation of the policy, emphasizing the faculty's commitment to maintaining both the integrity and accessibility of their scholarly work while navigating the complexities of open access requirements.

The following motion: "CEFO recommend further study before adoption and suggests more detailed instructions on execution and copyright ownership of this policy."

The motion was unanimously adopted.
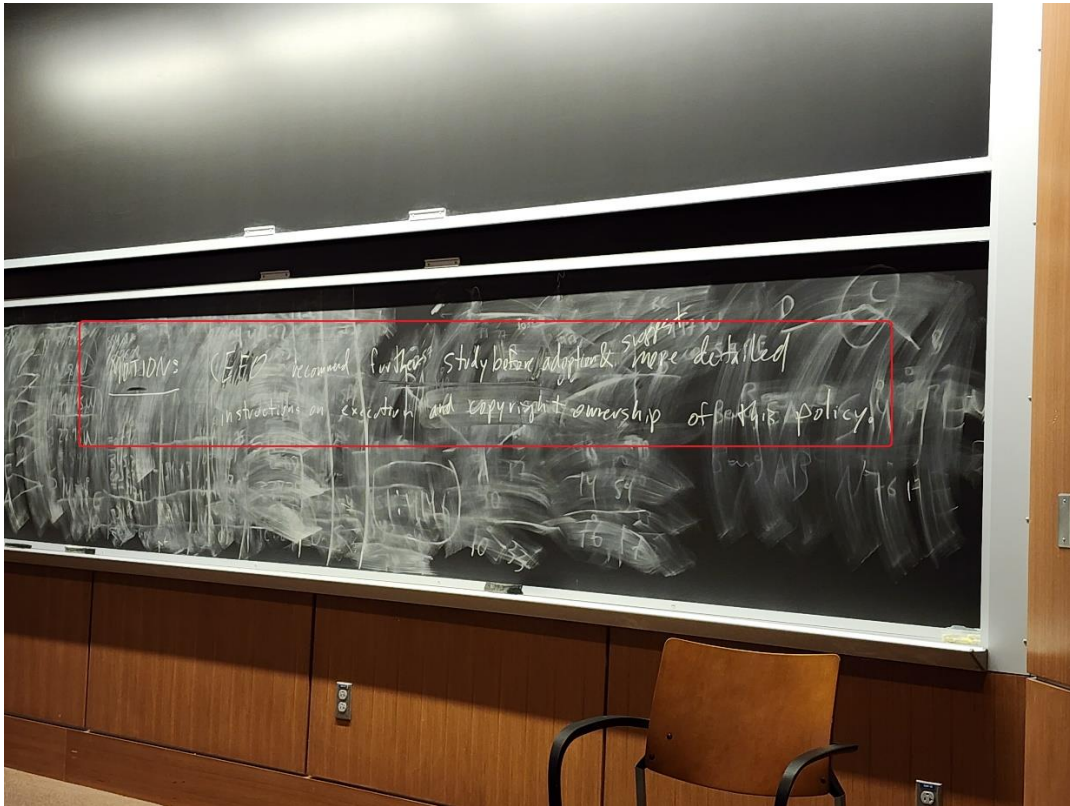
8. Changes to the Tenure Policy presented by Aidan Browne

Aidan Browne updated the faculty on revisions to the tenure policy that were pending approval. He described the updates as largely procedural, noting that they were intended to align with system office mandates issued over the past two years, some of which had not yet been fully integrated into local policies.

He outlined the key changes in the tenure policy:

- The removal of a list that specified discriminatory statuses as impermissible grounds for tenure decisions.
- The addition of provisions that make it impermissible to base tenure decisions on any other violations of law.
- The elimination of the concept of "personal malice" from tenure procedures, a change aimed at clarifying the grounds on which decisions are made.

Additionally, the revised policy would replace the term "serious sanctions" with "disciplinary discharge, suspension, or demotion" throughout the tenure documents. It also defined "neglect of duty" and "misconduct" more explicitly, granting the Chancellor and the Provost the authority to place faculty on leave without prior challenge — a significant increase in administrative power.

Aidan expressed some confusion over the timing and implementation of these changes, revealing that upon reviewing policies at NC State and Chapel Hill, he found similar language already incorporated, suggesting some of the updates were overdue. He had reached out to the system office for clarification on when these policies were expected to be enacted, learning that they were supposed to have been implemented by all universities by the previous summer.

Despite the formal vote scheduled for the policy in Charlotte, Aidan indicated that the system office considered these changes already effective. He concluded the update by questioning the necessity of distributing detailed documents on the policy revisions, given their apparent inevitability, and queried the faculty on their desire to receive more information, ultimately deciding against further distribution based on the faculty's response.

9. Closing

The meeting concluded after all agenda items were addressed. The meeting adjourned at 12:40 PM.