**LSUS FACULTY SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**April 16, 2025**

**11:00 A.M.**

**Webster Room, University Center**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** 11:04 a.m. President Williams called the meeting to order.

**II. PRESENT:** Senator Cassandra Williams, Senator Zaidi, Senator Gifford, Senator Saleh, Senator Yeh, Senator Dunnavent, Senator Zhao, Senator Siska, Senator Shepherd, Senator Widmeyer, Senator Mikaberidze. **Absent:** Senator Felice Williams, Senator Si Chen, Senator White, Senator Kim, Senator Noor. A quorum was present.

**III.** **COMMENTS:**  President Williams opened the floor for comments from non-senators who signed up to comment, under prescribed time limits. Per parliamentary procedure, only those present in the room may comment. No one signed up for comments.

President Williams asked for a roll to be taken and asked senators to introduce themselves.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Senator Dunnavent moved to approve; Senator Gifford seconded. Motion approved.

**V. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

President Williams opened the meeting by encouraging faculty to attend the upcoming May graduation ceremonies. She commended the strong faculty turnout at the December commencement, which saw a record number of participants.

President Williams invited the administrators to present their reports.

**V. ADMINISTRATORS’ REPORTS**

**Chancellor:**

Dr. Robert Smith began his report with an update on student enrollment at LSUS. At the previous meeting, he had projected that enrollment might surpass 11,000 students; while the final count fell just short of that mark, enrollment continues to grow steadily. The university has been actively working to sustain this momentum, including outreach efforts in Baton Rouge and ongoing conversations with elected officials to support further growth. In contrast, many institutions are facing significant enrollment challenges, with some experiencing declines of up to 50% in recent years. LSUS is performing well - and remains committed to doing even better. The administration is actively seeking support from legislators to secure funding for campus facility improvements, including a much-needed upgrade to the biology laboratory. In addition, administrators are exploring potential opportunities for federal funding to support these efforts.

Dr. Smith expressed his appreciation to the faculty and staff for their hard work in preparing for the SACSCOC site visit, which took place in March. He noted that while the visit went well, several recommendations are anticipated, including the need to hire more full-time faculty and to implement stronger oversight of current overload practices. He then addressed the ongoing hiring freeze, clarifying that there are actually two separate freezes in effect. One, instituted by LSU, is tied to recent funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health. The other, issued by the state governor, directly impacts LSUS and has resulted in some positions remaining unfilled for the summer and fall semesters. Despite these restrictions, Dr. Smith emphasized the administration’s commitment to navigating the process and securing the necessary approvals from Baton Rouge. He underscored the urgency of certain faculty searches, especially with the summer term fast approaching. He encouraged department chairs and deans to proceed with future searches in a timely and efficient manner, noting that some of the affected searches were delayed in starting and now face the risk of suspension.

He completed his report by encouraging the faculty to attend the LPC meeting later in the day and the commencement ceremonies in mid-May.

Senator Gifford inquired whether the full SACSCOC report would be made available to the faculty and sought clarification regarding the anticipated recommendation concerning faculty overloads. Dr. Smith responded that the full report is not yet available, as SACSCOC is still in the process of finalizing it and the university must first address certain outstanding issues. However, he assured the senators that the administration will share summaries and key findings with the faculty as they become available.

Senator Mikaberidze asked for more details regarding the scope of the capital improvements Dr. Smith had briefly mentioned in his remarks. Dr. Smith responded that the planned projects include the construction of a bridge connecting the campus to the Pilot’s Point apartments, a new boathouse for the LSU Shreveport Bass Fishing Team, and the opening of a Business Engagement Center.

**Provost:**

Dr. Helen Taylor offered brief remarks emphasizing the importance of initiating faculty searches early and conducting them efficiently. She reserved her comments on faculty overloads and compensation for a later discussion focused on observations and concerns.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business.

**VII. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

The Faculty Senate conducted elections for the Executive Committee, which is composed of six elected officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Parliamentarian, and two Members-at-Large.

Senator Felice Williams was nominated for a Member-at-Large position and elected unanimously.

Senator Gifford was also nominated for a Member-at-Large position and elected unanimously.

Senator Widmeyer was nominated for the position of Parliamentarian and elected unanimously.

Senator Mikaberidze was nominated for the position of Secretary and elected unanimously.

Senator Zaidi was nominated for the position of Vice President and elected unanimously.

Senator Cassandra Williams was nominated for the position of President of the Faculty Senate. However, Article 6 of the Senate by-laws limits Executive Committee members to no more than two consecutive terms (six years) of continuous service, after which they must step down for at least one year before becoming eligible again. Following a brief discussion, Senator Dunnavent moved to override this term limit due to the absence of other candidates. The motion was seconded and approved. Senators then voted on Senator Cassandra Williams’s candidacy, and she was elected President.

**VIII. OBSERVATIONS & CONCERNS:**

Senator Gifford raised concerns regarding reduced compensation for courses with low enrollment. This prompted a broader discussion among senators and Provost Taylor about base salary policies and the need for clear guidance on what constitutes low enrollment, as well as the implications for faculty whose courses consistently fall below enrollment thresholds.

Provost Taylor responded by clarifying that faculty base salaries are determined by their employment contracts. She encouraged faculty members to review LSUS Policy Statement 2.33.04 on compensation, which outlines the relevant procedures and expectations. Provost Taylor emphasized that LSUS does not reduce a faculty member’s base salary due to low enrollment. If a course is canceled for low enrollment, the university first seeks alternative solutions - such as reassigning a course from an adjunct instructor or providing the faculty member with a departmental assignment - to fulfill the contractual teaching load. She further explained that LSUS is obligated to cancel any summer course with fewer than eight enrolled students unless it is offered at a reduced rate. “We always try to find a compromise to ensure that our course rotations remain intact and that students can continue progressing through their programs,” she noted. President Williams sought clarification on the minimum number of students needed for a class. Provost replied that “the number eight is a negotiable number if justified by student needs.” Dr. Taylor also announced that the Office of Academic Affairs is developing a new policy on faculty work overload. The goal is establishing clear, cohesive guidelines that articulate expectations and ensure consistency across departments.

Senator Dunnavent asked for clarification if the AP classes are affected by low-enrollment restrictions, to which the Provost replied that they are not.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:** Senator Mikaberidze motionedto adjourn the meeting; motion was seconded and approved. The meeting wasadjourned at 12:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander Mikaberidze

Secretary