

University Faculty Meeting

August 30, 2024

Agenda:

1. Remarks by President Chris Roellke
2. Remarks by Provost Elizabeth Skomp
3. Remarks by Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage
4. Presentation and recommendations to rename the 3/2+1 Initiative as Hatter Ready (Tim Peter and Steven Smallpage) [Please see the Marketing Subgroup Report.]
5. Presentation and recommendations from FAR Task Force (Yiorgos Bakamitsos)

The meeting was called to order at 12:00pm by Provost Skomp.

Provost Skomp welcomed the faculty, outlining the agenda for the session. She noted that the meeting would focus on key strategic initiatives, including updates on the 3/2+1 initiative and a report from the FAR Task Force. Provost Skomp also introduced President Christopher Roellke, who was greeted warmly by the attendees following his recent return to campus.

Remarks by President Chris Roellke:

President Christopher Roellke warmly welcomed the faculty, expressing his joy at SEEING everyone and extending a special welcome to both returning faculty and new colleagues. He shared his gratitude for the community's support during his recent eye surgeries, noting how the encouragement from faculty, staff, and students had significantly lifted his spirits. President Roellke praised the university's senior leadership team for their effective management during his absence, highlighting that the university not only maintained its operations but also made significant strides forward.

President Roellke highlighted key achievements, including the successful recruitment of a strong first-year class, improvements in campus facilities, and the groundbreaking of a new 305-bed residence hall. He expressed excitement about meeting his new students in his first-year seminar, emphasizing their eagerness to engage with the Stetson experience. He also previewed his upcoming annual report to the Board of Trustees.

Reflecting on his tenure, President Roellke acknowledged the challenges related to faculty and staff morale and shared governance when he first arrived at Stetson. He emphasized the importance of repairing these relationships to improve key indicators such as student persistence, retention, and success. The President outlined the university's strategic priorities, including enhancing student recruitment and retention, ensuring curricular relevance, and improving the first-year residential experience. He stressed that relationship-rich education, rooted in kindness and empathy, remains central to Stetson's mission.

President Roellke closed by addressing the broader challenges facing higher education, including declining enrollment, increased competition, and financial pressures. Despite these hurdles, he expressed confidence in Stetson's ability to thrive, thanks to strategic reforms and a strong focus on student-centered education. He reaffirmed his commitment to building a resilient and

successful university that will endure beyond his tenure, urging faculty to continue their exceptional work in promoting student success.

Remarks by Provost Elizabeth Skomp

Provost Elizabeth Skomp expressed excitement for the start of the fall semester and encouraged faculty to share their classroom innovations and experiences with her. She noted the upcoming fall census date on September 4 and commented on positive undergraduate and graduate enrollment trends on the DeLand campus.

The Provost introduced 24 new (or new to their role) faculty members across various schools and departments, as well as two new deans who have recently joined the university. She also announced the names of 13 faculty who were recently tenured and promoted to associate professor or promoted to professor. Those recognized received applause from their colleagues.

Provost Skomp outlined the meeting plans for the academic year, mentioning that university faculty meetings will continue with a mix of in-person and Zoom sessions. Two important April meetings will be focused on finance and compensation and will be designed to allow for more substantive discussions based on feedback. She also provided an update on the faculty compensation increases approved by the Board of Trustees, which will be implemented in the September payroll, emphasizing that compensation remains a top priority.

In addition, Provost Skomp discussed several Academic Affairs strategic priorities, including expanding collaborations between the College of Law and the DeLand campus; streamlining transfer pathways; integrating academics and career; ensuring a sustainable context for grantseeking; fostering collaboration among University institutes and centers; and promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. She mentioned the progress on the 3/2+1 initiative, with a pilot underway in preparation for full implementation in Fall 2025. She also shared that a task force will soon be convened to re-examine student evaluations of teaching.

Finally, Provost Skomp highlighted ongoing professional development opportunities related to Generative AI, including a Teaching with AI book group and programming offered by Dr. Kirsten Davis, the Provost's Faculty Fellow for Generative Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education. She shared that a team of Stetson faculty has been accepted to the AAC&U's National Institute on Generative A.I. Pedagogy and the Curriculum. She also noted her participation in the University of Chicago's inaugural Academic Freedom Institute and announced plans for two events in Spring 2025, a talk on free inquiry and expression and an event on institutional neutrality, funded by a modest grant from the University of Chicago.

Remarks by Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage

Provost Skomp introduced and welcomed Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage to the podium, expressing her hope for continued collegial collaboration and a commitment to shared governance in the upcoming year.

Chair Smallpage began by acknowledging the transition from the previous Senate Chair, Josh Rust, who has taken on the role of Pre-Law Director. Smallpage highlighted that the Faculty Senate has been traditionally reactive but is now moving toward a more proactive approach

under a renewed emphasis on shared governance. He outlined key initiatives for the year, including revisiting and reimagining the faculty governance proposal from 2014, addressing the academic calendar with a particular focus on spring break, and developing a faculty handbook to clarify responsibilities and support faculty orientation.

Smallpage also emphasized the Senate's commitment to advocating for competitive faculty compensation, noting recent progress and the need for continued improvement to retain faculty. He announced the formation of a task force to review Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) focusing on potential biases in the evaluation process. Additionally, he discussed plans to document the university's history by interviewing past faculty, with the aim of preserving institutional memory for future generations.

Presentation and recommendations to rename the 3/2+1 Initiative as Hatter Ready (Tim Peter and Steven Smallpage)

Following his Senate remarks, Smallpage, along with Tim Peter, co-chair of the 3/2+1 Steering Committee, provided an update on the initiative's progress. The focus was on rebranding the initiative, with the Marketing Subcommittee proposing "Hatter Ready" as the new name and "Immersive Curriculum" for internal use to describe specific program components. This rebranding aims to better market the initiative to prospective students.

The committee conducted a survey of faculty, staff, and students, which led to the selection of Hatter Ready as the most appealing and marketable name. The rebranding was informally endorsed by the faculty present through a show of hands. The Steering Committee emphasized that while the rebranding represents a significant step forward, there will be room for adjustments as the initiative is further developed.

Smallpage concluded with thanks to the Steering Committee, the Marketing Subcommittee, and the faculty for their participation in the discussion.

Presentation and recommendations from FAR Task Force

Dean Yiorgos Bakamitsos, chair of the Faculty Annual Review (FAR) Task Force, presented the group's progress on reviewing and streamlining the FAR form and process. Dean Bakamitsos outlined the work of the task force over the past year; he then introduced the task force members and emphasized their charge to clarify and simplify the FAR process to reduce the burden on faculty.

The task force began by reviewing the existing FAR document and conducting listening sessions across academic units. They also surveyed faculty and university administrators to gather feedback. The faculty survey, which received 88 responses, highlighted concerns about the time-consuming nature of the current FAR process. Faculty expressed a desire for limited or optional narratives, automation of the process, and the creation of an electronic database for faculty activities. The administrator survey, though smaller in scope, reflected a slightly more favorable view of the FAR process but still recognized its time-consuming nature.

Based on this feedback, the task force has proposed several changes to the FAR form and process. These included simplifying the form from four pages to two, reducing the need for extensive narratives in favor of more concise lists of activities and accomplishments, and imposing word limits on the narrative sections. The task force also recommended aligning the

FAR process with the tenure and promotion policy and developing a dynamic online portal to streamline data collection and reduce redundancy.

During the Q&A session, faculty inquired about streamlining the process for department chairs, the possibility of including a checklist for transparency, and the distinction between “Faculty Activity Report” and “Faculty Annual Review.” Dean Bakamitsos explained that the proposed changes aimed to balance efficiency with the need for meaningful reflection and documentation. He also addressed concerns about whether full professors, particularly those not seeking promotion, should complete the FAR annually, emphasizing the importance of maintaining an annual record of activities for accurate institutional reporting.

Dean Bakamitsos encouraged faculty to review the proposed changes, which would be shared via email, and to provide feedback by September 15. The task force will consider this feedback before finalizing their recommendations to the Provost.

Open Discussion and Announcements:

Roslyn Crowder, Chair of the Professional Development Committee, reminded faculty of upcoming deadlines for sabbatical and summer grant applications.

Adjournment

Provost Skomp adjourned the meeting with thanks to all participants, and wished everyone a restful and enjoyable holiday weekend.

The meeting adjourned at 1:13pm.