

University Faculty Meeting

October 4, 2024

Agenda:

1. Comments from President Chris Roellke
2. Comments from Provost Elizabeth Skomp
3. Comments from Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage
4. National Survey of Student Engagement: Preparing for November NSSE Discussion (Colin Hilton-MacFarlane, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness)
5. Enrollment update and discussion (Jeff Gates, Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing)

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

Provost Skomp welcomed the faculty, outlined the agenda for the session, and then introduced President Chris Roellke.

Comments from President Chris Roellke

President Roellke began by sharing an overview of a fall survey he conducts with his first-year students. Students were asked three key questions: how Stetson exceeded their expectations, how it fell short, and what they would prioritize if they were president for a day. The positive feedback highlighted faculty engagement, mental health support, accessible resources, and an inclusive community. President Roellke praised the faculty for fostering a relationship-rich environment that positively affects students' experiences.

He also noted areas in which students felt Stetson had fallen short, such as campus dining, parking, and dormitory conditions. Roellke reassured the faculty that the university is actively addressing these concerns, noting that a new residence hall is under construction, and the addition of a Starbucks on campus in one step toward improving the dining experience.

He concluded by previewing the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting, where two plenary sessions will focus on academics and athletics. The first session, led by Provost Skomp, Jeff Gates, and Krista Bofill, will discuss marketing strategies for academic programs and the Hatter Ready initiative, while the second, led by Athletic Director Ricky Ray, will address the future of intercollegiate athletics at Stetson and the financial pressures faced by the athletics department.

Comments from Provost Elizabeth Skomp

Provost Elizabeth Skomp opened with comments about the university's response to Hurricane Helene. She acknowledged the difficulties faced by members of the Stetson community, especially students and staff at the College of Law, and she assured faculty that the administration is monitoring the situation and providing support to those affected.

Provost Skomp also noted the formation of the new Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) Task Force. The task force, comprised of Holley Lynch, Chadley Ballantyne, Jon-Michael Carrick,

Ken McCoy (fall 2024), Julie Schmitt (Spring 2025), Robert Askew, and Mary Ellen Oslick (chair) will review the current SET instrument and propose revisions based on best practices and scholarly research.

Provost Skomp also announced the formation of a Faculty Program Review Committee to review the proposal for a new Medical Health and Humanities minor. This proposal will be the first to go through the new Academic Program Initiation Process approved in May 2022. The review committee will consist of Raisa Ankeny, Mike Eskenazi, Asal Johnson, Josh Rust, and AJ Scarlato, who will evaluate the program based on input from faculty stakeholders.

Provost Skomp also highlighted the ongoing development of a grant sustainability action plan, spurred by the 2023-24 work of a focused inquiry group (FIG) led by Lynn Kee. This initiative aims to streamline grant-seeking processes at the university and improve support for faculty applying for grants. Finally, she provided an update on the Hatter Ready initiative, noting the administration's focus on preparing for its broad implementation in 2025-26 and the importance of marketing the program effectively to prospective students and families.

Comments from Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage

Faculty Senate Chair Steven Smallpage provided several key updates. He emphasized the Senate's commitment to ensuring that the revised SET instrument measures what faculty intend. He noted the importance of faculty involvement in this process and the need to align the evaluation tool with teaching and learning goals.

Smallpage also addressed faculty concerns about compensation, commending the administration for its efforts to bring salaries closer to the median. However, he stressed the need for transparency in how compensation decisions are made and called for greater faculty input in shaping salary policies. He also noted ongoing discussions around salary equity and compression, which affect faculty across different departments and ranks.

For the Hatter Ready initiative, Smallpage affirmed to faculty that the assessment and evaluation of immersive experiences will be embedded within existing structures. He also shared plans to develop a comprehensive FAQ guide to support faculty as they implement immersive learning experiences within their departments.

Lastly, Smallpage provided updates on faculty governance reform, noting that the Policies and Procedures Committee is working to revise the 2014 shared governance plan. This proposed reform aims to streamline faculty service obligations, reduce the number of committees, and allow faculty greater input in decision-making processes.

National Survey of Student Engagement: Preparing for November NSSE Discussion (Colin Hilton-MacFarlane, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness)

Colin Hilton-MacFarlane, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, provided an introduction to the upcoming discussion on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), scheduled for the November faculty meeting. The NSSE survey, conducted

in spring 2024, focuses on student behaviors, learning experiences, and the campus environment. Stetson's first-year and senior students participated, with a response rate of 34.7%.

Hilton-MacFarlane outlined the university's three comparison groups: organizational peers, aspirational peers, and southeastern private universities. He encouraged faculty to review the NSSE reports available on the Institutional Research website and submit questions or topics for discussion ahead of the November meeting. The detailed results, including areas of student engagement, will help guide future discussions on improving student outcomes and enhancing the campus environment.

Enrollment update and discussion (Jeff Gates, Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing)

Jeff Gates, Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing, presented an overview of enrollment at the university. Application volume has increased, though the university has not yet returned to pre-pandemic enrollment levels. First-time in college (FTIC) enrollment rose by 8%, with a 47% increase in transfer students. However, Gates noted challenges with maintaining a sustainable discount rate, particularly for transfer students.

SVP Gates discussed changes to financial aid structures, including reducing need-based aid for international students and streamlining aid packages for domestic students. The university is focusing on increasing net tuition revenue while managing the discount rate effectively. One key challenge has been adjusting aid for international students to ensure sustainability while continuing to internationalize the campus.

Gates also highlighted efforts to strengthen transfer recruitment, including targeted marketing campaigns at institutions like UCF and New College of Florida. He expressed optimism about the university's progress but acknowledged that more work is needed to achieve long-term financial goals.

In conclusion, Gates shared positive news about the university's retention rate, which improved to 78.2%, returning to pre-pandemic levels. He credited faculty and staff for their efforts in supporting student success but noted that maintaining this retention level will require continued attention to student needs and financial aid adjustments.

The meeting concluded with an open Q&A session. Faculty raised concerns about international student recruitment, the impact of financial aid changes, and the need for greater transparency around enrollment strategies. Some attendees expressed unease about the shift away from need-based aid for international students and called for initiatives to offset these changes, such as scholarships for students from underserved regions.

Gates addressed these concerns, acknowledging the temporary nature of the aid adjustments and outlining future plans to support international students. He also encouraged faculty to share ideas for new pipeline programs and cohort-based experiences to enhance student recruitment and retention.

At the end of a productive discussion, all attendees were encouraged to continue engaging in the enrollment and recruitment process.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:15pm.