An Expression of No Confidence in Faculty Senate Practices, with Recommendations for Reform

Sponsored by Inessa Bazayev, Margo Brault, Jin-Woo Choi, Robert Mann, Helen Regis, Jeffrey Roland, Daniel Tirone and Meredith Veldman

Whereas attempts underway across the United States to abolish tenure, limit faculty’s right to freedom of speech, and eradicate the principles and practices of shared university governance highlight the importance of the LSU Faculty Senate serving as a strong and effective advocate for faculty interests and concerns; and

Whereas a series of formal and informal changes made over the last several years to the policies and practices of the Faculty Senate have centralized decision-making and diminished faculty representation, allowing for the exercise of authority without accountability; and

Whereas certain members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) itself were excluded from communications regarding proposed changes to the LSU Board of Supervisors Regulations that would have fundamentally altered shared governance at the university, and this information additionally was kept from members of the Faculty Senate and Council, even though it was clear that the actions of the Board of Supervisors were likely undertaken as retaliation against the faculty for its activism in assuring COVID planning during the summer of 2021; and

Whereas the erosion of Faculty Senate practices has been obvious in the disorganization of the last several meetings and led to general dissatisfaction with the manner in which recent meetings have been conducted; and

Whereas these instances include the inappropriate use of Executive Session at the FSEC meeting on November 10, 2021, and at the meeting of the full Senate on November 15, 2021, actions that subjected the Senate to criticism on legal and principled grounds1 and exposed members to potential fines;2 and

Whereas an anonymous Resolution (21-11) was added to the agenda for the Senate meeting on November 15, 2021 in violation of the requirements described in the Senate’s Constitution and Bylaws;

Therefore, be it resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate calls for the creation of an ad hoc committee composed of five Senators to be elected by their peers to review current Senate Constitution & Bylaws, policies and practices and to present a series of recommendations for revisions and improvements to the Senate no later than its March meeting; and

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2 http://legis.la.gov/Legis/Law.aspx?d=99299
Therefore, be it further resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate is to immediately implement or observe the following best practices, many of which are already part of its guidelines, while awaiting the recommendations of the ad hoc committee:

1. The FSEC is to operate according to established Senate rules and general parliamentary procedure and is to set and approve the agenda for Faculty Senate meetings via deliberation and a vote by all eligible FSEC members, in accordance with the requirements laid out in the Constitution and Bylaws, during their normal meetings.

2. Time limits are to be strictly enforced as follows: a three-minute limit for public comments; ten minutes for presentations by outside speakers followed by a five-minute question-and-answer period; ten minutes for committee reports; and for the President’s Report to be circulated in written format to the Senate in advance of the minutes with a ten-minute in-meeting presentation of the most pressing issues followed by a five-minute question-and-answer period.

3. All FSEC members and Senators must be immediately notified of any potential changes to any LSU Regulation, Policy Statement, Permanent Memorandum, or other standing practice or policy originating from inside or outside of the Senate.

4. The Senate is to be advised of all actions taken on its behalf by the FSEC at the earliest opportunity, in accordance with the requirements laid out in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Therefore, be it further resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate also directs the FSEC to undertake the following actions:

1. Investigate the possibility of retaining outside counsel to assist in the conduct of meetings, determining permissible meeting formats including the use of remote participation technologies, and for consultation on legal matters which may arise as part of Senate business, and to present their findings to the Senate at its February meeting.

2. Identify and adopt an easily accessible method of conducting votes that is compliant with ADA requirements and all other applicable laws.

Therefore, be it further resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate does not allow for resolutions to be sponsored anonymously; and

Therefore, be it further resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate rejects any efforts to constrain faculty voices or academic freedom in any way, and supports the right of faculty to participate in shared governance and advocate for their interests via all legal channels.
Appendix. **LSU journalism faculty condemns Faculty Senate’s expulsion of reporter**

The journalism faculty of LSU’s Manship School of Mass Communication today (Nov. 17) issued the following statement as a result of actions at Monday’s Faculty Senate meeting:

We the journalism faculty of LSU’s Manship School of Mass Communication condemn the Faculty Senate’s expulsion of a student reporter and members of the public from a crucial Senate meeting Monday. The reporter, from the Reveille student newspaper, was the only journalist present. The Senate failed its ethical obligation to set a good example for students when it endorsed doing the public’s business secretly. It also undoubtedly failed a legal obligation: The Louisiana Open Meetings Law requires “that public business be performed in an open and public manner.” Finally, the Senate’s action demonstrated remarkable contempt for the much-honored 134-year-old Reveille, whose alumni work for The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Advocate, POLITICO, CBS, NBC and other leading news organizations. Despite the Senate’s blatant move to avoid transparency, we will continue to teach future journalists that they, as representatives of the public, deserve access when state-funded institutions make important decisions.

Signed:

Leonard Apcar, Wendell Gray Switzer Endowed Chair in Media Literacy; professional-in-residence

Cindy Carter, Tiger TV advisor; professional-in-residence

Jerry Ceppos, William B. Dickinson Professor of Journalism and former dean of the Manship School

Roxanne Dill, instructor in journalism

Christopher Drew, Fred Jones Greer Jr. Endowed Chair in Media Business and Ethics; professional-in-residence

Jeff Gauger, Reveille adviser; professional-in-residence

John Maxwell Hamilton, Hopkins P. Breazeale Professor of Journalism and former dean of the Manship School

Robert Mann, Manship Professor of Journalism

William Mari, assistant professor of journalism

Ruth Moon, assistant professor of journalism

Tad Odell, professional-in-residence
Lisa Frazier Page, professional-in-residence

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