

Minutes
Bloomington Faculty Council
November 17, 2020

1. Due the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting occurred remotely, via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM by Provost Lauren Robel. The minutes from November 3, 2020 were approved with 100% of voting members in favor.
2. Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Eliza Pavalko offered a memorial resolution in honor of John Dyson.
3. Council President John Walbridge responded to a question from an undergraduate who asked whether the S/F grading option would again be made available to students this term. He reported that S/F grading was not currently under consideration, noting that, in his opinion, circumstances are different this term than they were in the spring, at least insofar as faculty and students understood the conditions under which instruction would take place from the semester's outset. He also observed that the pandemic is likely to continue for some time and emphasized the importance of endeavoring to return to some semblance of normalcy, despite the challenges we are all currently facing. President Walbridge's second order of business was to confer an Indiana University Bicentennial Medal upon Elizabeth Pear, Director of the Faculty Council Office, in recognition of her distinguished and distinctive service in support of the mission of the university. Past-Presidents Alex Tanford, Moira Marsh, Diane Henshel, President-Elect Marietta Simpson, and sitting President Walbridge all offered words of high praise for Pear and congratulated her on this well-deserved honor.
4. In recognition of our collective achievement having made it so successfully to the end of the in-person instruction phase of the semester, Provost Robel reported that she was "only going to talk about happy things." She began by reporting on recent presentations by members of this year's class of newly appointed Distinguished Professors. She continued with a report regarding IUB's innovative and highly successful use outdoor venues throughout the fall term, noting that, if anything good has come out of the pandemic, it may be our newly reinvigorated appreciation for the beauty and versatility of our campus, which has proven to be an extraordinary resource over the past several months, especially for students who are newly arrived and in search of ways to connect with one another. Provost Robel also fielded a question from the floor regarding a student petition in favor of the extension of the S/F grading option. She said she believed the Educational Policies Committee was in receipt of the petition and discussing it. She did note, however, that she was aware of significant concerns regarding S/F grading, including problems it could create for students who later seek admission to graduate and professional school programs. She also noted that only two institutions in the Big 10—Michigan State and Penn State—have chosen to extend the S/F grading option into the 2020-21 academic year. J Duncan, Co-Chair of the Educational Policies Committee, confirmed receipt of the petition and welcomed further input from various constituencies. Provost Robel then briefly entertained questions regarding issues related to DACA students, the global gateways, and the status of study abroad programs in future terms.

5. The Council then turned to a second reading of the proposed amendments to BL-ACA-D9, the Bylaws of the Bloomington Faculty Council. Professor Alex Tanford presented the matter on behalf of the Constitution and Rules Committee. As noted previously, the proposed amendments would alter the current process for filling vacant seats on the Council in several ways. The most significant of these would be to move from our current third-party nomination process to a self-nomination process. J Duncan expressed concern that the proposed amendments could result in the loss of candidates who are not inclined to self-nominate and encouraged increased outreach to faculty regarding the importance of serving on the Council. The measure carried by 100%.
6. The next item on the agenda was a set of proposed amendments to BL-ACA-H28, the policy on Faculty Instructional Responsibilities. J Duncan presented the proposal on behalf of the Educational Policies Committee. The proposed amendments would expand the definition of “early evaluation” to include instructor observations and feedback, in addition to “letter grades.” Duncan explained that the measure is intended to leverage the capabilities of the new Student Engagement Roster (SER) while also providing instructors with a way to offer meaningful feedback that is not tied to a particular percentage, which some instructors have difficulty calculating with any degree of accuracy prior to the early evaluation deadline. When asked what prompted the proposal, Duncan explained that the idea had originated with the Registrar and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, but noted that it was supported by the EPC.
7. Discussion of the proposed amendments to BL-ACA-H28 was then paused so that members could receive an update regarding Indiana University’s ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Stewart Cobine, Associate Vice President and Chief Audit Officer, reported on his office’s efforts to conduct a broad range of consultative reviews aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the university’s efforts in various “risk areas.” These include: the availability and use of PPE; cleaning protocols; physical distancing; compliance with occupancy guidelines; air filtration; employee training; and effective intra-institutional communication. He expects that his office will issue a report regarding its findings following the Thanksgiving break. Aaron Carroll, Professor of Pediatrics and Director of Surveillance and Mitigation for the COVID-19 Pandemic, discussed the university’s success in keeping infection rates comparatively low throughout the fall term. He also discussed several challenges we continue to face, including the fact that numbers across the state, and indeed across the nation, are increasingly worrisome.
8. Following the COVID-19 update, discussion returned briefly to the proposed amendments to BL-ACA-H28. Members received clarification that early evaluation is currently required for all freshman, all second-year students who are still in University Division, and all students enrolled in general education courses. This would remain the case under the terms of proposed amendments. Because this was a first reading of the measure, so no action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.
Colin R. Johnson, BFC Secretary