



University Council

To: President Jere W. Morehead

Re: Recommendations of the University Council from the November 18, 2020 Meeting

Document Number: 2020.11.18.07

Issue: A proposal from the Educational Affairs Committee for a resolution regarding faculty role in educational affairs and policies.

Discussion: There was an extensive discussion on the proposal.

Action: The vote was called, and the proposal was approved with 112 in favor, 46 against, and 18 abstentions.

Submitted by: *Fiona Liken*
Fiona Liken, Secretary

11/23/20
Date

- Approved
- Reconsider
- Vetoed (see attached explanation)
- Received

Jere W. Morehead
Jere W. Morehead, President


12/14/20
Date



December 15, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fiona Liken
Secretary, University Council

FROM: Jere W. Morehead
President 

RE: Recommendations of University Council from November 18, 2020 Meeting

Accompanying this memo are my signed responses to the recommendations of the University Council from the November 18, 2020 meeting.

I have elected to approve the Documents numbered 2020.11.18.01, 2020.11.18.02, 2020.11.18.03, 2020.11.18.04, 2020.11.18.05, 2020.11.18.06, 2020.11.18.10, and 2020.11.18.11.

I have elected to receive the Documents numbered 2020.11.18.07, 2020.11.18.08, and 2020.11.18.09. I respect the Council's right to express its views on matters of general educational policy and other issues impacting the general welfare of the University. While I endorse many of the views expressed by the Council in these resolutions, I have concerns about the implications of certain aspects of the resolutions.

As a longstanding member of the University of Georgia faculty, I fully recognize and appreciate the importance of faculty governance in decisions regarding educational policy. During the unique circumstances of the pandemic, units have maintained pedagogical flexibility to adjust classroom tactics, so long as those adjustments do not change the mode of delivery of class instruction without proper approval. Such decisions cannot be made in a vacuum, however, as there are many other stakeholders besides the instructional faculty. Students rely on course descriptions and syllabi when making course selections, and the Board of Regents, the Provost, the Office of the Vice President of Instruction, Deans, and Department Heads play important roles in ensuring that we are delivering the educational experience our students expect and deserve. While faculty should have autonomy in their disciplinary areas of expertise, academic and pedagogical integrity must be maintained through adherence to the mode of delivery set at course registration, absent extreme circumstances.

Fiona Liken
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Moreover, the resolution requesting that promotion and/or tenure or post-tenure reviews be postponed for at least one full academic year has already been addressed. Earlier this year, I approved the Provost's recommendation that all tenure-track faculty, and non-tenure track faculty whose current rank has a time limit, have an opportunity to extend their review period by one year. Use of this one-year extension was at the faculty member's discretion, and does not count toward the two-year extension available for events that qualify under the Family Medical Leave Act. Any faculty member who wants to apply for promotion and tenure according to their standard eligibility schedule may still do so. I certainly do not subscribe to the belief expressed by some in the meeting that an extension related to COVID-19 should be for an unlimited amount of time. Earlier this month the Provost met with the Faculty Affairs Committee of the University Council to discuss how we will proceed in the year ahead. Regarding the method of evaluation, assessments of the effectiveness of faculty teaching, research, outreach, service and productivity are left to the academic units to determine.

Consistent with its Bylaws, the University Council, through the Educational Affairs Committee, should continue to have input into the academic calendar. This consultation is a matter of routine and was most recently demonstrated when the Vice President for Instruction sought the input of the EAC on the revision of the Spring 2021 Academic Calendar. The EAC provided feedback, and I later accepted the recommendation to change the traditional Spring Break due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19.

Of course, the University Council has the right to convene the Faculty Conference to "provide a forum for the discussion of issues of concern to the faculty," as provided in Part IV of the University Council Bylaws. Likewise, I continue to support the principles of academic freedom as embodied in the University Statutes.

I request that this memo be included in the University Council records along with my responses indicating receipt of Documents 2020.11.18.07, 2020.11.18.08, and 2020.11.18.09.

cc: Professor David Shipley, Chair, University Council Executive Committee

Educational Affairs Committee of the University Council of the University of Georgia

Resolution Regarding Faculty Role in Educational Affairs and Policies

Given that the duty of the UGA University Council Educational Affairs Committee is to “... *consider and recommend to the Council educational policies dealing with registration procedures, course scheduling, class times and periods, academic advising, and ... hears academic student appeals and reports from the Division of Academic Enhancement Student Issues Committee,*” the Educational Affairs Committee should be included in decision-making processes about policies and procedures related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other circumstances at the University that pertain to our charge.

To that end, the EAC requests the following measures:

1. **Governance:** We request that faculty governance play a substantive role in decision making alongside university administration; participating in the administration’s discussions about the duties of the Educational Affairs Committee as defined in the bylaws.
2. **Educational Policy:** The EAC encourages UGA to uphold existing educational policies that support unit level flexibility in order to deliver excellent pedagogy and meet the ever-changing needs of students. We request that faculty autonomy be upheld, by working within the University community, to ensure that quality education is upheld by (1) supporting their opportunities to adjust their normal tactics in the classroom without changing the mode of delivery of instruction of the class and (2) reinforcing their prevailing ability to revise those plans, as necessary over the course of the semester. In light of both our current situation and continuing innovation in online learning, we would like to encourage, not discourage, faculty to work alongside of administration to find ways to innovate beyond the physical classroom so as to most effectively serve students.
3. **Academic Calendar:** During the COVID-19 duration, the EAC requests continued input on the academic calendar with special consideration of breaks that lead to students leaving and returning from campus.
4. **Academic Freedom:** That the UGA administration continues to support academic freedom in instruction including innovation, flexibility, instructional content, pedagogical delivery, and classroom management. As defined in the University Statutes, Article X, Section 5, academic freedom is defined as: “University Faculty members are entitled to full freedom of expression in research, teaching, and publishing, subject only to those restrictions that are imposed by professional ethics and respect for the rights of others. University Faculty members have the right to criticize and seek alteration of both academic and non-academic University policies, whether or not those policies affect them directly. University Faculty are free from institutional censorship, discipline, or reprisal affecting their professional careers for exercising freedom of expression.”