

UNIVERSITY SENATE YEAR END REPORT – Suzanne Valdez

As the 2019-20 academic year comes to a close and I reflect on the work of both SenEx and the University Senate, I am impressed with all we have accomplished in light of the budget cuts, a Provost search, and the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are highlights of our work:

- The Chick-fil-A (CFA) move from the Underground to the Memorial Union over the summer 2019 created controversy at KU and angst among our marginalized communities. In addressing the move to the Union under the CFA contract, SenEx leadership discovered that the Union's contracts with CFA were renewed recently without proper vetting of all stakeholders at KU, including University Governance. Of particular concern was that the renewal contract was negotiated after the KU community had expressed its dissatisfaction with the original CFA contract years ago. It was determined that the lack consistent leadership in the Provost office had contributed to this difficult debate about CFA's presence on campus.
- Search and appointment of Faculty Ombuds, Ada Emmett, took place over summer 2019. We are pleased to have Ada join the Ombuds Office and thankful for Maria Orive's many years of service in this role.
- Involvement in search for Provost and Vice Provost for Diversity & Equity. SenEx was involved in the interviews of four finalists for the permanent provost. As well, SenEx was involved in the interviews of three finalists for the VP DE position.
- The academic calendar for Fall 2022 - Spring 2025 was approved by the University Senate. KBOR approved the 2022-23 calendar in March. The Calendar Committee conducted a university-wide poll regarding keeping fall break or moving to a week-long break over the Thanksgiving holiday. The findings of the survey indicated that Fall Break is preferable, and the Calendar Committee has recommended to keep Fall Break as is.
- The Stop Day Policy (USRR1.3.7) was approved by the University Senate and the Chancellor. It will go into effect fall 2020.
- SenEx discussed at great length the Absence Policy, which generated much debate. With COVID-19, this issue has become more complicated. SenEx voted to have the AP&P committee conduct a review of the Absence Policy as part of its charges for next academic year.
- A Grade Replacement Policy was also discussed in SenEx. Along with the Absence Policy, the AP&P committee will review this policy next academic year.
- The University Gift Policy (USRR Article X), which had been reviewed and flagged by FRPR, was discussed and passed by the University Senate with involvement of KU Endowment. Chancellor Girod approved this policy.
- Staff Senate was instrumental in creating a temporary Dependent Tuition Scholarship Policy to distribute \$200,000 allocated by Interim Provost Carl Lejuez as seed money to start a more robust dependent tuition waiver program. The original policy was approved by the University Senate in

December and both the Chancellor and Provost approved it. After necessary revisions were made to enable the policy to be implemented, the revised policy has been sent to the Chancellor and Provost office for approval. Both the Chancellor and Provost appear to be in favor of developing a meaningful waiver benefit program for all eligible university employees.

- A draft of Professional Standards of Conduct Guidelines created by University Ombuds D.A. Graham and his working committee was received by SenEx and reviewed. This is an ongoing project that will be discussed with SenEx in phases over time.
- Staff Senate leadership has announced that it would like to make changes to the University Senate rules to allow for more equitable representation of staff on the University Senate. Suzanne Valdez recommended creation of an ad hoc committee – Staff Equity Committee – to review and address staff concerns. Provost Bichelmeyer approves of such a committee.
- The University Senate hosted many visitors – Chancellor Girod, Athletics Director Jeff Long, Vice Chancellor of Edwards Campus David Cook, Vice Chancellor of Research Simon Atkinson, Marie Taylor of General Counsel’s office, interim provost Carl Lejuez, and permanent Provost Barbara Bichelmeyer.
- Both SenEx and the University Senate conducted business using Zoom once COVID-19 prevented in person meetings. Zoom was popular with our senate members and attendance levels at meetings were at some of our highest levels in recent history. Let’s continue to incorporate Zoom into meetings even when we are someday allowed to go back to in person meetings.