

# **LSU Council of Faculty Advisors Meeting**

February 21, 2025  
LSU Admin Building 8 a.m.

## **I. Call to order.**

Dan called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

## **II. Roll Call**

Members present: Daniel Tirone (LSUA&M), Melissa LaBorde (LSUA), John Apolzan, alternate- (PBRC), Megan Flavin Deininger (LSUHSC-Shreveport), Kevin McCarter (Ag), Rachelle Brown, (LSUE); Kimboj (LSUHSC-New Orleans)

Members absent: Cassandra Williams (LSUS)

Guests: none

## **III. There were no public comments.**

Kimboj asked about the process for public comments. Tirone clarified that potential speakers should register one hour before the meeting.

## **IV. Approval of Minutes from October meeting**

The minutes were approved from the February meeting. Kimboj made the motion and Deininger provided the second.

## **V. New Business:**

Campus reports: Tirone went over the updates that he had received and indicated that he will submit our written report to the Supervisors.

Brown reported that she had asked her campus administration how the NIH cuts impact LSUE faculty and has asked her chancellor to please keep faculty in the loop. She expects faculty to hear from the chancellor after this board meeting.

Tirone reported that Provost Hagerty presented to the LSU faculty Senate on February 20. For the LSU A&M campus, the impact is about \$22 million in NIH funding. This is going to put stress on the biomedical sciences. Social sciences and humanities will look better. Tirone also mentioned that some of the topics faculty cover in classes may come under fire as well. It has been rumored that the Board of Regents may be taking a look at course descriptions and language related to DEI.

Apolzan mentioned that places like Johns Hopkins and others have larger endowments to fall back on. LSU campuses do not have that level of cushion.

The School of Allied Health at Shreveport has 8 different accrediting agencies and all have different requirements concerning diversity. Faculty need clarification on what is expected. Kimboj added that the LSUHSC- NO accreditation still requires some DEI processes.

Brown shared that President Tate's approach is to use the word "engagement" that we are engaging with all peoples. We will have to see what the Board of Regents bring forward...for example, will they tell us that we can use a textbook with DEI language in it. CoFA members agreed that this is a First Amendment and Academic Freedom issue. Currently, the information we are receiving is only an advisement, not a policy.

- We need to push info to faculty to advocate for both tenure and academic freedom. A broader campaign might include the Illuminator. The public needs to hear all voices.

Brown asked about a timeline for any faculty advocacy. Tirone says messaging is already getting out now so it can percolate. When we see what bill is filed by house education committee, hopefully we will be ahead of it. The preference is that we get enough information out to the right people so maybe a bill doesn't materialize. After we see what the bill is, then we can get talking points. In the end, we may have to steer it rather than stop.

We will know more in the next few weeks. Tirone told A&M faculty "don't be shy" when advocating for protection of tenure and academic freedom.

It was announced that ALFS will be meeting on April 5 in Alexandria. We need to get the information to them. We can use the listserv. AAUP will be meeting on April 12.

At the close of the meeting, Deininger mentioned that the new advisory committees that were created for the medical institutions in the system were done without faculty involvement. Faculty at the Health Science Centers have no idea who the members are or who appointed them. This is likely a result of the authority to appoint committee members. LaBorde reminded the group to follow up on the bylaw change -that would address this issue-that was postponed at the meeting because of the resignation of LSU legal counsel who was working on the verbiage.

Campus reports will be included in the written report to the Board.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

#### **Attachments:**

*Agenda 2-21-25*

*Written report to Board of Supervisors for 2-21-25*

## **LSU Council of Faculty Advisors Report**

**February 21, 2025**

Dear Supervisors,

This month's faculty report will deviate from our usual format to reflect these extraordinary times. Changes are occurring incredibly quickly across this country and many of them are directly impacting higher education. Given the pace of change, it seems wise to assess the situation using the principle put forward by G.K. Chesterton, an English author, philosopher and conservative critic. The parable of [Chesterton's Fence](#) cautions us to "not remove a fence until you know why it was put up in the first place." This is a reminder that many institutions, processes and policies have been thoughtfully and purposefully developed over decades and in some cases centuries, and if we are to successfully reform them we must first understand the reasons they were created and why they function as they do. I'll address two here today: funding by the National Institutes of Health, or NIH, and academic freedom.

The NIH recently announced they were reducing their indirect cost rates to fifteen percent beginning immediately. These funds are vitally important to universities and others who conduct research as they cover "expenses not directly tied to specific research projects but are essential for their execution" ([The Conversation](#)). According to the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#), the US government began funding indirect costs of universities in 1947 "because of the significant return on investment of this shared partnership which has made the U.S. an international leader in advancing science. We lead in discoveries and innovations that save and transform lives, protect and defend our national security, feed our nation, and ensure our global competitiveness because of it." These sudden and drastic cuts imperil all of these benefits and present a real threat to the ability of universities and their researchers to continue this vital work. The LSU administration is working incredibly hard to address this issue as best they can and I encourage everyone to utilize every option at their disposal to work to protect these vital federal funding sources.

Funding is of course not the only element of higher education under stress. Academic freedom, the key principle guiding every college and university, has also been under increasingly frequent attacks which threaten to undermine their very purpose.

Higher education plays a special role in the life of a democratic state by allowing for the pursuit of knowledge and promotion of civic welfare. It also serves as a pathway for self-improvement for citizens. Importantly, these institutions and their faculty must be protected from external interference in order to fulfill their mission. Agricultural

procedure was appropriate for an individual's condition and performed correctly is a question for medical professionals and not politicians.

These terms also create other benefits for researchers, universities, and society at large. For example, an indefinite term of employment allows faculty to undertake long-term research whose prospects may be uncertain but whose benefits, if successful, could be immense. We want our faculty swinging for the fences, not playing "small ball". For example, the years long pursuit of gravitational waves, such as at the LIGO facility, or long-term research into the causes of and cures for various medical conditions may not happen if a faculty member's employment is a year-to-year proposition. It is also important to remember that tenure is view-point neutral. It protects all perspectives, from liberal to conservative, and creates stability by preventing faculty from having to change their research and teaching to cater to the preferences of a new administration after every election.

As faculty, we also recognize that the rights afforded us by academic freedom come with responsibilities. For example, LSU A&M's [Policy Statement 15](#) and the AAUP's [1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) on which it is based specify that teachers should not introduce contentious material which is not relevant to the course at hand. Similarly, the Board's [Bylaws](#) do not allow faculty to "insist upon the adoption by students or others of any particular point of view as authoritative in controversial issues." Overall, LSU faculty and students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the great responsibilities and high expectations that come with the privilege of being a member of our academic community.

Listening to the discussion around higher education in the last few years, one might think there was a crisis of faculty misbehavior. Locally, a recent case here at LSU has led some outside commentators to question whether we need to reform or remove tenure altogether. These arguments are misguided.

We do not have a faculty run amok in the LSU system. The recent case which has drawn so much attention, and for which the investigation is still ongoing, is notable because it is so very rare. Our faculty engage in their teaching and research for hundred of thousands of hours each semester across each campus with little fanfare or attention. They do their jobs in the service of their students and the state with dedication and professionalism, and this does not make the news because it is entirely expected. We are professionals and we conduct ourselves as such, and we have trained some of the leaders of this state and country. Furthermore, in the rare case when there is true misconduct, our campuses have policies in place to adjudicate these allegations and terminate the faculty member if it is appropriate.

## Campus Reports

### LSU AgCenter

- **Denise Holston**, School of Nutrition and Food Sciences, received an award for **\$3,795,612**. through **Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services from USDA – NIFA** for the 2025 LSU AgCenter SNAP-Ed Program.
- **The Farm Foundation** has named **Sungham Lim** as its **2025 Agricultural Economics Trade and Sustainability Fellow**. Lim is an Assistant Professor of International Agribusiness and Director of the LSU Global Value Chains Program in the LSU Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness. The Fellow program is for a faculty ag economist to focus on the challenges in developing a greater understanding of how trade and sustainability connect and impact the U.S. food and ag sectors in rapidly changing circumstances.
- **James Villegas**, Assistant Professor, Entomology, Dean Lee Research Station, received the **A. Wilbert's Sons Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources**. This professorship is awarded to a faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in research and extension of Louisiana's agriculture and natural resources.
- The **90th LSU AgCenter 4-H and FFA State Livestock Show** took place **Feb. 11-18, 2025**, at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana. The show is dedicated to the long-time 4-H Livestock show supporter, **Frank Sotile**. Over **1,700 exhibitors** will show more than **4,000 animals**. •
- **Schyler Thibodaux\*** is the recipient of the 2025 Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Graduate Student Award in Field Crop Integrated Pest Management.
- **Environmental Management Systems senior Allison Huddleston<sup>2</sup>** was recognized at two events for presentations on her undergraduate honors thesis research entitled *"Evaluating Growth of Coastal Grass in Recycled Glass Sand: Evidence for Safe Application in Coastal Restoration."* She received the **"Outstanding Presentation"** award for the overall **BioSciences section at Rice University's Gulf Coast Undergraduate Research Symposium** in November and she won **first place in the undergraduate competition at the Southern Region American Society for Horticultural Science conference** in Irving, Texas.

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<sup>2</sup> These student awards are included because they were done through funding and under the direction of researchers at the LSU AgCenter

## LSU Eunice

### *Faculty Development*

Meauxmentum Scholar Faculty Learning Communities, funded by the Board of Regents, are now created and the first meetings are imminent. These are being led by Dr. Robert Jones, Professor of English, Bridget Thibodeaux, Diagnostic Medial Sonography Instructor and Dr. Summer Ford, Professor of Psychology.

### *Faculty Publications and Features*

Art Professor, Symantha Jones, is currently featured in Philadelphia's Era Contemporary Galleries current exhibition, "Dollhouse". The show runs from February 1, 2025- March 1, 2025.

Dr. Paul Fowler, Adjunct Faculty of Mathematics and Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness, will be a panel speaker at the national meeting of Achieving the Dream (ATD) in Philadelphia, reporting on the success of LSUE faculty and students in the development and implementation of digital literacy skills for every department at the college. LSUE is a national rural cohort institution for ATD in the "Preparing Rural Communities for the Future of Work" Initiative.

### *Faculty Professional Awards and Honors*

LSU Online & Continuing Education (OCE) will be awarding LSU-EUNICE Professor Nicki May the "Innovative Contributions to Online Learning" award for thoughtfully planning for the unique needs of the student population in the development of online courses, all while supporting faculty in the AAS Management program! This award will be given during the Innovation Series event on Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the LSU Lod Cook Conference Center.

### *General Faculty News*

Respiratory Care program celebrates all 14 graduates who recently passed their national board exam. All 14 are working. The graduates exceeded the board national mean in all 17 components of the exam. LSUE program pass rate: 100%, national pass rate is only 65%.

LSU-Eunice Faculty members representing four academic program areas are participating in the Campus-wide Strategic Planning Committee led by Chancellor Nancee Sorenson. The scope of the committee includes LSUE Mission, Vision and Values followed by crafting a new Strategic Plan. The Committee work begins in March and continues into the Fall.



and ingestive behavior at the intersection of obesity medication and modern food environment.

*Wellness Day for Women:*

On Saturday, March 8, Pennington Biomedical will host the 25th Annual Wellness Day for Women. The event features health screenings and a variety of great activities like entry-level Chair Yoga class, CPR demonstration, and a number of talks on health and wellness.

## LSUHSC Shreveport

- The Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Board of Trustees reaffirmed the accreditation of LSU Health Sciences Center at Shreveport during its meeting held on December 8, 2024. The institution's next reaffirmation will take place in 2034.
- ExThera Medical has been awarded funding by the Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium (MTEC) to perform a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the efficacy of the Seraph® 100 Microbind® Affinity Blood Filter (Seraph 100), a novel, broad-spectrum adsorbent hemoperfusion device, in the treatment of patients with sepsis caused by wound infections. The trial will be performed at LSU Health Shreveport.
- LSU Health Shreveport's School of Allied Health Professions' Doctor of Occupational Therapy program, the first of its kind in the state of Louisiana, has been granted accreditation for a period of seven years from the American Occupational Therapy Association's Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). This milestone reflects the program's commitment to excellence in education and preparing graduates to meet the highest professional standards in occupational therapy.
- Oren Rom, PhD, RD, Associate Dean for Basic and Translational Research at LSU Health Shreveport was named to the Internal Advisory Board of the Pennington Biomedical/Louisiana Nutrition and Obesity Research Center (NORC). In the last seven months, Dr. Rom has been instrumental in recruiting seven basic science faculty with a total of eleven R01 grants and one R00 grant. These new faculty come from Johns Hopkins, Univ Colorado, UAB, U of Augusta, UTEP, and other great schools.