

Registration, Records and Calendar Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, February 25, 2022

Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Location: virtual meeting - Zoom

Voting Members present: Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman, Jamie Larsen, Patricia Marshall, Jason DeRousie, Molly Fenn, Kristin Thoney-Barletta, Megan Albidrez, Meagan Kittle Autry, Heather Lyerly, Michael Shurer, Joanna Stegall, Gary Blank, Harrison Andrews (undergraduate)

Voting Members absent: Tameka Whitaker, Barbara Kirby, Bret Smith, Ragen Willaford-Menefee (Student Senate), Maggie Lally (undergraduate); plus, 2 unfilled grad and 1 unfilled undergrad student positions

Ex Officio Non-Voting Members present: Charles Clift, Kyle Pysher, Lindsey Mihalov Watts, Lian Lynch, Margaret Erickson

Ex Officio Non-Voting Members absent: Don Hunt, Barry Olson, Than Austin, Carrie Doyle

Guests present: Kayla Bertling, Kasey Harris

Welcome

- Meeting called to order at 10:32am by Chair Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman.
- Cynthia thanked members for attending this additional meeting. The number of members present attests to the fact that our committee believes is an important issue to discuss.
- Cynthia shared a few reminders:
 - 1) The Chancellor has final approval on any recommendations the committee makes following this discussion.
 - 2) Keep in mind that any changes the committee decides on regarding the 3-year academic calendar will not be voted on until the Fall '22 committee meeting. The committee's composition in 2022-23 may be different (i.e. there will be some member changes).
 - 3) The university is bound to a specific number of instruction days in a term. For any no class days added there will have to be a trade-off with already scheduled non-instruction days.
- While having a conversation in today's meeting, Cynthia hopes the committee thinks through the benefits and the challenges in terms of the different proposals made by Student Government. The committee must consider the feasibility of the proposals given the boundary conditions we are under at the university and come up with possible alternatives that keep with the general spirit or goal of the proposals.

Unfinished Business

Elections & Student Engagement

- Kayla Bertling, Student Government representative, clarified before discussion began that under Proposal D (no classes on federal general elections) it would include both midterm and presidential elections, so it would be every 2 years not 4 years.
- Proposals presentation located in the committee shared folder.
- The original presentation took place during the January 28, 2022 committee meeting.

Proposals summary:

- Kayla Bertling reminded members that Student Government is proposing 1) no classes on election days moving forward, as well as 2) allowing student poll workers excused absences from class.
- 1) → Proposals for class cancellation on election days:
 - Proposal A - Raleigh Municipal, state of NC, federal primary, and federal general elections
 - Proposal B - state of NC, federal primary, and federal general elections
 - Proposal C - federal primary and federal general elections
 - Proposal D - federal general elections
- 2) → Proposals for excused absences for student poll workers:
 - Proposal A - all election days (early voting, election day, runoffs)
 - Proposal B - single day elections (election day and runoffs)
 - Proposal C - election day only
- Student Government is making these proposals because the university, by scheduling classes on election days, is sending an implicit message to students. The 18-29 age group is consistently the lowest age group to vote. For the 18 year old students that have never voted before they can't because they have classes on election day and so they don't begin the habit of voting. Student Government wants to change this narrative. These proposals do have student support behind it, but it's more than just about the students. NC State as a land-grant university is charged with a duty to the public and we need to take this initiative to see changes in our community.
- All election dates are set by state or federal statutes, so we can plan far in advance as needed for the 3 year academic calendar.

Discussion/Questions:

- Patricia Marshall took these proposals to their department after the last committee meeting. Most colleagues were very excited about the notion of civic engagement. However, one concern that arose was whether or not this initiative would be paired with some other initiative, so it would not end up being just a day off for students. Patricia asked if there would be a major get-out-the-vote campaign developed in conjunction with this? Kayla Bertling answered that is something Student Government is considering. The Pack the Polls Coalition combines all of the voter engagement groups on campus to work on a path forward. Currently they are looking at the primaries in May '22. There is

no early voting site on campus, so the coalition is discussing transportation, how to get students out to vote, education efforts, and registration efforts.

- Megan Albidrez asked if students missed class in order to vote, do instructors currently count it as an excused absence? Gary Blank responded that, personally as an instructor, students would receive full support if they needed to miss class in order to vote, but there is no university policy and so it is up to the individual instructors how they would or would not credit a student missing their class. Charles Clift stated that voting specifically is not addressed in the university's policy. As the policy currently reads there is a lot of instructor discretion even around accepting or having any penalties for an excused absence that is defined in the policy. Gary further commented that is similar to how instructors deal with athletes that miss class and that some classes may be more difficult than others for athletes to negotiate absences.
- Gary Blank shared support for Proposals B through D for class cancellations. There are not enough students from the Raleigh area and so Proposal A having included Raleigh Municipal elections does not have enough justification to warrant canceling all university classes for the day. Kayla Bertling responded that Raleigh Municipal elections was included in a proposal because Pack the Polls does encourage students to change their registration to their university address. There are a lot of local matters that affect the university, so if we were to go through with choosing Proposal A we'd likely see an increase in students changing their registration to their campus address and this would benefit the university in the long-run. Kayla also added that most election days would fall on the same dates.
- Joanna Stegall commented on similar concerns/questions about the local elections since each state may have different dates for those elections. Kayla Bertling responded that while Pack the Polls does encourage students to vote in elections using their campus address, they also understand that many students have interest in supporting their local communities outside of the university. So one of the additional proposals (listed as a "special circumstance" on Student Government's presentation) are excused absences for those students needing to travel in order to vote.
- Lian Lynch commented that changing the academic calendar is difficult because a day off has to be removed in order to give another day off. However, for example, the university does not give students off Good Friday for Easter weekend, but it is in the policy that students have a floating day off for religious purposes. Perhaps we could have a policy similar to that for voting so that students are guaranteed an excused absence. If enough students use the allowed absences for voting then over time it may become a day off for classes. Patricia Marshall asked weren't there no classes for Good Friday even though the university remained open? Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman responded that it no longer exists. Charles Clift added that the perpetual calendar is built in a way that we could make amendments to it, for example to allow for a new federal holiday, but there's still the give and take. If we were to grant a no class day for elections

then a no class day would have to be removed elsewhere, such as from Fall Break or a Reading Day. There are constraints on the back end of the calendar with Commencement, last day of classes, and when grades are due. At the fall meeting when this committee votes on the next calendar we'll have to do a thorough analysis on what the adjustments would have to be in order to facilitate this.

- Kayla Bertling doesn't know the logistics behind the semesters beginning on Mondays now instead of Wednesdays like in the past, but proposed if the university were to go back to the Wednesday model perhaps we could begin classes on Tuesdays in order to allow for an extra day of no classes during the semester. Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman responded that start dates are tied to faculty contracts, so changing that is not negotiable. In addition, the perpetual calendar balances MW and TH meeting pattern days of instruction.
- Several members in the chat expressed their support for an excused absence policy, similar to the current policy allowing floating holiday absences for religious observance, instead of adding a no-class day to the calendar. Explicitly allowing excused absences for election voting or for poll workers should be added to the policy.
- Undergraduate student Harrison Andrews voiced his support for updating the excused absence policy to allow for voting coupled with Proposal D because it would have the least impact on the academic calendar. It should be relatively easy to work in one extra class day every two years. Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman clarified what Harrison was saying is the explicit excused absences would apply to election dates falling under Proposals A, B, and C, while seeing if there's a possibility to accommodate Proposal D for class cancellation for federal midterm and general elections. Harrison added that NC State had the highest student voter turnout in the last federal election out of the schools in the ACC, so at a base level the university should go with Proposal D. Kayla Bertling pointed out that NC State did have amazing student turnout in the 2020 elections, but a factor to consider is that classes were online at that time. NC State had between 80-89% student turnout.
- Meagan Kittle Autry shared support for allowing students an excused absence to vote. The hope is that it will eventually build momentum toward a university no class day on Election Day. This would require a lot of effort to implement, but often doing the right thing is hard. In this case the right thing is to encourage civic engagement.
- Kayla Bertling proposed an additional idea of requiring asynchronous instruction on election days in lieu of simply canceling all classes on those dates. Instructors have had to become accustomed to teaching online and in that format during the pandemic, so the challenge on instructors wouldn't be too big and we also wouldn't lose that instructional day. This would allow students the flexibility to vote and then watch the lecture(s) for their class(es) when they can. Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman responded it's a good idea, but it would be a proposal more appropriate for the Faculty Senate.

- Kristin Thoney-Barletta asked if the university moved to the model that allowed students excused absences how many would that be in a year with the most election days? Kayla Bertling answered that for most elections they fall on the same date, so it typically would be 1 day an academic year.
 - Sample timeline through 2025:
 - May 17, 2022 federal primary
 - November 8, 2022 federal general, state of NC, and Raleigh Municipal
 - November 7, 2023 state of NC, Raleigh Municipal
 - March 5, 2024 federal primary
 - November 5, 2024 federal general, Raleigh Municipal
 - November 11, 2025 (unannounced) state of NC, Raleigh Municipal

- Gary Blank asked if anyone has examined why NC State had the highest rate of student voter turnout in the last federal election and if it could be tied to our QEP Enhancement on Critical Thinking? Kayla Bertling responded they haven't had a chance to do full research into why, but there were a lot of factors at play – e.g. classes were all online, general conversation around this particular election, a lot of campus groups looking for ways to get students involved, our Student Leadership & Engagement office, the mentality on our campus with voter participation, and having a dedicated faculty member to work on elections. NC State is a leader among universities with our Pack the Polls Coalition.

- Molly Fenn shared support for the asynchronous class day idea. It would be very impactful if there was encouragement, such as from the Provost, for instructors to participate by teaching asynchronously or offering their students excused absences for voting on election days. Megan Albidrez agreed and added that some classes, like labs, would have a harder time with asynchronous and so they could consider allowing excused absences. Molly pointed out upcoming election days should be communicated with instructors in advance of semester planning so that exams and presentations are not scheduled on the same days. Instructors already receive reminders from leadership about major religious holidays and it would be great if elections are included.

- Kayla Bertling asked if the 2024 academic calendars could be amended since it's so far out and if this committee could propose a change now without waiting for the fall meeting? Charles Clift replied that approved calendars have already gone through the Chancellor and submitted to the UNC System, so changes would be difficult. Our past experience with calendar changes has been limited, primarily it was in response to Covid-19. The 3-year academic calendar and perpetual calendars are built years out for important planning purposes. Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman added the more feasible outcome for the immediate future is explicit and clear language around voting as an excused absence and supportive messaging from higher administration as to the importance of voting and recognition of excused absences.

- Molly Fenn suggested for November elections, in the future, that the Tuesday of Fall Break be moved to election day while keeping the Monday in October for a shorter Fall Break. This would keep the same balance of instruction days. Kyle Pyscher added the most obvious options for a fall election day would be to use the Tuesday from Fall Break or the Tuesday Reading Day.

Closing

- The student absence policy falls under Enrollment Management and Registration & Records. Charles Clift and Kyle Pyscher will connect with Kayla Bertling again to discuss the excused absences. There is a process to update the university's policies, regulations, and rules, which includes vetting with committees such as this one, the Faculty Senate, and Associate Deans.
- Cynthia Zuckerman Hyman will meet with Tameka Whitaker, the committee chair for 2022-2023, and share the ideas discussed in this meeting. Any voting in terms of what comes next, particularly if there are any calendar changes, is a function of the next 2022-23 committee.
- The committee's recommendations to put forward include:
 - Higher level leadership messaging the campus community about the importance of civic engagement
 - Administration memos to instructors with reminders of upcoming election dates
 - Excused absences and explicit recognition of students that are voting and/or working as a poll worker
 - Asynchronous instruction on election days
 - Consideration of implementing Proposal D (class cancellation for federal elections)
- Meeting adjourned at 11:18am.

Minutes recorded by Lindsey Mihalov Watts.