

FS Update 7.10.20

Fri 7/10/2020 11:52 AM

To: Alfred, Marcus <marAlfred@Howard.edu>

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are well! Congratulations to all newly tenured faculty and those soon to be. Congratulations and please stay encouraged to all that are attending virtual conferences and continuing their research and teaching in spite of all the new difficulties.

I apologize in advance for this long email. Please find below updates from the Senate on Fall instruction guidelines, 2019 FGC, Survey results, and facts on the incoming Board Chair's recent letter.

Senate response to Fall reopening plan

If you have not done so, please read over the administration's reopening plan for Fall 2020? There has been some debate within the forum on the plan. Please chime in with your thoughts? The senate officers will try to take the expressed opinions of the faculty to the administration relatively soon. In addition, closer to the beginning of the semester, we'll try to convene a council meeting for an official vote on a recommendation. Here is the link to the forum discussion on the Fall 2020 reopening instruction guidelines:

<https://senateforum.hufaculty.com/t/provosts-fall-2020-instruction-guidelines/489>

I resent an invite to join the forum and set a password around 12:13pm today if you haven't done so already.

FGC

The 2019 Faculty Grievance Commission has still not met. As a reminder, the new 2019 Faculty Handbook changed the formation and implementation of the FGC. For example, the FGC members are now elected by each school/college. The senate no longer runs these elections. As a consequence, the elected members of the 2019 FGC were not partially filled until February 2020 of the Spring Semester. In addition, the 2019 handbook requires training of FGC members and panelists. The administration refused to pay for this required training up until only recently. This caused further delays. The administration has now requested more information on the FGC training program before agreeing to the needed budget.

Senate Survey Results

Please find links to the final results of the recent climate and general surveys that were conducted within the online senate forum. The surveys were approved by the council during the 2020 spring semester.

Originally, we had hoped to allow the faculty take them before the end of the semester, but that was impossible with the disruptions due to the unexpected shutdown of in person classes. We will use the aggregate results to inform senate policy recommendations to the administration and the board for the upcoming year. Thanks for all that participated. I've attached the results as well.

<https://senateforum.hufaculty.com/t/hu-climate-survey-2019-2020/402>

<https://senateforum.hufaculty.com/t/annual-faculty-survey-2019-2020/400>

A closer look at Dr. Morse's response:

I regretfully have to respond to Dr. Morse's letter. As a reminder, it appears Dr. Morse is the in-coming chair of the Howard University Board of Trustees. In a previous email to Dr. Morse, I summarized points made during a recent zoom meeting with him, a few other board members, and Dr. Wutoh. Links to my original summary and his response are here:

<https://hufaculty.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/255.6.5-NoSENSITIVE-MeetingSummaryEmail.pdf>

https://hufaculty.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/260.Prof_-Marcus-Alfred-Response-6-18-20-final8.pdf

I wrote,

"I think HU faculty would like to see a climate on campus that supports active discussion among all faculty on issues relevant to African American communities. In addition, I think HU faculty expect that if HU reached its full potential, many HU faculty would be involved in most media conversations on these issues - not a handful. I had linked a relative lack of HU faculty voices in the current protests to faculty apathy on campus. It's not surprising that HU faculty aren't more outspoken. Many faculty feel retaliation against them by the upper administration is the new normal at HU, and sanctioned by the HU Board."

Unfortunately, Dr. Morse disagrees with me. In his letter to me, he wrote,

"Your assertions that there exists a "relative lack of HU faculty voices in the current protests" and that such voices as have been represented are but a "handful" are not consistent with the facts. I would ask you to review the 11-page Attachment detailing the participation of Howard faculty in the current national conversation and local conversation over the last two months alone. Far from a relative dearth of voices, or there being only a "handful," faculty from no fewer than 15 University departments have been outspoken in print, audio, visual and all forms of social media, lending their voices, thoughts and perspectives on the current moment – in the best Howard tradition – providing intellectual leadership not only for the Black community, but indeed for the nation and the world."

All of the May interviews listed in the attachment document provided by Dr. Morse, had nothing to do with the protests of police killings of black people. While health disparities and the impact of COVID-19 on black communities are just as important, they are not the primary motive for the protests and I did not mention health disparities in my statement. In other words, 6 pages of the 11 pages had nothing to do with the protests.

Of the remaining 5 pages, 3 experts were not regular full time faculty - this includes Dr. Frederick. All are experts and I am grateful that they spoke up, but again, three were not full time faculty and would not be counted in the handful I mentioned.

I spoke with the board members on June 5. How many full time faculty members that spoke on topics relevant to the protests of black men and women murdered by police are then left on the list that spoke on or before June 5? Nine.

9 faculty out of over 900. Conservatively around 1%.

Dr. Morse later wrote,

“The fact that, as Trustees, we choose not to indulge in the sort of negative hyperbole that too often envelops the campus, eroding trust among students, faculty and administrators who are better served by recognizing and understanding that our common condition necessitates common aims, is a conscious one.”

It appears that Dr. Morse is saying my description of 9 faculty out of over 900 as a handful, is “negative hyperbole”. I’m not quite sure how 9 out of 900 isn’t a handful. Describing it as a handful does not seem to be an exaggeration to me.

If you’d like to see the 11 pages that Dr. Morse cites and count for yourself, the link is here:

<https://hufaculty.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/261.Howard-Coronavirus-and-Protest-Media-Placements-May-June-202011.pdf>

What I think is a bit serious, is that it appears the Howard University incoming Board Chair, labels legitimate faculty concerns as “negative hyperbole”. He says the board “choose not to indulge in the sort of negative hyperbole that too often envelops the campus, eroding trust among students, faculty and administrators”. It appears they simply dismiss faculty concerns they consider negative hyperbole - even if the concerns are accurate as we see above for example.

Best,

Marcus

Marcus Alfred
Associate Professor
Chair, HU Faculty Senate
Howard University
Dept. of Physics & Astronomy
Washington, DC 20059
202-806-6258
maralfred@howard.edu