School of Engineering - Faculty Meeting Minutes
October 1st, 2021
Online Meeting (Webex)


Dean Thomas N. Farris called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

No objections were raised concerning the minutes of the Faculty Meeting held on May 7th, 2021, nor on the agenda of the current meeting.

• Dean’s Report:
  – Dean Farris highlighted several recent achievements within the School of Engineering, including the school’s recognition for student diversity, year-on-year increases in research funding, progress in planning and construction of new buildings, and in returning large numbers of students to campus for the fall 2021 semester. Dean Farris encouraged the faculty to use these highlights and other SoE news ([https://soe.rutgers.edu/news](https://soe.rutgers.edu/news)) to elevate the school’s profile regionally and nationally.
  – Chancellor-Provost Conway’s office is overseeing development of the New Brunswick Academic Master Plan. Part of this process involves the school completing a SWOT analysis focused on research activities. Dean Farris thanked the department chairs for gathering faculty input for this initiative, noted that several recurring themes will be taken under consideration, and indicated that there will be additional opportunities to contribute to the Academic Master Plan in the future.
  – Michael E. Zwick was named Senior Vice President for Research at Rutgers. His previous position was at Emory University where he was recognized for his work in building out core research facilities, a topic of relevance to the SoE.
  – Several SoE faculty have recently taken on new positions within the school and university:
    ▪ Henrik Pedersen is now Interim Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
    ▪ Wade Trappe is now Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Kimberly Cook-Chennault is now Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Lydia Prendergast is now Associate Dean at Douglass Residential College

Cecilia Vargas is now Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education and Academic Services

Jesenia Cadena is now the First Year Dean

A search is underway for the open position of Dean for Recruitment and Outreach

Kimberly Cook-Chennault, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, provided links to resources on diversity, equity, and inclusion, to share with the SoE faculty:

- LinkedIn Learning (https://diversity.rutgers.edu/LinkedIn_Learning)
- Unpacking Hate (https://diversity.rutgers.edu/unpackhate)

Dean Farris recognized Dean Candiece White’s receipt of the Golden Torch award from the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) in 2020, and the Advisor of the Year Award from the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) in 2021.

Undergraduate enrollment in the School of Engineering appears to have recovered following a dip during the 2020-21 academic year. Currently, there are 3937 undergraduate students enrolled in the school, including 893 freshmen.

Dean Farris recognized several promotions and reappointments in the school:

- From assistant professor to associate professor with tenure:
  - Onur Bilgen (MAE)
  - Shishir Chundawat (CBE)
  - Jonathan Singer (MAE)
  - George Tsilomelekis (CBE)
  - Haoran Zhang (CBE)

- From associate professor to full professor:
  - Li Cai (BME)
  - Joseph Freeman (BME)
  - Tugrul Ozel (ISE)
  - Maribel Vazquez (BME)

- From assistant teaching professor to associate teaching professor:
  - E. Koray Akdogan (MSE)

- Reappointment at the rank of assistant professor:
  - Umer Hassan (ECE)
  - Sheng Wei (ECE)
• Bo Yuan (ECE)
  ▪ These and other achievements will be celebrated at the annual faculty awards event on November 18th.

– Rutgers University will partner with Princeton University and the University of Delaware to form the new NSF I-Corps Northeast Hub. Dunbar Birnie will provide faculty leadership at Rutgers. The I-Corps program focuses on providing entrepreneurial training, mentoring, and resources to enable researchers to commercialize technologies developed in academic labs and centers.

– The school will hold an alumni panel with Jeffrey Robinson, Randall Pinkett, and Omeka Oguh at 5pm on October 20th.

– Rutgers will lead a multi-university NSF Megalopolitan Coastal Transformation Hub (MACH) project, supported by a grant amounting to $20m over the next five years. The principal investigator is Bob Kopp (SAS), with Shantenu Jha (ECE) and Jie Gong (CEE) among a group of experts serving as co-PI’s.

– Congressman Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo toured SoE facilities on August 5th. President Holloway and Dean Farris hosted the delegation to highlight the impact of federal investment in research on economic growth in the US.

– The SoE’s Packaging Engineering program continues to flourish, with a diverse student body and strong industry engagement. Moving forward, Packaging Engineering will become part of the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE) department.

• Open Discussion

– Dean Farris opened the floor to comments and questions from the faculty.

  o Haym Benaroya inquired on the likely mode of instruction for the spring 2022 semester. Peng Song indicated that at present, the expectation is that Spring 2022 will see a return to in-person “pre-COVID” instruction.

  o Several faculty commented on the challenges and opportunities arising from hybrid (in-person and remote) instruction, currently underway in many SoE courses during the fall 2021 semester. The additional workload involved in teaching and accommodating simultaneous in-person and remote sections was emphasized. Challenges remain in maintaining academic integrity during course assessments, particularly among students completing exams online.

  o Students appear to be adjusting to the mixed forms of instruction offered in Fall 2021 but the transition back to in-person classes can be a challenge for some. The balance of in-person and remote instruction varies across SoE departments. Preferences among students for in-person versus online instruction appear to vary widely and may depend on factors including the scheduled class time, and whether students have courses scheduled close
together or spread throughout the week. The pass / no credit option for course grades is no longer offered in fall 2021.

- Potential benefits of hybrid instruction include the ability for students to access recorded materials, but additional classroom resources may be required to enable faculty to capture their in-person lectures.

- Old Business
  - None

- New Business
  - None

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark C. Pierce
Secretary, Engineering Faculty