



CMI

College of the Marshall Islands

Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

P.O. Box 1258
Uluga Campus
Majuro, Marshall Islands, MH 96960

Tel: (692) 625-3394/3291/4931
Fax: (692) 625-7203
Email: itcommittee@cmi.edu



The College of The Marshall Islands Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting (#1) Date: August 22, 2025

Quorum was achieved. Total Attendees 37

Absent: 10

Excused: 3

Meeting Start: 11:15 AM

I. Introductions: Mission statement was read by the interim FS Secretary Honorable Alex Velasquez, followed by the FS President Honorable Dr. Viviana Uriona's acknowledgement of the presence of the Dean of Instruction, Edward Alfonso. Dr. Uriona shared a brief background and some reasons that led to the invitation and presence of the Instructional Dean.

Background Statements by FS President Uriona

Last semester, it came to light that some instructors were approached by the Dean of Instruction and asked to revise grades they had submitted — not based on academic appeal or student requests, but as administrative directives. This raised serious concerns across the faculty regarding academic autonomy, integrity, and coercion. As Faculty Senate, we take these concerns seriously. Today we ask for clarification, accountability, and a clear commitment that such actions will not occur again. The CMI Policy 361 was shared on the big screen for all to read.

Questions by the FS President Uriona and Responses by Dean Edward Alfonso and other faculty members follow.

Question by FS Pres. Uriona: At which part in Policy 361 does it point that one can request to change a grade?

Dean Alfonso read the policy while expressing his answers to questions; he reiterated his interpretation, practices, and beliefs on how he implemented procedures based on words, phrases, statements or statements of the policy. The following statements are from the Dean Alfonso:

Answer from Dean Alfonso: I do believe that the student contacts the instructor, and at the same time the instructor contacts the Student about it. And then, if ever so, if the student has a decision. So, for example, there's a person who says No, we cannot do that. So there is another avenue for the department chair to ask for help. Okay, to attempt to resolve the issue informally, and then after, after





CMI

College of the Marshall Islands

Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

P.O. Box 1258
Uluga Campus
Maiuro, Marshall Islands, MH 96960

Tel: (692) 625-3394/3291/4931
Fax: (692) 625-7203
Email: itcommittee@cmi.edu

that. So I do believe that there is also an option from the department chair during that time. And then, they definitely did not get any confirmation to help, to assist the student, right? And then another option that they are doing is they come to my office, and at the beginning, I asked also the department chair, just an informal discussion of everything on this, and to the faculty, and then at the beginning, then from there. So yes, I just do an email to the faculty, whoever of this and just only a request. And after that particular request, and I've seen the the position of the fact of the faculty, then we we stop the conversation and advise the student that this is the position of the faculty, and from that particular position of the faculty and the student understand it, and we can also advise the student about the doing the grade appeal.

Okay, however, the students don't like to do it because it's a long process, and choose to just retake the class of the next semester, summer or fall, right now, so I do believe I just do a certain process about it. And since the faculty don't like to make that particular decision, because it's already final, and he's already standing on that particular decision, the discussion is already that. I respect the position of the faculty, and that's it. Only now it's the call of the student to go make an appeal for that, but by this time, the student just decided to retake it next semester. So I'm giving you your opinion about that. If you feel that it's unfair to you, or if you feel that my action is wrong, then help me by correcting this, because it might happen again, and it will happen again in the next semester. And I don't want you guys, and I don't want to repeat this kind of this scenario, because I am protecting you guys as the academic affair, and I'm also have the responsibility for our student here in CMI, so I owe An answer to our student, because they already go to the faculty. They ask the department chair. And then there's another avenue. Actually, there are two more avenues, my Office and the Office of the Dean of Student Success. So I want to ask for help.

Question by FS Pres. Uriona: I want to understand you, right. You say that it will happen in the next semesters to have this situation.

Answer from Dean Alfonso: That's why I am asking you to help me.

Question by FS Pres. Uriona: How we are going to do this. I guess the policy is very clear. This is my interpretation. It's very clear. We, as instructors, teach the students. We give the grades. If the student has a situation, in a special situation that they cannot speak with us, and have the feeling that they have to go to you, to be like a mediator because of the grade, we have steps that they can do. Yes, okay, now it's, for me, the question, if we cannot change, we don't want to change this grade, because this is in the past, or because we are not more, we don't have more the time to give the possibility to the students to make up, then it's done. This is the result, and this is the situation that we have, and we have the academic entity that we have to be sure that we don't will be under pressure to change any grades.

Answer from Dean Alfonso: That's what I did in this matter, though. So when I hear the opinion of the faculty, yeah, I advise them. It's the decision.

FS President Viviana: Thank you for that.





CMI

College of the Marshall Islands

Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

P.O. Box 1258
Uliga Campus
Majuro, Marshall Islands, MH 96960

Tel: (692) 625-3394/3291/4931
Fax: (692) 625-7203
Email: itcommittee@cmi.edu

Question by Pres. Uriona: But I have a question about this, did we have cases that they graduate? Even these instructors say that they are not changing the grades, and how it can be possible that these students graduate?

Answer from Dean Alfonso: I don't have any idea with that.

Question by VP David Sinkey: I'm just trying to follow your explanation. Yes, I'm curious to know when the students were unsatisfied with the grade. Was it your practice to have the student go to the instructor directly and have them appeal. Or was it your practice to go to the instructor.

Answer from Dean Alfonso: Actually, in the beginning, according to this policy.....

VP David Sinkey: I'm asking you, what was your practice? That's what I need to know. What was your practice last term?

Answer from Dean Alfonso: I will just be guided on this particular one. So there is an informal discussion needed. So I presume that that informal discussion is that way talking to the instructor and to the student and then talking to the department to have a help with them, to the instructor, and it's just still low, and then my and then my Avenue, And then low, and that's so I just, I just accommodate them in the way that I need to talk first, whoever uses the door, and just ask an inquiry, or what else that we can do. But since the instructor, he said we cannot do it in Edward and I respect that. That's it.

VP David Sinkey: So did any instructors say they could not change their grade to you? Did any instructors tell you that?

Answer from Dean Alfonso: Yes. and respect that. Okay? And I stopped them. I just. Advise the student that this is the kind of the instructor, and we have to respect that. And then, according to this policy, you can choose a grade appeal and do the process. And I said, this is the process, and the and the students said that it seems that it's long to process and the students wants to just do I'm just retaking the class, and I am not interested to walk for the graduation, and at least from time I know already the position of this. So my suggestion is, help me how I'm going to facilitate this, this guy, and that's a good idea, Doctor, Doctor, Viviana, so if it is really the faculty say no and then we stop it.

Faculty 1: Shared three more policies which somehow correlated with what was being discussed. The referenced policies were the following:

- CMI Act 1992 (..academic freedom...)
- HR policy 1.8.1a (..free from coercion and intimation..)
- Academic Renewal Policy from the CMI catalog (..wide latitude of interpretation...)

The same faculty shared that the Policy 361 can perhaps be interpreted widely because of the supporting policies, but the lack of detailed implementing procedures created the grey area, and that's where perhaps Dean Edward exercised his rights based on the flexibility of the policy. Now for any of us who will experience this, we have these policies and procedures in place, and I'm glad that Dean Edward has expressed his desire for us to work together to move forward, because there's really a





broad interpretation of all this, and we all have one goal: to increase successful and quality students. So, if you look at this, I think this was also part of why Dean Edward did what he did last term; however, the details of how to do it form a grey area.

Faculty 2 & 3: Can we suggest ways to tighten up the language so that we can revise this policy and be more specific. Such can be worked out by the HR Committee reps for revisions. Stick to the policy.

FS President Dr. Uriona: Due to time constraints, I will thank you Dean Edward for coming today, and hope that this meeting today is a turning point for us to be sure in which way and on the same path we are for the future for everyone.

Dean Alfonso: For clarification, So when the student comes to me. My main advice is, “you have to do the grade appeal” so that the closures happen.

VP David Sinkey: And just to follow up with that, I think what would help the faculty rest on this matter is if you sent from your office those steps clearly, we can see the procedure and not be questioning how that procedure is.

FS President Dr. Uriona’s Closing Remark on the Discussion with Dean Alfonso

Thank you for addressing this issue openly today. Faculty trust and academic integrity are essential to our institution. We hope this conversation will mark a turning point in how academic decisions are respected moving forward.

In summary, Dean Edward clarified that his actions were based on the Grades Appeal Policy 361 and student requests. Dean Edward expressed his desire and invitation to the Senate to work with him in improving the implementing procedures of cited policies to avoid a recurrence of the issue in future semesters. The faculty debated the clarity of policies and proposed revisions to reduce ambiguity, balance, and preserve the integrity of a student’s appeal.

Actionable Items from The Discussion of the Faculty Senate with Dean Alfonso

- Review and potentially revise the relevant policies to provide clearer guidelines on the grade appeal process and prevent any coercion of instructors.
- Clearly communicate the grade appeal process to students, including the steps and the faculty's role, to avoid any misunderstandings.
- Ensure that any outreach to students regarding grade appeals or academic renewal is initiated by the students themselves, and not manufactured.

II. Executive Message/Updates from Faculty Senate President

The election of new Faculty Senate officers and officers for the standing committees was presided over by (then interim) FS President Dr. Viviana.





CMI

College of the Marshall Islands

Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

P.O. Box 1258
Uluga Campus
Maiuro, Marshall Islands, MH 96960

Tel: (692) 625-3394/3291/4931
Fax: (692) 625-7203
Email: itcommittee@cmi.edu

Results of the Election of FS Executive Officers by the Faculty Senate

- FS President: Dr. Viviana Uriona
- FS VP: David Sinkey
- FS Sec. Curtis Vila

Results of the Election of Officers for the Standing Committees

- Executive Council: FS Executive Officers
- Human Resources Committee: Alvin Page & Dr. Rosalinda Sumaoang
- Curriculum Committee: (Dr. Linus)
- Institutional Effective Committee: (Gade Maitokana)
- Enrollment Management Committee: Jennifer Seru
- Plant and Facilities Committee: Derick Debrum
- Information and Technology Committee: Waisiki Baleikorocau, Jennifer Poquita

*A suggestion was offered for the interim Standing Committee officers during the SY 2024-2025 to indicate your intentions if you still want to serve or to remain as an officer in the same standing committee or in another committee that you like, or to step down so that other honorable FS members will have the opportunity to volunteer and serve in the CMI Standing Committees for SY 2025-2026.

The quorum agreed to meet on Thursday, August 28, 2025 since on Friday September 5, 2025 meeting is a holiday.

III. The Faculty Senate meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM

Submitted By:

Curtis Vila
Faculty Senate Secretary
Academic Year 2025-2026

Concurred By:

Dr. Viviana Uriona
Faculty Senate President
Academic Year 2025-2026

Date Approved by the Faculty Senate Body: September 19, 2025

Date Submitted and Concurred: September 22, 2025

Date Submitted by the FS Secretary to the webmaster for posting: October 1, 2025

