

Minutes of
THE FACULTY SENATE OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

This meeting of the 2022-2023 Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in Rothwell 456 and on Webex. The following members were present:

Mr. Stan Apple	Dr. Masanori Kuroki
Dr. Michael Bradley	Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon
Dr. Breanna Clair	Dr. Julie Mikles-Schluterman
Dr. Rene Couture	Dr. Tom Nupp
Dr. David Cullen	Dr. Azin Sanjari Pirmahaleh
Dr. Melissa Darnell	Dr. Sean Reed
Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. Peter Dykema	Dr. Bethany Swindell
Dr. David Eshelman	Dr. Arwen Taylor
Ms. Jasmine Greer	Ms. Sherry Tinarella
Dr. Newt Hilliard	Dr. Ellen Treadway
Dr. Efosa Idemudia	

Absent: Dr. Erica Wondolowski, Dr. Kuldeep Singh

Also present: Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe (VPAA); Ms. Tammy Weaver (Registrar); Dr. Sarah Gordon (Graduate College); Dr. Jeremy Schwem, Dr. Gregory Michna (Gen Ed); Ms. Laury Fiorello, Mr. John Joyner (Finance/Budget); Mr. Bill Clary (Board of Trustees)

- I. **Call to Order:** Dr. Sean Reed called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.
 - A. **Approval of the Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes from the March 14 meeting from Sean Huss, seconded by Dr. Michael Davis. Motion carried.
- II. **New Business.**
 - A. **Registrar:** Ms. Weaver asked any faculty who are interested in piloting a waitlist system, or who are willing to let their classes serve as a test-run for a new grading program, to contact her. However, the more duplicitous reason that Ms. Weaver was asked to attend was to receive the Faculty Senate Choice Award for her excellence and dedication as a part of ATU's administration.

B. Graduate Catalog: Dr. Gordon asked for a faculty response to the proposed updates to the Graduate Catalog, previously circulated to the Senate, and already approved by the Graduate Council. These revisions include a policy update to the criteria for graduate faculty status, in order to make the process of approving grad faculty clear, consistent, and applicable across programs. The most significant change requires graduate faculty to have accomplished two from a list of various possible scholarship activities in the last six years.

C. Budget

Because of internet problems that made Webex essentially unavailable, the Senate delayed discussion of the budget until later in the meeting in hopes those attending online would also be able to hear and participate.

III. Committee Updates

a. Standing Committees

- i. Budget Advisory Committee (Nupp): Delayed till the budget discussion with Ms. Fiorello.
- ii. General Education Committee (Tinerella): Dr. Michna and Dr. Schwehm asked for a vote on their proposal that Leadership 2003, Ethics in Leadership, be approved for the General Education Curriculum. **Motion to approve from David Eshelman, seconded by Sean Huss. Motion carried.**
- iii. Institutional Aid Committee (Hilliard): Nothing to report.
- iv. Shared Governance Committee (Eshelman): The committee met to discuss the program elimination committee (which does not eliminate programs, just creates the procedures for after the programs have been eliminated) and concomitantly addressed the questions of what this committee is, viz. though the administration does not seem to agree, the Senate understands this to be a standing committee, which should have staff and student representation and work to ensure new faculty participate in shared governance.
- v. Campus Space and Utilization Committee (Singh): Nothing to report.
- vi. Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee (Hilliard): Nothing to report.
- vii. Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee (Swindell): Nothing to report.
- viii. Professional Development Committee (Dykema): Nothing to report.
- ix. Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee (Apple): Little to report; Ken Wester is retiring from OIS.
- x. Emergency Management and Safety Committee (Laffoon): Nothing to report.

b. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees

- i. Faculty Workload Committee (Eshelman/Darnell): Nothing to report; however, questions were raised as to whether Dr. Cezeaux ever responded to concerns that the Senate raised with the new Faculty Workload Policy. The only updated draft we've seen corrected some math, but nothing of substance. Dr. Furst-Bowe said that she would raise this with Dr. Cezeaux, since the Deans also had some concerns about the policy. Senators are concerned that the policy will go to the Board in June without these issues having been addressed.
- ii. Insurance Benefits Committee (Davis): Nothing to report.
- iii. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Wondolowski/Eshelman): The proposal to add the Vision Statement from Tech's Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence to the university's mission statement on the "About Arkansas Tech" webpage has, according to Dr. Furst-Bowe, been forwarded to Dr. Gunter; from there it will go to the Executive Council. The Senate had some discussion of the proposal to faculty job candidates to submit a teaching statement that incorporates discussion of a classroom inclusivity. Some senators reported concerns about the politics of such a policy at a time when the state government is likely to be unsupportive. **Motion from Sean Huss to table this proposal while senators gather feedback from their constituents for the next meeting, seconded by New Hilliard. Motion carried.**
- iv. Exploratory Committee on P & T Salary Increases (Hilliard): CUPA data has been drawn down, so these policies will be drafted soon.
- v. Strategic Planning Steering Committee (Darnell): Nothing to report.
- vi. Prior Learning Assessment (Swindell): New courses will go into effect in the fall, with leftover funds to be used on marketing.
- vii. Transfer Students Committee (Stacy): Nothing to report.
- viii. Micro-Credentials (Wondolowski): We're advertising the microcredentials that we've established and have been ordered to revive non-credit courses to use for microcredentials.
- ix. Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations (Laffoon): The PD session on increasing evaluation rates was held and their notes are available. Currently the setting that lets faculty see which specific students have done their evaluations is still off. Faculty's interest in having this set one way or the other remains, it seems, difficult to consistently gauge.
- x. Rules Committee (Huss): A handout detailing the proposed size, turnover, and charge of this committee was provided. The committee is meant to

serve as formalized institutional memory, to ensure that changes and policies are documented for future senators and administrators.

Dr. Reed asked for a motion to return to the budget discussion slated earlier in the agenda while Alex Manly continued heroic efforts to revive the insistentlly comatose ethernet.

Motion made by Sean Huss, seconded by David Eshelman. Motion carried.

IV. New Business, redux

C. Budget: Ms. Fiorello discussed the budget situation at length.

-At present, the aim is to budget for the next two academic years. Previously, we've had rolling five-year plans, but given the current enrollment drop, we're now budgeting based on extrapolations of data drawn from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, which suggests further drops in enrollment to come. We saw a decline of 8% in 2022-2023, with another 9% after this year. Projections are that we'll lose another 5.51% and 3.84% in the '24 and '25 academic years. All of this constitutes an 18% change from what was budgeted this year, with close to \$10 million lost in tuition and fees.

-We'll propose a 3% raise in tuition to the Board, which will offset the decline by \$3 million. This may make Tech the most expensive four-year school in the state. Some of this difference, however, is accounted for by less transparent fee structures at other schools.

-We're also getting about \$1 million less in state revenue because we've lost funds through the productivity model, via the core expense ratio as well as efficiency measures. Since the amount of state funding available is zero-sum, we can only take more in state revenue if we take it from someone else. We're also competing against ourselves, in the sense that slow, steady growth is rewarded rather than big jumps.

-We're also investing a year's worth of cash on hand to take advantage of high interest rates, which will add \$1.25 million in revenue.

-Athletics will not be cut; in fact, \$950 thousand will be transferred from food services to athletics to help balance their budget. Mr. Clary responded to the question of why athletics is being held harmless. A number of sports would not be viable if they were further cut, and the death of sports is viewed as the "slow death of the university."

-Both the staff senate and the SGA representative would like to see an official statement clarifying some of these decisions. These decisions are causing a great deal of anger among students in particular, who are already angry about fees and the student union, for which they generally do not see the justification.

-Ms. Fiorello anticipates the student union will include a convenience store from which we can capture commissions for E&G (Education and General). The Hull loan has been forgiven to enable the student union fees, so E&G will get receive that \$548,00.

-We're predicting, overall, a \$9.3 million decline, which comes to \$7.2 million that need to be balanced via a set of core areas:

- The president: 2.94%
- Academic Affairs: 58% (instruction and support)
- Student Affairs: 13.91%
- Admin & Finance: 26.2%
- Advancement: 2.34%

Allocating what we need to find in each category:

- The President: \$180,000
- Academic Affairs: \$3.8 million in instruction; \$330,000 in support
- Student affairs: \$1 million
- Advancement: \$169,000

The details of how this has been mapped to each area is available and have been shared with the President and members of the budget committee; previous years were re-mapped to the way we're structured now.

Senators emphasized that continuing to cut academics will likely lead to further declines in enrollment, since continuing to cut faculty positions harms the ability of departments to keep programs running and thus attract students. Administrators may forget that faculty are the financial engine running the university; there needs to be real cost/benefit analysis from Academic Affairs in terms of how we fill positions. A blanket cut will likely harm the instructional core's potential to generate billable hours; senators are interested in whether it's possible to calculate the costs, not just the financial gain, of faculty attrition.

Drs. Huss and Nupp have a list of questions collected from the faculty about the budget and the origins of this budget situation, which they will take to the Executive Council.

- D. VPAA Update:** Tech will hold a faculty recognition day on May 4, with Tech Talks in the morning, lunch, and the recognition of outstanding faculty, promotion and tenure recipients, and retirees. Dr. Furst-Bowe anticipates we'll hear an announcement about the VPAA soon.

On the matter of cutting programs: Tech has a list of programs that haven't been categorized as non-viable but that show a trend of declining enrollment. So far, programs that have been eliminated have had very few students and no unique courses; it's more complex to deal with programs that do have unique courses, and faculty who also teach general education or classes necessary for other departments. There will be no immediate actions taken, since the Faculty Handbook won't allow it anyway. These departments are aware they'll be considered on the 11th day next Fall. For example: The undergrad degree in physics has a small number of majors and ADHE would like to see it cut, but we still need physics faculty and physics classes for Gen Ed and Engineering. The program elimination committee will create policies to determine what happens to the physics department and physics professors, who stays and who might be let go and how that's decided. All of this will move slowly and go through Faculty Senate; we're planning for years ahead, and faculty are protected by the Handbook. Ultimately we'll want to see guidelines in the Faculty Handbook approved by the Senate and Board, for how this process works.

V. Old Business

- A. Items concerning adjuncts:** Nothing to report.
- B. Faculty Satisfaction Survey:** This opens next week; be sure your constituents are invited to respond.

VI. Announcements and Informational Items

- A. Elections:** College elections should be wrapping up, and then Andrea Eubanks can open university-wide elections. Some colleges apparently have not even started their elections.
- B. Senate elections:** Dr. Stacy reminded all senators finishing the first year of their term that they will be automatically entered as nominees for next year's faculty chair unless they explicitly withdraw their name.

- VII. Adjournment:** Efosa Idemudia moved to Adjourn, seconded by Jamie Stacy. Motion carried.



Faculty Senate

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Reed".

Dr. Sean Reed, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arwen Taylor".

Dr. Arwen Taylor, Secretary