

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, March 14, 2023, in Rothwell 456 and on Webex. The following members were present:

Mr. Stan Apple
Dr. Michael Bradley
Dr. Breanna Clair
Dr. Rene Couture
Dr. David Cullen
Dr. Melissa Darnell
Dr. Michael Davis
Dr. Peter Dykema
Dr. David Eshelman
Ms. Jasmine Greer
Dr. Newt Hilliard
Dr. Efosa Idemudia
Dr. Masanori Kuroki

Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon
Dr. Julie Mikles-Schluterman
Dr. Tom Nupp
Dr. Azin Sanjari Pirmahaleh
Dr. Sean Reed
Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. Kuldeep Singh
Dr. Bethany Swindell
Dr. Arwen Taylor
Ms. Sherry Tinarella
Dr. Ellen Treadway
Dr. Erica Wondolowski

Also present: Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe (VPAA); Ms. Tara Malone (Adjuncts); Ms. Melissa Riffle (HR); Ms. Kim McKown (HR)

- I. **Call to Order:** Dr. Sean Reed called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.
 - A. **Approval of the Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes from the November 8 meeting from Dr. Tom Nupp, seconded by Dr. Efosa Idemudia. Motion carried.
- II. **FMLA:** Kim McKown and Melissa Riffle addressed the Senate to review ATU's FMLA policy, which entails 12 weeks of unpaid leave for new parents, foster or adoptive parents, caregivers to an ill family member, or employees with health conditions that make them unable to work. For parental leave, Tech offers both medical and baby-bonding for 12 weeks total, which can be separated; if both parents work at Tech, they'll have to split the 12 weeks between them. Employees can also choose to use their sick leave (720 hours) in combination with other leave. Leave arrangements are based on private medical information, so faculty were reminded to avoid comparing situations which may not, for private reasons, be comparable. Accommodations for chronic

conditions and disabilities are arranged via reporting from the employee's physician, and then are recertified every year.

- III. **Items Concerning Adjuncts:** Dr. Taylor and Ms. Malone reported that they had met with Melissa Riffle in HR to discuss the delay of adjuncts' first paycheck. Since the originating problem appears to be is the timing of adjunct contracts, the next step should be discuss when adjunct contracts are prepared and dispersed with Academic Affairs. According to the registrar, sections are virtually never canceled after the semester begins (this semester being an exception due to the drop in enrollment), so it would be only rarely necessary to adjust an adjunct's contract after the fact.

IV. **DEI**

- A. Dr. Eshelman reported that the DEI Committee wants to identify specific, actionable items to improve the state of DEI on campus. The committee raised the possibility of requiring a DEI statement from all job candidates, which they've discussed with both HR and the Staff Senate. The Staff Senate suggested an alternative to a written statement may be more useful for some positions. Currently, no 4-year institution in Arkansas requires this as a part of employment applications; this may be a way to assert Tech's identity as an inclusive, welcoming campus. Questions were raised about how such a statement would be evaluated with regard to job applications, as well as possible political fallout of making this change. The DEI Committee agreed to return at the next meeting with a more specific recommendation, perhaps folded into a statement of teaching philosophy.
- B. The Senate also voted to support the proposal of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee to place the Vision Statement from Tech's Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence alongside the university's mission statement on the "About Arkansas Tech University" website page (<https://www.atu.edu/about/index.php>)

V. **Committee Updates**

- a. Standing Committees
- i. Budget Advisory Committee (Nupp): While the administration would like to emphasize the financial soundness of the institution, decline in enrollment means a budgetary gap of \$5.1 million. Options for addressing this shortfall include: tuition increases; leaving vacancies unfilled; early retirement program, the latter two of which have reportedly ameliorated around \$4 million. Faculty asked about the 700k lost because of Tech's having fallen out of sync with peer institutions in terms of both core expenses and the ratio of faculty to administrative salaries; no plan to

rectify this has been forthcoming. Faculty also expressed concern about the relative sidelining of academics in budgetary talks, e.g., that the percentage of funding going to the academic core has dropped from 43% to 32% since 2015. Unfilled academic vacancies damage the ability of academics to generate revenue via enrollment. The Senate was reminded that Tech also receives proportionately less money than other schools from state funding.

- ii. General Education Committee (Tinerella): The Gen Ed Committee is beginning to grade artefacts on the critical thinking criterion; faculty can contact Christine Austin if they're willing to help.
 - iii. Institutional Aid Committee (Hilliard): Nothing to report.
 - iv. Shared Governance Committee (Eshelman) Nothing to report.
 - 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) Nothing to report.
 - x. Emergency Management and Safety Committee (Laffoon): The committee is working on a comprehensive emergency management plan and will have a draft for review soon. A few exercises have scheduled, including an active shooter drill. Do Something is partnering with the committee to walk through campus and evaluate safety concerns. Narcan boxes will soon be available around campus. Preparation is starting for the 2024 eclipse.
- b. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees
- i. Faculty Workload Committee (Eshelman/Darnell): Nothing to report.
 - ii. Insurance Benefits Committee (Davis): Nothing to report.
 - iii. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Wondolowski): Nothing further to report; see above.
 - iv. Exploratory Committee on P & T Salary Increases (Hilliard): This committee came into being because of evident discrepancies in how salary increase were handled; they've determined confirmed that the impression of discrepancies has arisen from misunderstandings around processes that are not codified in writing. The committee's aim is both to make recommendations to adjust the formula for salary increases with regard to CUPA data, as well as to promulgate clear, easy to understand information about the procedure for determining pay and raises.

- v. Strategic Planning Steering Committee (Darnell): Nothing to report.
- vi. Hiring Processes (Dykema): Wishes to be dissolved, since we're on a hiring freeze.
- vii. Prior Learning Assessment (Swindell): Eleven faculty were awarded 26 courses for PLA; the committee is meeting again at the end of March to talk about pricing.
- viii. Transfer Students Committee (Stacy): The search for a dedicated transfer advisor is ongoing; the university should have particular interest in recruiting transfers, who count more in the funding formula, and graduate at higher rate. Currently, the transfer recruiter is shared with concurrent enrollment.
- ix. Micro-Credentials (Wondolowski): Nothing to report.
- x. Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations (Laffoon): A professional development workshop on April 5 will present research on effective ways to improve response rates, with a panel of professors whose response rates are high. Faculty need to emphasize that they read and are responsive to their evaluations, and to communicate to students how evaluations are used in promotion and tenure consideration.
- xi. Rules Committee (Huss): This relatively new committee has been organized to ensure that institutional memory is not lost due to turnover, to update processes as they're described in the handbook, and to ensure that policies are explicitly documented, and the documentation changed when necessary.

VI. New Business

VPAA Update (Furst-Bowe): August Commencement has been canceled; students will be invited to walk in either May or December. The Board P&T vote took place on the following Thursday. ADHE has created a list of non-viable programs at Tech; BAs that graduate fewer than 6 students, and MAs that graduate fewer than 4, are at risk of being identified as non-viable. Those programs already identified will likely be eliminated as of ADHE's April board meeting. Academic Affairs is creating a committee to manage the elimination of programs procedurally, e.g., guaranteeing a teach-out for enrolled students, and looking for ways to re-assign faculty. The committee will include Dr. Furst-Bowe and Dr. Meyer, Melissa Riffle from HR, one dean, and four faculty members—Dr. Hilliard representing the Senate, Dr. Bright the Department Heads, and reps to be chosen by campus-wide vote from the other two colleges.

VII. Old Business

Faculty Satisfaction Survey: Dr. Julie Mikels-Schluterman will take over preparing and running this from Dr. Sean Huss.

VIII. Announcements and Informational Items

- A final Safe Zone training was scheduled for March 14.
- On March 30, Spectrum held a Trans/GNC clothing swap.
- April 13 at 6 p.m. is Pride Walk
- Candidates for the Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion are beginning campus visits
- Emergency Management hosted a talk on business continuity and risk management
- Dr. Ellen Treadway reported that the university has a grant from the Walton Foundation for ATU graduates who teach in NWA and are part of underrepresented groups; a informational meeting is scheduled for April 5.

IX. **Adjournment:** Dr. David Eshelman moved to Adjourn. Seconded by Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon.
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Sean Reed, Chair



Dr. Arwen Taylor, Secretary