



Faculty Senate

Minutes of THE FACULTY SENATE OF ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

This meeting of the 2021-2022 Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 on WebEx. The following members were present:

Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Dr. Pam Dixon	Dr. Masanori Kuroki
Dr. David Eshelman	Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. V. Carole Smith	Dr. Peter Dykema
Dr. Newt Hilliard	Dr. Arwen Taylor
Dr. Efosa Idemudia	Dr. Rene Couture
Dr. Sean Huss	Dr. Melissa Darnell
Dr. Julie Mikles-Schleterman	Dr. Bethany Swindell
Dr. Sean Reed	Dr. Cynthia Jacobs
	Dr. Azin Sanjari Pirmahaleh

Absent: Dr. Asim Shrestha

Guests: Jason Geiken

- I. **Call to Order:** Motion to call the meeting to order from Dr. Efosa Idemudia, seconded by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm. Motion carried. Dr. Jamie Stacy called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.
 - A. **Approval of the Minutes:** from the October 12, 2021 meeting. Minutes were approved as distributed.

Motion to suspend the rules was adopted to allow the guests to present first. Agenda item B from new business will go first.

II. New Business – Guests

- A. **Fundraising and Advancement:** Mr. Jason Geiken stated that ATU had a strong fundraising year, 10.5 million dollars, with another 5.5 million raised since July of this year. Mr. Geiken announced that a 40 million dollar comprehensive fundraising campaign will go public in April, with 35 million already raised towards that campaign. Mr. Geiken stressed the importance of faculty in fundraising.
 - Dr. Stacy asked how the faculty can assist with fundraising and alumni engagement. Mr. Geiken replied that communication regarding events within the academic departments is vital. Advancement is happy to partner with community events.

III. Committee Updates

i. Standing Committees

1. Budget Advisory Committee (Stacy): No report
2. General Education Committee (Taylor): No report
3. Institutional Aid Committee (Reed): No report
4. Shared Governance Committee (Stacy): No report.
5. Campus Space and Utilization Committee (Hilliard): No report.
6. Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee (Hilliard): No report.
7. Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee (Swindell): 6 appeals in October
8. Professional Development Committee (Taylor): Still taking applications. New process is faster and more flexible.
9. Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee (TBA): No report.

ii. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees

1. Faculty Workload Committee (Huss/Darnell): Sorting documents into a rubric and will have a meeting in a few weeks.
2. Insurance Benefit Committee (Davis/Stacy): Open enrollment has ended.
3. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Smith/Huss) No report.
4. Exploratory Committee on P&T Salary Increases (Hilliard): No report.
5. Restructuring Committee (Stacy): Report given during new business.
6. Strategic Enrollment and Retention Committee (Mikles-Schluterman/Couture): Brainstorming ideas and looking at what other institutions are doing, idea to switch scholarships to GPA instead of ACT score, no decisions yet.

IV. New Business

A. Curricular Items: <https://www.atu.edu/standingcommittees/curriculum/2022-23/Summary%20Proposals%20CC%20Oct%2026%20FS%20Nov%209.pdf>

Motion to take the items as a block from Dr. Reed, seconded by Dr. Smith. Dr. Eshelman pointed out that there were some issues with classes. Dr. Eshelman amended the motion to only approve item 1. Second by Dr. Swindell. Discussion surrounding issues with curriculum items 2, 3, and 4. Dr. Davis serves on the curriculum committee and pointed out that item 3 was tabled during the curriculum meeting. Item 3 is not to be voted on by the Senate. Dr. Reed amended the motion to include 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. Seconded by Dr. Davis. Dr. Jacobs asked if all issues surrounding the curriculum changes were addressed. Dr. Eshelman moved that all curriculum change items be tabled until the end of old business. Seconded by Huss.

B. Restructuring Proposal: Dr. Stacy presented the 4-college proposal and discussed the changes. Dr. Schwehm pointed out the justification narrative was included in the proposal.

- Dr. Couture asked how Department Heads would be determined as well as the naming of the colleges. Dr. Stacy explained that the naming would be determined by the participants in the college. Department Heads are personnel matters and the mission of the committee did not include personnel issues.

- Dr. Mikles-Schleterman asked why we were restructuring. Dr. Reed stated that he asked Dr. Bowen this question during a meeting. Dr. Bowen's response to Dr. Reed referenced the strategic plan and the STEM buildings. Dr. Stacy was in the same past meeting with Drs. Reed and Bowen and added that Dr. Bowen stated restructuring was part of the budget process and meeting the requirements set forth by the Board of Trustees.
- Dr. Huss asked if the restructuring process was saving money. Dr. Stacy stated that financial issues were not part of the mission of the restructuring committee. The purpose was to enhance synergies.
- Dr. Huss applauded the efforts of the committee and the example set for shared governance. Dr. Schwehm explained that the committee approached the process as best they could and looked for innovation and growth opportunities – which groupings could thrive.
- Dr. Mikles-Schleterman sees the potential benefits to the restructuring but pointed out that the purpose initially was a budget issue but now the committee was told not to be concerned with budgets.
- Dr. Stacy said that EC did support the proposal. There were some questions so more information and justification were provided. Mr. Geiken explained that the EC wants to work with the process and agrees that the committee did an excellent job even with the roadblocks. EC does not want to majorly overhaul the proposal and only requested clarification. Dr. Schwehm stated that this process was the first time it felt like shared governance.
- Dr. Davis asked why some programs and existing departments are separated out in the proposal. Dr. Schwehm stated that the committee started including programs on the proposal; however, there are over 100 on campus so they stopped and decided to keep the proposal simple. Dr. Davis pointed out that we need to speak the same terminology for program, degrees, college, etc. Dr. Schwehm stated the committee could add programs if it would help with a better overall picture. Dr. Davis stated that it would be useful to list all programs to clarify which have a program coordinator for the course release. Dr. Stacy agreed that an issue is program coordinator vs program director and the terminology. The committee meets on Mondays and Dr. Stacy will bring the issue up to the full committee.
- Dr. Couture inquired about the Graduate College? Dr. Stacy confirmed that the Graduate College is under academic affairs.
- Dr. Eschleman posted a motion in the chat: The Faculty Senate endorses the Academic College Restructuring proposal as presented at the November 9, 2021, Faculty Senate meeting. In so doing, we affirm the following:
 1. We commend the members of the Academic College Restructuring ad hoc committee for their thoughtful work. Our Handbook recognizes faculty's role of primary responsibility in areas of curriculum and other elements related to the educational process. We applaud the committee in that, as it proceeded in its work, it

operated appropriately in a faculty-driven way, seeking and incorporating feedback from faculty affected by these important decisions.

2. Recognizing that faculty have special responsibility when it comes to an academic restructure, we request that the president and the VPAA refrain from making changes except to account for legal issues or on the grounds of evidence-based projected negative financial impacts to the institution.

3. As per the Faculty Handbook, if the president and/or VPAA deviate from the college restructuring proposal as approved by the Senate, we ask for a written explanation of why the ad hoc committee's and Senate's recommendations were not followed. We ask that this explanation be presented to the ad hoc committee, the Faculty Senate, and to the Shared Governance Committee. We request that the response be presented within a week of the time when changes are made by administration. Dr. Huss second. Motion approved.

C. Graduation Rates: Dr. Dykema stated that faculty questioned the institutional numbers that Dr. Bowen released near the beginning of the semester. Dr. Dykema contacted Dr. Bowen and Wyatt Watson for an explanation of the numbers.

- Question 1: Why the 4-year timeframe? One of the goals of the Strategic Plan is to raise graduation rates. The Strategic Plan was initiated in fall 2016. A 4-year or 5-year timeframe would work as a benchmark, but not a 6-year timeframe.
- Question 2: How explain rise in graduation rates? The reported number included all degrees since fall 2016, not just bachelors. State funding formula gives every university points for credentials awarded. More points could lead to potential better funding for the university.

D. Faculty Senate Choice Award nominations: Dr. Eshelman explained that this is a new award that Faculty Senate selects for the administrator that most helps with the academic mission. Last year was given to Dr. Johnson. Dr. Eshelman asked for nominations: Dr. Swindell nominated Jeff Robertson.

E. Voting Processes, Information Dissemination, and Surveys: Dr. Schwehm discussed that all full faculty will be included in the vote. A survey will be disseminated through QuestionPro to ensure that it is only full faculty. A response rate at certain threshold on Dr. Bowen's confidence would allow for a Faculty Senate block vote. If 143 faculty respond, a simple majority, then Senate vote as a block to affirm the faculty decision on December 1.

- Dr. Huss clarified that Senate is trying to guarantee that only the 284 full time faculty are voting. Dr. Schwehm explained the distribution function in QuestionPro is unique to each email and will limit access so only certain people can participate. Each faculty will receive a unique link that can only be used once to protect from ballot stuffing.
- Dr. Reed emphasized the importance of communication. Dr. Mikles-Schleterman elucidated on the communication committee which includes five Senators. The communication committee will visit with every department to encourage participation. Eshelman emphasized that it will be a lot of work for a committee of 5 so it would be beneficial if Senators would help. We are pushing for participation not for a specific

vote. Dr. Huss stressed that the intent is not a position and only informing on how to access the information. Senate will express personal opinions in the survey, not when discussing the vote.

- Dr. Arwen asked when is the link to the survey would be distributed. Dr. Huss stated that the link from the email will explain a little more about the process. Dr. Schwehm will send reminders through QuestionPro to those that haven't voted.
- Dr. Eshelman inquired about the status of the consultant report. Dr. Stacy asked Ms. Duffield about the status and Ms. Duffield stated that she hopes to have the report in a week or so. At this time the Board does not have it. The next Board meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2021. Dr. Taylor asked about the value of the facilitation process if Senate and faculty can't see the report? Dr. Stacy stated that Ms. Duffield said that there was no reason that the Board wouldn't give the report, but she can't speak for entire Board. Dr. Dykema asked if there is any way to see the report before out vote? Dr. Stacy stated that only if the Board passes it along. Dr. Davis questioned why Ms. Duffield isn't comfortable to speak for the Board but was 6 months ago? When Ms. Duffield contacted the Senate in April, the vote was postponed in good faith. The vote was again postponed to December. Dr. Stacy asked that Ms. Duffield discuss the facilitator report in the Board meeting but this did not come up. Ms. Duffield did issue a statement at the Board meeting. Dr. Huss reiterated that the position has always been there is no support from the Board for a vote of no confidence.
- Dr. Dykema asked when the survey will be available and the process for the communication committee to get the word out? Dr. Mikles-Schleterman explained that communication committee will let faculty know how to access the Blackboard site with information. Dr. Schwehm stated that an introduction email will be distributed this week and then the link for the survey will be sent on Monday the 15th. Dr. Darnell pointed out the need for a reminder on the 24th before the holiday. Dr. Schwehm said that reminders will go out the 24th and the 29th.

Dr. Schwehm Motion to vote as a block to affirm the faculty voice if a simple majority of all full-time faculty select a specific vote of interest on the question of confidence / no-confidence in Dr. Bowen. Second by Dr. Reed. Motion carried.

F. Anonymous Letters: One letter about concerns related to additional positions being added while academics are being cut.

V. Old Business

A. Concerns related to the primacy of academics / Provost: No report

B. COVID Updates: The Task Force continues to meet. Numbers are trending down. Mask mandate still in effect and health check tied to mask mandate. The two will go away at same time.

C. VPAA Update: Dr. Robertson is out on leave but emailed a report.

- Dr. Johnson is on leave October 15 – November 29.

- Legislative council approved a request for 1.1 million. This money will provide opportunities for faculty training and online hybrid and high flex course delivery modalities, upgrades to several classrooms across campus for facilitating course delivery through these modalities, as well as stipends.
- The restructuring process is ongoing.

Revisit curriculum. Dr. Huss stated that he visited with Dr. Ward. The department is ok with moving forward on the curriculum and any issues will be addressed with how it is presented in the catalog. Dr. Eshelman asked to un-table the motion related to the statistics class and approve curriculum items 1,2, and 6. Dr. Huss seconded. Motion carried.

VI. Open Forum

- Dr. Huss brought up the issue of Engineering and Applied Science not having a Senate representative in their college due to restructuring. Stated that the issue should be on the agenda for 2022 as all committees and Senate membership will need to be evaluated.

VII. Announcements and Information Items

- Staff Senate Thanksgiving food drive
- Next Senate meeting is December 1
- International Education Week

VI. Adjournment: Dr. Idemudia moved to Adjourn. Seconded by Dr. Eshelman. Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dr. Jamie Stacy, Chair



Bethany Swindell, Secretary