

AGENDA
November 11, 2025
Rothwell 312
3:30 to 5:00 PM

1. Call to Order (Mike Rogers)
2. Approval of October 14, 2025 meeting minutes
3. President Jones Update (if needed)
4. VPAA/Provost Santos Update (if needed)
5. Faculty Member of the Month Award
6. New Business
 - a. Dr. Santos NSSE Date Presentation
 - b. Dr. Michna update on General Education
7. Old Business.
 - a. Merging Course Evaluations Proposal- Sidd Bhambhwani & Wyatt Watson
 - b. ATU Faculty Sick Leave Policy (Mike Rogers)
 - c. Distinguished Professor Rank Proposal (Sean Huss)
 - d. Proposed revisions to the Merit Pay Policy (Mike Rogers)
 - e. Ice (ex. of UCA) (Sean Reed)
8. Committee Updates

a. Academic Council	Senate Chair—Mike Rogers (Carl Brucker)
b. Budget Advisory Committee	Senate Rep – Siddharth Bhambhwani
c. Campus Council	Senate Reps- Black (Chair), Rogers, Brucker
d. Campus Space and Utilization	Senate Rep – Virginia Jones
e. Emergency Mgmt. & Safety Comm	Senate Rep – Shanna Escobar
f. Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee	Senate chair or Rep – Debra Murphy
g. Gen Ed Committee	Senate Rep – Jeff Aulgar
h. Graduate Council	Senate Rep –Jeff Aulgar
i. Institutional Aid Committee	Chair-elect –Carl Brucker
j. Institutional Scholarship Appeals	Chair or Senate Rep – Debra Murphy
k. Professional Development Committee	Ex officio appointment – Matthew Hankins
l. Retirement RFP Committee	Senate Rep – Siddharth Bhambhwani
m. Technology Prior and Impact	Senate Rep – Lucas Moody
n. Univ. Wide Recruitment and Retention	Senate Chair – Mike Rogers
9. Open Forum
10. Announcements and Information Items

Adjournment



Faculty Senate

Merging Course Evaluations Proposal- Sidd Bhambhwani

Dear Professor Rogers,

I'm following up on our earlier discussion regarding merging course evaluations. I realize this is a minor matter and not time-sensitive, so it can certainly be addressed whenever there is adequate time in our upcoming meetings.

To summarize: the issue arises in cross-listed courses where small enrollment in one section prevents those evaluations from being counted. For example, in Spring 2025 I taught Blockchain for Business, which was cross-listed under Data Analytics (BDA, 19 students) and Finance (FIN, 2 students). The evaluations from the 2 Finance students were excluded due to the system's minimum threshold of 3 responses. I've encountered similar cases in Principles of Accounting II, which was cross-listed with Hospitality Accounting.

If possible, I hope we can implement a simple fix that ensures all student evaluations are included in these cases.

Thank you and best regards,

Sidd

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Faculty Senate

President Jones's response to faculty senate inquiries on the proposed sick leave policy:

Michael,

Thank you for following up on this matter:

- 1) What is the empirical evidence there is a problem, as it sounds like 1 or 2 outliers?

While I cannot provide the identity of the individuals, there were several cases where there was probable cause to believe that individuals with faculty status were abusing the liberal sick leave policy over the past five years.

- 2) What is the financial cost to the university that this policy is addressing?

The major loss is contact hours with students and the loss of valuable instruction time.

- 3) The faculty benefits package is an important recruitment tool for faculty given our wages are not the most competitive in the market. The faculty (and staff) benefits package has been dwindling over the last few years (e.g., tuition benefit policy; health care increases, etc.). This further weakens that package, and the ability to use it to recruit quality new faculty (and staff).

I disagree that the benefits package has been weakening. ATU still provides the most robust tuition benefit package among our competitors and there has been no increase in health care benefits in the last three years. The increase for 2026 is below the average increase of our competitors.

- 4) Starting at ZERO in year one for faculty and staff is not acceptable. You should start with a bank of hours. Again, recruitment tool to have better health benefits than other institutions.

The draft proposal is that no continuing faculty member starts with zero. All other state employees accrue sick leave at 8 hours per month. The draft proposes states that returning faculty members would start January 1, 2026, with 96 hours of sick leave for every year of service at ATU, up to a maximum of 720. Beginning January 1, 2026, all faculty would earn eight hours of sick leave per month (96 hours annually) to be added to their carryover. All new employees at other institutions begin with zero sick leave unless they are bringing over hours from a previous Arkansas institution.

FYI - For 2024 and 2025, only 6 faculty have exceeded 240 hours of sick leave. The maximum taken over the last two years by one individual is 330.



Parameters shaping proposed revisions to the current Merit Pay Policy

- 1) Budget is \$50,000 to \$60,000 (i.e., 50-60 \$1,000 awards). Dr. Jones goal hopes to have this budgeted for in the 2027 ATU budget and intends to see it as an annual budget item, barring fiscal downturn.
- 2) \$2,500- More than adjunct pay for 1 course, less than university-wide awards for teaching, scholarship or creative works, and service.
- 3) Time period of raise- 1 year
- 4) Candidates determined automatically through evaluations.
- 5) Level at which awards are made (Library, 15 Departments and/or 4 Colleges)
 - a. Departments and Library 1, then additional allocated to colleges and/or deans based on level of funds
- 6) Criteria- Annual Evaluations

College and Department Faculty Headcounts			
Arts & Humanities (81 or 33%)	Science, Tech., Engin., & Mathematics (71 or 29%)	Education & Health (53 or 22%)	Business & Econ. Development (32 or 13%)
EWL (18)	Math/Phys Science (27)	Nursing (17)	Business (21)
Music (16)	Eng & Comp. Science (23)	TEL (15)	Agri (11)
Beha. Sciences (13)	Bio/Earth Sci (21)	PACE (12)	
HPS (12)		Kins/Rehab (9)	
Comm/Jour. (11)			
Art (11)			
Library 6 or 2%			
*Data provided by the VPAA/Provost Office			

MERIT PAY POLICY (Committee Proposal)

Preamble

Merit pay is a reward for faculty excellence and designed to promote faculty retention by recognizing when faculty demonstrate outstanding performance in teaching, scholarship or creative works, and/or service.

Definition:

Merit pay is a temporary raise for faculty for outstanding performance in any one or combination of the following: teaching, scholarship or creative works, and/or service. Awards raise a faculty member's base salary for one year, then return to the merit pay pool at the end of the academic year to be redistributed again the next academic year.

Faculty Eligibility:

1. All full-time faculty members (i.e., tenure track line, instructor line, legacy faculty, and librarians excluding the Library Director) are eligible.
2. To be eligible for a merit pay raise, a faculty member's most recent annual evaluation must have no evaluation scores below "satisfactory" (i.e., 3) and at least one rating of "good" (i.e., 4) or "excellent" (i.e., 5) in one or more categories.
 - a. To be eligible for merit pay, a librarian's most recent annual performance review must have no evaluation scores below "satisfactory" (i.e., 3) and an overall composite score that exceeds 4.
3. Once a faculty member has received a merit pay award, they are ineligible to receive another merit pay award for the next TWO years.

Allotment of Merit Pay Awards by Departments and Colleges:

The annual merit pay budget must be a minimum of \$50,000 per academic year. Individual merit pay awards are to be \$2,500 per faculty member. The awards are to be distributed as follows:

1. All departments and the library receive one award to award to a member of its faculty.
 - a. If there are insufficient funds to allocate all departments and the library one award, then no merit awards will be awarded for the academic year.
 - b. If there are funds left in the merit pay pool, they are allocated as follows:
 - i. If there enough funds to give all departments one additional \$2,500 award, all departments receive a second. If there are still enough funds to give all departments another additional \$2,500 award, all departments receive a third, and so on until the funds can no longer be equally distributed among all departments.
 1. Given its small faculty size, the library does not receive additional allocations beyond one merit pay award for the year,
 - ii. Where there are insufficient funds left in the merit pay pool to award each department an additional \$2,500 award, but there are sufficient funds to give one to each undergraduate college, then the colleges receive a merit pay award to distribute to its faculty.
 1. If there are enough funds to give each college one additional \$2,500 award, all receive a second award to distribute. If there are enough funds to give one to each colleges another \$2,500 award, all colleges receive a third award to distribute to their faculty.
 - iii. If there are any funds left in the pool after maximizing the allocation of the \$2,500 awards to departments (and colleges) following the above formula, these funds roll over to the next year's merit pay pool fund.

Merit Pay Process:

1. Department Heads and the Library Director identify their full-time faculty members eligible for merit pay based on the eligibility criteria above. The Department Heads communicate the pool of eligible faculty to the DPTC Chair.
2. The DPTC Chair convenes the DPTC to discuss the list of eligible department faculty and recommend a name or names for merit pay to the Department Head.
3. The Department Head determines who among the pool from the DPTC receives awards based on the number allotted to the department for the given year.
 - a. As the librarians have no DPTC, it is left to the Library Director to distribute the merit pay awards to eligible library faculty as s/he sees fit.
 - b. If Colleges have any awards to distribute, the college dean determines faculty to receive the merit pay award(s) as s/he sees fit from those eligible faculty in the college.



Faculty Senate

4. Department Heads, the Library Director, and deans forward the list of merit pay awardees to the Provost/VPAA, who administers the funds.

Current Merit Pay Policy in the Faculty Handbook
(accessed 11/6/2025 from 2025-2026 ATU Faculty Handbook)

MERIT PAY

In the event that merit salary funding is established in a given fiscal year, the following guidelines will apply.

Definition:

Merit pay is defined as a salary increase to base pay for meritorious performance of professional duties and activities within a given year of service. By definition, merit pay is intended to exclude the concept of one-time bonuses. It is not intended that everyone evaluated for merit will receive a merit salary increase.

Eligibility

1. The full-time tenure track faculty of Arkansas Tech University shall be eligible for merit pay consideration.
2. Merit pools will be allocated to each College within the University. Deans will work with Department Heads in allocating the funds to the various departments.
3. Eligibility for consideration for merit pay will be based on the annual performance review of the faculty, already established in the Arkansas Tech University *Faculty Handbook*. Department Heads will reduce the areas of teaching, research, and service to one evaluation number for merit pay consideration. No faculty member will be considered for merit pay with a lower overall number than 4, and lower than a 4 in the area of teaching.

Salary Distribution:

Salary increments for merit are recommended by the Department Head, forwarded to the Dean of the College for review and further recommendation, and then forwarded to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.