



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, September 14, 2021 on WebEx. The following members were present:

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

Absent: Dr. Cynthia Jacobs

Guests: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Dr. Keegan Nichols, Dr. Erin Clair, Christina Stolarz

- I. **Call to Order:** Motion to call the meeting to order from Dr. Sean Reed, seconded by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm. Motion carried. Dr. Jamie Stacy called the meeting to order at 3:01pm.
- A. **Approval of the Minutes:** from the August 17, 2021 meeting. Motion to approve from Dr. Jeremy Schwehm, seconded by Dr. Sean Reed. Motion carried.

Motion to suspend the rules was adopted to allow the guests to present first. Agenda items B, C, and G from new business will go first.

II. New Business – Guests

- A. **General Education Committee: Goals and Assessment Standards:** Dr. Erin Clair discussed the general education program review process. Most recently the Deans and Academic Affairs leadership looked at the proposals. The general education program has 6 goals that have not changed since January 2014. All goals must be assessed and ATU has not done a good job of assessing the goals. Each goal has two assessments – beta and then full. Dr. Sandy Smith is the chair. Last semester (spring 2021) was the beta assessment of the arts and humanities goal. Critical thinking is in currently beta and start ethical perspectives next semester. 2-year schedule of rotation is available on the general education website: <https://www.atu.edu/generaleducation/assessment.php>
Dr. Jeremy Schwehm asked about the membership and structure of the committee. Dr. Erin Clair stated that the committee has 22 members and all colleges are well represented. The

committee added representatives from the programs which teach the highest number of general education courses.

Dr. Ken Futterer addressed the Senate and referred to an email exchange in which Dr. Erin Clair stated that faculty did not have to participate if they felt a standard did not apply to a class. Dr. Erin Clair confirmed the statement and encouraged faculty to provide feedback via the form on the website.

- B. Flexible Work Policy:** Christina Stolarz (Human Resources) clarified that the flexible work arrangement and remote work policy is only a staff policy and does not apply to faculty. The only way to approve an accommodation for faculty is to meet the qualifications under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If the requests do not meet the qualifications necessary under the ADA, then HR is not able to approve. Dr. Sean Reed asked about policy restrictions related to geographic boundaries. Ms. Stolarz stated that location matters and staff must live in an approved location as we are not covered for all borders due to software and licensing that are limited.
- C. VPSA Update:** Dr. Keegan Nichols updated Senate on the restructured Student Affairs responsibilities which now has three areas: enrollment management, safety student support, and student engagement. A new initiative is the Retention and Recruitment committee that is co-chaired by Dr. Blake Bledsoe and Dr. Jeff Robertson. Academic advisors and career coaches are being cross-trained to better assist students. Dr. Nichols passed along a “thank you” from the Health and Wellness Center for helping with COVID response. The One Stop Shop is starting as a pilot program this fall.

III. Committee Updates

i. Standing Committees

1. Budget Advisory Committee (Stacy): First meeting is set for September 24.
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): 22 appeals reviewed in August where we approve or deny the requests
8. Professional Development Committee (Taylor): Meeting October 1
9. Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee (TBA): No report

ii. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees

1. Faculty Workload Committee (Huss/Darnell): Waiting for information from department heads on workload by department
2. Insurance Benefit Committee (Davis/Stacy): Looks like insurance changes are moving in a positive direction.
3. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Smith/Huss): Met once or twice over summer and have an action plan. How many more letters

do we have to get from faculty of color for it to be acknowledged and addressed?

4. Exploratory Committee on P&T Salary Increases (Hilliard): Dr. Johnson asked for a small group to take a look. Committee is in data collection mode.
5. Restructuring Committee (Stacy): Meeting every Monday for the semester, first meeting was yesterday. Email sent to faculty, please provide input. Dr. Schwehm reiterated the need for input.

IV. New Business

- A. **Curricular Items:** <https://www.atu.edu/standingcommittees/curriculum/2022-23/Summary%20Proposals%20CC%20Aug%2016%20FS%20Sept%2014.pdf>
Motion to take the items as a block from Dr. Reed, seconded by Dr. Eschelman. **Motion carried.** Motion to approve the curricular items from Ms. Bethany Swindell, seconded by Dr. Dykema. Dr. Schwehm discussed out that the curriculum committee is doing a good job of going through the proposals and Senate is able to approve without spending hours on reviewing. Dr. Huss reiterated the good job the committee is doing. **Motion carried.**
- B. **Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee Membership:** A recommendation has been made to revise the structure of the committee as follows: change “Associate Registrar appointed by the Registrar” to “Registrar representative appointed by the Registrar.” Voted and passed via WebEx Teams on 8/20.
- C. **Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee Representative:** Faculty Senate needs a representative on the committee. There were no volunteers. Dr. Stacy will appoint a representative.
- D. **Anonymous Letters:** Received several anonymous letters through the Faculty Senate email.
 - i. Several letters expressed concern over the graduate council requesting changes to the graduate program director including compensation levels. The graduate program director is in the faculty handbook. The Senate discussed that if this was removed from the handbook, it could result in doing more for less money.
 - ii. Received 3 letters questioning the 4-year graduation rate that was reported. Can we confirm the numbers? Dr. Dykema has the same questions and started doing research and is mystified about the numbers. Dr. Dykema volunteered to work on resolution of this concern and will contact Wyatt Watson.
- E. **VPAA Update:** Dr. Johnson asked that Dr. Robertson be included in the discussion about the graduation rate numbers.
 - i. Dr. Johnson stated that the process for COVID notification is streamlined thanks to the Deans. The Health and Wellness Center will email the entire class directly through Banner. Faculty still need to keep seating charts. If there is a positive in a class, Amy Pennington will email the faculty. Remember to do the daily health screenings.
 - ii. Deadline for promotion and tenure is September 24 and the portfolio must be uploaded by the Department Head by 5pm. It is critical that individuals provide evidence to support. Just on the CV is not evidence, there needs to be some proof.

- iii. Dr. Jeff Robertson is the new AVPAA. Interim Dean for College of Natural and Health Science is Dr. John Jackson. Interim Department Head for Biological Sciences is Dr. Tom Nupp.
 - iv. The Board of Trustees expressed interest in visiting academic units. The Deans identified areas to showcase academic programs. The Board of Trustees will visit Williamson in October. Music is December. January will coincide with the Be a Match program.
- Dr. Huss pointed out that evidence proof for portfolios is in every iteration of the handbook and faculty acknowledges the handbook at the start of the academic year.

V. Old Business

A. Consultant: The consultant is a facilitator not a mediator. The terms facilitator and consultant are used interchangeably.

- i. Dr. Stacy met with the consultant on September 13th. This is a consultant that the Board hired, Faculty Senate did not have any input in the process. The consultant is meeting with the other 7 Faculty Senate representatives next week. The consultant is also meeting with Staff Senate, Student Government, Executive Council, an “outsider”, and the Board of Trustees.
- ii. The consultant has read the most recent faculty satisfaction survey. Dr. Stacy sent two past faculty satisfaction surveys to the consultant. The consultant also has the communication committee report. Dr. Stacy will also send the budget advisory report to the consultant. Dr. Huss recommends that the consultant read the historical Faculty Senate notes and minutes. Dr. Stacy stated that she would ensure that the consultant has the website link to review the minutes.
- iii. Dr. V. Carole Smith asked about the staff knowledge and involvement in the process. Dr. Smith stated that not all staff know about the process of restructuring either. The email from the Restructuring Committee did not go to staff. Dr. Huss pointed out that it should all be transparent and everyone needs to know. The letter that Dr. Stacy sent to Senators explaining the consultant process was emailed to Kaitlynn so that it could be sent to all staff. Andrea Eubanks will assist with sharing the restructuring information to all staff that fall under Academic Affairs.

B. Shared Governance Committee Membership: Dr. Stacy stated that Deans are selecting a person from each college. A special election will be held to vote for shared governance committee membership and ATU strategic planning steering committee member.

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

D. COVID Updates: Dr. Stacy clarified that faculty still need to keep seating charts. The Task Force is going to discuss allowing international travel at the next meeting.

Before moving to open forum, Dr. Schwehm asked that we jump back to the consultant for more discussion.

Consultant Continued

- i. Dr. Schwehm asked when the switch was made in verbiage from mediator to consultant. Dr. Reed pointed out that the original letter used facilitator; however, the word mediator has also been used.
- ii. Dr. Schwehm asked for clarification on the goals of the consultant. What do we think the process is? Dr. Schwehm is worried that this is a communication consultant and that shouldn't be the only thing we get out of this. Dr. Huss pointed out that Faculty Senate does not have information – we don't know the process, we don't know what will happen with the information/report. We need more.
- iii. Dr. Stacy indicated that the facilitator stated she was preparing a report for the board. Dr. Johnson was called on for more clarification. Dr. Johnson said that the initial conversation in April or May did use "mediator" but "consultant" was used at the last Board meeting. Dr. Huss pointed out that you can hire a mediator as a consultant and the terminology is not the issue, the role in the process is the question. Dr. Johnson stated there has been there has been no discussion in Executive Council except to say that the consultant would be interviewing members of EC. Dr. Johnson visited with the consultant on September 13th.
- iv. Dr. Reed read excerpts from Mrs. Duffield's email that guaranteed anonymity, no retaliation, and responses shared in summary format.
- v. Dr. Huss asked what would happen with the final report. Dr. Huss expressed that everyone should be part of the process. We need an open faculty forum, not just 1-1 meetings.
- vi. Dr. Stacy stated that there was miscommunication regarding the 8 faculty that were selected and are being interviewed from Faculty Senate. Dr. Stacy clarified that the 8 Faculty Senate selected to interview were pulled by Ms. Duffield from the Faculty Senate website that listed 8 individuals on the advisory board last year. Two of the individuals had expired terms so replacements were suggested. The consultant thought that Faculty Senate chose the representatives, but this was not the process.
- vii. Dr. Reed added to the discussion that Faculty Senate asked for a group meeting instead of 1-1 and that the request was denied. There was consensus to have group session and have the consultant speak at a Faculty Senate meeting and that was also denied. Dr. Johnson suggested that Faculty Senate contact Ms. Duffield and ask if we can see the report. Dr. Johnson asked if we were provided an answer as to why we can't do groups? Dr. Reed confirmed from Ms. Duffield's email that the consultant expressed the want for 1-1 meetings.
- viii. Dr. Smith stated that the entire process has changed. It is no longer rational or efficient. Dr. Schwehm emphasized that the current process creates legitimacy issues. Dr. Smith indicated that the process is not transparent and there were people involved in the process that should not be. Dr. Stacy confirmed and shared that the secretary to the Board scheduled the 1-1 meetings with the consultant. Dr. Smith stated that the only way to have a legitimate process is to include everyone – faculty, staff, adjuncts,

students, etc. Dr. Huss stressed the importance of Faculty Senate in the process and that Faculty Senate can advocate for everyone on campus since not all are included in the process.

VI. Open Forum

- Mental Health – Dr. Stacy stated that there are concerns about mental health. Faculty Senate is open to ideas to help with concerns on campus for faculty, staff, and students.
- EC Meeting – first will by 9.22 (moved from 9.15). Faculty Senate can add two items to the agenda.
- Strategic Enrollment and Retention Committee – need Faculty Senate representatives.
 - Retention subcommittee – Julie Mikles-Schluterman
 - Enrollment/Recruitment subcommittee – Rene Couture
- University Strategic Planning Steering Committee – need Faculty Senate representative to assist with developing the 5-year plan. Melissa Darnell volunteered.
- Name changes – Dr. Eshelman provided information on how to change your name in the computer system as there has been some frustration. He called OIS, registrar, Dr. Johnson, and financial aid. Dr. Eshelman shared the official procedure and form is housed within the registrar office: <https://www.atu.edu/registrar/forms/Name%20Change.pdf>
- Dr. Couture stated that he still feels in the dark about the restructuring process. We lack guiding principles. STEM vs STEAM is a big difference. Seems like some of it is pre-determined in the outcome. Dr. Johnson said that STEM is to take advantage of grant funding. The process is left open for input and hopefully the committee will get suggestions. Dr. Darnell emphasized the importance of the email we received asking for input and ideas from the committee. Dr. Johnson stated that there will be multiple models that are presented and there would be opportunities for feedback.

VII. Announcements and Information Items

- University Council Search Committee Faculty Rep – Shelly Daily
- Employee Lounge “Tech Outlet” Opened 8.26 in Baz 204
- Golden Suns have first home volleyball game tonight
- Brass in the clouds is this Saturday at 6:4am5 on Nebo
- Next meeting is October 12, 2021.

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

Respectfully Submitted,



Dr. Jamie Stacy, Chair



Bethany Swindell, Secretary