

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2025

Senators in attendance: (no particular order) T. Nupp (chair), M. Rogers (chair-elect), M. Hankins (Secretary), J. Grosskopf, J. Clements, J. Greer, A. Gilbert, C. Brucker, P. Dykema, C. Capen-Housley, S. Apple, D. Murphy, S. Escobar, S. Huss, V. Jones, S. Tinerella, T. Pennington, D. Dunnick

Guests: A. Santos (P/VPAA), T. Weaver (Registrar)

1. Call to Order (Dr. Tom Nupp)
2. Approval of March 11, 2025 Minutes
 - Tabled to next meeting. Matt Hankins (Secretary) has been out sick and requests extension on this item.
3. Faculty Senate Chair updates
 - Budget Advisory Committee met on March 18th. Update below:
 - Budget for the next fiscal year is the same as current year
 - F27 is moving to zero-based budget model where each department starts with zero supplies/travel/capital budget and justifies expenditures to make the budget. Overall budgets for colleges will be the same as FY 26, but how it is divided among departments may change.
 - Budgets for F27 should be in draft form by Jan. 26, reach out to your department head if you want to be involved in this process
 - Legislative Updates (have had meetings with Dr. Santos & Dr. Jones to discuss):
 - Funding model for concurrent course is changing - possible increase in funding received based on charges per credit hour
 - Changes coming to productivity formula. At this time, it is unknown what the exact details will be, but there is a sense that there will be emphasis on return on investment for students receiving their degree.
 - Changes coming to course number system (5-digits) universal across the state
 - ADHE wants to have post-tenure review changes by Jan 26. Requirement made by legislature (ACCESS Bill). Tight timeline because handbook changes need Board review (likely sets Nov. deadline to match with board meetings).
4. Faculty Athletics Representative Report: Dr. Shellie Hanna
 - **There was a motion to table this item until Dr. Hanna, who is currently delayed, is present.**
Items listed below occurred after items 5 & 6A in the meeting sequence
 - Providing annual Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) report to senate which is an NCAA recommendation.
 - Spoke about issues that have been identified with registration issues and solutions

that are being pursued.

- Aim to improve communication with faculty about student absences. Changes are likely coming to the 'standard note' that faculty have received in the past because there are times schedule changes occur rapidly and it's not always possible to have the signed note to students with quick turnarounds.

5. P/VPAA update: Dr. Santos

- ACCESS Bill - planned meeting with faculty senate leadership, Dr. Escobar and Eric Walker next week to determine what needs to be done to be compliant with the new law.
 - Currently listed as senate bill 246. Draft have been shared. Most relevant parts start on page 72.
- HB 1696 - ideas built on the core curriculum. This has changed from original formulation, and is now more flexible and not as concerning as initially thought.
- HB 1958 – requires public entities to form policy on authorized use of artificial intelligence. ATU has already begun crafting such a policy and have sent feedback to the legislature on this item. More to come on this later.
- Dr. Santos recently traveled to HLC annual meeting in Chicago. Raised questions about DEI policies at state level and possible conflict with prior items submitted to HLC. This is a issue almost nationwide, and HLC seems willing work with us to be compliant with state law.
- Reminder from Andrea Eubanks to work on the ballot for faculty standing committees for next year.
- Commencement is upcoming (May 9 and 10)
- Arkansas Legislature is recognizing the ATU robotics team tomorrow at 2 PM
- Dr. Santos is chairing the search committee for next VP of student affairs. Interviews ongoing.

6. Discussion of new policies and policy updates

A. Merit Pay (Rogers) - Received significant feedback from faculty and other discussions with members of the committee. Summary and discussion below:

- Equity issues are still a concern with regards to this policy, and fear that this could lead to issues with faculty morale
- Additional comments raised the point that awards should not be limited in number because there are many deserving faculty. The primary issue with this is that it is very difficult to budget if implemented.
- Discussed changes to policy implementation structure – No 'new' committee for selecting merit pay, but will use the UPTC to carry out the final selection process
- Aim is to hold a vote on this policy sometime in the fall next year.
- Discussion on the floor consisted of:
 - Suggestion that larger departments should have more opportunity to win the award than smaller departments. Presented structure where selections are at dept. level, which could have equity issues.

- Discussed different mechanisms for awarding merit pay between colleges and depts. Ultimately several different models discussed.
 - P. Dykema made a motion for senate members will take it upon themselves to read carefully the draft Merit Pay policy and provide feedback to the draft committee; The Senate leadership shall present to President Jones and Provost/VPAA Santos our desire that equity pay issues be addressed as a priority and that the issue of merit pay be addressed only when progress is made on the equity pay issues; and also shall present to Dr. Jones and Dr. Santos our sense that the Senate has significant concerns with the very idea of merit pay and the procedures by which it would be determined.
 - The motion passes
- B. Active committees (Jones) – shared document with 33 listed university committees. Most meeting schedules are now known. Only a small number still need information on meeting schedule. Additional discussion of how to better align student government (SGA) elections so that student members of committees can be joined, where this has been an issue in the past.
- C. Other active committee reports
- i. General Education Committee (Tinerella) – The 5-year evaluation of goals currently being used has been tabled because of HB 1696. Assessment committee is assisting in assessing the critical thinking goal and the value of arts and humanities goal. These items will be completed this month.
 - ii. Institutional Aid Committee (Rogers) – No Report
 - iii. Shared Governance Committee (Huss) - Campus council has been voted on by senate. Waiting to be sent to the Board of Trustees for approval.
 - iv. Campus Space and Utilization Committee: (Jones) – No Report
 - v. Budget Advisory Committee: (Nupp) – Discussed earlier, see item #3
 - vi. Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee (Murphy) – No Report
 - vii. Professional Development Committee (Dykema) - two recipients of spring PD grants have become ineligible because of a change in dates. These funds have been re-awarded to individuals who did not receive an awarded in the initial selection.
 - viii. Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee (Apple) – No Report
 - ix. Emergency Management and Safety Committee (Escobar) – No Report
- D. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees
- i. Faculty Workload Committee (Huss) – Senate has previously voted on handbook changes. Executive council (EC) have gotten back to us with requested changes. Most requested changes are to the memo form, but a few changes to actual policy. EC wanted to add the ability for distinguished professor to be hired at that rank. This got push back and Dr. Santos agreed that this was better off not included
 - S. Huss makes a motion to amend the memo form of the handbook changes at ECs request (Motion passes)
 - ii. Insurance Benefit Committee (Clements) - committee voted to suggest to move to self-

funding model for insurance as we move forward. Ultimately this is being sent up to the president and board for the final say, but this was the committee vote. Currently we are fully funded through blue cross. Self-funding model will give much greater deal of flexibility in how we can structure insurance plans.

- iii. Recruitment and Retention (West) – No Report
- iv. Assessment (Murphy and Jones) – No Report
- v. Common Hour Committee (Clements) – No Report
- vi. Merit Pay Committee (Rogers) – Discussed earlier under item 6A

7. New Business

- i. Curricular items – we missed voting on February proposed items in our March meeting. These are currently under consideration by senate, with the exception of a minor deletion in parks and recreation that still has a student in it, and so it needs to be amended from Fall to Spring 26.
 - Motion to consider the curricular items in block with the exclusion of HI/HIM related items which were voted on in the March meeting (Huss)
 - Move to approve all items in block (Brucker) – Motion Passes
- ii. ACCESS and Faculty Handbook changes (Nupp) – Discussed briefly in prior items. Senate leadership has a planned meeting with Dr. Santos next week to chart a path forward on this. Changes to the handbook are likely needed to be compliant with this new legislation.
- iii. Faculty Senate Elections – brief discussion of elections which are upcoming.
- iv. Faculty Satisfaction Survey – Faculty satisfaction survey is ready to go. Dr. Murphy has been working on this.

8. Old Business

Distinguished Professor policy revisions – already discussed. See item D.i.

9. Open Forum

10. Announcements and Information Items

- Campus Closet – If you student who needs clothing for interview or presentation, this is a great resource. Have them go to <https://www.atu.edu/career/careercloset.php>. Boxes are also located around campus for donations.

11. Adjournment