

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

December 5, 2024

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

Guests: R. Jones (president), A. Santos (provost), J. Myers (Assoc. VPAA), S. Reed (serving as alternate for Dr. Clements)

1. Call to Order (Dr. Tom Nupp)
2. Approval of November 12, 2024 Minutes
 - Motion to approve minutes passes.
3. Guest speaker: Dr. Russell Jones, President ATU

Shared information about recent salary adjustments: Primary goal of this has been to help with CUPA related issues (being hired in good years vs. bad years) and related issues of salary compression that have caused inequalities.

 - The majority of the raises went to lower-paid staff, such as administrative assistants and FAMA
 - A total of \$1.1 million was used for the salary adjustments, with 46% going to academic affairs
 - The method for calculating raises involved comparing current salaries to CUPA titles, with a goal of reaching 80% of the CUPA median value
 - A 1% raise was given to those at or above 80% of their CUPA median
 - There was a 5K individual cap, which means there are still a handful of people who are not quite to 80% even after this adjustment, but this is the best that could be done at this time.
 - Adjustments were also made to prevent employees from being negatively impacted by insurance premium increases (if salary would go above 55k)
 - A lump sum adjustment (1/2 year) will be paid in February for the remainder of the current year, and this increase will be reflected on new contracts starting in the summer
 - Amounts were also rounded to the nearest \$50 to make it easier on folks issuing the Feb. checks over in payroll.

Additional Discussion on the floor related to the above items:

- A majority of senators were pleased with funds going to staff members who have been underpaid for a very long time.
- While this raise is targeted at hitting 80% of CUPA, it is not the final goal. 80% is simply the minimum that could be achieved with the available funds, but in the long-term Dr. Jones

assures that the goal is to reach the CUPA median. It may not be possible to give raises every year to hit this goal. But if funds are available, this is something that will be revisited in the future.

- There was discussion about the need for a system that accounts for length of service, as CUPA adjustments do not
- Dr. Jones also mentioned looking to a future system that uses national all public university data to determine CUPA. This would be modified using a regional cost of living multiplier.

Other items also discussed:

- Ongoing interviews for Government relations position that will represent ATU. Down to 4 candidates. This is viewed as an important hire as the Governor's budget does not seem to be prioritizing higher education and times ahead may be difficult.
- December graduation is upcoming.

4. Committee Updates

A. Standing Committees

- i. Budget Advisory Committee (Nupp) – No Report
- ii. General Education Committee (Tinerella) – No Report
- iii. Institutional Aid Committee (Rogers) – No Report
- iv. Shared Governance Committee (Huss) – Currently in the process of revising a draft of the shared governance committee document, with the aim of sharing this in advance of the next senate meeting in February. Currently, the committee is working on finalizing the number of people from each constituency that should be on the committee. How many voting members, and what members might be added but as non-voting participants.
- v. Campus Space and Utilization Committee: (Jones) – No Report
- vi. Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee: (Nupp) – No Report
- vii. Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee (Murphy) – No Report
- viii. Professional Development Committee (Dykema) – No Report
- ix. Technology Prioritization and Impact Committee (Apple) – No Report
- x. Emergency Management and Safety Committee (Escobar) – No Report

B. Ad Hoc & Senate Committees

- i. Faculty Workload Committee (Huss) – Functionally this is really the faculty handbook re-writes committee. Committee is actively working on policy rewrites and anticipates having drafts to share in advance of senate meetings in February and March which can be considered as voting measures at that time. This committee has already gathered a lot of feedback from across campus and expects to have the revisions to the current policy drafts mostly completed by the next senate meeting.
A draft of the AI policy was shared, which includes some aspects that have been raised related to concerns around possible FERPA violations if using chatGPT (and similar) because stuff entered into these sites become part of their database used to train future AI models.
- ii. Insurance Benefit Committee (Clements) – No Report
- iii. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Wondolowski) – The committee

has not yet met, but have touched base with Jocelyn in the minority student services office. The committee is brainstorming how to expand the reach of the minority student services to include other minority populations beyond race and ethnicity.

- iv. Credit for Prior Learning and Microcredentials (Bradley) – No Report
- v. Rules Committee (Dykema) – No Report
- vi. Recruitment and Retention (West) – Brief mention of workshop on Jan. 6th. Half day event focused on recruitment and retention matters.
- vii. Assessment (Murphy and Jones) – No Report
- viii. Common Hour Committee (Clements) – No Report
- ix. Merit Pay Committee (Rogers) – version of merit pay proposal posted on senate WebEx for review. Seeking feedback at this stage because several discussions with the policy are ongoing. One of the main points raised was the difficulty in shaping some aspects of the policy without a source of funding identified. Additional discussion on the floor focused on the following items:
 - There is a debate whether merit pay should be a permanent addition to base salary or a temporary bonus. A permanent increase would continue indefinitely, while a temporary one would be for a set period (e.g., one to three years), after which it would be removed from the base salary and the funds could be redistributed. The committee is leaning towards making it an addition to the base salary until some other salary change occurred, which is more of a permanent route, but they would like feedback from the faculty.
 - Later discussion started to shift in favor of a one-year bonus, which would be more budget friendly and sustainable. But this is still very fluid in being discussed.
 - There is a sentiment among the committee that departments should have control and flexibility to decide how to use their merit pay funding. The merit pay process should incentivize faculty to do better in teaching, advising, recruiting, grant writing, and scholarship. The policy could be used to reward those who have done something really outstanding
 - It was also suggested that departments could reward faculty for taking on extra duties or for teaching overload classes.
 - There was further discussion that Merit pay could be a way to address the issue of compression, where some faculty are making less than their peers, possibly due to when they were hired or a lack of adjustments in the past.
 - On eligibility- All full-time faculty in tenure lines, instructor lines, legacy faculty, and librarians would be eligible for merit pay in the current consideration of the policy.

5. New Business

- VPAA Update
 - New Graduate Dean – Dr. Bradley has accepted the role of Dean of the College of Research and Graduate Studies and will be leaving his current position in January
 - Recruitment & Retention Conference – scheduled for January 6th.
 - Considering a revamp of professional development programs to make them more

interesting and useful for faculty. One idea being explored is to create a podcast-style format where a national expert is brought in monthly to discuss relevant higher education topics, which would be available via Webex. This approach would allow for more flexibility in how people can participate and provide more access to information

- Currently considering using some funds from the VPAA office to help support study abroad activities, with the aim of trying to make this as affordable as possible for students

6. Old Business – None

7. Open Forum

i. The Budget Advisory Council has not been meeting

- the faculty want to know why the committee is not meeting and to what extent the faculty is participating or not in the budgetary process
- While the faculty has a seat at the table, the administration has the ultimate say in the budgetary process, unlike curriculum matters, where the faculty has the majority say
- there is a need for the Budget Advisory Committee to meet regularly so that people can be in the room to hear and ask questions especially when there is a serious issue
- It was noted that shared governance is tied into the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- It was suggested that the administration be approached with a request to discuss why the meetings have not been occurring and to get an update on the fee structure

ii. Concerns were raised about additional committees that may not be meeting

- Access and inclusion (or inclusion and access committee, which was formerly the university, diversity, equity and inclusion group) has not been meeting. From discussion there seems to be some confusion around membership in this committee.
- Gen Ed committee – There is a concern about lack of reports coming from this committee. A senator raised a point that a colleague in their department sits on this committee, but has not been able to attend because of a course conflict. From this it is unclear if the committee is meeting. That stated, there is a concern about the lack of reports to the senate from this committee.
- There was further discussion on this point, and there seemed to be a consensus that we should look into the current senate committees to determine which are still relevant and which should be disbanded. Some 'stale' committees seem to be a source of confusion.
 - There was a suggestion that a description of each active committee and how often it meets should be made available on the faculty senate website.
 - V. Jones volunteered to look into meeting frequencies for committees on the 24-25 standing committees list to help address some of these issues.

8. Announcements and Information Items

- Poinsettia sale at the farm starting tomorrow.

Adjournment