

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2024

3 PM; Rothwell 456

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

Guests: R. Jones (president), A. Santos (provost), J. Myers (Assoc. VPAA), M. Davis (Faculty), G. Adkins (Faculty)

1. Call to Order (Dr. Tom Nupp)
2. Approval of August 20, 2024 Minutes (1st - Dr. Rogers, 2nd - Dr. Clements)
 - > Correction to spelling of Dr. Rogers Name in the August meeting minutes
 - > Minutes approved with the above correction to the record.
3. Committee Updates
 - A. Standing Committees
 - i. Budget Advisory Committee (Nupp) - *No Report*
 - ii. General Education Committee (Tinerella) - *Met on the 29th of last month. A new gen ed course was approved (Music 2023 – American Pop Music). Committee will take more proposals for courses to be considered for general education credits.*
 - iii. Institutional Aid Committee (Rogers) - *No Report*
 - iv. Shared Governance Committee (Huss) – *Information was provided on the history and previous proposed structure of this committee. Documents provided related to this discussion are attached at the end of this document. Discussion on the floor focused on benefits of this committee in improving communication across campus related to new initiatives and policies, whether this should be a university wide committee (with representation from faculty, staff, and students) or if this should be confined to faculty senate (with similar committees existing in staff senate and student government), the proposed make up of this committee (number of faculty, staff, student representatives to be involved if combined into a single committee structure).*
 - > *Dr. Huss plans to write a draft of the committee organization and description document. Previous document referenced was from 2017 and needs considerable updates to reflect the current university structure and changes that have occurred over this time period.*

- v. Campus Space and Utilization Committee: *V. Jones was appointed to this committee. R. Jones noted the importance of this committee in the future as new facilities are made available on campus starting next year.*
 - vi. Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee: (Nupp) – *This committee has met recently. Discussion on the floor focused on distinction between this committee which is a university standing committee and the faculty senate ad hoc committee. Ideas pursued by the faculty senate ad hoc committee will be reported to the university standing committee.*
 - vii. Institutional Scholarship Appeals Committee (Murphy) – *No Report*
 - viii. Professional Development Committee (Dykema) – *This committee met earlier in the semester. Applications for professional development grants are currently open and have a deadline on Sept. 27th for the current cycle.*
 - 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)- *Committee is examining possible criteria for the rank of Distinguished Professor. An example could be a minimum of 15 years at ATU, and at least 6 years after being granted rank of full professor, but this is still very much under consideration and open to discussion.*
 - > *S. Huss plans to expand membership in this committee and plans to add J. Schwehm and several junior faculty members. Any interested junior faculty members should reach out to committee chair (Huss) for more information. Discussion noted that these changes will require changes to the faculty handbook and will need to be coordinated with university leadership.*
 - ii. Insurance Benefit Committee (Clements) – *Little to report at the moment, but open enrollment is coming soon (October). Committee will meet more frequently around that time. Need to identify dates for open enrollment and plan to discuss further at the next meeting.*
 - > *R. Jones noted that next month there will be a series of training/information sessions with HR about pre-tax withholding for dependent care. As discussed in the president's address at the beginning of the semester, ATU faculty will be able to elect how much of your check goes towards pre-tax dependent care (within limits set by tax law). Keep in mind that these accounts are 'use it or lose it' so don't put more in than you will actually use, and these accounts accumulate over time paycheck to paycheck and so the full amount you plan to put into the account will not be immediately available to use.*

- iii. Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Action Committee (Wondolowski) – *Plans to meet next month, no report currently.*
 - iv. Credit for Prior Learning and Micro-credentials (Bradley) – *Meeting scheduled for Thursday (9/12), no other updates at present.*
 - v. Rules Committee (Dykema) – *No Report. Dykema noted that he is also representative for Graduate Council for this year.*
 - vi. Recruitment and Retention (West) – *No report from committee.*
 - > *R. Jones wanted again to commend the faculty for efforts that are reflected in our retention numbers. Numbers are in for 11th day of class attendance and report can be found here:*
<https://www.arkansastechnews.com/atu-reports-preliminary-fall-2024-enrollment/>. *Highlights are that we achieved 75% retention from freshman to sophomore year, and this is the highest we have ever achieved for this demographic. Pre-pandemic, we were at 69 %. During the pandemic years we were 62%, 63 %, 64 %, and then last year it jumped to 71 %. This year is 75 %.*
 - vii. Assessment (Murphy and Jones) – *Plan to meet in next few weeks. No report at present.*
 - viii. Common Hour Committee (Clements) – *Dr. Myers has provided considerable data and additional information on schedule that is being examined. There is a plan to conduct surveys among the faculty to try and find the best options for the ‘common hour’. May seek some assistance with drafting emails when it comes to that stage, but most of the work still lies ahead with shifting through that data when they have it.*
4. New Business
- A. President’s Update (by R. Jones; item added by amending the original agenda with 1st from S. Huss, 2nd from V. Jones)
 - i. Report on 11th day attendance numbers:
 - *Freshmen class is down 16 % university wide, which is concerning and will likely have a ripple effect as the current class progresses past freshman year.*
 - *Our strong performance on retention and transfer students means the overall enrollment is only down ~4.5% (total enrollment this year is 9,062 compared to last year which was 9,487)*
 - *There is a strong sense that our freshmen numbers being down is tied to offers of ‘free’ education from other institutions within the state, but the thinking is that this will course correct over time. There is at least some anecdotal evidence of individuals finding out that the actual cost of education at other institutions within the state is not really ‘free’ in every*

case, and there is a hope with these realizations that our transfer numbers will be up and future freshmen class numbers will improve. For many students our scholarships and financial aid are a better deal compared to the 'free' education offered at other schools around the state.

- *Breakdown of enrollment numbers:*
 - *Concurrent is up 0.6%*
 - *Ozark campus is up 8%*
 - *Russellville campus is down 7%*
- *There was discussion about growth at the Ozark campus. Several popular programs are space limited at present. The Ozark campus is not landlocked, but would need additional funding to expand facilities to be able to admit more students into some of these high demand programs*
 - *Largest demand programs at Ozark are welding, HVAC, automotive, and health sciences*
- *Of the 17 departments on Russellville Campus 4 increased in enrollment and 13 decreased in enrollment*
 - *Total Undergrad + Grad at Russellville Campus is 5,077*
- *Campus housing has 2k beds, and are at ~88% capacity.*

ii. *Mission and Vision statement*

- *Current strategic plan expires June 30th – Important to be thinking about future direction and crafting a new mission and vision statement is a useful first step in the process of creating a new strategic plan*
- *A draft of the statement was discussed and provided at the end of this document.*
 - *Currently seeking feedback on this from faculty, staff and students*
 - *Plan to have this finalized by the time we leave on thanksgiving break.*

B. *VPAA Update (A. Santos)*

- *Efforts related to ongoing policy review - meeting with SGA yesterday – desire to have involvement with common hour committee and policy review committee (see earlier discussion with Dr. Huss). Still many issues with outdated polices that need to be tackled. Echoing Dr. Jones - we want to be student centered school and our policies need to reflect that. Want to create a set of policies that are equity focused. Dr. Myers and Santos are attending a set of workshops that are aimed at developing equitable policies. More to report on this front later.*
 - > *Dr. Santos would like a few individuals from faculty senate to take*

part in the policy committee - Two volunteers: S. Huss and C. Austin

- *Pursing External Grants – We are hoping to increase funding/revenue in grants. One challenge is grants office doesn't have the personnel/capacity to handle a large influx of grant proposals. To fix this, the plan is to hire new individuals to support the ability for faculty to pursue grant funding. Research grants are good, but would like focus on service focus grants. The example given was the recently awarded Gear Up grant. These programs could present opportunities to take faculty out of the classroom and into the broader community. There have been and will be meetings with the mayor and other community leaders.
> We are also looking at companies that can help with grant applications. Previously had contract with Hanover, but that has since expired. These are very expensive, and so we are in the process of shopping around. One we are looking at is the McAlister and Quin. It is still very early in the discussion, may not be very affordable. Plan to seek feedback from Deans and faculty that have been identified by Deans. We want to make sure if we spend the money on this that the services will be used.*
- *Recruitment efforts are commendable. Noted Dr. Bradley and success in the ag program. Freshmen class being small can lead to challenges down the road, but we are looking at ... Bridge to excellence is something we're looking at. Mixed feelings among faculty, but we would like to bring something like this back. Looking at what was done at FIU - faculty, staff being paired with students to check in on them and spend time with them in mentorship capacity. In the future, we will need to retain more and more students. 75% is excellent, but we could get to 80% and these will help our overall numbers. This is in early stage thinking, but progress will be made on fleshing out details along with input from members of senate as part of the process.*
- *90-hour degree programs? - One of our fellow state universities (Henderson) is proposing 90-hour degrees. We still need to understand if this is going to be allowed under ADHE. May be beneficial for some of our weaker programs. This could be done by eliminating free electives but keeping gen ed and major classes. Not sure how Henderson is designing these degrees (where the time cuts are occurring to get down to 90 hours), but the elimination of free electives is a model that BYU followed for their 90-hour degree*

programs.

> Sounds good on surface, but could hurt things like discovery majors because of reduction of courses that are 'free electives'. Not far in development process. bringing it here for discussion and 'food for thought'. There is a relevant article discussing these plans in the recently published Arkansas Democrat Gazette (see: <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2024/sep/06/trustees-ok-6-semester-degree-programs-at/>)

C. Curricular items, Ms. Weaver

- *Clements motion to consider all items as a block; 2nd by V. Jones*
- *Details of curricular changes proposed are provided at the end of this document.*
- *Discussion on floor consisted of individual items explained by relevant faculty who were present.*
- *Changes were voted and approved as a block*

D. Development of committee to examine advanced rank (above Professor)

- *Reference earlier items with Faculty Workload Committee (Huss). Suggestion to merged this committee with Faculty Workload Committee and renamed to be more reflective of its current purpose. New name for this committee is TBD.*
 - *Motion to merge committees (1st – Rogers, 2nd- Tinerella) which unanimously passed.*

E. Handbook updates – will be merged with the new 'To be renamed' committee (previously faculty workload), which is chaired by S. Huss.

F. Reestablishment of a Merit Pay Committee

- *Discussion around the issue of equity which has still not been addressed. Faculty senate is being asked to consider merit pay, but many on senate would prefer seeing the equity issue tackled first.*
- *Discussion about source of funding for merit pay. Perception is that everything will still come from the same 'pot of money' so enacting this could worsen the equity issue.*
- *A point was raised (V. Jones) that adding distinguished professor as a new rank could also contribute to greater inequality among the faculty.*
- *A motion was made for M. Rogers to chair this committee (1st Rogers, 2nd Clements) which was approved.*

5. Old Business - None

6. Open Forum

- Discussion about issues with decrease in freshmen enrollment – Questions were raised about spending on advertisement, hiring more recruiters. There is certainly danger if we continue to have a shrinking freshman class year after year.
 - Recruitment efforts are led by Student Affairs and we would need to reach out to them to understand what's being done about this issue
 - A suggestion was raised to have Dr. Hagge give a report based on research he's done into student demographics and how it can inform our recruiting process.

7. Announcements and Information Items

- A. ATU Debate - Dr. Adkins, ATU Debate Coach, discussed updates from the Debate Team including a tournament that will be hosted here at ATU Nov. 15th and 17th. They will need spaces from around campus to host this upcoming event as well as volunteers to help with judging the event.
- Suggestion was raised that our undergraduate students would make good judges and experience in this area is not required to be a judge. If you have interested students, please have them reach out about this opportunity

ATU debate has also been selected to host a national debate tournament on our campus in 2027 (Dates are expected to be Friday, April 16 to Monday, April 19). This will require significant space on our campus (possibly every available room). Plans will need to be made to accommodate this event. Possibility of pushing classes online to allow for classroom spaces to be utilized for the event. Note that this is in very early planning stages with ~2.5 years to work out the specific details.

- Senate encourages Dr. Adkins to come back closer to time for this event and brief us about relevant needs with estimates of needed room numbers (current expectation could exceed 350 rooms).
- B. Constitution Day – Dr. Rogers reported on plans for constitution day, which is on Tuesday Sept. 17th. There will be a public reading of the constitution at Hindsman Bell Tower starting at about 12:30 PM. There may be hot dogs.
- C. Notable Alumni – Dr. Dykema discussed Kaitlin Bounds recent performance at the Paralympic Games. Kaitlin is an ATU alum and was part of the cross-country team here at ATU. She finished 6th in the women's 1500m T20 Finals.

8. Adjournment (motion 1st by Tinerella; 2nd by Huss)