April 4th, 2025

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE MEETING

April 4, 2025

Reynolds 222

Attendees: Amanda Mohler, Julie King, Suzanne Melescue, Dwayne Powell, Savannah Cormier, Shanon Brantley, Stephanie Hoeckley, Katie Camden, Trinity Pullam, Pradeep Mishra, Kristen Sumler, Toccara Carter, Argelia Lorence, Khem Aryal, Richard Segall, Bert Greenwalt, Mark Lewis, Gary Edwards, Ed Salo, Rollin Tusalem, Hao Yang Teng, Guolei Zhou, Eric Dry, Karen Graham, Scott Mangan, Ibrahim Duyar, Jamie Pasmore

Proxy Attendees: Ibrahim Duyar proxy for Rob Williams, Rebbecca Wellborn proxy for Rashele Wade, Pradeep Mishra/Karen Graham proxy for Sarah Scott, Susan Whiteland proxy for Kim Vickrey, Amanda Mohler for Audrey Folsom

Guests: Kevin Hennings (parliamentarian), Todd Sheilds

Absentees: John Hershberger, Alexandr Sokolov, Zahid Hossain, LTC Morgan Weatherly, Hung-Chi Su, Donna Caldwell, Paul Finnicum, DayDay Robinson, Veena Kulkarni, Jessica Curtis

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

Order of the Day: Motion to approve the order of the day by Ed Salo, seconded by Dwayne Powell, all in favor, motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: The motion to approve the March 21, 2025 meeting minutes with AAS and FEq acronyms spelled out, by Ed Salo, seconded by Trinity Pullman all in favor, and the motion was carried out.

New Business:

Chancellor Dr. Todd Sheilds Q&A

Arkansas Access Act

- Regarding the access bill, lobbying efforts were made to change and make things acceptable on campus. These efforts have worked, reducing stress from the Arkansas Access Act.

Arkansas Access Act Overview:

- K-12 Systems:
  - Currently, schools that are not performing, do not have a certified teacher, or on probation do not have any ramifications. Bill seeks to *"shorten waiver timelines from 5 years to 1 year for K-12 schools that are out of compliance in teacher licensing, class size, and other areas."*

- Standardized weights on concurrent credits:
  - *Standardization of course numbers:* To speed up the transfer process, course numbers will be standardized. If a course is unique, the course number will not change.
  - *High school students and college credit:* The governor encourages high school students to take college credits. If students are rural, they can take a class from someone certified by Astate or online. In preparation for the Arkansas Access Act, A-State's enrollment management team started thinking about how to prepare and recruit highschool students.
    - Concurrent enrollments up to 800 – 1000 students.
    - A-State has made agreements with new high schools that want to collaborate.
  - *K-12 standardization:* Many seniors take college classes during their senior year, but taking concurrent classes can lower a student's grade point average. Many seniors take two classes their senior year and can start college but do not want to miss the high school experience. The Access Act will standardize numbers.
  - *Scholarships and funding:* The act will increase the number of scholarships and fellowships for students taking campus classes. A-State is developing strategies to make students feel like Redwolves now. A-State also need to think about online students and how to make them feel like Redwolves.
    - Early Registration: The university hopes to have students registered by May and scholarships assigned so faculty can begin preparing for Fall courses to accommodate the growing student population.
    - Hiring Plan: The administration is conscious of the student-to-faculty ratio. Therefore, a hiring plan will be released before commencement. Hiring plans will be part of the summer workload.

- College and Tenure: The administration is not worried, and faculty should not be worried. Dr. Shields met with the governor and discussed the statement regarding indoctrination. Dr. Shields suggested we want teachers to push students “how to think”, not “what to think.” There is nothing about indoctrination or teaching the wrong material in the Arkansas Access Act.
  - *Circumstances for review:* Tenure does not protect faculty members from participating in poor behavior. Should an event or situation occur that triggers an investigation, A-State has a process in place. Each university is responsible for how it manages inappropriate behavior. A-State has a process in place that works with the faculty member to attempt to resolve the situation through a Performance Improvement Plan. A-State’s Performance Improvement Plan is designed to support the faculty member, not hurt them.
  - *Post-tenure review:* A-State has a process in place, and Governor Sanders is supportive of the process.

- DEI and Accreditation: Paraphrasing – When going through accreditation, if HLC asks for something that we cannot provide, the response should be, “Our state law prevents us from answering that.”
  - HLC is aware of the Arkansas Access Act and knows the university is not able to answer specific questions.
  - *Program Accreditation:* When programs have criteria needed for accreditation regarding DEI, the Chancellor and Provost will meet with the program(s) accreditors, and give the same response. Programs are also encouraged to meet with the Chancellor and Provost to discuss the requiremetns.
  - College experience for minorities: The Arkansas Access Act will not change the college experience for minorities and does not change anything A-State is already doing.
    - Admission criteria is the same for everyone, student success is the same for everyone, and A-State wants everyone to feel welcome. This was expressed to Governor Sanders and the Senators.

- Workforce Development: A-State got ahead of the workforce criteria to serve more students.

- One Application Portal: Students will complete one application for all universities. A-State is lobbying so it can advertise to more students that we are not able to contact typically. Then, A-State can to show students/applicants what the university has to offer. Only one university wants to prevent the one application portal.

Senator Questions:

- Question 1: Has the university seen benefits to the early retirement plan?
  - Response: The university has to wait two years. A new hiring plan goes out for 26-27.
- Question 2: Are alumni able to use safe space for A-State?
  - Response: This past week, we had many folks from the community try to get into A-State's safe space. At the moment, safety is a priority. We are looking to develop strategies and assign safe spaces in the community.

New Business

- Faculty Equity Committee
  - The Faculty Equity Committee put a proposal in place. Over the next few weeks, review the policy and distribute it to constituents seeking feedback. Discussions will be held during Senate meetings to discuss the recommendations and feedback.
  - Cre@astate: Create@astate needs reviewers. If you can serve as a reviewer, please register at Create@State 2025 Judging Sign Up

Old business

- Committee Reports: No new updates.

The meeting was adjourned by Amanda Mohler at 4:23 pm.

Minutes recorded by Amanda Mohler, approved on 4/18/2025 (uploaded to KB 10/14/2025)

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