

November 15th, 2024

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE MEETING

November 15th, 2024

Reynolds 222

Attendees: Amanda Mohler, Audrey Folsom, Julie King, Veena Kulkarni, Shanon Brantley, Katie Camden, Kristen Sumler, Dwayne Powell, Pradeep Mishra, John Hershberger, Stephanie Hoeckley, Ibrahim Duyar, Guolei Zhou, Savannah Cormier, Jessica Curtis, Rashele Wade, Trinity Pullam, Karen Graham, Jamie Pasmore, Ed Salo, Toccara Carter, Suzanne Melescue, Robert Williams, Scott Mangan, Hao Yang Teng, LTC John (Morgan) Weatherly, Kim Vickrey, Mark Lewis, Ibrahim Duyar, Richard Segall, Eric Dry, Gary Edwards, Bert Greenwalt

Proxy Attendees: Veronica Scudamore (Proxy for Paul Finnicum?), Karen Graham for Sarah Scott

Guests: Will McLean, Calvin White, Alyssa Wells, Carlitta Moore, Kristen Ruccio, Tom Moore

Absentees: Khem Aryal, Donna Caldwell, Zahid Hossain, DayDay Robinson, Alexander Sokolov, Hung-Chi Su, Rollin, Tusalem,

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

Order of the Day: Motion to approve the order of the day by Richard Segall, seconded by Eric Dry all in favor, motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the November 1st, 2024, meeting minutes by Jessica Curtis seconded by Ibrahim Duyar, all in favor, motion carried.

Provost Q&A

1) Why was the advising change not a shared governance issue?

Because it was a workflow procedure change, not a policy change, it is in the purview of the Provost. Communication was given before the change, at all levels. Deans were all on board. Input was sought at the college level. Shared governance can only make recommendations to the Chancellor and the Provost.

2) How is the university preparing for the new federal administration? In particular, what are plans to deal with potential tariffs, potential restrictions on student visas, and curtailment of academic freedom?

Tariffs: we have nothing to do with those, it might impact procurement, and it would fall under the systems office

Visas: international education is important, if restrictions are placed, we must comply. But we have lived through this before. We will do all we can while complying with state and federal law. We will use best practices.

Academic freedom: Review academic freedom regarding how it is impacted by the law. Your personal views do not fall under academic freedom, especially if it is not related to your discipline. You have freedom of speech, you can say what you want but you can't be protected from the consequences; we work for the state, therefore, we represent the state and Arkansas State University. We will advise you if needed but we will protect the institution (the whole/A-State). Look at court decisions about academic freedom. We are limited in how much we can protect you. We will advocate for you but may not be able to protect you. We are agents of the state. The provost is not worried about the federal government. Of the federal laws, Title IX has the biggest impact on you. We are more concerned with the state government's position. They ask about faculty-to-student ratios; staff:student:faculty ratios, and worked hours per week. They also asked about tenure. The state will have the biggest impact on how the university operates. Tenure will look significantly different. The guard rails are gone. DEI legislation is coming. The core mission of educating our students is staying the same. They have (the state legislature) an opinion about how many staff and faculty it takes to run our campus. We won't be able to keep the departments we had in 2011. This is why faculty lines are disappearing.

3.) Students have concerns about financial aid, mental health, and other personal issues. When referred to the Registrar, Counseling Center, and Financial Aid, the offices often do not provide much support to help these students stay in college. What plans do we have to improve training in these areas so they can support student retention and place less of a burden on faculty?

The new advising model has taken the burden off faculty. We are beefing up financial aid and registrar. FAFSA has undergone one of the biggest transformations in decades. This is why we need more training and professional advisors. It is constantly changing and faculty can't be expected to

keep up with the constant changes. All these new changes in workflow are to reduce the burden on the faculty. Not all of this falls under AA but falls under Student Affairs. We are trying to get more help for counseling (not under AA). Students needing counseling could go to the HOWL Service Center for mental health. Enquire about this if you are interested. [H.O.W.L. Service Center](#)

4.) The changing allocation of Infrastructure Funds places some programs at a disadvantage as they are programs that often require expensive supplies to meet the most basic needs of our students. Since a lack of funding for supplies and equipment directly impacts our ability to recruit new students, how does this administration plan to support the needs of the programs, who will now have limited access to infrastructure funding?

The way we are moving the infrastructure funds will provide more money from a deeper pool of money for departments. The current departmental limit is \$120,000 but with this new way, departments can purchase items that cost more than that. It will require the dean and the chairs to put more thought into the proposals. We will fund more large things now, but it will require a proposal. Make a great proposal. In times of plenty, you have to be good stewards of your money. We have to be good stewards all the time. The infrastructure money did go out this week.

5.) Our department has remained the same size throughout the pandemic, but we have had numerous faculty lines removed, reduced to non-tenure-track, or moved to adjunct load. If this administration wants to prioritize full-time faculty lines, why have so many lines removed or reduced?

We do prioritize full-time faculty lines where there is growth. If there is no growth, faculty lines may not be needed. A line has to be justified. [TN State has laid off 114 university employees](#). Nationally, 27 [universities have closed](#) or shut their doors. We have to be able to defend our decisions regarding the money we spend. We are being forced to do something different now. This is why the Provost is being honest with us and keeping us informed.

A legislative session is happening soon. The Chancellor will update us soon (next month). Tenure is being questioned, DEI legislation is coming, they are questioning the curricula, and they are pushing workforce development. We will need to right-size to the current requirements. We have had declining enrollment since 2014. Things are not okay but we can make it. [UConn cut dozens of programs](#). The Provost is advocating for us. We will not be a victim of the future. We will create our future. We will keep our core values of educating Arkansas. We were the only 4-year institution that got money yesterday (Grant awarded by Gov. Sanders). 4-year universities have lost their value propositions with the state. Concerning DEI, we will protect everybody (that is how we keep it). Concerning tenure, we are advocating for a 7-year post-tenure review (to protect and keep tenure).

New Business

Guest speaker Kristen Ruccio, Chair of Access and Accommodations Committee.

New guidelines for classrooms to make them more accommodating.

We are publishing a resource for faculty and staff. It will be available the week after Thanksgiving. Access promotes retention.

It has 6-pages of suggested good practices for classrooms (after the all captioning stuff), materials, and events. Course files should be screen reader-friendly (large Excel tables can be a problem). Use at least 14-point fonts. Be open about having an inclusive classroom. Don't discuss a student's disability in front of the whole class. Representation matters (in your materials). Minimize ableist language. For events provide a contact for people with mobility issues, food allergies, and avoid flashing lights. Guidelines for accessible PPTs and color-blind friendly materials.

Find the document here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/11QZ13MhCXPgefzUquKx_b5-wdNUnhgsUFCV6iE32-78/edit?tab=t.0

Old business

None.

The meeting was adjourned by Amanda Mohler at 4:14 pm.

Minutes prepared by Audrey Folsom, approved on 12/6/2024 (uploaded to KB 10/14/2025)

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