September 18, 2026

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE MEETING

September 18, 2026

LSE 219

Attendees:

Banafsheh (Bana) Aghayeeabianeh, Kacie Altom, Timberly Baker, Andrea Brown, Toccara Carter, Michael Cooper, Nicole Covey, Eric Dry, Gary Edwards, Audrey Folsom, Stephanie Gotay, Bert Greenwalt, John Hershberger, Stephanie Hoeckley, John Howard, Julie King, Mark Lewis, Anne McGee, Suzanne Melescue, Pradeep Mishra, Pankaj Nagpal, DayDay Robinson, Veronika Scudamore, Richard Segall, Kristin Sumler, Alexander Sokolov, Rollin Tusalem, Kim Vickrey, Rob Williams, Jason Zhou

Proxy Attendees:

Fredrick Webb as proxy for Melanie Fulton; Julie King as proxy for Eric West; Alexandr Sokolov as proxy for Jason Causey; Anahita Izadyar as proxy for Koushik Biswas

Guests:

Will McClean, Alyssa Wells

Absentees:

Eric West, Fredrick Webb, Jason Causey, Khem Aryal, Kousik Biswas, Robert Bradley, Scott Mangan, Mohamed Milad, Melany Fulton, Marceline Thompson-Hayes

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by John Hershberger

Order of the day:

Motion to approve the order of the day made by Andrea Brown, seconded by Audrey Folsom; all are in favor, the motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the August 21, 2026 meeting minutes with noted edits (date and location of meeting) was made by Andrea Brown, seconded by Alexander Sokolov, all in favor, the motion carried.

New Business

Provost Q & A

Interim Provost McClean here to answer questions and provide updates.

Dr. McClean expresses the desire to be transparent with faculty while also maintaining the privacy and confidentiality that is necessary in circumstances when decisions may not be final or when negotiations are ongoing.

Interim Provost McClean noted there were a couple of question submitted ahead of time. One was, “What did Dr. White mean when in his email when he said, ‘be careful what you ask for’?” Will expresses that this was referencing the housing challenges we are currently facing. We “asked for” increases in enrollment and students on campus, and the housing challenges, parking challenges, etc are a byproduct of increased enrollment and increased number of students living on campus. Campus was empty post-COVID. When Dr. White came to A-State he questioned where the students were (the physical presence of students). Housing occupancy was at about 40%. Today we occupancy is 100%. As enrollment grows, there is pressure on the system as a whole. It can take time to resolve those concerns. Enrollment and retention both increased from last year. Class sizes have gone up and will continue to, especially in general education courses. As those cohorts move through the system, upper level courses will also have to grow. This requires strategic planning for scheduling and utilization of classroom space, etc. These are good “problems” to have because it means we have students here to teach. Even some large, public, well-known institutions are having to make cuts. Getting students here helps make sure we don’t have to do that. Short answer to housing issue would be to go and build a new, expensive dorm, but thinking long-term is important and prevents undue burden on students. We are on a growth trajectory. We have to grow. We can’t be static or the institution will fail.

Next Question: In the April meeting Dr. White discussed budget prioritie. What went to the board was shared. Priorities were as follows:

1. Faculty promotions and equity

2. 2% merit raise and non-classified employees

3. 2% increase in Grad assistantships—necessary to attract quality graduate students and grad assistants

4. Operating budget for the College of Veterinary Medicine—building is bonded, but everything else is being fronted by the university. They will pay it plus some. Those funds will be pushed back to other areas as well. Hiring is also happening in phases as more faculty will be needed to teach additional years of the program.

5. Expanded research support (ABI and Office of Research and Technology Transfer)

6. Utilities and property insurance increases

Plan to continue to increase faculty salaries and equity pools. Make starting salaries more attractive to people, etc.

Only 9,000 of the 40,000 high school graduates in the state of Arkansas matriculated to higher ed. UofA pulls about 1/3. We then compete with other institutions for the remaining 2/3 of the students. We cannot focus only on recruiting from within the state, and we have to expand what we offer to compete.

Do not hire someone you don't want to hire or inferior candidates. Dr. McClean promises departments WILL NOT lose lines that are needed just because a search failed. We want to get good faculty who have longevity. We don't want to hire people that aren't going to stay or aren't going to be good at their job.

Financial aid hiccups have occurred this semester due to changes to guidelines and job turnover in the financial aid office. Try to be patient and help students as financial aid continue to work on things.

Work through chain of command when possible, but Will expresses he is here to support faculty.

On the issue of the upcoming spring schedule:

The schedule was copied, and that was bad for some departments due to the need for deletion of courses. Each course deletion requires an individual form. For some departments forms required reached the triple digits. Wouldn't it have been easier to seek input from the stakeholders before deciding to proceed in this fashion?

Dr. McClean states that he accepts ownership in part. All courses are in Banner and Coursedog; when we went from 4 to 5 digit course numbers, we couldn't make the transitions during the middle of the semester because of Banner. We had to have a "bandaid" approach in one semester or another. Schedule was getting built from scratch every semester. When the transition happened, it had to be done as a whole instead of as separate colleges, so it wasn't an option to allow one college to do one thing and another college a different thing. Though it was difficult and burdensome, it should never happen again. Once the schedule is rebuilt this one time, it should be easy moving forward. Going from scratch probably would have created a lot of errors as well and

inevitably there would have been some that wouldn't have liked that either.

On the issue of deductible for ABI insurance claim: will this affect budget?

There was a smoke related incident with overheated equipment. The sprinkler system went off and there was a lot of water damage, so a deductible has to be paid. The University has reserve funds that can cover this cost. They just aren't funds that replenish, so we have to hope that we don't have multiple similar issues in the same small time fram. There is recurring cost and one-time expense funds. There might be some money sitting there, but it won't be recurring. The university is "healthy but not wealthy".

On the topic of promotion for non tenure track faculty:

Dr. White has mentioned in the past that he would like a pathway for advancement opportunities for NTT faculty. This has still been in discussions. It has to be thought out and proposals presented. Dr. McClean is willing to entertain the idea of promotion without tenure, etc. However, the work would be best completed from the ground upward with each college coming up with criteria and agreeing on terminology that could then be used to create a University-wide policy through UPRT. An additional consideration is a funding formula. If this pathway is created without funds to back it, it would eat into raises for other faculty initially. Implementation phases would likely be required as funds are not available at this time. Provost's office has no problem with changes to titles, but funding for raises is another issue. There is not a committee at this time who has been charged to work on this. It has been discussed for years, but hasn't gone forward.

On the topic of Merit Raises:

Merit raises are intended to function as meritorious increases. In some departments they are giving flat raises to everyone. Why is it called that if it isn't that? Deans and chairs make those decisions. They have been told it should be for meritorious service with rubrics and standards in place to decide percentages to be given to faculty. It is a 2% merit pool that is dispensed at the college level. Faculty should be told the standards by which they are being evaluated and raises assigned. It is your right to know what you got and why. Faculty should be asked to sign their evaluation each year.

Regarding Changes to Insurance:

When will we know if our spouses will be denied insurance moving forward? Much concern was expressed for lack of timely notification of the potential for changes.

Provost office only found out what the suggested changes were a couple of hours before faculty did. HR hasn't always even shared the changes with us in advance.

A-State stood alone and got outvoted by other campuses in the ASU system. Other campuses voted for Option 2 and to cut spousal insurance. We voted Option 1 and to keep spousal insurance. There was only one vote per campus regardless of number of faculty represented. We do not know yet what is going to be done. Even if a spouse misses their open enrollment, loss of insurance is a qualifying event, so the spouse would be eligible to request coverage from their employer outside

of open enrollment.

Stand up Faculty Senate Constitutional Review Committee

Julie King and Rollin Tusalem volunteered to be on the committee to review the Faculty Senate Constitution for necessary updates. John Hershberger charged them with beginning this work and including others if they desire and will touch base with them.

Discuss Teams Attendance policy for 100% online faculty who do not live near campus

Timberly Baker requested that we consider adding an option to attend Faculty Senate meetings via Microsoft Teams citing that some programs are 100% online and have faculty that work remotely. If they are unable to drive in for meetings, they are excluded from Faculty Senate Service. Allowing those individuals to meet via Teams would increase their ability to participate in shared governance. Location of meeting and technology needed for the meeting could be a concern. An Owl camera could be used, though we would have to be in an alternate location as this room won't work with the monitor. Security has also been expressed as a concern. When setting up a meeting with a Teams group, only members of the group have access to the meeting link. Unless a senator sent the link to someone, there should not be a way for anyone else to join. The president would need to be the operator of the Teams meeting. John Hershberger expressed that the initial discussion was that if you are an on campus or in Jonesboro, the expectation is that you would attend in person. This consideration is primarily intended for remote faculty who do not live in Jonesboro. Some concern is expressed about recordings and transcripts created by Teams. The meetings would NOT be recorded, and AI transcripts would not be utilized. Some suggest that it would be appropriate to allow others to meet via Teams as well in certain circumstances. While some prefer this not happen, others recommend that they simply be required to ask for permission. Others do not feel permission should be required. Would this need to be written into the constitution or be a proposal so that we can have more official documentation?

Kacie Altom made a motion to create a temporary policy to allow 100% online remote faculty 100% who don't live in Jonesboro to meet via Teams until a more formal policy can be established.

Julie King seconded this motion.

Further discussion:

What is the problem with all being on Teams?

Not the same community connection

Staff senate is hybrid

Note taking is complicated

Cultural shift in behavioral expectations would be required

Some don’t pay attention in the meeting; are doing other work

For many there is value to being face-to face

Could prevent need to get proxy if traveling, etc.

The “danger” will be that everyone will sit in their office doing their own thing and not be involved.

Mark Lewis requested to amend motion to be more permissive and allow any senator to attend via teams for any reason without the requirement to ask permission.

Vote on amendment was conducted first. 15 for—9 against; motion to amend the motion carries.

Overall vote--3 against; motion carries

We can change this policy again later if needed. Timberly Baker volunteered to draft an official proposal.

Ask for input on others to invite to Faculty Senate

Access and Accommodations

University PRT Chair

Administration would like to build it from bottom up so it isn’t a directive but a collaborative.

Creativity Garage Manager, Michael Alexander

FRAC candidate names revealed--vote needed

College of Science and Math—Alam and Lorence

College of Castro, Duckworth, Kulkarni

It might be helpful to have a biographical paragraph for future votes. It may also be best to do these votes as a Qualtrics survey sent to senators.

Discuss how best to navigate future short-turnaround requests of faculty and/or Faculty Senate

What can be done about this? The email spelled it out clearly, but then it went into the faculty listserv and the discussion got muddy. Some senators didn’t send it out in time, etc. Qualtrics or a Teams poll is a good way to gather feedback. Larger faculty body would be easier to do Qualtrics. If it is a shared governance issue might be easier to do poll. Weighted votes of people in the college might need to be considered. John Hershberger will explore a bit more.

We could create a resolution regarding time required when senate is asked for feedback. We could send it up the chain, but it doesn’t force anyone to give us more time.

Old Business

Committee Reports

None

Meeting adjourned by John Hershberger at 4:30

Minutes Recorded by Kacie Altom

Revision #2
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