

Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2024 @ 3:30pm

I. Call to Order & Meeting Minutes

The Senate was called to order at 3:32 p.m.

Senators Present: Sandra Cox (Pres), Trent Fawcett (VP), Karen Carter, Alan Christensen, Steve Hart, Wes Jamison, Rachel Keller, Adam Larsen, Charley Roetting, Dennis Schugk, Tony Smith, Jeff Wallace, Hilary Withers

Guests: Jacob L. Thomas (Parliamentarian), Mike Brenchley (Deans), Mike Austin (Provost), David Allred (Assoc. Provost)

Minutes from 9/25/2024

Motion to Approve: A. Larsen ; **2nd:** W. Jamison

Approval: unanimous of all present

Minutes from 10/9/2024

Motion to Approve: W. Jamison; **2nd:** S. Hart

Approval: unanimous of all present

II. Senate Bylaws & Organization

A. GE Committee—Richfield

S. Hart, GE Committee Rep from Senate

Senators addressed the issue of a vacant seat on the General Education (GE) Committee representing Richfield. S. Hart noted that, despite efforts, there is no immediate solution to fill the position. Since the committee already has a

quorum, they agreed to continue operations with the seat temporarily unfilled, likely leaving it vacant until next semester.

III. Senate Business

Senators will receive updates from the following committees and discuss any arising matters.

A. Deans Council Report

S. Cox, representing the Senate on the Deans Council

M. Brenchley, representing the Deans Council on the Senate

1. Procedure for Post-Tenure. Senators reviewed a faculty evaluation document developed by Academic Affairs (AA) and discussed the complexities and legal requirements surrounding yearly tenured faculty reviews. Some senators found the document overly detailed and suggested it needed to be simplified for more practical implementation. S. Cox mentioned that D. Allred had proposed breaking down the process into step-by-step procedures for easier application. W. Jamison raised concerns over the longer “Form D” requirements, preferring a more streamlined form such as a simplified electronic Kualu form submission.

The discussion highlighted discrepancies in review practices across departments: some divisions, like Humanities, conduct annual reviews, while others do not. M. Brenchley reported that Deans and Chairs were under pressure to conduct annual reviews due to demands from the Academic and Tenure (A&T) committee. Senators also learned that annual Dean reviews are a state requirement, and that these reviews will transition to a simpler, standardized form to meet legal mandates.

Provost Austin clarified that state law now requires both annual Dean reviews and comprehensive five-year reviews for tenured faculty, which is comparable to promotion evaluations. The Provost also reassured senators that, although the president has the legal authority to enforce these reviews directly, President McIff is choosing to work with the Faculty Senate to establish the criteria, preferring a collaborative approach.

Provost Austin further addressed concerns about workload, explaining that while the Deans would initiate review committees, they would not oversee every

review detail. The five-year review cycle is intended to spread out the workload. Senators discussed that this system will relieve some pressure by formalizing review committees within each division and clarifying faculty responsibilities.

Provost Austin warned about potential legislative funding cuts, with a possible 10% reduction due to perceived compliance issues within USHE institutions. This would have a significant impact on Snow College, which depends heavily on legislative appropriations, unlike other state universities.

2. Academic Freedom. S. Cox reported on a Deans Council conversation concerning academic freedom, particularly regarding the implementation of the new Simple Syllabi program. She explained that although faculty members expressed concerns about the transition, simplifying master syllabi could, in fact, enhance academic freedom by reserving detailed course-specific content for individual syllabi. This approach would allow faculty more freedom within their classes while ensuring consistency across courses.

S. Hart added that while this change empowers departments, it could also increase the authority of department chairs, potentially impacting individual faculty members' academic freedom in isolated cases. R. Keller questioned if chairs would actually gain this power, to which S. Cox responded that chairs would primarily have the ability to set a template for the Simple Syllabi. If any department moved too far from the Curriculum Committee's (CC) standards, its oversight could bring it back in line.

Provost Austin emphasized that academic freedom primarily resides within individual syllabi and classroom practices. The master syllabus serves to maintain consistency and is designed to set boundaries, thus it does place minimal limits on academic freedom in order to set a baseline. The current master syllabi do far more than this, and actually hamper academic freedom by being too prescriptive. A. Larsen agreed with this, recalling that the addition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) components to the master syllabus years ago had similarly raised concerns over academic freedom. However, S. Cox reassured the group that Academic Affairs has no intention of limiting academic freedom through these changes and noted that many in her division were enthusiastic about the streamlined, one-page master syllabus format.

B. Calendaring Committee

S. Hart, Senate representative to this committee

1. Calendaring Committee Composition & Scope. S. Hart reported ongoing discussions about the formation of a new Calendaring Committee, which could reach about 25 members—a size that raised concerns. SH acknowledged that Associate Provost D. Allred, who is organizing the committee, aims to be inclusive, ensuring representation from various groups, including Food Services, Housing, Athletics, Richfield Administration, Concurrent Enrollment, and others. S. Hart expressed some reservations that the committee’s size might dilute faculty input, despite efforts to boost faculty participation by including a Senate rep on the committee.

A. Christensen asked if the large membership reflects the many stakeholders affected by the calendar, to which Provost Austin explained that Academic Affairs is working to avoid unintended consequences of any calendar shifts, noting that even a minor date change could impact multiple departments. The Provost added that although most work would likely be done by a few members, a broad committee would help indicate potential issues from the outset.

2. Student Orientation. S. Cox mentioned recent Deans Council discussions about extending orientation and potentially starting the semester earlier, which prompted various scheduling considerations. W. Jamison suggested reallocating additional days within the semester, such as extending Winter Break rather than adding to Finals Week. Provost Austin clarified that financial aid and accreditation requirements influence semester length, which impacts decisions on added days.

The discussion on calendaring concluded with agreement that the Senate has a representative on the committee (S. Hart), and thus any faculty input should be directed to him, rather than trying to deliberate it as a Senate body.

C. Curriculum Committee: Master Syllabi Revisions

T. Fawcett, Senate representative to the Curriculum Committee

T. Fawcett reported that the Curriculum Committee (CC) recently passed two motions on master syllabi revisions. First, they authorized Academic Affairs (AA) to make minor word changes in master syllabi, with the stipulation that any perceived substantial changes be reported through departmental channels. The

second motion accepted most changes in a document titled “Master Course Syllabi Revision EDF,” which focuses on restructuring the syllabi format. One key modification keeps “optimal class size” under CC purview, giving faculty a means to petition if class size becomes a point of contention, despite objections that this might add unnecessary oversight.

Senators debated who should oversee class size, weighing departmental autonomy against the need for checks outside administrative channels. While some argued that deans and chairs should decide, others felt CC involvement would prevent potential departmental conflicts or biases.

T. Fawcett highlighted that other committees, like the General Education Committee, now handle some syllabi reviews. S. Cox expressed appreciation for these streamlined updates but noted that technical adjustments in Argos, the current data system, may slow full implementation. Faculty are advised to proceed with ongoing syllabi updates and maintain flexibility until the changes are fully integrated.

D. Stipends & Course Releases Ad Hoc Committee

T. Fawcett and D. Schugk, ad hoc committee members

Provost Austin reported that there was no meeting this week as the department chair survey, which identifies 14 factors influencing department chair workload, is still in progress. Chairs were asked to rank factors such as the number of full-time faculty, adjuncts, and programs. The goal is to create a weighted formula to quantify chair workloads, with future plans to extend the assessment to fellows, program directors, and other roles involving release time and stipends.

The survey will enable flexibility with stipends and course releases, allowing chairs to choose either option without requiring an overload to receive a stipend. Provost Austin clarified that the model aims to standardize compensation, permitting chairs to either reduce their course load to four or accept a stipend equivalent to an overload’s pay. The goal is to streamline the process and ensure fair compensation without creating additional burdens, particularly for those who rely on overload pay to supplement income.

E. Academic Integrity Policy Update Subcommittee

R. Keller (chair) and A. Christensen

R. Keller updated the Senate on reforming the academic integrity policy and process. She reported that D. Allred has developed a helpful landing page for students to access resources for issues like grade changes, dishonesty appeals, and financial aid. The Registrar's office will handle appeals related to deadlines, debts, and grades, while the Academic Standards Committee will oversee academic dishonesty cases and grade change requests specifically relevant to faculty. Bylaws are currently under review, and one faculty position on the committee remains unfilled.

Senate members discussed the process of appointing faculty to Academic Standards. Traditionally, the Curriculum Committee appoints these members, though they're feeling stretched and may not want this responsibility. The Senate could allow CC to continue this task, expediting the process, or consider a new method, though that would take longer. R. Keller noted that the Academic Standards Committee currently operates with three faculty members plus the Registrar but needs five to avoid tie votes.

F. Institutional Review Board Development Subcommittee

W. Jamison (interim chair), Tony Smith

W. Jamison reported that the new Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee is nearing completion of its bylaws, with final revisions set for review soon. He proposed that the school's lawyer review the bylaws once finalized, which Provost Austin confirmed as necessary to meet USHE requirements for legal protection. The committee will hold a blind vote for a chairperson soon.

G. Supporting Adjunct Faculty Ad Hoc Committee

H. Withers (chair) and W. Jamison

H. Withers reported a few key updates. Justin Thorpe, Teaching and Learning Center Director, plans to launch an onboarding course for adjunct faculty by the Spring semester. Although the course could be made a required training, the current recommendation is to keep it as an optional resource for adjuncts. Departments could make it mandatory if desired. To ensure adjuncts are aware, the course can be added directly to their dashboards, simplifying access.

Senators discussed challenges in identifying and reaching all adjunct faculty, with suggestions to involve HR or leverage Canvas rosters.

The committee also explored options for adjunct medical and family leave benefits. However, Utah Public Code prevents the college from offering benefits to part-time employees, and existing college policies keep adjunct hours below thresholds that would mandate benefit provisions.

H. Faculty Association

Jeff Wallace, FA Vice-President and FA representative to the Senate

The Faculty Association (FA) was discussed, with J. Wallace seeking honest feedback regarding its effectiveness. While he appreciated the FA's intended role as an avenue for faculty to address concerns through an influential body, he noted that its usage seemed minimal, although it may have been more active in the past. T. Fawcett suggested that the lack of engagement might indicate satisfaction among faculty. W. Jamison shared that he was unaware of the FA until joining the Senate and proposed that a newsletter might help raise its visibility. A. Larsen noted that the FA has traditionally focused on the benefits package. S. Hart suggested the FA could address additional issues, and A. Christensen mentioned their involvement in recent discussions about calendar days. S. Cox also acknowledged the FA's involvement in back-to-school events and suggested that the FA President might increase its future participation. While S. Cox emphasized that both the FA and Senate couldn't directly change policies, they could advocate for faculty interests and bring attention to important issues.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting concluded with R. Keller suggesting that future Senate meetings focus on proactive initiatives instead of only responding to ongoing issues. She highlighted that this would allow the Senate to add positive, constructive items to the agenda and take a more forward-thinking approach in shaping the institution's direction.

Motion to Adjourn: W. Jamison; **2nd:** R. Keller
Approval: unanimous of all senators present

The Senate adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

The next Senate meeting will be held on **November 13, 2024** from 3:30-5:00 p.m. in the Academy Room, Noyes Building.

Minutes by Jacob L. Thomas
Approved: November 13, 2024