

**Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting
Minutes
August 19th, 2024**

Please email corrections to Faculty.Senate@nau.edu.

1. Call to order – Kate Ellis

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis calls the meeting to order at 3:02pm.

Those Attending: Kate Ellis, Karen Pugliesi, Roger Bounds, Michael Smith, Tarang Jain, Sara Rinfret, Carmin Chan, John Georgas, Andrew Stevens, Gioia Woods, Marco Cabrera-Geserick, John Tingerthal, Lisa Bliss, Jose Luis Cruz Rivera, Donna Simon, Miriam Espinoza, Jamie Axelrod, Hillary Stowell.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Kate Ellis

The 8/19 Agenda is voted on and **approved**. The 4/1 FSEC meeting minutes are voted on and **approved**.

3. Information and Q&A: University President – Jose Luis Cruz Rivera

NAU President Jose Luis Cruz Rivera gives an update on the university and provides more information on the speech he shared at the university convocation.

- President Cruz Rivera shares that the university is trending in a positive direction. He states that we are currently in the strongest financial position that we have ever had, despite the uncertainty and struggles regarding higher education in the state of Arizona and the reduction of support from the state.
- A focus of this year will be strategic finance, and creating a framework for planning and investment that will position us well for the future. With this framework we can also become more resilient to the increases or decreases of state support.
- Moving forward, NAU has had a 4% cut in the base support from the state compared to last year. The Arizona's Teachers Academy Scholarship Program was eliminated, and the Arizona Promise Scholarship Program was not renewed. NAU will still honor these current student scholarships, but it is unfunded by the state.
- President Cruz Rivera mentions the importance of needing help from faculty and individuals around the university regarding these financial challenges.
- President Cruz Rivera also shares the current cuts from ASU's budget and the financial position of the University of Arizona.
- Compared to other states, Arizona provides less support to families and students for higher education, creating the impression that higher education is more of a private good than a public good that can be available to everyone.
- President Cruz Rivera states how incredible NAU's fundraising has been and the growth in our intercollegiate athletics programs.
- Ex-Officio Gioia Woods asks President Cruz Rivera for strategies and advice on how faculty could support the mindset of higher education being a public good that should be available for everyone.
- President Cruz Rivera responds by saying that being an advocate to public officials is extremely important, as they choose how to invest the resources of the state. Polling

data shows that currently 70% of Arizonans believe that there is value in higher education, despite the state moving in the opposite direction. The other strategy is having faculty communicate the value of higher education to the people of Arizona as yearly 40,000 high school graduates in Arizona don't go to community or four-year college.

- President Cruz Rivera plans to create an eight-year plan that utilizes many areas of the university. This plan aims to increase enrollment, communicate the value of higher education, work with elected officials to improve state support to NAU, and other processes to improve the situation of higher education in Arizona.
- FSEC Member Michael Smith shares with President Cruz Rivera that faculty members often are willing to contribute a lot, especially if others are contributing as well. He asks how will administration communicate this effort to faculty?
- President Cruz Rivera responds by saying the creation of accountability amongst individuals across the campus is important. He also states that we do not need to work harder or smarter, as many faculty are working extremely hard, but instead look at processes and plans that we do not need to do, thus freeing up more time and resources. Currently, our biggest investment is in people, so best utilizing our community in ways that supports the university is vital.
- President Cruz Rivera shares that academic units will not be closing, but there may be reallocation of resources instead of cutting resources.
- A roadmap and town hall will be developed to inform faculty on how they can best support and contribute to the plans and challenges up ahead. Reviewing each college's academic portfolio and reducing curricular complexity will be included in this plan.
- President Cruz Rivera also states that the Strategic Advisory Board will be looking at the current NAU plans and initiatives with a goal of finding how we can best integrate them to better allocate resources.
- Retaining students is also mentioned; NAU has had a 4% increase in student retention compared to academic year (AY) 2022-2023. Graduation rate has also been raised by 4% compared to AY 2022-2023.
- Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis suggests that a potential message of security is warranted. Due to distrust in previous administration, faculty may feel worried about their job status.
- NAU has fundraised \$121 million in the past three-year span, this is \$80 million more than our previous best three-year span. NAU's bond ratings are excellent and that money can be used to finance some deferred maintenance that has not been contributed to by the state.
- NAU's employee retention rate means less vacancies compared to previous years.
- President Cruz Rivera sums up his statement by saying that these plans will help ensure NAU is financially healthy and able to continue to invest in the individuals working at NAU.
- Over the Summer NAU has also worked on clarifying policies regarding freedom of expression and campus safety. These will be shared and communicated to students as they return to campus. Feedback will be collected from various organizations to help improve the communication between students, faculty, and administration. Tabletop exercises have also occurred to ensure that administration knows to protect protesters'

- rights and freedom of expression, while also making sure that campus is a safe environment.
- FSEC Member John Tingerthal mentions that many faculty members have a strong connection with outside industry related to their practice. He suggests that NAU shares information on how to better communicate with these outside partners to create a better understanding and motivate further advocacy for the university. President Cruz Rivera says that this information will be shared to the NAU Foundation and Alumni Board.
 - Provost Pugliesi shares that she will be answering further questions and how faculty can best support this initiative in her report.

4. Senate President's Report – Kate Ellis

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis shares her report.

- President Ellis delivers the news that this will be her last year as Faculty Senate President. After completing this year, she will have served four years as Senate President.
- The FSEC gives their thanks President Ellis for how important she was in building a new strong relationship with administration.
- President Ellis shares the goals for the upcoming year:
 - Complete the Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics.
 - Complete the Annual Review Process changes.
 - Update teaching expectations & evaluations of teaching.
 - Reviewing the curricular process and student opinion surveys.
 - Create a task force focused on creating a standardized undergraduate attendance policy.
 - Increase organization and efficiency of the Senate.
- Senate Administrator Andrew Stevens now has a full-time role. All chairs of the senate committees and councils should use this resource to better organize and improve their council or committee's work.
- Councils & Committees will be expected to meet once a month. Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis will discuss each committee and council's yearly agenda. Administrative collaborators also need to be identified so that each council and committee can receive proper feedback on their work.
- Prior to the arrival of NAU President Rita Cheng, the faculty senate had the provost report at the end of the agenda. Senate President Ellis is returning to this practice and all new senate agendas will have the provost report at the end.
- To align with the Senate Bylaws changes last year, college caucuses will be meeting at the 8/26 senate meeting. These caucuses will determine who will send out senate quick notes and set meeting dates three times a semester. It is required that one of these meeting dates will be with the college's dean. After this meeting, the colleges will report to Senate President Ellis & share the colleges' concerns are and the FSEC will determine if they need to go to the full senate.
- With the development of the College of Nursing, Senate President Kate Ellis asks Vice Provost Roger Bounds for a census of the current full-time faculty at NAU.

With the census information the Senate will reapportion the 50 seats so that every college is properly represented on the senate.

5. Discussion: Council and Committee Agendas – All FSEC Members

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis discusses the Senate Council & Committees' agendas and goals for the upcoming year.

- The Elections Committee, which is chaired by Senate Vice President Tarang Jain, should be focused on the recruitment of senators for the upcoming year. This committee should also be focused on the recruitment of senators for various senate-charged councils and committees.
- The Bylaws Committee, which is chaired by Senate Parliamentarian Blue Brazelton, should be focused on small clean up tasks in the current Senate Bylaws. They will also be discussing upcoming changes to the Inclusive Curriculum Committee's Bylaws.
- The Budget Committee, which is chaired by Senate Treasurer Lisa Bliss, should be focused on discussing issues mentioned in the University Budget Advisory Board. President Ellis also suggests that the Council on Planning should be merged with the Budget Committee.
- The Council on Learning, which is chaired by John Tingerthal, should be focused on implementation plan of the Inclusive Excellence in Teaching document. The Teaching Portfolio, which was created under previous chair Rodrigo Bastos de Toledo, needs to be updated to reflect the current practices listed in the Inclusive Excellence in Teaching document. The Council on Learning will also be involved in the continued discussion on Generative AI and collaborate with the Council of Faculty Rights and Responsibilities on reviewing Student Opinion Surveys. Provost Pugliesi also mentions that the Inclusive Excellence in Teaching document will be used by each college when updating their annual review processes.
- The Council on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities, which is chaired by Michael Smith, should be focused on the Faculty Code of Conduct and Ethics, as well as collaborate in the creation of an undergraduate student attendance policy. This council will also collaborate with the Council on Learning to look at student opinion surveys.
- The Council on Career Track Faculty Issues, which is chaired by Jill Navran, should be focused on communication with the provost office on current concerns and the career track faculty spotlight.
- The Council on Distance Education, which is chaired by Donna Simon, should be focused on increasing communication with Vice Provost for NAU Online, Carmin Chan and other administrators supporting NAU's extended campuses.
- Senate President Kate Ellis suggests the Council on Part-Time Faculty Issues be disbanded, as they can be properly represented by the Council on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities.
- Senate Vice President Tarang Jain shares that senators will be receiving two surveys. The first survey will collect information regarding each senator's current council and committee participation. The second survey will collect information on each senator's interest of joining senate councils or committees. This information will then be used to fill the current vacancies in each committee and council.

6. Discussion: Annual Review Process – All FSEC Members

The FSEC discusses questions regarding proposed changes to the Annual Review Process.

- FSEC member John Tingerthal asks about the timeline of the senate approval regarding these changes. President Ellis states that the senate will discuss these changes next Monday 8/26. Feedback will be collected in September during the full senate meeting, with a goal to vote on the changes in October.
- President Ellis shares that she has received concern from colleges regarding the removal of rating colleagues by annual review committees. President Ellis shares that annual review committees can still rate their colleagues if they would like to. The proposed changes allow flexibility for faculty members to be reviewed less frequently than they currently are required, but if they would like to be reviewed yearly to gain valuable feedback, they can request it.
- FSEC member Marco Cabrera Geserick suggests that we communicate that local departments adapt these policies to best suit their faculty members' needs. Vice Provost Roger Bounds states that it is important that faculty know that the final rating of the faculty is from the chairs, and this is an ABOR policy and unable to be changed by an academic department. Other ratings from the annual review committees may be requested by departments for feedback purposes, but the chair must be the one to create and submit the rating.
- Senate President Kate Ellis suggests that all FSEC members ask any further questions at the 8/26 Full Senate Meeting.
- Provost Pugliesi also clarifies that faculty ratings are not directly tied to faculty raises, as these ratings should be used to provide beneficial feedback to faculty on how they can best improve. She shares that often peers tend to be exceedingly generous in peer ratings, especially when they are tied to raises. To promote a culture of feedback and improvement it is important to remind faculty that these ratings are not directly related to raises and should be used strictly as feedback.

7. Web & Mobile App Accessibility – Jamie Axelrod

Jamie Axelrod shares information regarding new web & mobile app accessibility policies.

- Jamie asks the FSEC to help spread the word about upcoming changes to web accessibility and digitally delivered content.
- In April, the Department of Justice passed new regulations that require public entities, such as NAU, to require digital accessibility on the web and mobile applications. The NAU Disabilities Office has been working on digital accessibility for quite some time, but now the standard is that the entire university follows these standards. These changes will go into effect in April 2026.
- Initially the Department of Justice allowed an exception for accessibility to password protected university content, but due to public feedback this exception was removed, and universities are now required to have everything accessible by April 2026.
- 3rd party content that NAU has partnered with through contractual agreements must be accessible to students if course material is shared through these programs.

- Jamie shares that there are many resources for faculty that can be used to help create accessible course materials for students. The first mentioned is a tool in canvas called ALLY. This tool gives an accessibility rating on each canvas shell with suggestions on how faculty can improve accessibility. Instructional design teams located around campus are also trained on accessibility and can provide support to faculty members. NAU has a Usable Materials Center, where faculty can send in content to be reviewed for accessibility and the Center can remediate the inaccessible content. There is also a team of analysts focused on digital accessibility that can help evaluate software for accessibility to ensure that we are adopting the right courseware.

8. Provost Report – Karen Pugliesi

Provost Pugliesi shares her report.

- Provost Pugliesi thanks the FSEC & Senate for the foundation that has been created surrounding shared governance and states the importance of faculty collaboration for the upcoming strategic finance plans. It is important that we understand how we are currently investing our resources and ensure that we align those investments with our strategic goals as a university.
- Provost Pugliesi restates the metrics that President Cruz Rivera shared earlier in the meeting. Student retention has raised considerably, but new student enrollment has stayed flat compared to previous years.
- Provost Pugliesi also restates how NAU will be receiving less support from the state meaning the university will have to change plans and adapt to the current financial situation.
- Provost Pugliesi mentions 100% career ready and how it ensures that all NAU's programs are high value and support students in their career. This program better positions us to attract prospective students and translate how our programs positively impact the state of Arizona to ABOR.
- We also want to continue our momentum initiatives that have helped increase our student retention. First Year Together (FYT) is one of these initiatives that has positively impacted student retention. FYT has 17 courses that will help first-year students transition to NAU.
- We also must continue our work on curricular complexity and reducing the number of obstacles when students to progress through their programs. Analyzing curricular complexity also allows us to create more optimal curricular design and investment of our resources.
- Faculty must continue to work on reviewing our program portfolio. Last year, we reviewed the NAU Online portfolio. This year we will push the review and assessment of the program portfolio at NAU's Flagstaff Mountain Campus. This portfolio review will help us properly address the needs of our students in the future, while also consolidating programs to increase efficiency.
- Provost Pugliesi states that it is vital that we examine current processes that are taking large amounts of faculty time and resources. In streamlining these processes, we can free up more time and resources that can be used elsewhere. One process mentioned is the annual review process that is currently being reviewed and changed.

- The provost office will also be very rigorous regarding hiring this year. When comparing Fall of 2024 to Fall of 2019, we have more full-time faculty, despite a decline of 8.9% in student enrollment.
- The provost office will take a close look at university sponsored research and scholarship and how it relates to faculty time and resources.
- Ideas about Summer & Winter sessions are being developed to take advantage of the seasons' ideal climate and increased availability of campus housing.
- The provost office will also be expanding partnerships with businesses and industries across the state and internationally.

**9. New Business/ Old Business/ Adjourn – Kate Ellis
Meeting is adjourned at 5:18pm.**