

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes August 26th, 2024

Please email corrections to [Faculty.Senate@nau.edu](mailto: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, Donna Simon, Miriam Espinoza, Jamie Axelrod, Hillary Stowell, Marinela Golemi, Josh Hewes, Robert Cannon, Jennifer Duis, Aimee Quinn, Shelly Thomas, Dahana Zamora, Blue Brazelton, Jill Navran, Crystal Diaz, Claudia Rodas, Jennifer Lee, Melissa Lawton, Theresa Bierer, Samantha Clifford, Melinda Treml, Sandy Heath, Michelle Cook, Laurie Dickson, David Castellano, Sara Abercrombie, Kerry Thompson, Eric Cerino, Bettie Coplan, Rob Parish, Katie Tullman, Igor Steinmacher, Laura Bounds, Abby Fisher, Kevin Tague, Victoria Damjanovic, Christy Arazan, Kristin Greenwalt, Maribeth Watwood, Jessie Finch, Deborah Mariage, Sara Maier, Sam Yingling, Chris Sthultz, Alice Gibb, Ashley Vaughan, Jenny Holzappel, Jennifer Russell, Jasmine Garani, Karl K.C., Rachel Starks, Emily Manone, Oaklee Rogers, Jessie Lundin, Omar Ahumada, Jane marks, Eyal Bar.

## 2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Kate Ellis

The 8/26 Agenda is voted on and **approved**. The 4/28 senate meeting minutes are voted on and **approved**. The 6/3 and 7/1 summer senate meeting minutes are voted on and **approved**.

## 3. Senate President's Report – Kate Ellis

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis shares her report.

- 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. Each college uses student surveys differently, which may cause inequity amongst faculty members.
  - Create a task force to investigate creating a standardized undergraduate attendance policy. Currently, there is not a standardized policy, leaving the burden on students to juggle multiple policies for each class.
  - Additional revision to the Faculty Senate Bylaws is needed.
  - Increase organization and efficiency of the Senate.
- Senate Administrator Andrew Stevens now has a full-time role, and all chairs of the senate committees and councils should use this resource to better organize and improve their council or committee's work.
- New Senator Orientation will be held Friday, 8/30, to help new senators understand senate duties and processes.

- 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 reversing this change, and all new senate agendas will have the provost report at the end of the meeting.
- To align with the Senate Bylaws changes last year, college caucuses will be 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 what the colleges concerns are and whether they should be discussed with the full senate.
- President Ellis also suggests that senators focus on productively and respectfully communicating with their college's dean and administration about faculty concerns and issues.

#### **4. College Caucus Set Up – Full Senate**

Senators join breakout rooms with their respective college caucus to nominate a leader and find the availability of senators to meet with their caucus.

- Any issues that are present in the college should be discussed with President Ellis and Senate Admin Andrew Stevens. If any of these concerns are shared amongst colleges, it will be elevated as a discussion topic to the full senate.

#### **5. Discussion: Council and Committee Agendas – FSEC Members**

Senate Council & Committee's Chairs share the agendas and goals for the upcoming year.

- The Elections Committee, which is chaired by Senate Vice President Tarang Jain, will be focused on the recruitment of senators for the upcoming year. This committee will also be focused on the recruitment of senators for various senate-charged councils and committees. Vice President Jain recently sent out a survey to all senators that inquired information on their current committee and council assignments, as well as their interests. If senators have not filled out these two surveys, he requests that they complete them by midnight, 8/26.
- The Bylaws Committee, which is chaired by Senate Parliamentarian Blue Brazelton, will be focused on small clean up tasks in the current Senate Bylaws. They will also be analyzing the bylaws of current senate charged councils and committees to ensure that they are updated and reflect current practices.
- The Budget Committee, which is chaired by Senate Treasurer Lisa Bliss, will 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. Currently the Senate has \$5,000 in their state fund, which is a use it or lose it fund, and \$25,000 in the senate local fund. Treasurer Bliss also shares that she will be in contact with Associate Vice President of Financial Oversight, Cole Charlebois, regarding senate dues.
- The Council on Learning, which is chaired by John Tingerthal, will be focused on an implementation plan of the Inclusive Excellence in Teaching document. The Teaching Portfolio, which was implemented by 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. Chair Tingerthal shares that the Council on Learning works directly with the NAU Teaching Academy. He will be working with the Teaching Academy to bring in some At-Large Members from the Teaching Academy to the Council on Learning meetings.

- The Council on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities, which is chaired by Michael Smith, will 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. Chair Smith also shared that the Council would look at Academic Freedom in the upcoming year.
- The Council on Career Track Faculty Issues, which is chaired by Jill Navran, will be focused on communication with the provost office regarding current concerns and the career track faculty spotlight. Chair Navran shares that there has been some concern regarding the changes to the annual review process, she will share these concerns during the upcoming discussion.
- The Council on Distance Education, which is chaired by Donna Simon, will be focused on increasing communication with Vice Provost for NAU Online, Carmin Chan, and other administrators supporting NAU's extended campuses.

## **6. Discussion: Annual Review Process – All Senators**

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

- In the Spring of academic year 2023-2024, the senate voted on and approved two changes to the current comprehensive review process.
  - Comprehensive review will now occur in the spring semester.
  - There is no longer a requirement of simultaneous annual and comprehensive review.
- Over the Summer Senate Meetings, other elements of the proposal were discussed and will be voted on this Fall.
  - Proposed changes to the current review rating scale, as the current scale does not encourage a growth mindset.
  - Peer Review Committees will no longer rate faculty members when performing a comprehensive review. The rating will be solely from the chair of the department.
  - Peer Review Committees will provide formative feedback to the faculty member being reviewed. With faculty no longer rating their colleagues, it is expected that more impactful and constructive feedback can be provided.
  - Faculty will be provided with a comprehensive review their first year, third year, and fifth year at NAU. After promotion, a faculty member would have a comprehensive review every three years.
- 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, it is just

- not required anymore. The proposed changes allow flexibility for faculty members to be formally reviewed less frequently than is currently required, but if they would like to be reviewed during an “off” year, they can request it.
- President Ellis also shares that senators have voiced concerns that there may be difficulty arising from an entirely new process for departments that have not had to provide formative feedback. President Ellis shares a potential solution to this problem through the creation of a template from the Provost Office that provides these committees with a guidance on how to provide formative feedback. The Teaching Academy’s Guidelines for Inclusive Excellence in Teaching should also be used to help guide this formative feedback and rating from the chair.
  - The proposed changes to the 4-point rating scale are as follows:
    - 4 - Exceeds expectations
    - 3 – Meets expectations
    - 2 – Approaching expectations
    - 1 – Needs improvement
  - As mentioned previously in the meeting, President Ellis shares that the title changes of the scales create a growth mindset surrounding faculty ratings. These title changes also directly correlate with the recent title changes within Human Resources at NAU.
  - President Ellis also addresses concerns that with Comprehensive Review in the Spring, faculty members on one-year contracts who are not renewed for the upcoming year have a much shorter time to appeal this decision. She states that the goal of these changes provides meaningful feedback to the faculty member, meaning if they are struggling, this should be identified by the comprehensive review committee with clear expectations for improvement provided to the faculty member. If a contract is not renewed, the faculty member could still appeal this outcome.
  - Senator Karen Jarratt Snider raises concern regarding the potential blindsiding of faculty members if they are not renewed by the department. President Ellis responds, if the department is doing their job and providing feedback, the faculty member would see there are suggestions in how to improve and thus know what they need to do to improve. If the faculty member does not implement the feedback provided, then there is a likelihood that they would not be renewed. Senator Jarratt Snider suggests that each department ensures that feedback is shared to protect faculty, especially in rare cases where a department chair wants to set up a faculty member for failure.
  - Vice Provost Roger Bounds shares that in the case of increased feedback being provided to faculty members, they have more protection in an appeal. This is because the faculty member has a list of items they can implement into their teaching to improve and share in the potential appeal.
  - President Ellis restates that the proposed changes to the annual review process would set up the minimum required by departments, while still allowing faculty members or chairs to request more reviews than required.
  - FSEC member Juliana Suby suggests that these comprehensive review ratings do not count toward potential layoffs in a situation like the spring of 2020. Senate President Kate Ellis shares that this decision is up to the university administration, but the Faculty Senate has made steps in the right direction with updates to the Faculty Constitution regarding methods of response.

- Provost Pugliesi shares that it is extremely important to reinforce the importance of providing accurate and impactful feedback to faculty. This will strengthen the performance of the university and avoid the highly unlikely scenario of layoffs that occurred back in 2020.
- Vice Provost Roger Bounds provides more clarity by sharing that the comprehensive reviews would focus on all work that occurred since the previous review.
- Senator Melissa Lawton advocates for the Academic Professionals as they are not on a semester structure and often work on long-term projects over semesters or years.
- Vice Provost Roger Bounds also states that FAAR should be updated throughout the year with faculty practices and accomplishments, in order to prevent a buildup of material that would need to be inputted.
- The proposed changes will be voted on in the September Faculty Senate Meeting.

## **7. Web & Mobile App Accessibility – Jamie Axelrod**

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

- Jamie asks the Senate 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 expectation 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.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 and will give suggestions on how faculty can make changes to create better 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. The Center can then remediate the inaccessible content. There is also a team of analysts focused on digital accessibility that can help evaluate software for accessibility in order to ensure that we are adopting the right courseware.
- The Teaching & Learning Center will also be offering trainings for faculty members to learn more about accessibility and universal design learning (UDL).
- Last year, there were 100,000 conversions of course materials to different formats, by 19,00 unique individual students, which shows the importance of accessibility across campus.
- FSEC member John Tingerthal suggests that faculty test their course content and accessibility, as many technical errors may occur if the faculty member is transferring content to be more accessible. He also asks if and how will NAU administration

enforce this policy? Jamie Axelrod responds by suggesting that we set up accountability across the university. The way this would be enforced is a student or outside entity files a complaint, which leads to an investigation of the accessibility of NAU content.

## **8. Provost Report – Karen Pugliesi**

Provost Pugliesi shares her report.

- Provost Pugliesi thanks the Senate for the foundation that has been created surrounding shared governance. Provost Pugliesi discusses 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.
- NAU President Jose Cruz Rivera is holding a Welcome Back Barbecue on Wednesday, 8/28. Faculty members are welcome and encouraged to attend in celebration of the new academic year.
- Last year, a group of faculty members and academic leaders were convened to discuss ways in which NAU can support faculty in an environment of political polarization and risks of negative attention on social media. A resource guide has been assembled to support faculty; this will be shared with faculty members in the upcoming weeks.
- An event focused on educating faculty members about academic freedom and freedom of expression has been organized. The event's date will be shared amongst faculty members in the coming weeks. Dean of Hastings Law School at UC Berkeley, Erwin Chemerinsky, will be the expert speaker for this event.
- Provost Pugliesi shares that the Strategic Planning Advisory Board will be working on analyzing NAU's current plans and priorities, and then refining those priorities for the upcoming years.
- NAU will continue their efforts to redesign NAU Online and statewide to increase the efficiency of these programs and ensure a high yield of impact from our investments.
- Provost Pugliesi shares that we will continue with NAU's Health Initiatives which include growing our health professions and behavioral health programs. We will also continue our journey in developing a distinct medical school.
- Provost Pugliesi restates the importance of integrity in peer feedback, and states that robust framework needs to be created to strengthen the peer review process. The robust framework that will be used is the Inclusive Excellence in Teaching, which was developed by the Council on Learning and Teaching Academy.
- Currently, we overly rely on student opinion surveys, and we need to shift this focus to promote peer review and self-reflection for faculty improvement.
- Provost Pugliesi mentions 100% career ready and how it ensures that all NAU's programs are of 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, this program has 17 courses that will help first-year students transition to NAU.

- For the upcoming year, NAU will focus on the priority of strategic finance. As shared in the President's Convocation, we will have to focus on transitioning from fiscal fragility to fiscal sustainability. The four pillars of this plan are:
  - Sharpening our focus.
  - Pursing impact.
  - Growing revenue.
  - Containing costs.
- This plan has been created to help us respond to upcoming financial challenges to the university associated with:
  - Currently, enrollment this Fall is down 144 students.
  - Enrollment trends for upcoming years.
  - Decrease in student credit hour productivity.
- We also must continue our work on curricular complexity and reducing the number of obstacles for students to progress through their programs. Analyzing curricular complexity also allows us to create optimal curricular designs and improved investment in 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 look at 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. An example of this is the annual review process that is currently being reviewed and changed.
- Currently, NAU is up 4% in student retention and student graduation rate compared to previous year.
- 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, although student enrollment is down 8.9%.
- The Faculty Senate will also play a role in the implementation of each college's workload policy.

**9. New Business/ Old Business/ Adjourn – Kate Ellis  
Meeting is adjourned at 5:08pm.**