

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes November 18th, 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, Tarang Jain, Lisa Bliss, Nick McKay, Gioia Woods, Michael Smith, John Tingerthal, Marco Cabrera Geserick, Jasmine Garani, Juliana Suby, Karl Krotke-Crandall, Corey Oshikoya, Peter Vadasz, Rachel Starks, Jenny Holzapfel, Andrew Stevens, Miriam Espinoza, Karen Jarratt-Snider, Kathleen Carpenter, Theresa Bierer, Emi Isaki, Shelly Thomas, Aimee Quinn, Lynn Jones, Brandie Reiner, Igor Steinmacher, Jennifer Duis, Melissa Lawton, Meredith Heller, Jessie Finch, Amy Rushall, Claudia Rodas, Chris Stultz, Donna Simon, Michelle Cook, Jill Navran, Abby Fisher, Natalie Cawood, Alison Essary, Bettie Coplan, Victoria Damjanovic, Samantha Clifford, Anna Sosa, Alice Gibb, Blue Brazelton, Bonita Switala, Andrew See, Jamie Axelrod, Eric Cerino, Oaklee Rogers, Katie Tullman, John Lynch, Robert Cannon, Ashley Vaughan, Mark Manone, Scot Raab, Sara Abercrombie, Kevin Tague, Deedee Perez-Granados, Kristin Greenwalt, Jason Bradley, Sara Maier, Jennifer Lee, David Castellano, Jennifer Russell, Jane Marks, Dale Cummings, Misty Pagan, Morgan Ruff, Karli VanderMeersch, Eyal Barr.

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

The 11/18 Agenda is voted on and **approved**. The 10/21 Senate meeting minutes are voted on and **approved**.

- Senator Peter Vadasz shares that he was unable to share the Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics document with his faculty members and motions to not vote on this topic today, motion approved.

## 3. Senate President's Report & Contentment of Vote on Item 2 of the Annual Review Changes, Rating System – Kate Ellis

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis shares her report.

- Both the Student Attendance Policy Task Force and the Student Opinion Survey Task Force have had their first meeting.
- The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) meeting will be held on November 21<sup>st</sup>. Senate President Kate Ellis will be presenting the AFC report during this meeting.
- At the previous ABOR meeting, AFC Chair & Senate President Ellis reported on two items that caught the board's attention. The first item was a concern about the doxing of faculty and staff members and potential steps that need to be taken to ensure fsafety. The second item was a suggestion that ABOR change their policy surrounding the prohibition of support of foreign terrorist organizations to include domestic terrorist organizations as well.
- Last week, Senate President Ellis received a request for a revote regarding the changes made to the annual review rating system. This item was previously voted on

in the September Senate meeting and was approved. Questions regarding the poll's validity were asked, the poll was validated, but concerns surrounding the current voting process were recognized.

- Senate President Ellis mentions the out-of-date voting process for zoom participants, that leaves a possibility for those who are not senators to vote.
- Senate President Ellis shares the new senate policy developed regarding voting. Approval of senate agendas and minutes will be done via zoom poll and a raising of hands. Substantive votes, such as the annual review changes, will be sent out to all eligible voting senators via email through Qualtrics. This will provide a record of votes and ensure that only eligible senators, or their identified substitutes, are able to vote. The vote will be open for 30 minutes and results will be shared at the end of the senate meeting.
- Senate President Ellis also received questions about the large number of abstentions in the vote surrounding the changes to the annual review rating system. She shares that a vote to abstain is typically for conflicts of interest, lack of information provided, or personal reservations surrounding a topic. Personal reservations on a topic can also be shared with a NAY vote.
- Due to the previous changes surrounding the annual review rating system, chairs and departments were concerned about having to update their current procedures and expectations documents in the time required. These updates would have to include new definitions on what it means if a faculty member is scored as “Highly Meritorious” or “Exceeding Expectations.”
- These concerns prompted the Provost Office to submit a proposal to the senate that would delay the implementation of the annual review rating system requirements until academic year 25-26. This proposal also gives chairs and departments more time to spend on the revision process of their procedures and expectation documents.
- To clarify, the timing of the annual review process has already been voted on and changed, this proposal only speaks to the changes surrounding the rating system.
- The legacy rating scale will be used for this current academic year, as they are currently linked to the annual review policies of each department.
- The senate will still vote on the topic of the annual review rating scale. If approved, the previous rating system will continue to be in place this academic year, and the new scale will be implemented in Spring of 2026. If the vote is to not approve the rating system, the faculty senate will decide if they want to continue dialogue on this proposed change, if not then the previous language will be kept. Regardless of the voting outcome, departments will maintain the previous annual review rating system for this academic year.
- Ex-Officio Gioia Woods gives her thanks to the provost office for recognizing the concerns of department chairs.
- FSEC Member Juliana Suby shares that one of the biggest issues that their department had was that the new rating system did not match the categories of the old rating system. An example of this is that the new rating system had two categories below satisfactory, while the previous system had two categories above satisfactory.
- Provost Pugliesi gives context that a Task Force recommended the changes. The goal of these changes was to encourage more formative feedback in the annual review

- process. She also clarifies that the department reports regarding annual review procedures and policies will be delayed until the next academic year.
- Provost Pugliesi also suggests a change in the current Statement of Expectations (SOE) documents in each department. Expectations should not be determined in this document, but instead it should be changed to Statement of Effort and should be used to provide a framework of where a faculty member spends their time the following year. Expectations should be evaluated in the annual review process, and not the creation of an SOE document.
  - Senator Peter Vadasz shares the strenuous process of hiring and assessing faculty in his department and is surprised that the provost office is surprised when they receive many highly meritorious ratings. He provides the rationale for the volume of highly meritorious ratings is due to the large amount of feedback and motivation that newly hired faculty members receive.
  - FSEC Member Michael Smith shares that changing the scoring tiers of the rating system is not entirely bad, and it would potentially fix the current problem that faculty members are all rated above average, and don't receive valuable feedback that they can use to improve. Also, if this feedback is not tied to merit raises, the annual review committees may feel more comfortable giving actionable feedback to the faculty member.

**A motion for a revote is seconded, and the previously approved annual review rating scale change is sent out via email to all eligible senators. The revote on the annual review rating scale is not approved, with a vote of 30 nays, 14 yays, and 0 abstentions.**

#### **4. Council and Committee Reports – All FSEC Committee & Council Chairs**

The Chairs of the various senate committees and councils share their current council & committee reports.

- Senate Vice President Tarang Jain & the Elections Committee share that they are working to fill two vacancies, one for the Council on Distance Education and one for the Inclusive Curriculum Committee.
- Senate Parliamentarian Blue Brazelton shares that the bylaws committee will work on reviewing the voting process.
- Senate Treasurer Lisa Bliss shares that she is working on the faculty senate dues process.
- Chair of the Council on Learning John Tingenthal reports that the council has completed the draft form of the Teaching Portfolio Guide which is now in review by the Teaching Academy. This will then be reviewed by the full senate.
- Chair of the Council on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Michael Smith shares that the Council will work on improving the communications with faculty and NAU travel team, and they will be meeting. Finally, Chair Smith has been working on CoFS edits in collaboration with Vice Provost Bounds.
- Chair of the Council on Career Track Faculty Issues Jill Navran shares that she has been planning an open forum for career track faculty to share their concerns.
- Chair of the Council on Statewide Education Donna Simon sent a four-question survey to all NAU statewide and online faculty members. Data from this survey will be compiled and reviewed.

## **5. Disability Resources Questions & Library Resources – Jamie Axelrod & Andrew See**

Director Jamie Axelrod & Andrew See answer questions regarding Disability Resources and Library Resources.

- Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis recently received an email that contained direct questions for disability resources. This email also requested that the senate develop a resolution that addresses the current disability resource process. This information was forwarded to Jamie Axelrod, and he was asked to come in and share specifics surrounding DR processes and a particular case that the senator mentioned.
- Andrew See shares information surrounding accessibility through NAU's Cline Library. He states that all PDFs that are requested by faculty for course materials are run through an OCR reader that optimizes the materials for screen reading software. Any materials that the library currently has in their online databases are also optimized for accessibility. It usually takes around 48 hours to fulfill a faculty request to make a PDF accessible.
- The first question Senate President Ellis asks Jamie Axelrod is about the time it takes for Disability Resources to review a request from a student for accommodations. Jamie Axelrod states that if a student submits a request, a file is created for them in the department's system within 24 hours. After this file is created, Disability Resources will reach out to the student to set up an intake interview where they can interact and understand the request of the student. Often there may be delays in this process when an intake interview takes place related to documentation needed for the referral to Disability Resource, or the student does not have the information or documentation to support the accommodation(s) they are requesting. After the proper information or documentation is provided, Disability Resources notifies the student of what accommodations they are eligible for and how to communicate this to their teacher.
- Last year, 7% of the total student population requested Disability Resources' support. Many of these requests are increasing in complexity which requires the department to spend more time looking at individualized course policies or situations. Disability Resources is unable to make a blanket policy that states that they cannot provide specific accommodations. Disability Resources must assess each individual case. If they are unable to provide a specific accommodation requested, they then work with the student to find an accommodation that would be reasonable within the context of the course.
- With the increase in volume of requests, Disability Resources has only been able to add one additional staff member who is continuing to be trained.
- Some Disability Resources Programs at other universities have implemented an expedited process. This expedited process has received numerous complaints due to the lack of intake interviews and interaction with the students requesting the accommodations.
- With the increase of many complex requests, Disability Resources also must work to stay consistent, requiring all accessibility analysts to meet and discuss certain complex requests.

- The specific case that was brought to Senate President Ellis was focused on a visually impaired student who requested that a book in the class be made accessible by Disability Resources. Disability Resources was unable to make this book accessible to the student prior to the course progressing past the book.
- Jamie Axelrod shares that in this specific case the book was unable to be made accessible using an OCR software. The only solution to convert the book to be readable by a screen reader was to retype the entire book manually. This book was only being used in the first weeks of the course making it difficult to provide the material in a timely manner.
- NAU Disability Resources is also involved in a million-dollar Melon Foundation grant that is run by the University of Virginia. This grant supports the creation of a repository of instructional materials that have been made accessible by institutions around the country. NAU is the largest contributor to this project compared to all other universities involved.
- Senator Jennifer Russell suggests that Disability Resources creates instructions for faculty members on how they can recommend students to get help from Disability Resources.
- Senator Bettie Coplan shares that in her cohort-based program, Disability Resources has been efficient when providing accommodations.
- ASNAU President Karli VanderMeersch asks if Disability Resources has a current process for collecting feedback from students. Jamie Axelrod shares that there is a complaint process that students can use to appeal determinations they have received.

## **6. Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics – Michael Smith**

Chair of the Council of Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Michael Smith shares feedback on the Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics Document.

- Chair Michael Smith shares that there has been feedback questioning why administrators are not included in this document. The answer is that administrators who are faculty members do fall under this document.
- Chair Smith also clarifies that this document does not create laws but can potentially be used in a comprehensive review process to give faculty guidance on conduct and ethics at NAU. Provost Pugliesi shares that this provides a standard that faculty members can look to for guidance.
- Chair Smith shares that it is important that faculty and departments continue to examine this document for it to be voted on in the Spring.
- Provost Pugliesi states that non-faculty administrators and staff who do not teach any classes fall under a different set of policies managed by Human Resources.
- Senate Treasurer Lisa Bliss shares that she thinks that the language surrounding relationships between faculty and students needs to be strengthened, as faculty members could have influence or power over their students whether they are currently enrolled in a class they teach. Provost Pugliesi shares that this is covered under Title IX and the conflict-of-interest surveys that NAU faculty and staff are required to fill out yearly.

## **7. Provost Report including Academic Freedom/Free Expression Document – Karen Pugliesi**

Provost Pugliesi gives her report and gives an update on the Academic Freedom/Free Expression Document.

- Provost Pugliesi shares that the ABOR standing committee meetings were held on Thursday, 11/7. In the Operations and Governance Committee meeting, the Tri-University Assessment Team will be presenting the results of the three universities' assessments on student learning and critical thinking. Throughout this process, common definitions and rubrics have been developed for evaluating and assessing those skills. At the same time, the programs measured are extremely different and we are currently in a transition to a new General Studies Program. Therefore, the data may seem like NAU students are not achieving as much compared to other universities, which is simply not the case.
- There is currently a group tasked by ABOR to examine University Admission Policies. The goal of this group is to make these policies more flexible and able to accommodate the different foci that each university has.
- The Freedom of Expression & Academic Freedom Best Practices Documents has been developed and the provost office is looking for feedback on it. If senators have any suggestions or comments on the document, please reach out to provost Pugliesi.
- There will be another Faculty Town Hall in Spring focused on the book "You Can't Teach That." This book and Town Hall will dive into academic freedom in a university setting. This event will be on February 24<sup>th</sup>. FSEC member Juliana Suby will also be facilitating a Book Discussion on "You Can't Teach That."
- This year NAU will be refining their long-term plans for the expansion of our health and behavioral health programs. These plans will better align with the resources and investments that we have. A report on these changes will be shared to ABOR at the end of May 2025.
- We are also continuing to plan for the development of a medical school. Provost Pugliesi shares that the planning for this school has slowed down slightly, and that the hope is to start working with students at some point in 2030.
- We will also continue to look at how we strategically position NAU in our statewide and online offerings to address the workforce needs of Arizona.
- NAU has been looking at a new degree type that the University Undergraduate Committee has been entertaining. This degree is a reduced credit bachelor's degree in professional studies that will be highly workforce aligned and offered through online or statewide campuses.
- NAU will continue to focus on Strategic Finance. Deans have been requested to carefully evaluate the academic staffing in their units and provide the provost office with their highest priority requests to open searches and replace faculty who have already given their notice of retirement or resignation. This is because NAU has 2% more faculty members compared to before the pandemic, with an 8% lower headcount of students.
- Deans will also begin to look carefully at their current course schedule in relation to work assignments.

- 20 student applications for the ABOR Regents Cup have been received. Coaches Sarah Walker & Russell Pryba will be working with these students in preparation for the event that will be held at NAU's campus in April.
- Deans have been working on the convergence of a campus wide workload policy that would work for each college.

**8. New Business/ Old Business/ Adjourn – Kate Ellis**  
**Meeting is adjourned at 5:02pm.**