

**Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting
Minutes
November 4th, 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, Roger Bounds, Michael Smith, Tarang Jain, John Tingerthal, Lisa Bliss, Gioia Woods, Laura Umphrey, Andrew Stevens, Jamie Axelrod, Donna Simon, Blue Brazelton, Karen Pugliesi, Andrew See, Miriam Espinoza.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Kate Ellis

The 11/4 Agenda is voted on and **approved**. The 10/7 FSEC meeting minutes are voted on and **approved**.

3. Senate President's Report

Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis shares her report.

- The AFC briefing for the Governance & Operations Committee Meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.
- The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) meeting will be held on November 21st. 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 boards attention. The first item was a concern about the doxing of faculty members and potential steps that need to be taken to ensure faculty safety. The second item was a suggestion that ABOR changes their policy surrounding the prohibition of support of foreign terrorist organizations to include domestic terrorist organizations as well.
- Ex-Officio Gioia Woods recently contacted Senate President Ellis asking if there are any emergency financial help programs for faculty. Previously Ex-Officio Woods led a fundraising effort in 2020 to help support faculty who were not renewed for the following year.
- Senate President Ellis suggests an investigation into the already developed Lumberjack Emergency Assistance Fund (LEAF) Program to see if this can be expanded to faculty members and address other concerns such as support for international students.
- FSEC Member John Tingerthal suggests potentially opening a foundation account in order to fundraise.
- Senate Treasurer Lisa Bliss suggests that we also look to include staff in this fund to better support them.
- The Student Attendance Policy Task Force has their first meeting on Tuesday, 11/5. Senate President Kate Ellis & Vice Provost John Georgas will be co-chairing this task force. President Ellis suggests that the task force may not end up with an attendance policy recommendation due to the complications surrounding online education and

federal laws. She shares that the task force can come up with a set of specific guidelines and recommendations that would go out to all faculty.

- The Student Opinion Survey Task Force will also be meeting for the first time this week. FSEC member Michael Smith will be chairing this task force with a goal to examine our current practices and biases surrounding student opinion surveys and make suggestions.
- On Friday, 11/1, Senate President Ellis received a request for review of the vote on the Comprehensive Review Rating Scale, from the department of Mechanical Engineering. To fulfill this request of review and revoting, 10 senators or 25 faculty must support the request. This request is only focused on the comprehensive review rating scale.
- Questions regarding the validity of the vote were raised, Senate Admin Andrew Stevens addresses how he validated the vote. He shares that the Mechanical Engineering Faculty shared that based on the faculty senate website, only 34 active voting senators attended the meeting. This directly goes against the reported 41 votes received. Admin Stevens shares that due to administrative mistakes, later caught and fixed, 41 active voting senators attended the meeting. The main mistake made was the updating of the senate membership on the website: 4 senators have had substitutes represent them this semester which were not reflected in the roster. There were also 4 non-senators who placed votes, three of these were abstentions and one was nay, meaning there was a total of 37 valid votes, 18 yays, 14 nays, and 5 abstentions.
- Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis suggests that the senate begin using Qualtrics to send the ballot out to only voting senators. This would ensure that guests would not be able to place votes.
- FSEC Member Michael Smith asks whether the senate support anonymous voting? FSEC Member John Tingerthal shares that the bylaws allow the president to make the decision on whether votes are anonymous, or if 3 or more senators request a secret ballot.
- Parliamentarian Blue Brazelton shares that Bylaws Committee will be looking at the current voting process in the senate bylaws, as there is confusion surrounding voting processes.
- Faculty Senate President Kate Ellis shares that it is great that there was a request to reconsider the vote as it models the functionality of our constitution.
- The reconsideration discussion will occur at the next full senate meeting.
- Regarding the implementation of Qualtrics voting, Senate President Ellis shares that she hopes to keep the votes within the parameters of the Senate meeting (30 minutes). Any senators not attending the meeting will still be sent a ballot, unless they have assigned a substitute senator to attend the meeting and vote.
- FSEC Member Michael Smith proposes that we vote on whether we keep anonymous voting. He suggests that due to senators representing groups of faculty members, they should have a name tied to their vote, and it should not be anonymous.
- Senate President Ellis shares that if someone requests, they can see how their department's senator votes. This information will be shared with senators prior to voting.

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 Tingerthal reports that the council has completed the draft form of the Teaching Portfolio Guide and is currently being reviewed by the Teaching Academy. This will be reviewed by the full senate in January. The roll out of the Teaching Portfolio Guide is discussed. Ex-Officio Gioia Woods shares that there has been a lot of change surrounding the comprehensive review process and that many faculty may be fatigued if we were to roll this document out urgently. It should also be noted in CoFS how this document should be used.
- Chair of the Council on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Michael Smith shares that he hopes the senate can vote on and approve the Faculty Code of Conduct and Ethics during their next meeting. Chair Smith shares that he has not received any major suggestions or feedback on this document since the previous edits.
- Chair of the Council on Distance 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 processes. This information was forwarded to Jamie Axelrod, and he was asked to come in and share specifics surrounding 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 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 the correct documentation regarding the student to be sent to Disability Resources, or the student does not have the information or documentation to support what 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 Resource support. Many of these requests are increasing in complexity meaning the department must 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.
- The FSEC thanks Disability Resources for their hard work and shares that they understand the difficulty of the situation stated previously. Presenting this information at the Full Senate Meeting will help provide information surrounding what the Disability Resources office is doing to support students and faculty.

6. Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics – Michael Smith

Due to no new feedback or edits since the previous Faculty Code of Conduct & Ethics discussion, this agenda item is skipped.

7. Academic Freedom/Free Expression Document – Karen Pugliesi

Provost Pugliesi provides updates on an Academic Freedom/Free Expression Document.

- Provost Pugliesi shares that this document has been in development since December 2023, when faculty shared concerns regarding what the institution is doing to protect faculty from unwanted attention and harassment via media or social media.
- Provost Pugliesi, General Counsel Michelle Parker and Vice-President of Communications Kim Ott collaborated to create a document that informs faculty of policies and resources that may be available from the university to support faculty regarding this topic. The document also contains suggestions and strategies that faculty can use to limit risk or exposure to negative experiences in media.
- If approved, this document would be accessible on the Faculty Affairs webpage and the Freedom of Expression webpage.
- Provost Pugliesi suggests that the FSEC look at this document in the upcoming weeks and send any feedback to herself or Vice Provost Roger Bounds.
- The Provost Office is looking to schedule another Faculty Town Hall surrounding Academic Freedom on February 10th.
- FSEC member Michael Smith shares his support for this document.

8. Ombuds Program Report – Laura Umphrey

Laura Umphrey shares a report on the Ombuds Program.

- Last year the Ombuds Program had 209 different appointments made last year. Of these appointments, 86 were faculty, 84 were staff, 35 graduate students, and 4 other various individuals. The greatest concerns of these meetings were power differentials, followed by peer relationships.
- Currently the Ombuds program is in the Health and Learning Center where they have two adjacent office spaces that are used to meet with clients.
- Last year 4 formal mediations and 5 consensus building workshops were held.
- The Ombuds Program gave over 15 presentations to various groups on campus.
- Currently a document is being developed that shares potential workshops that the Ombuds Office can offer.
- The Ombuds Program will continue to develop and update their website. The changes to the website will be shared with the Faculty Senate once finished.

9. Provost Report – Karen Pugliesi

Provost Pugliesi gives her report.

- Provost Pugliesi shares that the ABOR standing committee meetings will be held this 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 transitioning 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.
- Provost Pugliesi shares that there have been conversations with various parts of campus about providing a positive presence on campus surrounding the election and other contentious issues at hand. There are groups prepared to mobilize in case the election was to be called or if there is any kind of protest or action on campus.
- The provost office and the student affairs office will be working on communicating with faculty and students on suggestions of how to take care of oneself when distressed to minimize systemic disruption. As public employees, it is important that staff and faculty sustain political and content neutrality and work to best support students to continually engage in their learning.
- 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.
- The provost office has been continually engaged in the academic programming initiative that was funded by one-time funds from the Governor's office. The areas that have been focused on are the departments surrounding hospitality and wildfire science.
- 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.
- Deans will also begin to look carefully at their current course schedule in relation to work assignments.
- ABOR has extended student applications for the upcoming Regent's Cup that will be held in Flagstaff this academic year.

10. New Business/ Old Business/ Adjourn – Kate Ellis
Meeting is adjourned at 5:03pm.