

WCU Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Date: 9.8.23

Facilitator: Israel Sanz-Sánchez, President

Time: 3:00pm-5:00pm

Note Taker: Selen Razon, Recording Secretary

Location: SECC 101A

Type of Meeting: Scheduled meeting

Attendees

Senators

❖ Benedict, Kristopher	Present	❖ Metz, Stacie	Present
❖ Bolton, David	Present	❖ Mishra, Vipanchi	Present
❖ Brenner, Jim	Present	❖ Mraz, Megan	Present
❖ Chen, Tianran	Present	❖ Panagiotidou, Eirini	Present
❖ Cherry, Dan	Present	❖ Panichelli, Meg	Present
❖ Childs, Gary	Present	❖ Park, Innhwa	Present
❖ Cooke, Laquana	Proxy	❖ Pierlott, Matt	Present
❖ Daltry, Rachel	Present	❖ Razon, Selen	Present
❖ Du, Wei	Present	❖ Ruchti, Simon	Present
❖ Forbes, Dan	Proxy	❖ Sanz- Sánchez, Israel	Present
❖ Garthwait, Clayton	Present	❖ Sawyer, William	Present
❖ Grasseti, Stevie	Present	❖ Schugar, Heather	Present
❖ Guerriero, Tara	Present	❖ Selvarathinam, Priya	Present
❖ Hill, Erin	Present	❖ Smidt, Esther	Present
❖ Hodes, Jackie	Proxy	❖ Stokes, Jordan	Absent
❖ Houser, Mary	Present	❖ Tennille, Julie	Absent
❖ Junius, Premalatha	Present	❖ Wade, Michelle	Present
❖ Kolasinski, Kurt	Present	❖ Watkins, Karen	Present
❖ Lawton, Bessie	Present	❖ Wiest, Julie	Present
❖ Lightner, Sarah	Present	❖ Wilbur, Veronica	Present

Representatives

❖ Adjunct Faculty Representative: Bill Sawyer	Present
❖ Adjunct Faculty Representative: Priya Selvarathinam	Present
❖ APSCUF Representative: Bessie Lawton (alternate: Julie Wiest)	Present
❖ Student Government Association Representative: Sierra Irving	Present
❖ Graduate Student Association Representative: Amah Ensume	Absent
❖ ROTC Representative: Salamatu Dumbuya	Absent

Senate Proxies

❖ Edelblute, Heather	Absent
❖ Howard, Rick	Present, proxy for Laquana Cooke
❖ Kaulback, Michelle	Absent
❖ Mohajeri, Orkideh	Absent
❖ O'Brien, Lia	Absent
❖ Owens, Jackie	Present, proxy for Dan Forbes
❖ Patriarca, Ashley	Absent
❖ Tully, Greg	Absent
❖ Van Liew, Maria	Absent
❖ Whidden, Melissa	Absent
❖ Matthew Kruger-Ross	Present, proxy for Jackie Hodes

Guests In Attendance

Dr. Zebulun R. Davenport, Vice President for University Advancement & External Affairs

Dr. Julie L. Dietrich, Executive Director for External Relations

Helen Hammerschmidt, Associate Vice President for Communications, Operations, and Strategy

Margaret Ervin, WCU APSCUF Chapter President

Agenda

Welcome to Senators, Proxies, and Guests

Senate Business and Announcements

1. Approval of minutes from Faculty Senate meeting on 4.28.2023.
2. Meeting updates: With President Fiorentino (Friday, September 1) (attended by Rachel Daltry, Vipanchi Mishra, Bessie Lawton, and Israel Sanz) and with Interim Provost Osgood (Thursday, August 31) (attended by Julie Wiest and Israel Sanz).

Enrollments. Osgood: Students are returning, it's not just that we have more first-year students or doing better with retention. Maybe this is a trend that student enrollment is going back to normal (i.e., historical) behaviors, but this remains to be confirmed. Enrollment in Fall 2022 was 16,600, this year it's looking like we will land around 16,700 or 16,800. The Provost's Office is feeling good about the budget and classroom sizes. A recent factor is the introduction of a legislature amendment to the PASSHE Student Code to freeze tuition for 2024-2025 too, and grant out-of-state students from states like NJ, NY, and Maryland the same tuition as in-state (to match what those states are offering). This may mean enrollment dollars for us. We obtained a 6% budget increase for this year from the legislature, and for WCU, that increase means about 10% higher state allocation because of the new formula that rewards enrollments. The increase will be absorbed in part by the expected increase in salaries in the new CBA that's being negotiated, assuming that the negotiations will be successful. This increase is already factored out in the general budget. Fiorentino: It's clear that students want online classes in the summer. Preliminary numbers for first-year students are just above 3,000, which is slightly above projections. Overall, the projections for the next few years are to stabilize in the high 16,000s or low 17,000s.

Student housing: Osgood: Overall housing situation is better than last year, there has been more time to react. The Microtel deal fell through because of structural problems that would have been too expensive to address. There is a need for about 1,000 new beds, and any new student housing facilities will be a part of the new facilities plan. A \$759,000 contract has been signed with EwingCole (a construction engineering and planning company), and they have 120 days to identify a plot in our existing land to add an additional housing facility (options: space between Tyson and Goshen, demolishing Killinger "bad use of land", South Campus for additional apartment style homes, among others). A possibility is to institute a 2-year residential requirement, but this requires more conversation. Fiorentino: Last year we ended up with 300 people who were predicted to have left on-campus housing but did not. Temporary solutions included scholarships and other incentives to commute. This year the university has been much more careful not to promise housing, and most students on the waiting list have been accommodated. The new facilities master plan will outline construction/facilities interventions for the next 10 years, and will address student housing as the most urgent issue. As one of the options, Wayne Hall may be converted back into dorms. There was a lot of summer work on existing facilities (renovating apartments, mold, shower, appliances) and a report will be available in mid-fall.

Student retention strategies (mental health, Moon Shot, financial aid, food insecurity): Osgood: The university, via its Student Affairs division, is working on several initiatives focused on student mental health. For instance, a grant with the JED Foundation, which will provide 3-4 years of support for programs addressing student mental health as a first step towards a Student Mental Health Strategic plan. The food pantry has more resources and has been expanded into the Philly campus. In the area of financial support to students (besides Financial Aid), the University has increased its budget from \$5 million in 2018 to \$13 million. There are now microgrants available for emergency reasons, which students can apply for even if they got the original FA package. A link is available on the Financial Aid website to apply for these funds.

For Moonshot, there will be a series of formalized recommendations that will be presented by Megan Jerabek and Vanessa Kahen by mid-October. Senate also reminded the Provost's Office to ensure that Asian students, faculty, and staff are included in University data breakdowns (based on a few recent instances of non-inclusion). Fiorentino: The Moonshot team is continuing its work. The University wants to address as many needs as possible but also tify "low-hanging fruit", i.e., areas of high impact with small budgetary demands (e.g. if a microgrant can ensure that a student in good academic standing does not drop out). Because we have lost 1,000 students since the high peak in 2019, that \$10 million less in revenue. Partial scholarships are typically offered, rather than full scholarships, to spread the resources. The University is also working with the Foundation to pursue philanthropy sources. We need to improve our advertising of some of these activities (e.g., some scholarships are not being granted because students who qualify for them are not applying). In the mental health area, we are in the range of ca. 1,000-1,500 students per counselor, needed for accreditation. The Faculty Senate pointed out that there have been some reports of students not hearing back from Financial Aid – Fiorentino said he was not aware of this, but will inquire.

State system: Osgood: The System is focused on CBA negotiations. Laurie has been able to successfully advocate for a \$60 million allocation to satisfy PennWest's debt ("defeasance" model), and the plan is for PennWest to become solvent by 2027-2028, with no additional faculty retrenchments. If PennWest is handled well, then it benefits everybody and does not take resources away from WCU. Fiorentino: The new allocation formula benefits us, although we are still not at average, but it's better than the old formula. There is also an uptick in enrollments at some of the struggling campuses, which is also good news. The \$60 million allocation is also a big help to stabilize PennWest. There are several WCU administrators offering PennWest help, not just Laurie (Zeb Davenport with training student support services, Scott Heinrichs training their deans, Lisa Yannick with Institutional Research, our Admissions Office, etc. Sharing formulas that have worked at WCU so they can apply them too). The timeline for the continuation of this help is not clear – "until they feel comfortable doing things the right way". Stabilizing them is also necessary for them to recruit good administrators.

Administrative and staff search updates: Osgood: The only open administrative search in Academic Affairs is the search for a Dean of Sciences and Mathematics (Julie Wiest is Faculty Senate representative on that committee). Hiring is going to slow down significantly, because we've done so much, not that we're saying no (11 searches approved for this year, fewer than in the past). Promotions at WCU are not limited because of budget (unlike at other PASSHE universities). Fiorentino: The search for a VP of Student Affairs was discontinued so new president will have the chance to select somebody (Jackie Hodes was FS representative last year, and Israel Sanz briefly over the summer). Tabetha Adkins will continue serving as Interim VP for Student Affairs. More stability around HR and Accounting, but still some open positions (hiring is challenging for us because we're not competitive salary-wise). The University is keeping an eye on enrollments and budget to not hire unless it is necessary (some areas may not need the same amount of personnel, replacements are not automatic and are assessed on a case-by-case basis). There is a challenge in the custodial area because we don't have a full complement.

Other items: *Burdensome research-related processes:* Osgood: By October, there will be a series of formalized recommendations to address these issues. *President Fiorentino's retirement:* Osgood: The President was this last year to be a consequential one, so there are a lot of plans for initiatives that he wants finalized by June 2024: Moonshot, the facilities master plan, and a new Strategic Plan. The CoT has almost finalized the composition of the Committee, just waiting for the faculty representatives (APSCUF and faculty elected, and alternates) following point 3 of the Board of Governors policy. The CoT has placed a lot of emphasis on achieving a diverse composition of the committee: 57% female, 30% people of color on the search committee. The firm is Greenwood and Usher, and they are charging 33% of president's annual salary for the search. Fiorentino: FS asked what would happen if the CBA was not signed by his retirement date. Response: there is already another president on the negotiation's team (Shippensburg University) so a replacement may not be necessary. *Strategic Plan:* Fiorentino: We have reached the end of the previous plan. Instead of a new 3-year plan, we are designing a 2-year transitional plan to cover last year of Fiorentino + first year of new president. This new plan is almost finalized and will be rolled out in October (Heather Schugar was our representative on the Committee). *Taskforce on scheduling alternatives:* Osgood: The conversation has been taken off the table for now and being put on pause. It's not the right time, it was

just an exploration. FS representative on the taskforce was Megan Mraz (“amazing work”). *Banner*: Osgood: “we didn’t want to do this, this is all a decision from the Chancellor’s Office”. WCU is being forced to use this system, although we have been allowed to be in a different cloud space from the rest of PASSHE, and WCU is covering the cost of maintaining this autonomy.

Guest: Dr. Zebulun R. Davenport, Vice President for University Advancement & External Affairs, Dr. Julie L. Dietrich, Executive Director for External Relations, Helen Hammerschmidt, Associate Vice President for Communications, Operations, and Strategy

The guests presented the new Government Relations Strategic Plan. In his new role, Dr. Davenport serves as liaison to WCU Foundation and Alumni Association. The goal is to bring outside founding into the University. Specifically, Strategic Plan for Government Relations aims at securing more resources by strategically interacting with elected officials. The Government Relations plan has 4 pillars: Policy, advocacy, funding, and engagement. Next steps and goals involve finalizing policy /process for the engagement of public officials. The main takeaway for faculty is that faculty can provide feedback if any issues while engaging with public officials, for instance in the area of mental health efforts. Another idea could be to advocate for the notion that all majors and courses are useful –not just the ones designated for careers. Also, concerns related to the national focus on restricting DEI programs, as seen in many states, can be part of this advocacy effort. Wiest: There are scary things happening at public universities in other states (TX, FL), so this is an area that advocacy efforts should focus on, as well as getting the point across that college is not just about getting a degree, but also about developing thinking skills. Ruchti: we are seeing these restrictive processes even in the Chester County School System, and this has affected our family. We have an opportunity to market the university as a provider of liberal arts education, not just a vocational school. Childs: There is a specter of censorship looming over us, we need to take a strong stance, libraries are an important space for openness and inclusion. Hammerschmidt: A lot of this is happening in the school boards, and this is something we are very aware of. Daltry: There is a need to prioritize mental health at the public advocacy level too.

Guest: Margaret Ervin, WCU APSCUF Chapter President

Make sure to check the APSCUF site to get updates on the contract. Current topics being negotiated now: advising, faculty development funds, mandatory training, student evals, TeP evaluation process, office hours. We are going towards a model where faculty will have more freedom to schedule office hours on Zoom and will not be required to be on campus for office hours for three days a week. Salary negotiations are ongoing and have had to wait until the state budget for 2023-2024 was confirmed. OEA has worked hard to increase accessibility for students, but more support to OEA and the ASA Center (Academic Support and Advocacy Center) is being discussed (the OEA office is understaffed, and they are doing what they can). At M&D there have been conversations about improving the communications process letter with faculty. Presidential Search update: APSCUF was surprised by the email from the Council of Trustees on Sept. 7 announcing the almost complete composition of the committee, when the faculty representative and alternate election has not been finalized yet. Osgood said the reason was that a reporter from the Inquirer was present at the CoT meeting on Sept. 7 and found out about Laurie Bernotsky’s candidacy, and was going to publish a piece, so the CoT had to send that email before the piece was published.

Continuation of Senate Business:

Presidential Search update: FS does not have a formal role on the search. Exec sent an email to the CoT to offer a representative as per point 7 of the BoG policy, but the offer was declined. The CoT sent an email on Sept. 7 to announce the almost complete composition of the search committee, and in the email it was stated that Laurie Bernotsky was being considered as a preliminary candidate. If she accepts the candidacy and she is approved of by the search committee, she will be offered the position, and a national search will not be run. Brenner: It is problematic that this process is being followed because if appointed, Laurie Bernotsky will never have been appointed to any of her administrative positions following a national search. There is concern people will see this practice as something the future administration may consider normal.

Escaped inmate situation: Senators briefly discussed how information about safety measures (e.g., class dismissal on Friday, Sept. 1, door locks, need to access buildings with ID cards, etc.) has been shared with the campus community. Daltry: It is clear that the University does not have an effective plan in place in case of an emergency.

Liaisons: We need new liaisons for the Multicultural Faculty Commission and the Military Veterans Coordinating Committee. Senator Innhwa Park volunteered to serve as liaison with the Multicultural Faculty Commission. Senator Megan Mraz volunteered to serve as liaison with the Military Veterans Coordinating Committee.

Standing Committees: Senators were asked to select a standing committee and to identify chairs (or co-chairs). Options include: Faculty Welfare / Student Welfare / Communications / Research and Creative Activities.

Liaison Reports

1. **ADA Committee** – Senator Matt Pierlott
No report
2. **ADA Digital Accessibility Committee** – Senator Dan Forbes
No report. The committee has not met since last fall and may no longer be active.
3. **Alumni Association** – Bill Sawyer
No report
4. **APSCUF Exec Representative** – Senator Bessie Lawton
APSCUF ran the elections for faculty representative and alternate on the Presidential Search committee. They are concerned about how the Office of Educational Accessibility's new process for distributing accommodation letters and new accommodations (such as 48-hour extensions for assignments and alternative test options) might affect faculty workload. They are also concerned that some accommodations might impact faculty rights to intellectual property. Finally, there is concern that some accommodations that were brought over from K-12 are not appropriate for the college level or program requirements. There are still HVAC issues in several buildings, such as BPMC, Mitchell, Anderson, and UNA. APSCUF is working to clarify how the new Academic Support and Advocacy Center would impact faculty roles in advising.
5. **Budget Review Committee** – Senator Kurt Kolasinski
No report
6. **Sustainability Advisory Council** – Senator Kurt Kolasinski
No report
7. **Campus Climate Intervention Team** – Senator Simon Ruchti
No report
8. **Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Excellence** – Senator Ronnie Wilbur
No report
9. **Faculty Mentoring Committee** – Senator Innhwa Park
FMC is planning for the fall event (9/18; 9/19). The event will include a presentation by Dr. Stephen DiDomenico (from the COM department) on Active Listening—a topic that will help mentors and mentees and will hopefully be of interest to the broader faculty community. At the end of that event, we'll also have a short onboarding for the new mentors and mentees.
10. **IS&T and LMS Advisory Committees** – Senator Dan Forbes:
No report; committee did not meet over the summer.
11. **LGBTQIA+ University Caucus** – Senator Julie Tennille
No report
12. **Military Veterans Coordinating Committee** – Senator Megan Mraz
No report
13. **Multicultural Faculty Commission** – Senator Innhwa Park
No report

14. **Namesake Committee** – Senator Simon Ruchti
We submitted a recommendation to remove Schmucker’s name. The decision was made by the Council on Sept 7 to remove the name.
15. **Philadelphia Campus** – Senator Meg Panichelli
No report
16. **President’s Commission on the Status of Women** – Senators Michelle Wade
No report
17. **Strategic Plan** – Senator Heather Schugar- *committee finished work in Spring 2023*
18. **Student Government Association** – Sierra Irving
No report
19. **Graduate Student Association** – Amah Ensume
No report
20. **ROTC** – Salamatu Dumbuya
No report

21. **Ad-hoc liaisons:**

Scheduling alternatives working group (Megan Mraz)
Committee finished work in Spring 2023
SIS Advisory Board (Sarah Lightner & Simon Ruchti)
No report

22. **Search committees:**

Vice President for Student Affairs search (Jackie Hodes/Israel Sanz)
Search on pause, to be restarted after June 2024.
CSM dean search (Julie Wiest)
The committee is working with the Greenwood/Ascher search firm and began reviewing applications over the summer. We have narrowed down an initial list of 8 candidates and are scheduled to interview each of them on Wednesday, Sept. 13. On-campus interviews are tentatively scheduled for Oct. 4-6 & 9-11. The candidate pool looks quite good, and we’re hopeful for a positive outcome.

Committee Reports

1. **Faculty Welfare** – Senator Stacie Metz, Senator Michelle Wade, Senator Erin Hill, Senator Tara Guerriero, Senator Ronnie Wilbu (Co-Chair), Senator Megan Mraz, Senator Eirini Panagiotidou (Co-Chair), Senator Heather Schugar, Senator Jordan Stokes
2. **Student Welfare** – Senator Dan Cherry (Chair), Senator Rachel Daltry, Senator Jim Brenner , Senator Jackie Hodes
3. **Membership & Elections** – Senator Dan Forbes (Chair)
4. **Communications** – Senator Julie Tennille (Chair), Senator Julie Wiest, Senator Bessie Lawton, Senator Kurt Kolanski
5. **Research and Creative Activities** – Senator Gary Childs (Tri-chair), Senator Sarah Lightner (Tri-chair), Senator Stevie Grasseti (Tri-chair), Senator Kristopher Benedict, Senator Tianran Chen, Senator Innhwa Park, Senator Vipanchi Mishra, Senator Bill Sawyer, Senator Wei Du, Senator David Bolton, Senator Premalatha Junius

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

- ❖ President – Senator Israel Sanz-Sánchez
- ❖ Vice President – Senator Dan Forbes
- ❖ Recording Secretary – Senator Selen Razon
- ❖ Corresponding Secretary – Senator Julie Tennille
- ❖ At-Large Members – Senators Rachel Daltry and Vipanchi Mishra

- ❖ Immediate Past President – Senator Julie Wiest
- ❖ Past Presidents – Senators Bessie Lawton, Jim Brenner, and Heather Schugar

Upcoming Senate Meetings 2023-2024

Fall 2023:

Senate meeting: 3-5 pm. Friday, Oct. 13 (on Zoom)

Open Forum with administrators: 2-3 pm. Tuesday, Oct. 31 (Zoom webinar)

Senate meeting: 3-5 pm. Friday, Dec. 8 (on Zoom)

Spring 2024:

Senate meeting: 3-5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 9 (in person, SECC101A)

Open Forum with administrators: 3-4 pm. Monday, Feb. 26 (Zoom webinar)

Senate meeting: 3-5 p.m. Friday, March 29 (on Zoom)

Senate meeting: 3-5 p.m. Friday, April 26 (on Zoom)