



Faculty Senate Meeting
Thursday, October 23, 2025 -- 4:00 p.m.
Senate Chambers
Minutes

Call to Order:

- **Chair Dan Clark** called the regular meeting of the WKU Senate to order on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 4:00 pm in the Senate Chambers - DSU 2081. Senate Chambers. A quorum was present.
- **Members' Present:** Kirk Atkinson, Robin Ayers, Kristin Bennett, Erica Billingley, Daniel Boamah, Jenny Burton, Dan Clark, Margaret Crowder, William Czekanski, Gihan Edirisinghe, Brian Elliott, Xingang Fan, Ashley Fox, Said Ghezal, Gregory Ellis Griffith, Brooke Gross, Phillip Gunter, Kate Hudepohl, Sara Herbert, Nancy Hulan, Angie Jerome, Eric Kondratieff, Yuyun Lei, Mac McKerral, Meghan McKinley, Andrew Mienaltowski, Miranda Peterson, Kimberly Pharris, Matt Pruitt, Kelly Reames, Michelle Reece, Stephanie Riehn, Pinky Rusli, Sarah Scali, Karen Schifferdeckere, Matthew Shake, Kandy Smith, Jason Stewart, Dan Strunk, Thomas Blair, Melissa Travelsted, Aaron Wichman
- **Alternates Present:** Ingrid Cartwright (Yvonne Petkus), Allison Wittum (Amber Giacona, and Anne Heintzman (Gary Houchens)
- **Absent:** David Bell, Sheila Flener, Brandon Barber, Pallav Bera, Scott Bohnam, Tom Hunley, Kerron Joseph, Sebastian Leguizamon, Yaser Mowafi, and Matt Tullis
- **Guest:** Dorothea Browder, Scott Brown, Hilary Katz, Jim Lindsey, Rheanna Plemons, and Rui Zhang

A. Approve minutes of the previous month's Senate Meeting:

1st/2nd: Second row person/Brown, motion passes unanimously
[Senate Meeting Minutes, 9.18.25](#)

B. Visit from Jennifer Briewa Smith about HB4

Question #1: Concerns student organizations

- Apart from the student government, student organizations are specifically exempt under HB4, for many WKU student organizations are not affected by this bill at all

- So, the university is prohibited from providing any preferential treatment or benefits to an individual based on race, color, national origin, religion, or sex. So, those student organizations that received tangible benefits from the university are no longer receiving them. So, what we're talking about is space, human resources, and digital resources.
- I was asked specifically about fraternities and sororities and whether those groups need to allow persons of any sex to join. No, HB4 doesn't extend sex-based accommodations or populations, facilities for any athletic eligibility, or separate living facilities for members of the same biological sex. It specifically addresses those three categories. Regarding religious organizations, we had a question about whether these groups need to allow people of any religious identity to join.
- And the answer to that is no. So, religious student organizations are exempt. Do these groups use university space? Some of them do. One of the benefits of being a registered organization is access to campus space. There is a reservation process for that.
- You mentioned everything except for SGA. Yes. SGA gives grants to student organizations that you pass through. Money's not. Are we even stressed that we've met this year? Is new leadership necessary for SGA, as it is included in the definition of the institution, and does it have to? I'm saying that because the university provides funding to SGA, and they have a space here on campus.
- Well, so SGA can continue to be a classroom for funds if they have a content-neutral rubric for all of the wording, but for aid. So, they will continue as they have, but they can't. Question #1: Concerns student organizations always have money for every activity, based on the classes that I mentioned.

Question #2: Academic freedom and indoctrination

- Programs or measures required for institutional accreditation are not required or not affected. Okay, so there's an exemption under the legislation for programs or measures required for institutional accreditation. The question I received was what level of accreditation. And that would include any external accrediting body. Okay. The university values academic freedom. I know there is a concern for everyone on campus.
- The institution adopted a viewpoint neutrality policy, and the board approved that policy in June. It specifically addresses the importance of academic freedom and our intent to preserve academic freedom, as well as the First Amendment policy and our free speech policy, which was passed by the board last year and also addresses academic freedom, in line with the faculty Handbook on Academic Freedom.
- So, there's no intent from the administration to make any change there. We will continue to support academic freedom as outlined in the faculty handbook. Yes, yes. So, can you explain how the course review process fits into that? If courses are exempt from this, it's supposed to interfere with classroom instruction. Okay. My understanding was that there had been a class review.
- Sure. And that some of them were flagged. No. That's incorrect. As part of our compliance efforts, the provost formed a committee with representation from each academic college. And Linzi Carter, who is assistant general counsel, said on that committee. And they reviewed 50 required courses that had some obvious potential for DEI, either in the course title or in what would be anticipated as the course material. As expected, none of those courses were flagged as potentially indoctrinating students.
- So, they looked at syllabuses, and they talked to faculty; they had questions about those courses. And so, no problems were identified in that review. So, to answer your question, it does, but it seems like there's a conflict between the language saying this will not affect courses. This does not apply to academic freedom. And the review of those courses.

- What you're saying is that if this doesn't affect academic freedom, then why did they do it in the first place? Yeah, I mean, the language is in there. I mean, I understand the concern you're noting; it says, 'academic freedom,' and it is exempt under the policy. It also says we can't indoctrinate students.
- Yes. I think what's being said is that so-called indoctrinating persons may be offered that they are not permitted to be required to graduate, and you can't have a class. That is the intent of my students at this point, meaning that you need to present conflicting viewpoints. You know, opportunity, I mean, if your definition of indoctrination is within it.
- And so what is required or not? Yeah, we're not supposed to have this. We're not supposed to be indoctrinated. We can have the courses, okay. Yes. And we absolutely have until even, you know, those that are required right. Okay. We haven't made any changes to our course offerings. So, we have to demonstrate compliance. And that was the reason for the review.
- I mean, we have part of the responsibility for the institution under House Bill four, which is a reporting process. So, we've already submitted reports to the Office of the President and testified before the Senate subcommittee. Education Budget Review, Subcommittee on Education, that interim Joint committee, budget committee, subcommittee. It was finished in the House together budget. The budget review subcommittee. Yes.
- What is the metric for deciding if I'm indoctrinating them or not? What criteria are used? They were looking at assigned readings and media to ensure there wasn't a single ideological or political perspective. They examined learning objectives and made normative claims. They were looking for grading criteria to make sure that you didn't have to agree with the professor's opinion to receive your grade in the course. Looked for material where there wasn't any mention of alternative interpretations or counterarguments. What criteria is used to determine if materials are considered an alternative point of view? I mean, an alternative point of view is not defined in the House Bill, but I think discipline would dictate, in large part, academic freedom in a class. The goal is not to promote any particular ideology, but to help students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to assess evidence and independently reach conclusions. Open inquiry, respectful discussion, or single learning process.
- Can we use textbooks that make mention of diversity? Yes. Of course.
- What happens if a student or coworker complains? The process is the same as if students had complained before HB4 was passed. If it's meritless, the faculty will probably not know. If there's some merit to it, we need to ask questions. Yes, absolutely.
- If you have something like slavery. Why would you have to present an alternative theory that slavery is not bad? Talk about how it was justified using passages of 6 or 7 verses.

Question #3 Scholarships.

- We had a specific question about donation. So what? We made a donation to a foundation. That scholarship may not be permissible, or concerns that the donation may not be permissible.
- If someone had donated to support a scholarship, that was, I don't know, faith-based and ethnic based. Yeah, we should give them their money back. If we could use a grant, we could. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think the repurposing scholarship —the foundation — is better. I do believe that yes, they're giving people options. So, they are a donor, and they have an active scholarship, and it is affected, you know, or makes it impossible to. They are reaching out to those donors to have those conversations.
- So concerns were shared about scholarships for first-generation students and minority students first, also for households that don't affect any initiatives related to first-generation

grant recipients. Military veterans, low-income students, non-traditional students, transfer students, PCAs, or students with unique abilities. So, some of our student recruitment has shifted to one of those focuses.

Question # 4 Syllabus and Course Materials

- So, there were some questions raised about the syllabus and course materials, and who has ownership of those materials until we have a policy on this, our AP policy says that you, your course materials, and your syllabus.
- The question then is whether we would ask to supply that syllabus in an open records request. You own it. It's probably a public record, though. So, the Kentucky Open Records Act defines a record very broadly to include anything in our possession or under our control. So yeah, most likely that would have to be the case, because I don't think that's going to fall under an exception. Certainly, there are no privacy or proprietary arguments associated with it. We wouldn't ask you for resources, but anything you're distributing widely to students, I think, would be fair game for a public records request.
- Well, Kentucky's supposed to have the best open records laws.
- WKU received a questionnaire (every public university received), one of the questions was, we want to see every single mission statement that has anybody on campus, anywhere, including Barnes Noble, Aramark, Sodexo, any of our outside third-party partners. There were 10 pages of mission statements. The legislature repeatedly requested that information. There was a question about why some universities, such as the UK, did not send all complete syllabi; some were even redacted.
- I had several colleagues whose syllabi were sent who are very upset about it and felt unsafe; they were sent in the first place and felt honestly betrayed that they had not even been told they were having a target put on their back. I wouldn't say they were specifically having a target put on their back. I don't know if that's what I mean. Like I said, I didn't receive a single question about anything we sent or asked for.
- Back in February 2024. Received an email about an open records request that was related to communications related to House Bill nine, Senate Bill six, and Senate Bill 93, all of which pertain to DEI practices. And so, a request was sent to the office of the General Counsel at Western to send emails. So, I got this email about that. So, all of those emails, from what I understand, say our IT department will conduct the email search. There is no need to take any action; I am simply advising you of the request.
- So, anybody could do an open records request on our emails and say, I'm looking for this word, any email, and we go through it all to make sure there is something that needs to be redacted. But that happens all the time. You all so be very careful about what you're putting in an email, because we get requests for email records weekly.

Question #4 A colleague from an unknown KY university had received an email from their university stating that, at any time, because of HB4, the university could request and receive their text messages. I am praying that is not true, especially here, because you don't pay for my cell phone, so you have no right to ask me about my texts.

- So, I will tell you, there was a bill last session there, or maybe it may have been the 24-hour session. They all run together at some point, but there was a bill specifically about open records and cell phones.
- It did pass if memory serves me correctly, it was to exempt them. Yes. And thus, there was enough of an uproar about exempting cell phones that the bill ended up dying.

- It's been argued, as the Supreme Court has, about this. Currently, if it's a business-related text message, we would require you to say, "I'm not going to have you bring your phone to me." We're not doing any forensic analysis. It's." Do you have a text message?" Yes or no reason? Business-related.
- How does all of this translate to Teams chats?
- I know Teams is technically considered, like, the official way that we're supposed to talk to each other. That's not email. Those that fall under the same rule as email, where you can pull those at any time.
- If it's a record, then yes. It's university-owned, yes.
- Does the university have language being talked about, the fact that, okay, even if I'm on a university-owned computer. I'm on Google, but I'm using Western's Wi-Fi, so Western has the opportunity to tell me to release that information. Whether it's social media, Gmail, or anything like that, it doesn't really track well in that capacity.
- Well, I'm not saying that it's tracking. I mean, I know that they're tracking all the emails, and I know that there are certain red flags that they look for in, you know, the emails, because that's the domain of Western itself. I'm asking about just the use of traffic, Wi-Fi, or landlines. Does that happen automatically, or is someone trying to make it automatic so the university can then request that information?
- I wonder because I mean, if you're asking for text messages on my phone, right, that I maintain because nobody gives me an office phone. What they're asking and saying is that there is a possibility that, because I texted Doctor Jerome or a text to Mac, they could ask for that information. That's wildly inappropriate.
- In summary, all work should be done through email.

C. Officer Reports

1. Chair - Dan Clark

- Andrea Henry from the staff senate said she couldn't attend today, but she's going to be trying to attend most of our Senate meetings and forward.
- I'm going to be trying to attend staff Senate meetings so we can have some, you know, liaison relationship there. So, I think we have a lot in common and we can work together more. Also, Brooke and I've been organizing a meeting of the committee heads to talk about, you know, what we're working on. Just trying to make sure we have a cohesive mission with the Senate this year so we can meet next week as well.

2. Vice Chair - Brooke Gross

- We are still missing a Senate representative for the Graduate Council. Somebody please volunteer for this position. We are so close to having all our committee members fully in place. It would make me particularly happy if that could happen. Yeah. You do have to be a graduate faculty member to be on it.

3. Secretary - Sheila Flener, no report

D. Standing Committee Reports:

1. Academic Quality, Missy Travelsted (Chair): (Report Posted)

1st/2nd: Travelsted, motion passes unanimously

Question: This is one question on the idea of aptitude classes? It it's not feasible for the classrooms

2. **Budget and Finance, Eric Kondratieff (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Kondratieff, motion passes unanimously

3. **Colonnade/General Education, Andrew Mienaltowski (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Mienaltowski, motion passes unanimously

4. **Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities, Ashley Orehek (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Orehek, motion passes unanimously

Committee will be looking at faculty welfare, wellness, and mental health

5. **Graduate Council, Kirk Atkinson (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Atkinson, motion passes unanimously

6. **Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Ashley Fox (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Fox, motion passes unanimously with friendly amendments

Discussion on Film and Media collaboration is intentionally and strategically developed, offering courses that may benefit each other. There is a problem with Art215, 2D computer animation. In Course Leaf, the box that contains the field of study, significant restrictions, and film is not listed. The film should be listed in this area.

- The course was pulled from the report and sent back to UCC to find an answer to the problem.

7. **Faculty Handbook, Mac McKerral (Chair): (No Report)**

E. Other Committee/Organization Reports:

1. **American Association of University Professors (AAUP) None**

2. **Executive Budget Committee (BEC) (No Report)**

3. **Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership (COSFL) / ONE WKU None**

F. Advisory Member Reports:

1. **Faculty Regent, Shane Spiller**

- The Board of Regents changed the schedule last year so that the fall doesn't have quite as much to align more with the fiscal calendar. So, the November 14th meeting would be working with senior staff on it. I've already had a pre-meeting to get briefed on a few things from the budget, finance, and audit sides that we're going to see.
- For those that are new to this, just as a reminder, I'm a member of the Academic Affairs Committee and the Budget Finance Audit Committee. Those are reappointed each year. I don't think we did this last week because we were rushing through a little bit.
- The board of Regents has an all-woman leadership group this year. The chair, Jan West
- I want to say quickly that the audit committee is part of those that oversee the internal audit function of the university. And I've met with the internal auditor yesterday, as a reminder: the internal auditors are the arm; they report to the board, not to the president. So we asked them to go and look for certain things or specific audits that they do, which is part of standard practice.

2. Provost, Robert "Bud" Fischer

- Faculty continuance has been completed
- A new ombudsperson is going to be chosen by the executive committee and the provost before the next Senate meeting, and that person will start on January
- We're also working with the university's distinguished professors to increase visibility, R&D efforts, and to use them for student recruitment, to include them in research activities, and to help with scholarly presentations.
- Excited about academic affairs and alumni collaboration to flood the classroom. This is a program that invites alumni back into specific classrooms, where they can participate as students and rework their entire corporate experience. It's a chance to give alumni an opportunity to see what you're doing and the innovative and unique activities that you have going on, and make connections with it.
- The Presidential Speaker series will be on November 4th at 7 p.m. in Van Meter Auditorium. We are invited to attend and encouraged to invite your students here. Dr. Jean Twenge explores how generational change and technology shape society.
- Question concerning a faculty survey from the City of Bowling Green. The Provost's office was not involved in the survey. The inquirer stated that they took the survey to see what was there. It appears to be for the purpose of checking whether college campuses in the commonwealth are presenting a neutral viewpoint. There is some concern about the information being private.

2. SGA President, Rush Robinson

No Report

F. Old Business: none

G. New Business: none

H. Adjourn

Motion by Ayers/ motion passes unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

Faithfully submitted: Sheila S. Flener