

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes



Faculty Senate Meeting
Thursday, December 12, 2024 -- 3:45 p.m.
IN PERSON
Senate Chambers - DSU 2081

Present: A. Jerome, Y. Petkus, J-L. Houle (for C. Trojan), B. Thomas, L. Spalding (for M. Salvator), P. Otto, B. Elliott, M. Peterson, S. Riehn, J. Burton, S. Scali, T. Jenkins, R. Ayers, L. Plumlee, J. Stewart, A. Wichman, M. Aram, K. Liang, P. Gunter, D. Strunk, M. Pruitt, E. Kondratieff, K. Smith, C. Basham, J. Logsdon, K. Neelly, A. Mienaltowski, J. Maddox, K. Schifferdecker, T. Seguin, M. Crowder, B. Fischer, S. Spiller, D. Clark, S. Bonis

Guests: D. Smith (parliamentarian), J. Klemm, R. Hale, B. Laves, J. Hammonds

A. Approval of previous months Senate Meeting:

1. [Faculty Senate Minutes 11-21-24](#)

1st Wichman/2nd Jerome; motion passes (unanimous)

B. Officer Reports

1. Chair - Mac McKerral (No Report)

2. Vice-Chair - Dan Clark

Still a couple of open spots on the website, email Dan with interests.

3. Secretary - Sarah Bonis (No Report)

C. Standing Committee Reports:

1. Academic Quality, Tracy Jenkins (Chair): (No Report)

2. [Budget and Finance, Eric Kondratieff \(Chair\): \(Report Posted\)](#)

Move to approve, 1st Kondratieff; Petkus inquired about the BB Ultra note – summary, not well liked. Kondratieff discussed the clarification in the report RE: involvement in Benefits committee. Motion passes (unanimous)

3. Colonnade/General Education, Angie Jerome (Chair): (No Report)

4. [Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities, Stephanie Riehn](#)
(Chair): [\(Report Posted\)](#)

Motion to approve, 1st Riehn; motion passes (unanimous)

5. [Graduate Council, Jeremy Logsdon](#) (Chair): [\(Report posted\)](#)

Motion to approve, 1st Logsdon; motion passes (unanimous)

6. [Graduate Curriculum Committee, Whitley Stone](#) (Chair): [\(Report Posted\)](#)

Motion to approve, 1st Logsdon; motion passes (unanimous)

7. [Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Shelia Flener](#) (Chair): [\(Report posted\)](#)

Motion to approve, 1st Wichman; motion passes (unanimous)

8. Faculty Handbook, Julie Shadoan (Chair): (No Report)

D. Other Committee/Organization Reports:

1. American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

2. [Budget and Executive Committee \(BEC\)](#) [\(Report Posted\)](#)

Still going through reports from colleges with respect to budgets last year, D. Clark shared health care increases and how it balances out with salaries. 11% of WKU employees see their paycheck go down (with the raise) staying on the same insurance level. Important to think about how benefits, salaries, etc. all play together.

3. Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership (COSFL)

4. ONE WKU, Molly Kerby (Chair)

E. Advisory Member Reports:

1. Faculty Regent, Shane Spiller

Shane (speaking as faculty Shane, not board) expressed that his role is to take concerns from faculty to the board. One concern that Shane has is that, as faculty, and the things we pay attention to, the pushback that Shane sees is we pay a lot of

attention to finance issues in Senate, etc. so sometimes our voice gets muted at the board because we are so loud about budget. We need to be louder and clearer about our other concerns. Pushback Shane hears is. "I wish faculty would pay more attention to the curriculum." As Shane looks at faculty taking VSIP, thinking about faculty reduction (response from President: it may get worse), he wonders: is it time for us to take a leadership role in curriculum, should we be teaching and offering everything we are offering? We keep doing it for the students, but at some point it becomes a student quality issue. Just met with a student downstairs in the bookstore about the difference with WKU compared to UL and UK. Always say, we know your name here, small class, remember you, "WKU experience." But we need to start asking if it is truly still the WKU experience. We should question at the department level whether we do need additional resources/faculty – tension between innovation and resource needs; we as faculty own curriculum. If you say in a curriculum proposal, this is new and exciting, and we don't have a need for additional resources – the board believes you. We need to think about if we can continue what we are doing with no new lines coming. We need to take ownership as faculty about that area.

Regent report: Had a board meeting day before graduation. Nothing new except for finance report. President's evaluation was (quietly, at the end) shared – all feedback was shared with President and suggestions were made (that is all that was said at board meeting). Board's schedule was changed – no longer Jan. meeting but have a 2/14 meeting that is both committee and quarterly/ Provides a bit more flexibility in the schedule for getting materials together.

Kondratieff: Concerned that perception is that we are only about the finances/raises/salary since retention numbers are up, etc. We obviously have kept doing a good job to make retention happen. Where is the disconnect? Shane's response: clarify – not saying board thinks we only care about money. They are hearing about the large classes (from their family, etc.) and are asking questions about if we continue to cut resources can we deliver the quality programs that we are currently doing. Want us to focus on what else can we get that we have control over.

Kondratieff: Where is the money from VSIP going and why aren't we getting any more lines?

Jerome: We are being mischaracterized regarding curriculum. In her department, have taken two majors and combined them into one (due to staffing), 48 to 39 hours, etc.

Spiller: Shane's department also, have combined all majors. Now up to 900 students served, 7 faculty gone, 2 replaced. The question becomes are we doing too much with too little – when will we draw the line?

Pruitt: What is the board position on hiring and retaining faculty?

Spiller: When I bring up things like that, the accusation is being down in the weeds with those details, but that is needed to make changes.

Petkus: It sounds like it's more about perception – how can we change the perception, but still get our curriculum through and make it all work?

Spiller: Deans are under pressure to create curriculum that is responsive to community needs. The leverage that faculty have is to say, don't ask us to create new courses or curriculum with the existing resources, need to stand up to department chairs and deans since they get paid lots of money to make hard decisions.

2. Provost, Robert "Bud" Fischer

Start with curriculum – Provost has asked people to look at and modernize, innovate curriculum. What does it look like now compared to 10 years ago, continue to innovate. Provost does look at the curriculum approvals, so you need to put in those proposals what you actually need for resources. Tuition is related to students, so we need to attract students. Unlikely to get a base increase from state.

Tough world out there, in this state and on this campus.

Please help us modernize the curriculum, path is toward careers

Trying to figure out what %age goes back to lines from VSIPs. Provost is aware that we have outstanding lines we need replaced. Some %age of VSIPs will go to paying off a 20-year-old debt. Enrollment folks have done an incredible job and met numbers that seemed impossible related to visits, etc.

91% retention – congratulations to faculty.

Reminder that Department of Labor decision is canceled for a little while (WKU will monitor).

Budget kick off for 2026 has started, people in colleges have been together and will start review in Jan. while continuing to check 2025 budget.

Feasibility study went to state yesterday RE: R2 and PhD.

SACSCOC self-study review feedback – Good response, currently addressing any issues. Reminder that the on-campus visit is March 10th – 14th and anybody can be called, so please be available.

Dan Clark had asked why we pay application fee to WKU if you're a faculty member here and want to take a class – great question. Provost looked into it and beginning in fall 2025 we will waive faculty application fee.

QEP – still working on it, due end of Jan.

Neely: RE: R2, what is the Return on Investment, is the move to R2 expected to show a budget surplus or hit in the short term? Provost: if we can give people more opportunities for grants, it will help us for faculty and research.

3. SGA President, Sam Kurtz

F. Old Business:

G. New Business:

1. Action Item: Election for the WKU Academic Complaint Committee

Conducted via email immediately following the meeting

2. Action Item: Appointment to WKU Employee Benefits Advisory Committee

a. Andrew Head Bio

b. Dan Clark Bio

Revival of a math department spot on committee, Clark withdraws name.

Motion to appoint Andrew Head to Benefits Committee, 1st Pruitt/2nd Jerome; motion passes (unanimous).

3. Action Item: Summer-Winter Session Compensation Policy

Looked at additional data – using PCAL as example, # of students in summer class (5 days ahead of time 14.5, day 1 is 15.1 students, day 3 it is 14.7 students). In 4 out of 5 colleges, measurement on first day is best for faculty – costs university most, but best deal for you. Data suggest best time to measure is on day one.

Pruitt: Discussion of decision to cancel, prorate, actual pay being based on different days, and faculty choice – Day 1 is salary determination in current proposal, if it's lower number of students than what it was on Day minus 5, you would get less (which you may not have wanted to/agreed to work for).

Provost: Whether the course moves forward, and you get full pay is determined at the college level – each college has a different set of parameters. Unlikely to advocate for an increase in minimum base salary for summer/winter at this time – we are in the lower 3rd for compensation rates when looking at benchmarks/peer comparisons.

No motion, will return to agenda as old business in January.

H. Informational Items:

1. DRAFT: Academic Calendar

a. Provost email on Academic Calendar

I. Items for the Benefit of the Body:

Dough Smith has been a huge benefit to this Senate body for many years and his work is much appreciated.

J. Motion to Adjourn

1st Ayers/2nd Jerome, motion passes (unanimous)