Faculty Senate Chronicle December 2, 2021

Heather M. Loughney
hl@uakron.edu

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December 2, 2021

23 pages

SENATE ACTIONS

1. Approved a motion from the Academic Policies Committee to endorse a student-centered degree audit system (Appendix A)

2. Approved the proposals brought forward by the Curriculum Review Committee. (Appendix C)
Table of Contents

Minutes of Faculty Senate meeting held December 2, 2021 .........................3

Appendices to Minutes of the Faculty Senate meeting held on December 2, 2021
   A. Academic Policies Committee report .............................................18
   B. Computing and Communications Committee report .......................19
   C. Curriculum Review Committee report ..........................................20
   D. Part-time Faculty Committee report ............................................23
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING OF

December 2, 2021

The meeting of the Faculty Senate took place Thursday, December 2, 2021 in Teams. Senate Chair Kathryn Budd called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Of the current roster of 43 senators, 33 attended the meeting. Senator Frey was absent with notice. Senators Beneke, Buldum, Levin, Mudrey-Camino, Palmer, Sahl, Yi and Zhang were absent without notice.

I. Adoption of Agenda

Chair Budd noted two changes to the agenda. First, Senator Hartsock will read the GSG report for Senator Frey. Second, President Miller is in another meeting and will deliver his remarks when he joins.

Chair Budd called for further changes to the agenda; none were offered.

No objections were raised to adopting the agenda as amended; the amended agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

II. Adoption of minutes of November 4, 2021 meeting

Chair Budd called for corrections to the minutes; none were offered.

The minutes were adopted by unanimous consent.

III. Remarks of the Chair

Welcome to the final meeting of faculty senate for this semester. I’d like to remind everyone that this is the legislative body of the faculty at the University
level. Our meetings are formal and are conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order. Senators who wish to be recognized should type “request” into the chat window and wait for me to recognize you. If I mispronounce your name, let me know the correct pronunciation so I can do better next time. To preserve bandwidth for all, turn off your mics and cameras until you are called on to speak.

As mentioned previously, please be aware that both senate meetings and minutes are part of the public record, and members of the media are in attendance. If there are any questions or comments that you would prefer to raise in a less public venue, you may forward them to myself or any member of the Executive Committee and we will bring them to our meetings with the Provost. Senators may also submit questions in writing for the President or Provost’s review in advance of the senate meeting.

Thank you to those who attended the informal meeting with the President and Provost in November. You should have received the invitation for December’s meeting on Tuesday, December 14 at 3pm. The meeting is optional, but I urge you to attend if you can.

I am happy to welcome a special guest today. Eric Green, Director of Environmental & Occupational Health & Safety is with us to provide an overview of the situation with regards to Covid on campus and to answer your questions. Director Green has also kindly agreed to attend the upcoming informal meeting with the President and Provost, so know that if you have further questions there will be another opportunity to have them answered then.

I would also like to welcome Trina M. Carter of the University of Akron Board of Trustees.

Today we will consider a recommendation by the Academic Policies Committee for the adoption of a software platform that will give students the ability to access their grades and DPRs, schedule classes, make appointments with their advisors and perform a multitude of other actions from a single interface.
The students who have seen the demonstration of this software have remarked on its simplicity and believe that it will empower them to take better control of their academic careers. From the standpoint of faculty, advisors and other members of a student’s support team, the software greatly improves our ability to review our students’ progress, while streamlining and simplifying communication and coordination between all of those concerned with assisting students. This system will aid our student’s success, recruitment, and retention, and will help us compete with other institutions at the same time. I hope you will give the recommendation your support.

Finally, I want to thank each of you for everything you are doing for our students and University. This semester has presented unique challenges, but you’ve continued to advise, teach, mentor and support our students, and I thank you for it. I hope your holiday season is a happy one, and I wish you the very best for the New Year.

This concludes the remarks of the chair.

IV. Special Announcements

Dr. Minel (“Jack”) Braun, distinguished professor emeritus of mechanical engineering, passed away on Nov. 26th at 74 years old. During his 43 years of service at The University of Akron, Braun made innumerable contributions to his department, College and University. Dr. Braun was a multiple time recipient of the University of Akron’s Outstanding Researcher of the Year award, associate editor of several international engineering journals and chairman of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers for his specialty in the National Fluid Transients Committee. He was editor of six technical books in the field of tribology; published over 100 technical journal publications and over 220 international conference publications; and was the recipient of multiple recognition awards from NASA.
V. Report of the Executive Committee

Since our last meeting in November, the Executive Committee has met three times.

The committee endorsed encouraging senators to donate to the Campus Cupboard for UA’s #GivingROOvember campaign.

The committee met with Provost Wiencek and Senior Vice Provost Hendricks to discuss COVID, enrollment, articulation agreements, and ERP software options.

For more information on these discussions, please contact Angela Hartsock.

VII. Remarks of the President

President Miller thanked the senate for its work and acknowledged and thanked Trustee Trina Carter who was in attendance.

The president reminded the senate that commencement will be held in the JAR (James A. Rhodes Health and PE facility) and will include a processional and recessional. The platform party, including faculty and dignitaries, will robe in the same room to allow socializing.

President Miller acknowledged the Senate Executive Committee for contributing during Giving Tuesday with a gift of $1,000 to the Campus Cupboard. The UA faculty and staff raised over $100,000 during the campaign.

The administration continues to monitor Ohio House bills of interest to UA. On Monday, they will visit Columbus for a press conference in support of a bill introduced by Rep. Cross to give students who graduate from Ohio institutions a 3-year income tax break following graduation, business tax breaks for businesses who offer paid co-ops/internships, and merit-based scholarships for out-of-state students (through Choose Ohio First). On the divisive issues legislation, it is
unclear which version will move forward and whether higher education will be included. UA is ready with testimony and the IUC will strongly oppose the legislation. UA is sponsoring a local meeting of legislators on December 10th to discuss higher education priorities and legislation.

President Miller cited recent travel around the country and productive visits.

Renovations of the Main Street side of Polsky are starting with faculty involvement and an arts-driven project.

The president announced interviews for dean candidates in law and business and applauds the provost’s work on the searches.

President Miller provided an update on the safety initiatives at UA. The work of Director Jackson was acknowledged. There is opportunity for significant progress in the next year.

The president made special mention of the stress being experienced by our students. President Miller has heard student concerns related to mental health and strict attendance policies for classes. He urged the faculty to spend time listening to students.

The president is encouraged by some preliminary data on the new marketing campaign which suggests traction being gained in the Pittsburgh, Columbus, and Cincinnati areas.

President Miller has an upcoming meeting to formalize a different relationship with the City of Akron which will include a semi-permanent working group with both city and university representatives. The goal will be to identify areas of collaboration; Steve Ash will be part of the group. Eventually, this will turn into an opportunity for faculty leadership.

President Miller appreciates the informal faculty senate meetings that have been held this semester and hopes to do them in-person where difficult issues can be discussed.
The president concluded by wishing everyone a safe and peaceful holiday and expressed his intent to give assistance to those in need during this season.

President Miller invited questions. None were offered.

**VIII. Remarks of the Provost**

Provost Wiencek thanked Trustee Trina Carter for joining the meeting.

The provost emphasized the feedback being received from students who desire more flexibility for class attendance. President Miller and the provost would encourage faculty to be flexible and consider the stress of dealing with the end of the semester.

Applications: The provost cited an upward trend in applications and transfer students and an emphasis on re-capturing students for spring semester. The university likely won’t regain the losses of the past year but current efforts will help us moving forward. The admissions process is fully active, but processing will take a while to catch up to applications.

Planning Group: Progress is being made on the roll out of the strategic plan. An announcement is ready, and a website is being developed. Information will be shared through the Digest. There will be a focus on an envisioning activity to get the UA community engaged in the plan in a way that is meaningful to each person. The process will bring together the deans where a scale-up plan will be developed. Goal setting will be centered around the published Measure What Matters OKR (Objective and Key Result) approach with an Akron brand of AKRs (A=aspirations, KR=key results). The university will need someone to continually monitor these AKRs. The provost would like to have a Provost Faculty Fellow; faculty can receive overload. The provost noted the process will be clunky on the roll out but will improve over time.

Student Billing: The university has received feedback from students on bill statements, including that summer statements frequently don’t include financial
aid. A group is working to simplify billing statements and point students toward assistance. The provost considers this in the customer service realm; the goal should be to reduce anxiety and hurdles for students.

Ad hoc Investment Criteria Committee: The committee is making progress and plans to complete their work by the end of the academic year.

Searches: The provost encouraged faculty to attend the open forums in the leadership searches. Of the four dean searches, finalists for the positions in School of Law and College of Business have visited campus, finalists for College of Health and Human Science and College of Engineering and Polymer Science will visit in spring. Three vice provost positions are in progress; the goal is stability in leadership.

The provost invited questions.

In reference to the request for faculty to be understanding with attendance, Senator Evans sought clarification on whether this request is applying to only fall or also to spring semester.

Provost Wiencek referenced his discussion with President Miller and his understanding that it would also apply to spring semester. He pointed out that student government should be reaching out to Chair Budd. He cited significant feedback from students related to stress, mental health concerns, and needed flexibility; he acknowledged possible alternative faculty perspectives in disciplines where statistically attendance improves performance. The provost encouraged a case-by-case basis depending on faculty and discipline.

No further questions were asked.

X. COVID-19 Update – Eric Green, Director of Environmental & Occupational Health & Safety

Director Green presented the current UA COVID dashboard. New cases haven’t returned to the peak seen in September and a post-Halloween surge was
not detected. Overall, numbers were better last year at this time, but UA had transitioned to remote delivery by this point. There are increased hospitalizations in the county. Director Green cited a jump at the Wayne campus before Thanksgiving; after coordinating with the county health department, it was determined to be mostly due to family connections and not campus connections.

Regarding weekly testing, more than half of recent cases were breakthrough cases. Many tests were distributed prior to Thanksgiving; UA plans to expand test offerings as we approach Christmas.

UA currently has a 71% vaccination rate among employees and a 64% vaccination rate among students.

The Quaker Square quarantine site was successful this semester with no more than six quarantined individuals at a time. COVID supply chains are strong right now.

Director Green invited questions.

Senator Bisconti requested additional information on how vaccination rates have changed over the semester and if vaccination seems to have plateaued for both staff and students.

Director Green noted the bulk of vaccination did occur near the beginning of the semester, by mid-semester vaccination verifications were slowing down, now there is an uptick due to the deadline.

Senator Kidd asked about the availability of exemption data and whether current policy changes are going to impact the UA vaccine policy.

Director Green anticipates having good data on exemptions by December 14th. Regarding policy, UA will continue to monitor policy at the state and federal level; he sees no need to change UA policy at this time.

Senator Randby posed two questions. First, he inquired about whether booster verification would be reported through Med+Proctor. Second, he is
increasingly concerned with the lack of virtual options for scheduled meetings and requested clarification on related policy.

On booster verification, Director Green confirmed that booster status can be reported via Med+Proctor however, there is no requirement to do so. Regarding virtual meeting options, there is no current policy directive, but he encouraged everyone to be flexible and considerate. If COVID numbers on campus warrant it, they would consider a policy.

Senator Bisconti asked whether contact tracing capabilities and manpower were sufficient.

Director Green confirmed that the capacity to keep up with contact tracing has fluctuated. During the early semester surge, contact tracing fell behind and the response became more of a triage response with follow up on the newest cases first; UA continues to try to find the right balance for the number of needed tracers.

Chair Budd thanked Director Green.

XI. Committee Reports

Academic Policies Committee – Chair Klein

Senator Klein delayed the discussion of the DSST equivalencies.

Senator Klein presented the motion to recommend acquisition of a student-centered and user-friendly software system for academic/degree planning.

Chair Budd opened the floor to debate.

Senator Luettmer-Strathmann noted that UA’s previous software was eliminated due to cost, do we anticipate a similar future argument should we adopt a system. She re-stated her question to ask what has changed so that cost is no longer an argument against a system.
Senator Klein offered the option of revisiting this in the future but noted that the software would run alongside the ERP, reducing complications during ERP changes.

Provost Wiencek acknowledged cost concerns and noted that we don’t know details of the DPR associated with the Workday ERP. The ERP transition will take 4 years and the provost believes the cost of a software system like what is under discussion would justify itself in improved retention. The CFO and Provost’s office will look at cost justification, right now the senate is being asked to judge if this is appropriate. The provost noted reason to be concerned and there are alternative ways to provide good service to students, but this kind of software would provide continuity during the ERP transition.

Senator Klein shared that the registrar’s office estimated the cost per student to be in the same ballpark as other software; other institutions have reported an increase in retention associated with the use of the software.

Senator Evans sought clarification on functions that would be in the proposed software versus what would be part of the ERP. He noted that DARS was separate from PeopleSoft and UA moved to the degree audit process in PeopleSoft. He specifically asked whether the proposed type of software would handle registration and degree audit functions.

Senator Klein confirmed that it would do those things and track degree progress.

Senator Evans asked whether the software would allow for advising notes and sharing of notes.

Senator Klein stated her belief that it does and her recall from the presentation is that it does those things and more with customizable pop-ups that alert students to issues.

Provost Wiencek described the system as a full wrap-around of registration, degree audit, advising, and scheduling. The ERP functions as a secure database,
the software in question is more of a user interface and allows us to interact with the database in a meaningful way.

Senator Klein noted the ability to message and text students from the interface.

Chair Budd asked for further questions; none were offered.

Chair Budd called for a vote on the recommendation. The vote was unanimous in favor (29-0).

Computing and Communications Technology Committee – Chair Randby

Senator Randby shared that the committee is continuing to discuss information and security awareness training policy and are getting close to a proposal. John Corby has agreed to make himself available for the February senate meeting to discuss ERP.

Curriculum Review Committee – Chair Saliga

Senator Saliga, on behalf of the CRC, thanked everyone for helping to get proposals through the system and noted the helpful work of college curriculum committees. CRC has reviewed over 100 proposals with over 150 in our box currently and more to come. She praised the dedication of the committee members. All remaining proposals will be brought to senate in February.

For today’s meeting, the CRC brought 39 course and nine program proposals for approval.

Chair Budd opened the floor; there was no debate or opposition.

Chair Budd asked for objections to approval by unanimous consent; none were voiced.

The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.
Part-Time Faculty Committee – Chair Antunez

This report has been superseded by a new report, which will be included in the February Faculty Senate Chronicle.

Senator Antunez was not in attendance, but senators were encouraged to read the report.

The text of the report follows.

Highlights of fall 2021 committee activities:

Spring-Fall 2021: Created a self-enrolled site in Microsoft Teams for all current UA Part-Time Faculty. This site is called “UA Part-Time Faculty Network.” The site is used to share relevant documents and policies, communicate updates, and as a space for discussion.

Fall 2021: Hosted two Friday Brunch virtual meetings for part-time faculty

On November 19, 2021, Dean Shultz (Administrative Systems Trainer, Information Technology Services) presented, 12 participants.

On November 8, 2021, Chairman Joseph Gingo (Board of Trustees) and Provost Wiencek presented, 23 participants.

November 2021: Committee members voted to send a letter to three administrators (Dr. Mitchell McKinney, Dean, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Cher Hendricks, Senior Vice Provost; and Dr. Lisa Lenhart, Interim Director and Professor, LeBron James Family Foundation School of Education) expressing their concern that part-time faculty in the School of Education are required to submit their syllabi for Spring Semester 2022 courses before those faculty are officially hired (i.e., January 5, 2022). This is not required from the full-time faculty in the school.

XII. AAUP report—Toni Bisconti
Senator Bisconti shared that the Akron-AAUP is working with the OAA on the dean searches and workload.

XIII. Graduate Council report—Senator Graor

Senator Graor reported that the council met in November to discuss and approve curriculum proposals. The committee finalized and voted to accept the revised university rule on the definition of full-time graduate status. The committee is considering the nature of graduate student and faculty advisor relationships across departments; there will be more to come on this topic.

IXV. GSG report—Senator Frey

Senator Hartsock shared the following report on behalf of Senator Frey:

Graduate Student Appreciation Week has tentatively been set for the week of March 14th-18th. Mark your calendars! More details about the week's activities & ideas for faculty/departments will be shared in January.

Graduate Council is developing a draft for mentor/mentee agreements, and our hope is that this practice will become a standard part of graduate student advising.

Our new governing documents will be shared with the Board of Trustees this month and will hopefully be approved so we can finally become a formal governing body at the University of Akron. Yay!

Remind any graduate students you know about our Professional Enrichment Grant, which is meant to help with students' conference and subsequent travel-related expenses. The application & more information can be found on RooConnect.
XV. USG report—Senator Kasunic

Senator Kasunic extended holiday wishes to everyone. USG is planning more mental health roundtables for the future. For off-campus safety, USG developed a safety form for non-emergent concerns that students can access and anonymously report feedback to Director Jackson. This streamlines the feedback process and allows for reporting of things like nuisance properties. The off-campus safety focus groups will be starting after finals and geared toward specific student categories. As winter break approaches, there is a safety tips video and information on what UAPD is offering. USG is hosting therapy dogs in Bierce Library on December 8th. There were 130 applicants for the publishing award and Senator Kasunic thanked faculty for advertising the opportunity on Brightspace.

XVI. Report of University Council Representatives—Senator Evans

Senator Evans shared that UC-EC is actively involved in the strategic planning process. UC-EC is revising the bylaws and reminded the senate that every college should have a bylaws document. With the recent UA reorganization, it would be good to review bylaws in every college.

In the last UC meeting, Tammy Ewin recommended things we can all do to help with recruiting, including telling the UA story, talking in a positive way about our personal experiences at UA and participating in a future process for highlighting exciting research and scholarly activity at UA.

Finally, UC voted on creating an ad hoc Food Truck Committee; join if you are interested.

XVII. New Business

There was no new business.

XVIII. Good of the Order
Chair Budd called for items for good of the order. None were offered.

XIX. Adjournment

Chair Budd adjourned the meeting at 4:29 pm.

—Angela Hartsock, Secretary.

Questions and comments about the minutes can be emailed to

ahartsock1@uakron.edu.
APPENDIX A

Report of the Academic Policies Committee to Faculty Senate for the December 2 Meeting

After viewing a demonstration of a software product that manages academic pathway planning, registration, progress/risk analysis, and degree clearance, APC recommends adoption of a product that is student-centered and user-friendly to Faculty Senate. Review of this software product was in response to the USG resolution to find a system that was better than the current one, which is unhelpful to students, and which has been the subject of many complaints. APC recommends that any platform adopted should empower students to plan their courses of study with an adaptive and guided software program that can more easily personalize their schedules and minimize unproductive credits. The goal is for students and advisors to view the same information and for students to graduate on time. With such a software package we think that the experience of registering for courses and managing their degrees will be much less frustrating for students and would contribute to their success and retention. For advisors, such a system would save time on the planning process they engage in with students and would allow them to spend more time on other, more personal, parts of advising that are also key to student success. With a more student-centered, user-friendly software product, the registrar’s office can run a batch audit very quickly, as opposed to the current process, which can take up to 17 hours. The demo attended by USG students was apparently very well received by them. We recommend a software product that is ERP-agnostic; i.e., it can function by sitting on top of any ERP. Thus, when Peoplesoft is replaced by another ERP the degree-audit software would continue to function without interruption. We hope such a platform can be adopted sooner rather than later in the interest of student success, recruitment, and retention.
Computing & Communications Technologies Committee Report

The CCTC met on Tuesday, November 16, 2021. The committee continued its review of a draft of an information security awareness training policy that was submitted to the Faculty Senate by Information Technology Services. The review will continue during the next meeting of the committee.

The next meeting of the CCTC will near the beginning of the spring semester.

Scott Randby
CCTC Chair
CRC brings forward the following 39 course and 9 program proposals for Senate approval.

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APPENDIX D

This report has been superseded by a new report, which will be included in the February Faculty Senate Chronicle.

Part-time Faculty Committee, Faculty Senate Report
The University of Akron, Fall Semester 2021

Highlights of fall 2021 committee activities:

Spring-Fall 2021: Created a self-enrolled site in Microsoft Teams for all current UA Part-Time Faculty. This site is called “UA Part-Time Faculty Network.” The site is used to share relevant documents and policies, communicate updates, and as a space for discussion.

Fall 2021: Hosted two Friday Brunch virtual meetings for part-time faculty
  • On November 19, 2021, Dean Shultz (Administrative Systems Trainer, Information Technology Services) presented, 12 participants.
  • On November 8, 2021, Chairman Joseph Gingo (Board of Trustees) and Provost Wiencek presented, 23 participants.

November 2021: Committee members voted to send a letter to three administrators (Dr. Mitchell McKinney, Dean, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Cher Hendricks, Senior Vice Provost; and Dr. Lisa Lenhart, Interim Director and Professor, LeBron James Family Foundation School of Education) expressing their concern that part-time faculty in the School of Education are required to submit their syllabi for Spring Semester 2022 courses before those faculty are officially hired (i.e., January 5, 2022). This is not required from the full-time faculty in the school.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilia Antunez, Chair, Part-time Faculty Committee