

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
September 6, 2023*

The complete Recording for this meeting can be found at:

<https://myau.american.edu/groups/Committee/fs/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Present: Professors: Thomas Merrill, Jennifer Axe, Lilian Baeza-Mendoza, Ximena Varela, Mauro Tiso, Dan Abraham, Kristina Crona, Yijiang Zhao, Beverly Peters, Emily Peterson, Randall Blair, Mirjana Morosini, Alan Levine, Clarissa Ihssen, Ken Anderson, Jim Quirk, Katie Holton, Bryan Fantie, Chris Tudge, Paula Weissman, Justin Jacobs, Dario Bernardini, Joseph Graf, Jason Mollica, Jason Snyder, William Brent, Maria Gomez, Jennifer Steele, Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins, and Dean of Faculty, Monica Jackson

Chair's Report – Thomas Merrill

The chair of the Faculty Senate, Thomas Merrill, opened the meeting promptly. He made several announcements:

- The minutes of the May 3, 2023, meeting were voted on and approved.
- Updates were provided on several working groups/task forces:
 - Working Group of Faculty Engagement (chaired by Beverly Peters and John Bracht) – report is expected in time to present/discuss findings at the November senate meeting
 - Task Force on Service (chaired by Garret Martin and Taryn Morrissey) – draft of their report is complete is being discussed, with plans to present/discuss their findings at the October senate meeting
 - Administrative Growth Study – as a result of the discussion and concerns raised during the May senate meeting, a small group is being formed with Elizabeth Worden as chair to investigate
- Office of Academic Integrity (directed by Alison Thomas) is working on getting all the pieces in place this academic year. Senators should expect to see items to be voted on coming in March. Currently, Alison is soliciting insights and feedback from various senate committees on the academic integrity work she is doing.
- The Beyond SETs document was passed several years ago, though during discussions regarding term reappointments, continuing lines, and teaching portfolios, it appears there is some confusion across different units regarding its role. The Office of the Dean of Faculty has requested the Faculty Senate take a stance on the role of the Beyond SETs document, so there will be upcoming conversations on this matter.

Provost's Report – Vicky Wilkins

Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins made several announcements and provided updates regarding important matters:

- Although the official census date is not until October, currently we have missed our ideal enrollment numbers at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We are still working on boosting transfer numbers, however this approach becomes increasingly difficult as the semester progresses. There are several factors at play, particularly the economy and a difficulty in getting Visas for international students (especially from West Africa).
- Retention has also been an ongoing concern and we had set a target of 90% retention from first- to second-year students. This cycle our retention rate is 86.7%, though this number is still changing daily.
- Due to the enrollment and retention numbers, there is a budgetary shortfall of \$30 million. AU has been working to identify areas of saving across the University to cover this shortfall, avoiding cuts in personnel.
- Record year of \$51 million in external funding across campus.
- This year, we have 85 new faculty members joining AU including 31 new tenure-line faculty (15 or 48.39% of which are BIPOC) and 54 new term faculty (22 or 40.74% of which are BIPOC). We also had 14 departing faculty members; however, 11 counteroffers were successful, and we were able to retain a large portion of those faculty members. This year we will be looking to fill over 30 vacant tenure-track positions and well as a search for the Dean of the School of Communication.
- Data is forthcoming on salaries, administrative growth, and other requests made by various senate working groups and task forces.
- Dean of Faculty Monica Jackson provided two updates as well:
 - TOP (Target of Opportunities) streamlined hiring process to recruit tenure-line faculty members we are especially interested in has been renamed to SHOW (Special Hiring Opportunity Waivers). The process has also been clarified and a new checklist is forthcoming.
 - We are on target to have everything ready for the implementation of continuing line appointments starting in Fall 2024. Currently, SOC, CAS, and OGPS have adopted the Omnibus Guidelines distributed this summer. SIS and OGIS have revised the Omnibus Guidelines and are ready for Fall 2023 faculty submissions. KSB, SPA, and SOE are revising the Omnibus Guidelines and will have them ready to accept Spring 2024 faculty submissions. Please continue to send in any questions or concerns you have regarding the process.

Consent Agenda – Senate Bylaw Clarifying Title Changes – Thomas Merrill

As a new Continuing Appointment status for term faculty was established in Spring 2023, the titles used in the Senate bylaws must be updated to account for the addition of the “continuing appointment” title and the replacement of “tenure line” with “tenure track.” This proposal was added

to the consent agenda as it was approved by the Senate in April of 2023 and by the Board of Trustees in May 2023. These modifications will align the Senate bylaw language with the Faculty Manual.

Action Item – Updated CFA Course Release Proposal – Priya Doshi & Monica Jackson

Faculty are elected to the CFA for a three-year term. This committee has an extensive/arduous onboarding process, making it difficult when faculty step down from the committee or take sabbatical during their three years of service. The original course release policy allows for faculty on the committee to take a course release during the third year of service. This proposal will change the policy to state that the course release must be taken after three complete years of service and can no longer be taken during the third year. This change was requested by members of the CFA as an incentive to ensure faculty complete their full and continuous three-year service resulting in less turnover/onboarding for the committee.

During the discussion, the question of term faculty participation was also raised. The committee may be receiving more term faculty cases than in previous years with the implementation of the continuing appointment. There are currently two out of eleven term faculty members on the committee and only term faculty on the professor track are eligible. Though concerns regarding service and teaching loads were raised as a potential barrier to increasing term faculty numbers on the committee.

Discussion: Presidential Search

Faculty representation on the sixteen-member presidential search committee was initially composed of four faculty members, Ajay Adhikari, Carolyn Parker, Lia Epperson, and Monica Jackson (who also serves as Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty). In response to concerns from faculty, Past Chair of the Faculty Senate Lilian Baeza-Mendoza was added to the search committee and an eight-member advisory committee will be formed. Faculty have been asked to provide sixteen names to the Board of Trustees, who will select eight members from that pool for the committee. The discussion held at the senate meeting was to collect faculty thoughts and concerns regarding these procedures.

Overall, there was concern regarding the selection process for all faculty representatives compared to the 2016 search. The representatives on the current search committee were appointed, not elected by the faculty. Faculty are also not able to directly elect/select their own representatives for the advisory committee, instead they provide a pool of candidates.

An impromptu resolution was proposed, “The Faculty Senate resolves that it should select the members of the faculty [advisory] committee without the Board of Trustees choosing members from a larger pool,” but narrowly missed the two-thirds majority vote required to be considered at the current meeting as it was not part of the official agenda.

Listening Session: Steve Newton from Russell Reynolds, Presidential Search Firm

Faculty had the opportunity for a conversation with Russell Reynolds partner Steve Newton regarding the most important aspects to the next presidential search.

When asked about AU's major accomplishments, responses included:

- Pride in the sustainability and green initiatives, progress being made towards inclusive excellence, and progress being made towards greater stability for term faculty.
- Engaged student population, AU is highly ranked using various measures, especially teaching.
- Record-breaking year for research funding and is very involved in consultations with policymakers.
- AU is nimble and not locked into standard ways of thinking, it is well-equipped to respond to crises.

When asked about aspirations for AU, responses included:

- Greater transparency and shared governance.
- Regarding the question of striving for R1 status, this pursuit should be organic and faculty-driven rather than top-down or made a priority/initiative.
- AU does not have an “identity” that differentiates it from competitor institutions. Overall, there is a lack of belonging in students, faculty, and staff.
- Many recent successful initiatives have been carried over from the Kerwin administration, but would like to see AU have more ambition with new initiatives.

When asked about ideal characteristics possessed by the new president, responses included:

- Someone with an academic background, who has come up through the academy, who understands what a university is and how higher education works, and who understands the role of the faculty.
- Someone who hears and listens to faculty.
- Someone with budgeting and fund-raising knowledge/skills.
- Someone capable of community building, who can help with unification of faculty (tenure-line and term) and can help bring faculty, staff, and students together.
- Someone who understands unions and has sympathy