

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
February 7, 2024*

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:

- Conversations regarding the definition of service are underway and a proposal regarding the definition of service in the Faculty Manual is expected for the March Senate meeting. These changes are in response to the findings presented in the report by the Service Task Force last semester.
- The final report from the Working Group on Faculty Engagement included several suggested action items, one of which was Faculty Senate reform. Potential changes to the Faculty Senate can be broken down into two categories:
 - Smaller, less controversial changes that could be implemented this semester including more onboarding for senators, encouraging more conversations between senators and their home unit, and ensuring one member of the Senate is an official parliamentarian to improve meeting efficiency and procedures.
 - Larger, structural changes that will take more time, research, and faculty input before discussing implementation. Examples include reapportionment of senate seats, numbers of directly elected members, and membership of the Executive Committee.
- There is a call for nominations for the next vice chair of the Faculty Senate. This position is a three-year commitment as vice chair for AY2024-2025, chair for AY2025-2026, and past chair for AY2026-2027. The chair position alternates between tenure-line and term faculty. This cycle, the Senate is looking for a member of the tenure-line faculty. To be eligible to run for Faculty Senate vice chair, the individual must have either served on the Senate itself or a Senate Committee within the past five years. Serving on senate working groups and task forces within the past five years does NOT count for eligibility.
- The minutes from the February 7, 2024, meeting were **VOTED** on and approved 24-0-2.

Provost's Report – Vicky Wilkins

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

- Although census is not until February 24th, graduate enrollment data show we will be 1,300 credit hours short of our goal resulting in a \$1.8 million shortfall. This shortfall will not be taken out of school budgets, instead all areas have been instructed to be fiscally mindful regarding spending habits.
- Many questions have come up regarding the overload payment increase. The amount given for teaching overloads has not been addressed in over 20 years. Compared to the previous policy, the new overload payment has been increased and is set as a flat rate, rather than a specified percentage of annual salary to ensure equity. Questions regarding the timing of the salary increase with the budget shortfall have been raised across campus and in response it was stated that these conversations and the decision came ahead of enrollment numbers. The overload pay increase was in response to concerns raised by community voices. Although some units will be cutting back their offerings this semester, the cutbacks would have likely happened anyway, with or without the pay increase.
- Although there are still tickets/bugs being worked out, the Workday transformation has overall been highly successful. A lot of work has been put in throughout campus and we are incredibly grateful to those involved.
- Expect conversations regarding AUx2 curriculum restructuring to be announced soon. There is a long-term plan using the Senate Working Group on Teaching Race and Power. As has always been the case, students can petition to take AUx2 in a later semester or to substitute it with another course.
- The Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars Program will be undergoing some changes, as reported by *The Eagle*. Many individuals across campus were caught by surprise by these changes, so further discussion is being carried out about the differences announced and their impact on our students. The two largest changes are to:
 - Start funding in the sophomore year and use the program as a retention tool rather than a recruitment tool.
 - Give less money to each individual student but accept and provide for a greater number of students overall.
- We have a new Vice President of Inclusive Excellence, Dr. Nkenge Friday has joined us from the University of Nebraska. Please welcome her to AU!
- 49 continuing appointment files have been processed, with 120 remaining. Thank you for all the hard work going on in the Dean of Faculty office.
- Negotiations with SEIU have begun. Both teams are working well together.
- The call for faculty, staff, and student awards will be announced soon. Faculty award winners will be recognized during the annual Faculty Awards Dinner, held on April 21, 2024, this year.
- In response to the suggested action items from the final report of the Working Group on Faculty Engagement, two additional groups are being formed:

- The first group will be collecting information regarding faculty salaries, with the goal of presenting information to the incoming president. The group will be focused on structural salary concerns and will not be addressing merit.
- The second group will be focused on shared governance and will be addressing decision-making hygiene. The goal will be to establish guidelines regarding faculty involvement in decisions at a variety of levels. The group will be expected to meet 4-6 times this semester and possibly continue their work into the summer. A call for self-nominations for faculty who are interested in participating in this important work will be sent out soon. Long-serving AU faculty members and those with experience at other institutions are especially encouraged to apply, but all are welcome!
- Acting Provost Wilkins also responded to faculty questions and concerns:
 - Regarding the announced \$12.5 million budget realignment requested from Academic Affairs, clarifications were made. Academic Affairs includes everything under the Provost's Office. This \$12.5 million budget shortfall will be spread out across the different colleges, taking many factors into account and focusing on non-personnel costs.
 - Many concerns regarding term faculty job security and continuing appointments were raised:
 - Many of the OGIS term faculty have been at AU for a long time. They submitted continuing appointment files in the Fall, but due to declining enrollments will not hear about approval status until late Spring, after enrollment information comes in. At one time, the university had been making early notification a priority with many term faculty receiving reappointment contracts in the fall rather than in the spring. Recent budgetary concerns have made these earlier notifications more difficult, though the university is still committed as situations allow.
 - It was previously stated that faculty who are denied continuing appointment may have the option of applying for a one-year, terminal contract. However, if budgetary concerns were the reason for the denial, the one-year contract is unlikely to be approved. The college/unit may not have the resources needed to grant the contract. Questions regarding eligibility/possibility should be directed to the appropriate Dean.
 - In one college, a long-serving term faculty member was told not to apply for continuing appointment and did not receive a single or multiyear contract. However, there was a vacant tenure-line faculty position in a similar area/field/competency. Acting Provost Wilkins explained that tenure-line positions are given by the Board of Trustees, are not easily added, and therefore protecting these lines is a university priority.
 - Across campus, term faculty are concerned regarding job security. Specifically, there is great concern about the potential increase in adjunct faculty or replacement of term faculty with adjunct faculty. Acting Provost Wilkins assured term faculty that units should be preserving full-time positions wherever possible, though the decision is ultimately up to the individual

- schools. The upper administration does monitor adjunct raters and will raise concerns to the colleges if adjunct numbers become elevated.
- Requests for additional information regarding Huron Consulting were raised, including access to the CVs/bios of the employees working on AU's staff assessment. Additionally, it was addressed that this group does not need IRB approval because their work is not considered research and interview results will be anonymized and aggregated to protect individuals. It was also clarified that Huron Consulting will be conducting both in-person and hybrid work.

Presentation: Giving Day and Campaign – Lee Holsopple, Casey Jacobs, & Daniel Luperchio

AU has held Giving Day every year starting in 2015. Participation has been increasing since then, both in terms of the number of donors and the amount of donations received. This year, the 36-hour event will be held Monday, February 26th at 7:00AM through Tuesday, February 27th at 7:00PM. The goal is 3,000 donors and donations can go to specific efforts/areas, if desired. In a typical year, roughly 300 employees donate.

AU Experience Committee Proposal – Bridget Trogden, Martyn Oliver, & Brad Knight

AUx predates the AU Core, and so the governing body has been structurally separated from the rest of Core. This proposal is to create an official AUx subcommittee within AU Core, like the subcommittees used for Complex Problems, Habits of Mind, DIV, etc. Currently, this proposal is for a temporary subcommittee, however, the plan would be for it to become a permanent AU Core subcommittee in the next few years. It is being proposed as temporary because of the number of other changes that are currently occurring to the AUx curriculum. Once the new shape of AUx has solidified, the subcommittee can move to a more permanent status and be added to the bylaws.

This subcommittee will provide significant faculty oversight of the AUx curriculum and will better integrate AUx into the structure of AU Core. The AUx courses are the sole common curriculum that all undergraduate students take, and research has shown that similar courses at other universities play a key role in student retention. Although adjustments can still be made, the current plan would be for this subcommittee to mirror that of the Complex Problems subcommittee. The associate Deans of all colleges would therefore be the designated members but have the option of appointing or electing a representative in their place.

The proposal was **VOTED** on and approved 23-1-3.

Administrative Growth Study Group Report – Elizabeth Worden & Andrea Pearson

This study group was given a very narrow charge of assessing the disagreement that occurred at the end of AY2022-2023 regarding administrative growth. There was a group of faculty who were concerned that the number of university administrators had grown excessively compared to the size of the student body. This concern was summarized in a memo by Steve Silvia in Spring 2023. In

response, former Provost Peter Starr released a separate memo shortly after, defending the level of administrative growth and argued that it was comparable to peer institutions.

The study group completed a deep dive into the information provided by each memo as well as data released by current Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins and concluded that the growth of executive-level administration was disproportionately high compared to other employee groups on campus. As reported in Steve Silvia's memo and updated with newly provided data, there have been a 56% increase in presidential direct reports, a 100% increase in vice presidents, and a 64% increase in VP and director titles since 2016. Comparatively, there has been a 10% increase in full-time faculty and a 3% decrease in full-time staff. During the same time period, there has been a 4% increase in the overall student population.

Based on these results, and other reasons as presented in the full report, the Administrative Growth Study Group concluded that the administration has not sufficiently justified this level of growth.

The study group also called attention to other pressing issues caused by excessive administrative growth:

- Siphoning resources from other departments and offices
- The negative impact of understaffing
- The impact on faculty salaries

Questions were raised regarding the next steps, for example:

- Reexamining hiring policies and procedures for upper-level administrators
- Reexamining policies and procedures for the creation of upper-level administrator positions
- Investigating administrative growth in terms of salaries and overall percentage of the university budget rather than using a head count

Those who are interested in looking at the official data and performing their own analysis can access it through [THIS LINK](#) by logging in with standard AU credentials. The report was **VOTED** on and accepted 19-2-1.

Resolutions on Consultant Contracts & Budget Proposals – Kristina Crona, Jason Snyder, & William Brent

Concerns have been raised regarding the issue that important decisions are made by administrators and then announced to faculty, rather than asking for faculty input before the decision. The resolution proposed by Kristina Crona calls for all hirings of external consultants to come before the Senate floor for a vote before hiring decisions are made. This resolution was not approved.

Jason Snyder and William Brent also proposed a resolution, focused more on budgetary matters and decisions. [This resolution](#) was accepted by the Senate by a **VOTE** of 17-5-4.

Athletics 2023 Report & Presentation – Billy Walker

Athletic Director Billy Walker is retiring this year, after over a decade of service to AU. He was joined by Interim Deputy Athletic Director, Chief Operating Officer, Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Well-Being, and Senior Woman Administrator Katie Benoit and Associate Professor for Compliance and Internal Operations Chris Wright. Our new basketball coach Duane Simpkins attended the meeting via Zoom to introduce himself to the faculty.

The athletics team presented on the Student-Athlete Academic Performance. Overall, our student-athletes are maintaining great GPAs and earning many honors, such as placement on the Dean's list. Student-athlete retention is comparable to the retention rate to the overall student body.

Discussion on the President's message on Antisemitism – Tom Merrill & Vicky Wilkins

For context: Plans to reconvene the Senate Working Group on Freedom of Expression from two years ago began in December, before the President's message on January 25th. The group was not intended as a response to the January 25th message, nor did it have any part in the formulation of the message. The group is comprised of both faculty and staff, including those close to the affected parts of the community and staff charged with enforcing the policies. There are plans to invite members of the community to speak to the group about things they are seeing in their part of the world, with a goal of hearing from as many different parts of the community as possible. An anonymous form will also be made available for those interested in sharing thoughts or concerns about what is happening.

Disagreement with the President's message is in no way an indication that antisemitism and Islamophobia are not a concern on campus, rather it is a question as to the correct means to address these very real and very serious issues. After a passionate discussion regarding incidents of hate on campus and the need to protect our students, [this resolution](#) was **VOTED** on and approved 15-8-0.