

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
May 1, 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 recognized the unexpected passing of William (Bill) Ryan (WCL), who has served on the Senate, the Senate Executive Committee, the Senate Committee on Academic Budget and Benefits, and the University Budget Committee. Former Senate Chair John Heywood (WCL) wrote a heartfelt statement, which Senate Chair Merrill shared. Bill cared deeply about our students, his colleagues, and the institution. He was a baseball fan and Mexican food aficionado. He also “knew where the kegs were.”

Faculty Senate Chair Merrill also made several announcements:

- Jeffrey Middents has been appointed the next faculty director of the AU Honors Program.
- Faculty Senate committee annual reports were sent out to the community. Please read them as some contain unexpected information and updates.
- The Working Group on Freedom of Expression has a draft that is being circulated within the group. They hope to have a consensus and final version to share with the community soon.
- The Working Group on Race, Racialization, and Related Structures has a [link to SharePoint](#) available in the agenda for those interested in reading about their work.
- The Working Group on Shared Governance has been classifying different decision types based on who and/or what they affect. The group is also categorizing these decision types by level of faculty (or other stakeholder) input needed: Information, Consultation, Recommendation, or Joint Decision. They are almost done with new search procedures for presidential-level hires (Provost and Vice Presidents) and provost-level hires (Vice Provosts, Deans, etc.), as well as routine review/evaluation procedures for those who hold these positions. The group is now turning their attention towards school-level governance.
- Thank you to Faculty Senate Operations Manager Lura Graham for all your hard work with the Senate and ballot preparation!
- The minutes from the April 3, 2024, meeting were **VOTED** on 20-0-0 in favor.

Provost's Report – Vicky Wilkins

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

- Thank you to all the faculty award winners, retirees, and years of service honorees. Thank you to the provost's office and other community members involved in planning the Annual Faculty Award dinner. It was an enjoyable evening for all.
- The University Club had a soft opening for the end of the spring semester. The space (in Lydecker Tunnel) is currently smaller than the previous location, however, if it is well-utilized there will be an opportunity to move to a larger space. The University Club will fully reopen in Fall 2024.
- Updates on the budget:
 - The complications with FAFSA are continuing to impact our enrollment, as well as higher education enrollment across the country. Our AU team has been working hard to make financial aid information available to students at the same time they receive their acceptance letter. However, students are delaying their final decision as they wait for aid offers from other universities. Many institutions are moving their deadlines back to accommodate the delayed FAFSA information and student decisions. We are still seeing high numbers of tour groups and interested students. We will not have a solid picture of our enrollment situation until closer to June 1st.
 - Graduate enrollment is looking strong based on our goal of 17,400 credit hours. The current 17,400-credit hour goal was a reduction of 10,000 credit hours from the goal of the previous year. Concerns have been raised regarding section cancellations and other cuts to graduate programs in response to the 10,000-credit hour reduction. To clarify, the 17,400-credit hour goal is equivalent to the graduate enrollment that was realized this year. Our previous credit hour goal was unrealistically high, so the expectations built into the budget have been lowered to meet the current demand. It does **NOT** mean that a substantial number of courses will be cut to meet this reduced target.
 - Questions and concerns have been raised regarding information on the slides used for the budget community forum about \$10 million savings for “faculty and staff vacancies.” To clarify, this category within the budget refers to faculty and staff positions which are currently vacant with no new employees being hired to fill those vacancies, resulting in budgetary savings as no salary was paid. These savings do **NOT** mean layoffs or employee dismissals were used as a method of saving \$10 million.
- A faculty survey has been sent out, please take a moment to complete it.
- A decision regarding encampments was recently sent out to the community (announced in an email on April 25th). This decision is one of the cases the Working Group on Shared Governance has addressed to identify which stakeholder(s) should be consulted during the decision-making process and to what degree they should be consulted.
- There was a lockdown situation on campus on Saturday, April 27th. Students responded quickly and correctly by leaving a dangerous situation and contacting campus police. We are grateful to our campus police who, despite not carrying firearms, did approach someone suspected of having a firearm to diffuse the situation. The suspect was apprehended by the MPD.

- The Middle States review has been completed with positive results. Although everything may not be perfect at AU, we were honest about our problems, community issues, and lack of trust. The Middle States visiting team recognized and appreciated our honesty. Thank you to Karen Froslid-Jones, Sheila Bedford, and everyone else involved in the Middle States reaccreditation process.
- First-Year Orientation has been extended to four days. The additional time will allow for the instructional sessions to be more spread out rather than overwhelming students with information. There will also be more time available for students to meet with their schools and more opportunities to attend AU-planned social events. Hopefully, this change will better adjust the students to life on campus and will encourage a stronger sense of belonging upon their arrival.
 - Don't forget to volunteer to help with First-Year Move-In and Orientation! More volunteers will be needed this year due to the extended length. Please consider helping! Remember, this event is the very first experience students will have at AU, and it is important for retention!

Introduction of New Senators and Recognition of New Committee Members – Thomas Merrill

Welcome to our newly elected senators for AY2024-2025! Thank you for your willingness to serve! Although there was not time in the meeting to individually recognize all incoming senators and Senate committee members, we appreciate their dedication to the Senate and important committee work. Thank you to all our outgoing senators for your hard work and dedication! We would also like to express our gratitude to those senators and Senate committee members whose terms are ending or who are otherwise leaving their committees, thank you so much for your service.

Election of the At-Large and Additional Members of the Executive Committee for AY2024-2025 – Thomas Merrill

The Faculty Senate Executive committee is composed of the three members of the Senate leadership (chair, vice chair, and past chair), the chairs of specific Senate committees, one at-large member, and one additional member. The at-large member is elected from the five at-large senators. Once elected they serve a one-year term on the Executive Committee. The additional member is elected from all remaining senators and also serves a one-year term.

Two candidates ran for the at-large Executive Committee seat, Tricia Bacon (at-large, SPA) and John Bracht (at-large, CAS). The Senate **VOTED** 12-11-0 in favor of John Bracht, who was elected as the at-large representative.

Three candidates ran for the additional senator Executive Committee seat, Kurt Braddock (SOC), Alison Crisler (CAS), and Clarissa Ihssen (UL). The Senate **VOTED** 5-5-11-0 in favor of Clarissa Ihssen who was elected as the additional senator representative.

Undergraduate Regulation 11.4.3 and Graduate Regulation 3.10 Internships – Bridget Trogden & Wendy Boland

A proposal was presented to lower the minimum number of credit hours for internships to put our standards more in line with other institutions and the Carnegie credit hour definitions. Internship programs may still have credit hour requirements above this minimum. The reduction would continue to align with other non-standard credit hour definitions and requirements, such as laboratory courses,

studio courses, independent studies, and community-based learning. The Senate **VOTED** 20-0-0 in favor.

AU Core Report – Bridget Trogden, Martyn Oliver, & Brad Knight

It has been six years since the implementation of the AU Core and a full comprehensive report was provided to the AU community through the Faculty Senate email address on Thursday, April 25th. Thus far, the Core has been a great success as we moved from a content-based general education system to the current inquiry-based system. Roughly 48% of undergraduate courses taught are part of the AU Core.

There are also some challenges facing the Core. For example, 50% of all Habits of Mind courses are taught by adjunct rather than fulltime faculty. Although this proportion may not necessarily be an issue, as many adjunct faculty are long-serving and deeply rooted at AU, it is a striking statistic. Units are missing critical opportunities to engage with students early in their academic careers. The percentage of adjunct instructors for Habits of Mind courses has increased rapidly over the last few years and represents a broader change in the University as a whole and the adjustment of teaching assignments. Questions were raised, including: What is driving this shift? Is it a resource issue? Where should school/unit directors put their full-time faculty, in the Core or in major-required courses?

Another potential explanation is that there is a duplication of effort. Under the old General Education system, many introductory courses required for majors were also approved as General Education courses. As we shifted away from content-based courses into inquiry-based Habits of Mind courses, it is no longer possible for many programs to design classes that fit into both buckets (required introductory course for a major as well as a Habit of Mind or other Core course).

Complex Problems courses are required to be taught by full-time faculty, so we are not seeing the same shift there.

Proposed Bylaw Changes to FacCDEI Charge – William Brent

The FacCDEI has been doing self-reflective work this year and is thinking about other aspects in which the committee could be involved. DEI work at the university is undergoing a rebranding to Inclusive Excellence, as evidenced by the new office of Inclusive Excellence, headed by Vice President of Inclusive Excellence Nkenge Friday. As a result of their self-analysis, the FacCDEI has proposed the following changes within their bylaws:

- A name change, from Faculty Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Faculty Committee on Inclusive Excellence to reflect the new name of the respective Board of Trustees committee and the Inclusive Excellence office.
- The first paragraph is now a more general mission statement rather than going straight into the list of specific responsibilities.
- Committee responsibilities are now categorized into “regular” and “additional” responsibilities.
- Some new responsibilities have been added, such as reviewing the Senate agenda through a DEI lens, encouraging more faculty participation in the Senate, and increasing communication with the Senate leadership.
- Some additional responsibilities have been clarified as they were already in practice culturally, but now are officially written. One member serves on the President’s Counsel for DEI and one or more members serve on the annual Faculty Awards Committee.

The Senate **VOTED** 17-1-1 in favor.

Report from Presidential Search Advisory Committee (PSAC) and Proposed Resolution – Garret Martin & Phelton Moss (Members of PSAC) and the Faculty Senate Leadership

The search for our 16th president began this past summer. There was general faculty dissatisfaction regarding the level of faculty participation on the initial search committee. There were four faculty members, including Dean of Faculty Monica Jackson, selected by the Board of Trustees to act as faculty representatives on the Presidential Search Committee. In general, the faculty were disappointed about the number of representatives on the committee and as well as the fact that these members were appointed by the Board of Trustees and faculty were not given an opportunity to select/elect their own representatives. To address these concerns an additional member, Past Chair Lilian Baeza-Mendoza, was then added to the search committee and a faculty advisory committee was formed. The eight members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee (PSAC) were selected by the Board of Trustees from a list of sixteen candidates elected/chosen by faculty after school and university-wide elections.

Members of the PSAC spoke at the Senate to express their positive experience during the search. The PSAC was provided a good amount, one hour, with each candidate and felt their input was heard and well-valued by the Presidential Search Committee. By selecting members from a pool of names, diversity on the PSAC was ensured and each colleague was able to bring their different experiences, express different viewpoints, and address their questions/concerns. The PSAC also commended the search firm for providing candidates with a diverse range of experiences, strengths, and weaknesses rather than redundant candidates with similar areas of expertise and backgrounds. This strategy allowed the PSAC to discuss their perspectives on the future direction of AU and evaluate candidates based on how each could address faculty-perceived University priorities.

Despite the overall positive result, some challenges with the process remain. The PSAC was formed late in the process, as the members were announced late in the Fall semester, met with the chairs of the search committee in early January, and started meeting with candidates shortly after. The condensed timeline made it hard for committee members to meet with their respective units and collect information on general priorities from their faculty constituencies (specific details would have been withheld during these conversations to maintain confidentiality of the candidates). Some faculty disappointment also remained regarding the inability to directly elect faculty voices to the PSAC as well as the full Presidential Search Committee.

Some improvements were suggested to increase the legitimacy of the PSAC and future searches:

- Allow faculty to select their own representatives. If diversity is a concern, a pool of candidates for the PSAC may still be elected, however it is important that faculty are the ones who make the final selection from that pool.
- Some of the barriers between the PSCA and the full Presidential Search Committee should be removed to facilitate improved communication.
- The PSCA should be formed and involved earlier in the process, before the official job description has been written.
- It was noted that some candidates were concerned about meeting with faculty for reasons of confidentiality. Earlier involvement of the PSAC would have assuaged those fears, as it would have been a standard part of the candidate review rather than a quick add-on introduced amid the search process.

- AAUP guidelines regarding search procedures state that faculty should select their own representatives and that no candidate should be selected over the reasonable objections of the faculty.
- The best example of the advisory committee was used during the search process resulting in the selection of Neil Kerwin as president. The various versions of the faculty advisory committee have been losing power over the course of the last two searches.

A resolution thanking the Board of Trustees for the efforts they made to include faculty voices in the recent presidential search and expressing a desire to formalize a robust role of faculty in future presidential services was **VOTED** 14-6-1 in favor following some minor friendly amendments.

Being an R1 University and the Future of American University – Thomas Merrill & Senators

Under the previously established criteria, AU was approaching R1 status. Starting in 2025, a new formula will be used that is less reliant on self-reporting data and more reliant on external funding (with a \$50 million/year requirement) and the production of PhDs (with a seventy PhDs/year requirement). This new formula will move a large cohort, including AU and many other comparable institutions, up to R1 status. For recent historic context, in 2022, we well exceeded the \$50 million requirement, but with sixty-eight PhDs produced were just shy of the seventy required. In 2023, we were at \$67 million in external funding and seventy-five PhDs.

How this status change will affect AU is a question that has been raised in many places on campus, including with the Senate leadership and the Senate Executive Committee. It is also important that all faculty have a chance to ask questions, air their concerns, and discuss this change. However, to clarify, the status change itself will be occurring, so it is not up for discussion. The status is determined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. We have already put in the work needed to achieve this milestone.

The initial question posed was, *what does this status change mean for the University?* The following discussion led to other, more specific, questions and concerns:

- How will we continue to support research faculty driving our R1 status and how will we support teaching faculty maintaining our teaching excellence?
 - *We have been functioning as an R1 institution for many years. The status change does not mean we need to change our focus.*
- Will our peer and aspirational schools change?
 - *No, not naturally. There are many different factors used to determine peer institutions. Examples include private vs. public, size, city-based vs. rural, excellence in teaching, research output, etc.*
- Will there be a change in the promotion and/or tenure process?
 - *Not really, as previously stated, we have been functioning as an R1 institution for many years. We are just now getting recognition for it.*
- What about the stress on research faculty to increase their output? More time will be needed for research, more money will be needed for graduate students, post-doctoral assistants, and those in other research support roles.
 - *We are already doing everything we need to do for R1 status. There is no reason to believe this change will force AU to drastically alter any of our functions.*

Changing of the Gavel Ceremony – Thomas Merrill, Jennifer Axe, & Lilian Baeza-Mendoza

Senate Past Chair, Lilian Baeza-Mendoza, who will be completing her three-year term as part of the Senate leadership, expressed gratitude to her colleagues on the Senate and the other faculty members for their collaboration. She is known for her dedication to making sure all voices are heard and prefers to do things that make a difference rather than just making a statement using resolutions. We are grateful to her for her years of service, as well as her role on the Presidential Search Committee and the work she has done surrounding service and the updated Definition of Service.

Thank you, Lilian, for your time and dedication to the Faculty Senate and to the University!

Chair Thomas Merrill, who is moving from the chair to the past chair position, noted the achievements of the Senate this year and encouraged faculty to participate in university service. Professor Thomas Merrill then passed the gavel to Professor Jennifer Axe, who will be serving as the chair of the Senate for AY 2024-2025. He also passed along some words of wisdom he learned from Professor Lilian Baeza-Mendoza when starting his term as Senate Chair including a newfound appreciation for following the processes outlined in the Senate bylaws and the reminder that, as Lilian says, *“you change the Senate, and the Senate changes you.”*