

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
October 12, 2022*

The complete Recording for this meeting can be found at:

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

Present: Professors: Lilian Baeza-Mendoza, Thomas Merrill, Garret Martin, Maria Gomez, Maria Gomez, Mauro Tiso, Dan Abraham, Laura Beers, Yijiang Zhao, Sarah Irvine Belson, Randall Blair, Mirjana Morosini, Alan Levine, Nikhat Ghouse, Ken Anderson, Shawn Bates, Jim Quirk, Katie Holton, Bryan Fantie, Kelly Joyner, Jennifer Axe, Rhonda Zaharna, Dario Bernardini, Jennifer Poole, Alan Isaac, William Ryan, Mieke Meurs, Jennifer Steele, Provost Peter Starr, Dean of Faculty, Monica Jackson

Chair's Report—Lillian Baeza-Mendoza

The Chair of the Faculty Senate, Lillian Baeza-Mendoza, opened the meeting promptly. She made several announcements as part of the Chair's Report.

- The minutes of the faculty senate meeting of September 7, 2022, are available and were shared with the community in an email.
- The Working Group on Service is almost ready for its formal launch. The charge to the group is completed and the Senate leadership, together with Provost Starr, is working to find members.
- A proposal about emergency waivers for senate committees (which was discussed at the September 7 meeting) will be presented for a vote at the November senate meeting.
- Bronte Burleigh-Jones, CFO for AU, will be hosting a series of “Brunches with Bronte” to give community members a chance to talk about the budget and related concerns. The first Brunch with Bronte will be held on December 12 at 2 pm. Bronte will also make an informal visit to a Senate luncheon on February 20, 2023
- The Executive Committee of the Senate had breakfast with President Burwell on September 28 and had a productive conversation with her.
- Justin Jacobs of CAS (History) has been elected vice-chair of the Committee on Faculty Actions and is expected to take on the role of chair of that committee in the 2023-24 AY.

The Senate approved the minutes for the September 7, 2022, senate meeting. The Senate **VOTED** 17-0-0 in favor.

Provost's Report—Peter Starr

The Provost of the University, Peter Starr, reviewed several developments relevant to the whole community.

- The Provost expressed deep gratitude for Jessica Waters, who has announced that she will step down from her position as Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost for Academic Student Services. Waters will continue to serve through the end of the academic year.
- The search for Jessica Waters's replacement will be both internal and external, and the Senate will have a role in the search. The Senate will provide five names, after an election, for the search committee and the Provost will choose three.
- The recent Family Weekend, which showcased student research, was a great success.
- The University raised approximately \$30 million dollars in sponsored research in the last quarter plus a few weeks—a record high for the university in recent years.
- Representatives from the Carnegie Classification project visited campus. The university thinks that we have a shot at getting an R1 classification; the university is also looking to rise in the community service engagement and leadership with a public purpose classifications.
- The provost will make a presentation on the retention issues at the next faculty meeting. Retention is a crucial metric, and we have to talk about it. One issue that has been raised is the obstacles to internal transfers within the university.
- The university is changing its policy on class on Thanksgiving week. Faculty will be allowed (but are not mandated) to put their Thanksgiving week classes online.

President Burwell's Fall Visit

President Burwell began by thanking faculty for their contributions in teaching, research, and creating community. She made several remarks and announcements in her prepared remarks, all connected in some way with the university's strategic priorities:

- **People.** President Burwell affirmed the university's commitment to its people and noted that the university has agreements with each of the four unions on campus.
- **Research.** The university has already met its 5 year goal for research in the strategic plan. She was especially happy about the amount of externally funded research and noted its importance for the health of the community.
- **Retention.** Retention is a significant issue for the university right now. AU's 6 year graduation rate is approximately 79%. That number is below all of our Patriot League peers. President Burwell encouraged faculty to think about their students in their current classes.
- **Inclusive Excellence.** American University is showing its commitment to Inclusive Excellence in many respects, such as using a person's correct pronouns, offering greater access to campus buildings for disabled persons (including a new entrance to the President's office), and offering Black affinity group housing for undergraduates. President Burwell also lamented the recent anti-semitic incident on campus and said that instruction about anti-semitism is being considered for inclusion to the AUx class.
- **Campaign.** The university is in the final stages of the capital campaign and has raised \$355 million towards a goal of \$500 million. The university is especially interested in raising money for faculty chairs.

Several faculty asked questions about these matters, especially the retention issues. Some faculty asked if students were leaving because they don't feel academically challenged enough. Provost Starr

suggested that students leave for a perceived lack of social fit more often than a lack of academic fit. He also noted that students often leave because they feel they aren't getting sufficient value for their money and suggested that the university needs to do a better job articulating its value proposition. Provost Starr talked about the importance of experiential learning pathways as a way of addressing the retention challenges.

Athletics Report—Billy Walker and Ashley Rozendaal

Ashley Rozendaal reported that student athletes are very happy to back in class and in their competitions, and she encouraged members of the community to come out for athletic events.

Faculty Working Group—Lilian Baeza-Mendoza and Peter Starr

The Faculty Senate and the Office of the Provost are sponsoring a Working Group on Faculty Engagement to provide a place for faculty to talk through concerns about the university. The charge for the group has been written, members of the group are being recruited, and the group will be formally launched soon. Lilian Baeza-Mendoza asked members of the senate and other members of the community to reach out to the faculty senate leadership if they have any thoughts about what topics this group should address.

Action Item: OGIS/OGPS Joint Senate Seat Proposal—Beverly Peters and John Calabrese

The senate took up a proposal to create a joint senate seat for faculty in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and the Office of Global and Immersive Studies. According to the proposal, this seat will rotate between faculty from each unit according to a fixed plan. There was significant controversy over this and the next action item. The controversy focused on what counts as an academic unit in the eyes of the university and whether very small academic units should get the same kind of representation as large academic units. The senate **VOTED** 12-3-2 in favor.

Action Item: OGIS/OGPS CIS Membership Proposal—Beverly Peters and John Calabrese

Like the last action item, this proposal concerned representation for OGPS and OGIS, but this proposal was specifically about whether these units will have seats on the Committee on Information Services. This proposal was also very controversial, and the senate's deliberation went on beyond the official ending time of this meeting. The senate tabled this motion and will revisit this matter at the November Senate meeting.