

Academic Faculty Senate (2024-2025) Meeting MINUTES 04/29/25; 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Academic Senate	Call to order at 3:00 pm	ZOOM
Members Present	Martin Schmidt (Chair), Jessica Rowe (Vice Chair), Jaspreet Gill (Carson Senator), Tim Mayo (Fallon Senator), Heather Reardon (NAH Senator), Curtis Kupferschmid (LA Senator 1), John Duerk (LA Senator 2), Mary Gillespie (LA Senator 3), Patrick Bell (WCTE Senator/Recorder), Rachelle Bassen (Past Chair)	
Members Absent	Robin Eppard (Carson Part-Time Senator)	
Guests	Jeff Downs, Elizabeth Tattersall, Jaya Conkey, Brigitte Dillet, Erick York, Susan Priest, Winnie Kortemeier, Scott Morrison, Stephanie Arrigoti, Alyshia Fairbanks, Robert Whitcomb, Amy Ghilieri, Jayna Conkey, Thomas Herring, Kim DesRoches, Dibi (no last name), iPhone (no name), WNC Staff (no name)	

Agenda Topic	1. Shared Governance and Senate Chair Transition
Action Taken	Info/Discussion
Summary of Discussion	<p><i>Overview of shared governance concerns experienced by the Senate Chair this academic year, framed around AAUP, NSHE, and WNC Faculty Senate Bylaws principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Faculty primacy in academic matters</i> • <i>Faculty participation in policy formation</i> • <i>Autonomy of the Faculty Senate Chair</i> • <i>Risks when governance becomes performative</i> <p>PowerPoint slides provided by Martin S.</p> <p>Framing the Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerns are political, not personal ● About faculty roles and governance—not preferences ● Focused on restoring structure and process ● Shared in good faith—assuming good intentions, even if outcomes fall short

Observed Governance Pattern

- 1. **Planning** — motivation not shared
- 2. **Action** — admin makes decision
- 3. **Announcement** — in Senate or by mass email
- 4. **Defend** — any process critique resisted
- 5. **Deflect** — blame or burden placed on faculty

1. Faculty Primacy in Academic Matters

"The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process."

— AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities

Shared governance means: Faculty lead in academic matters. Admin supports—not decides.

WNC Examples:

- **Hi-Tech transfer:** Done without faculty input, impacted staffing.
- **Gen Ed revisions:** Driven by admin, presented late.
- **Instructional Quality Rubric:** Finalized before broad faculty participation.

2. Faculty Participation in Policy Formation

"The faculty... shall share in the government of that institution..." — NSHE Code Title 2

"The Faculty Senate shall represent the faculty in policy formation..." — WNC Bylaws §2.1

Faculty must be involved **early**. Collaboration—not notification.

WNC Examples:

- **Rubric and Evaluation Changes:** Built by small group, did not take into account faculty input, announced at near completion.
- **Class Cancellation Policy:** Based on average salary (no adjunct, overload), announced with no consultation.
- **Operational Rules:** Facilities use, event policies, safety procedures shared only at Senate.
- **EHS and Field-Trip Form Changes:** No advance notice; faculty blamed.

Summary of Discussion:

I. Central Themes

1. Communication Breakdown

- Faculty consistently report a lack of communication from administration, particularly regarding decisions that affect teaching, curriculum, and working conditions.
- Concerns over delays in responses, unclear channels for raising issues, and use of impersonal tools like AI for communication.

2. Lack of Faculty Participation in Decision Making

- Despite AAUP guidelines emphasizing shared governance, faculty feel excluded from decisions, especially regarding curriculum, scheduling, and hiring.
- A pattern of administrative decisions being made unilaterally or without timely or meaningful consultation with faculty.

3. Concerns Over Process and Transparency

- Processes related to compensation (release time, stipends), curriculum changes, and lack transparency and prior communication.
- Faculty often informed after the fact or asked to comply without opportunity for discussion.

4. Cultural Shift and Erosion of Shared Governance

- Faculty describe a shift in institutional culture where their expertise and contributions are undervalued.
- Decision-making perceived to be reactive, budget-driven, and rushed, rather than strategic and collaborative.

II. Specific Issues & Examples

A. Curriculum and Instructional Decisions

- **Hi-Tech Transfer Center** (Carson HS): Administration moved dual-credit courses without faculty input; tech and classroom changes made without consulting teaching staff.
- **Instructional Quality Rubric**: Faculty efforts impeded by required routing through VPSA and lack of dialogue.
- **Course & Curriculum Changes**: Faculty not involved in decisions about instructional assignments, course content, or classroom resources.

B. Faculty Governance and Oversight

- **Faculty Senate Marginalization**: Treated as advisory rather than participatory; faculty chair roles overwhelming with limited support or influence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Thresholds and Workday Approvals: Admin lowered thresholds without faculty consultation; later apologized but only after decisions were implemented. • Evaluation of Administration: Committee to evaluate administrators suggested but not active. • Faculty Chair Stress: Role has become excessively burdensome and perceived as ineffective due to lack of administrative collaboration. <p>C. Hiring & Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology Hire Decision: Faculty not consulted about academic hiring priorities. • Bookstore Changes: Faculty excluded from working group; form usability issues noted. <p>D. Compensation and Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipends and Release Time: Concerns about reductions; seen as undervaluing faculty labor and outreach mission. • Documentation Requests: Faculty asked to justify their release time; responses were met with skepticism by some administrators. <p>III. Faculty Recommendations & Requests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce AAUP Shared Governance Guidelines: Faculty must lead on curriculum decisions. • Clear and Transparent Communication Channels: Establish who to contact, ensure timely and respectful responses. • Restore Collaborative Culture: Return to holistic, consensus-building planning aligned with the college’s strategic vision. • Reform Processes: Involve faculty in early stages of policy and operational decisions (e.g., hiring, tech updates, space planning). • Support for Faculty Leadership: Ensure the faculty senate and chair have the authority, time, and backing to participate meaningfully in governance. <p>IV. Summary</p> <p>The prevailing concern is a deterioration in shared governance and a lack of effective communication between administration and faculty. Faculty express a strong desire to restore a culture of transparency, inclusion, and mutual respect, especially in areas critical to academic integrity and institutional mission.</p>
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Agenda Topic	2. Vice-Chair Role During Sabbatical
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Action Taken	Discussion
Summary of Discussion	<p><i>Discussion of whether it is appropriate for the Senate Vice-Chair to continue in the position while on sabbatical leave.</i></p> <p><u>Discussion: Vice Chair Role During Sabbatical</u></p> <p>Context: The current faculty senate vice chair (Jessica R.) will be on sabbatical next academic year. The question was raised whether she should step down from her leadership role during this period.</p> <p>Key Points from the Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan P.: Shared that she remained faculty senate chair during her sabbatical, setting a precedent. • Jessica R.: Expressed willingness to continue in the role during sabbatical. Reviewed bylaws and protocols, believes the decision should be left to faculty discretion. • Kim D.: Acknowledged Jessica’s dedication but raised concern about whether fulfilling vice chair duties might interfere with the goals of a sabbatical, which is meant to support rest, research, or professional development. • Martin: Agreed that the decision should rest with Jessica. If she chooses to step down, a fall election will be held to fill the position. <p>Summary</p> <p>There is general support for Jessica R. continuing as vice chair during her sabbatical if she feels capable of doing so, with a shared understanding that the decision is hers. A contingency plan (fall election) is in place should she opt to step down.</p>

Agenda Topic	3. Conflict of Interest Concern Regarding Chair Candidate
Action Taken	Discussion
Summary of Discussion	<p><i>Discussion of a potential conflict of interest involving one of the Senate Chair candidates, and the recommendation that if elected, the candidate step away from administrative duties that report directly to the VPASA to avoid conflict.</i></p> <p><u>Discussion: Faculty Senate Chair – Eligibility, Load, and Voting Process</u></p>

	<p>1. Potential Conflict of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin S: Raised a concern a candidate’s close working relationship with the VPSA may present a conflict of interest if they were to serve as Faculty Senate Chair. <p>2. Teaching Load Requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott M.: Inquired whether there is a minimum teaching load requirement for the Senate Chair. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: Faculty Senate Chair is generally limited to no more than 6 teaching credits, though exceptions have been made in the past. <p>3. Voting Timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick B.: Asked about the timeline for voting on the new Senate Chair. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: Jeff Downs will be coordinating the election process.
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Agenda Topic	4. Public Comment
Action Taken	Info
Summary of Discussion	

Agenda Topic	Adjournment
Action Taken	Unanimously Adjourned at 4:20 pm
Summary of Discussion	
Assignments/Potential Agenda Items	
Comments/Information	Submitted by Patrick Bell, Recorder