ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING MINUTES

September 16, 2019 | 4:00 PM | USUSA Senate Chamber

CALL TO ORDER

Approval of minutes: Senator Lyons: Moved / Senator Dent: Second / Voting body: Passed

Officer accountability

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

VP Lake: President Ahmed didn’t have anything that he needed to be brought before this body.

I hope you got your Leven’s and Sophie order taken care of because the deadline was Friday.

Aggie Heroes was due Friday too, so if you didn’t do that, shame on you.

A commitment I had as part of my campaign was to continue to make student fees even more transparent and that happened even more today, especially if you saw my tweet for my huge Twitter following. The student fee breakdowns from each entity have been added to the Student Fee page on my.usu.edu so you can look at the history for the previous year of that fee and how the expenditures are made. The ones that are uploaded right now are the years ‘17 and ‘18. When this year is finished, we’ll upload years ‘18 and ‘19. We’re off by a year, but that’s just how it goes. The Letter of Recommendation to the President as well as the meeting minutes from those Student Fee Board meetings are there. Whether or not any student looks at those is kind of irrelevant, it’s just the fact that it’s accessible. I’m pretty happy about that and happy that I’m checking things off of my campaign promise list. There’s more to come for that.

We need someone to write legislation to change the constitution to say “State-Wide Campuses” instead of “Regional Campuses.” The official name of our statewide campuses has changed. Any one of you senators can take this on.

Spencer Bitner: I thought that was voted on last year?

VP Lake: According to Linda, it’s not. We’ll talk to Linda and figure out what changes need to officially be made, whether it’s a blanket statement or whatever, but that needs to happen.

Any one of you is welcome to take that, just converse among yourselves and decide who wants to take the lead and do that. It would be a great thing to have multiple of you do that, because you can co-sponsor. Then you can get a
good idea of how to write legislation and policy changes regarding the constitution, which is a little more intricate than doing a resolution or bill.

We have our budget meeting today at 5.

Next week, Senator Brost may have to start this meeting. I will be in a meeting with the Executive Committee of Faculty Senate for what we’ll talk about in a minute.

There have been some graphics shared regarding VP Jessop’s ramp for the Block A, Homecoming, CAAS Week, and the Student at Large application. Make sure you share those.

NEW BUSINESS

VP Lake: I’m going to talk about the resolution before us. This is Academic Senate Resolution 2020-01, it’s the resolution to include students on faculty hiring committees. I’ll read through it and if you need clarification, just ask.

Reading: ASR 2020-01

This is now open for debate or discussion. If you want to make an amendment, this is where this happens. Are there any comments that you have?

Senator Brost: I would like to propose an amendment. The last line at the top, “the resolution ...important important” take that “important” out because you say it again four words later. I think it sounds a little redundant.

VP Lake: Okay.

What else?

Assistant Kremnev: At the end of many of your paragraphs earlier, your period is outside the quotation marks when it should be inside. It should be an easy fix.

VP Lake: Alright, I appreciate that.

You can keep giving feedback while I do this.

Senator Chamberlain: I think this is a good idea. I think it’s important.

Senator Brost: Agreed.

VP Lake: A little history behind this: when Sierra Wise was senator of the Caine College of the Arts, she was kind of having a hard time inserting herself into the hiring committee. She got onto it, but they rolled out the hiring committee and there was no inclusion of her, and she felt like that was important. There were some other issues last year that brought that to light and that is just the one we’re referencing for this.

Some departments already do this, it’s just not written in stone. Pretty much all of the departments in NR do it. There are also some departments that require it. Our department requires it. Like I said last week, I was on a hiring committee because I was involved in the student fee for it but also because it’s required. There are other institutions that do this as well: UVU does this, BYU does a form of this, Dixie... Pretty much all of the institutions do this. Whether or not that’s written in stone is another thing but it’s not unique. In a perfect world, this could lay out the foundation for other institutions when this gets taken to the Utah Student Association. We can say, “hey, take
this to your universities. Use the template. Let’s get student voices on all of the hiring committees.”

Senator Karras: I was going to mention that I didn’t get the opportunity to sit on the committee, but I know the College of Engineering and the Mechanical Engineering Department had students sit on the hiring process and on teaching situations and whatnot. Our administration and our current Dean found it very helpful.

VP Lake: That is where this stems from, just the need to have student voice represented. A student will always bring new insight to a hiring committee, especially those regarding academics. That’s what we’re hoping to see here.

I thought the presentation was today, but it wasn’t. It’s next week. I’ll be presenting this to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. From there, we’ll have a second reading of this next week, and then it will go to a Stater’s Council and then the whole Faculty Senate. Last year there was a resolution proposed that was met with a little bit of turmoil, but it was a lot heavier than this is, so we’ll see how the Faculty Senate reacts. I do have the Faculty Senate President all for this, and we do have a close relationship with him. If you ever feel like you have something you’d like to involve faculty in, Patrick Beaumont is a wonderful resource for us. Anything else?

Senator Bird: I would like to amend the spelling of my name. It’s two e’s instead of a y.

Senator Ward: Did it specify how the student would be appointed if it wasn’t the Academic Senator?

VP Lake: That’s a great question. We purposely avoided specifying that and here’s why: we didn’t want to go to the Faculty Senate and say, “this is what we expect.” We just want a student on there. I’m sure I’m going to get this question as well, and I’m going to explain it to the Faculty Senate. The Dean can’t know every student in their college, so it would ideally fall with the department head to pick a student of that department who they know is outstanding. If the situation doesn’t allow for the department head to pick the student, then the Academic Senator could be the default. Does it make sense why we did that? We didn’t want to go out there and dictate to the faculty how we want it done, we’re just saying, “this is what we want.”

Senator Scott: In the legislation here, is there anything about putting students on the committee for tenure consideration for faculty members? Are other students and other universities doing the same thing and is that part of the legislation in those specific quotes that you put in here?

VP Lake: As far as what other institutions are doing, I can’t speak on behalf of them. I just know that in general some universities in our state are doing a form of this. Whether or not it’s for tenured professionals, I don’t know. All of the references back to the Faculty Code are to policies that aren’t very long. That paragraph is practically the whole policy. Everything that I changed in the Faculty Policy regarding hiring committees I just changed to add a student each time it talks about hiring faculty. There was one point where it says the President is responsible for finding a hiring committee but it didn’t talk about who was supposed to be on it, so I didn’t add a student there just because there are no specifics anywhere else as to who the other members have to be. Did that answer your question?

Senator Scott: I love the idea, I’ve talked with Sierra a lot about this and how she was part of that committee for hiring. I’m also wondering about having students on a committee to consider a professor for tenure. Should students be on that type of committee to consider a faculty member tenure? You kind of answered that previously by saying that a dean could select a student who is familiar with the situation to be on the committee.
VP Lake: Yes, Like I said, if it’s not the dean it could be the department head. I thought about that too: is it really necessary to have students on a tenure committee? It is. I had a professor last year, and it was first year but for his first year he wasn’t doing a fantastic job but he was going to come up for tenure. I understand he’s improved a lot this year, but if he had come up for tenure last year, I would have wanted to be able to say, “no, I don’t think he should qualify.” It’s the students that are sitting in the classroom, and I think that’s important to understand. To me, some professors deserve tenure sooner rather later or later rather than sooner, so I think there’s good input from students regarding that.

Senator Chamberlain: I feel similarly to you that we have a better perspective as students of them as a teacher, whereas I feel the majority of people on a tenure committee would be looking at their research and maybe a couple of IDEA course surveys, but I feel we have the perspective.

VP Lake: That’s why we specified the department. A plant science major may not know what’s going on in agribusiness. Even though you all are elected, I still think there are issues that you can’t see within each classroom.

Senator Scott: Is there a part in the legislation that limits how many students are on the committee?

VP Lake: It says, “at least one.” That’s up to the person appointing the hiring committee to decide that. That’s just the minimum, there’s no maximum.

Senator Scott: For the people being considered to be hired, is there a part in this legislation or elsewhere that includes exposure to the rest of the students in the college? That was one issue that I went through last semester. We only met with the potential dean candidates once and it was a public forum open to the entire college. I only saw, face-to-face, the three candidates one time.

VP Lake: Nowhere in here does it specify that, but it would be worth considering. I think it would be a bigger thing than this right now, because it would be beyond the hiring committee. It would be required student input. It would be excellent to look into.

Spencer Bitner: There are two things that factor into hiring an individual. One is the faculty code, the other is HR policy which includes equal opportunity to internal policy. There are lots of ways you could approach that type of thing. If it’s in the faculty code, great. If not, there are other avenues to add it to.

VP Lake: That’s great. You can approach it from a lot of different angles. Because it’s so different from this based on what we’re accomplishing it should be done in another piece of legislation. I think it’s a great idea and any of you could look into it and pursue it!

Approval of changes: Senator Scott: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

Approval of first reading: Senator Dent: Moved / Senator Lyons: Second / Voting body: Passed

Thank you everybody. We’ll turn the time to Senator Karras for some charter changes.

Senator Karras: Before I get into the specific changes I’d like to recommend for my charter, I’d like to go over some background as to why these changes are being made and the formation of my council. When I was elected into my position, I made some basic structural changes. I simplified some of the director roles within my committees. We have an Executive Council that is made up of myself, my faculty advisor, and the president and vice president and
administrative assistant roles on my council. Below the Executive Council we have three major committees with different director positions within them and fulfill different purposes within in the college. The Activities Committee is in charge of Engineer’s Week and events. Our Student Involvement Committee includes student advocacy, led by me, as well as clubs and mentorship. Our Professionalism Committee includes our Professionalism Director as well as the Graduate Studies Committee.

The charter changes are under the Student Involvement Committee and Professionalism Committee. There is now a Mentorship Director instead of a Retention Director. The purpose is to make sure engineering students are looked after, which is now the Mentorship Committee’s role. Last year the Ambassadors shut down the mentorship program, but we picked it up and revamped it. This Mentorship Committee is a key part of retention because they're helping freshmen and transfer students have a better experience. We started that mentorship program under the Executive Council.

Another change that I’m proposing is under the Professionalism Committee. I just added some clarification that there is more than one graduate student on the Engineering Council and instead there’s a whole committee underneath that graduate studies student representative. Any questions? These are the changes to the charter.

Reading of: Engineering Senator Proposed Charter Changes

VP Lake: Any questions?

Senator Dent: What is the role that charters play? I, as a senator, have my initiatives and I completely reorganized Business Council. Is the charter used for that purpose? If so, I feel every year would need to be changed. Is the point of the charter to continually be changed depending on individuals’ initiatives or is it more specifically laid out for what every senator needs to do?

VP Lake: Yes. Your charter is a semi-living document; it has about a half a lung. There are some things you can change and there are things you can’t. You can’t change a committee without checking with the office and the Senate to make sure it’s still a committee because those are either university assignments or office assignments. As far as your personal initiatives, I think it’s sometimes better to make the council aspect of it a broad thing of our charters, but if you have a different way of setting up your council you are free to do that. You’re the leader. We need to be able to hold you accountable but other than that...

Spencer Bitner: Charters are used when relationships break down. Your charter is to help other officers in your position to understand their roles in general, not the role you play in enacting your charter. If you’re making changes, remember to think of it as “the position” instead of “my position.” This body and I are here to hold you accountable.

VP Lake: Last year we couldn’t approve charter changes here in Academic Senate, it had to be approved in Executive Council. Being able to do this this year is a great change.

Spencer Bitner: That was a constitutional change that was voted on by the student body.

VP Lake: Any other questions?

Approval of proposed changes: Senator Brost: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

COUNCIL UPDATES

Senator Brost: It’s CAAS Week! As long as it doesn’t rain tomorrow between 5 and 9, we’re good.
Senator Scott: I’m working with VP Patino on Oktoberfest.

Senator Fry: I’m meeting with my council and planning Mental Health Week.

Senator Chamberlain: We’re working on Research Week for our college. There is a Global Climate Strike on Friday on the Quad.

Senator Bird: I’m working on finishing an email list, which will allow us to contact everyone in the college for the first time ever.

Senator Dent: The National Parks dropped out of the benefit concert, but Foreign Figures will be there. Business Week is coming.

Senator Karras: We are making progress with our mentorship program.

Senator Ward: We’re planning our CHaSS Gala.

Senator Lyons: We’re excited for our Solar Luncheon and are working on our mentorship program as well.

ADVISOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Spencer Bitner: Remember that you are here to council together. These council update times are for you to be able to ask each other questions and work through things together.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator Fry: Moved / Senator Bird: Second / Voting body: Passed

IN ATTENDANCE: Spencer Bitner, VP Dexton Lake, Senator Jared Fry, Senator Sara Dent, Senator Sakia Brost, Senator Nathan Scott, Senator Rachel Chamberlain, Senator Naomi Ward, Senator Alex Lyons, Senator Tiffanee Bird, Senator Cooper Karras, Assistant Anna Kremnev