

*Minutes
Faculty Senate Meeting
December 6, 2023*

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:

- Updates were provided for the Presidential search advisory committee:
 - All sixteen faculty names were provided to the Board of Trustees
 - The Board of Trustees has made its eight selections for the committee and is in the process of contacting/confirming the selected eight members. The names will be announced soon.
- Updates were provided for the next steps on the recommendations reported by the Service Taskforce. The definition of “service” as presented in the Faculty Manual will be discussed at the upcoming December Faculty Senate luncheon. No official decisions will be made at this meeting, but the pros and cons of various definition options will be analyzed.
- The Administrative Growth Study Group, chaired by Elizabeth Worden, has submitted the final draft of their memo. Results will be shared with the community in the Spring semester. The group will likely be presenting their findings at a Faculty Senate meeting early next semester.
- The annual report from the athletics department has been delayed and will be coming in the spring.
- Bridget Trogden, Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Student Services, has appointed an interim AU Honors Faculty Director for the Spring semester. There will be a formal, public search for the next term of the Honors Faculty Director which starts Fall 2024. However, there was an absence in the role and Wendy Melillo (SOC) has been appointed to fill this vacancy for the Spring 2024 semester.
- The Faculty Senate has been asked by the Provost and the President’s office to reconvene the Working Group on Freedom of Expression from two years ago, which was co-chaired by Thomas Merrill and Regina Curran. This Working Group drafted and proposed a new policy on free expression including a statement of values, which was voted on and endorsed by the

Faculty Senate. The policy was accepted and is now in effect at the university. Clarifications were made that the working group has not been asked to review the policy itself, but rather to review the applications of the policy. Free expression has been a topic of interest in national news in recent months, following October 7th.

- The minutes from the November 1, 2023, meeting were **VOTED** on and approved 22-0-1.

Provost's Report – Vicky Wilkins

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

- A reminder was made regarding the transition from Colleague to Workday as the enterprise technology system for AU. The go live date is set for January 2, 2024. It was also emphasized that transitions of this magnitude are often bumpy, especially within the first several days. Please allow staff extra time and patience while working through issues. Those who have dedicated time and effort in helping to organize and coordinate this transition are greatly appreciated.
- There will be an adjustment in the approach to teaching overload payments. The original policy had been in place for over twenty years, was based on salary, and was capped at \$7,000. To maintain equity, a flat rate of \$12,000 will now be used.
- Updates were provided on the work being done in the Academic Integrity Office. Information regarding a new Academic Integrity Code will be coming soon. There has been a focus on maintaining equity and consistency in the application of the code.
- An email regarding updates on the estimated 2025 budget shortfall will be coming out in the next few days. Budget requests will then be addressed and there will be opportunities for budget conversations within units. The provost's office has been in close contact with Deans to provide up-to-date information regarding the budget.
- Thank you to the faculty who participated in the Board of Trustees breakfast focused on faculty and student research, especially members of the panel including Saul Newman, Ernesto Castañeda-Tinoco, and Amaarah DeCuir.
- Thank you also to the Service Taskforce. The Deans had a chance to meet with taskforce chairs Garret Martin and Taryn Morrissey, as well as Faculty Senate Past Chair Lilian Baeza-Mendoza. Everyone is looking forward to more regarding the service conversation.
- Thank you to everyone working on retention and admissions in their respective schools.

Dean of Faculty's Report – Monica Jackson

Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty Monica Jackson made several announcements and provided updates regarding important matters:

- The Elements system has replaced FARS and is now ready for data entry. Faculty are asked to fully use the system to enter their information, updates, accomplishments, and other relevant data. This information is helpful to Vice Provost for Research and Innovation Diana Burley, when working to find collaborations. The library is also keeping track of the

information for the faculty interest website. Finally, this information will be used for the merit review process.

- The contract with Interfolio is ending. Workday has features to replace Interfolio, so starting the first week in January, all new ads should be posted to Workday. Assistance with and training on how to manage searches using Workday will be available. Thirty-five tenure-line searches as well as some term-line and adjunct searches have already been posted to Workday.
- Next month some proposals for Faculty Manual changes will be coming to the Faculty Senate. Some will be minor, related to updates and typos surrounding the inclusion of continuing-line appointments. One larger change will be to add term faculty to the Committee on Faculty Grievances.
- Forty-three continuing appointments have been confirmed and processed in the Dean of Faculty office thus far. One-hundred and twenty in total are expected this academic year, with many coming in the spring semester.

Teaching Race and Power at AU – Bridget Trogden, Vicky Wilkins, and Thomas Merrill

Teaching Race and Power at AU will focus on teaching students how to engage in a world of differences. Students will engage with topics such as race, racialization, and power, among others. The group is co-chaired by Sara Kaplan and Amanda Taylor. There is a list of faculty experts and stakeholders who are being invited to join the group. Discussions will not be happening in a vacuum. Contact has been made with the DEI Committee and curricular adjustments will be transparent. The group is very conscience of shared governance. Updates can be expected next month.

AUx will be running in the spring. Faculty Fellows William Thomas and Amaarah DeCuir will work with and support individuals teaching courses on professional development.

Staff Survey and Contract with Huron Consulting Group – Vicky Wilkins

An open discussion was held in response to concerns regarding the ongoing staff survey and the use of Huron Consulting Group. Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins began the discussion by providing information on the charge and scope of the work with Huron.

- Initial interest in this survey was triggered during conversations with managers, staff, and the union.
- Huron already has numerous contracts with the university, mostly regarding technology, but they do other work too.
- Huron was then asked to complete an Administrative Activity Survey to understand staffing on campus. Many staff members report that due to cuts and other reasons, they are now completing the responsibilities/duties of two or more positions. Departments and units are also reporting that they do not have adequate staffing. The staff survey request of Huron is in response to concerns about understaffing. Staff Counsel and other stakeholder groups were aware of this survey.

- Staff will be receiving a survey/job analysis. They will be asked about their role, duties, responsibilities, time spent, etc. Deans and other campus leaders will also be interviewed to form a complete picture. There will be no analysis of faculty and faculty involvement will be limited to those who oversee/manage staff. This task could not easily be completed internally because a widely used, validated instrument was needed and the university does not have the manpower to dedicate to number crunching.
- Huron's involvement in relation to mass layoffs and program closures at other schools was a surprise to Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins. However, to be clear, this type of review is not what has been asked of Huron for this contract. It is also important to acknowledge that although Huron may have made recommendations at these schools, the decisions rest with the upper-level administrators.
- Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins also apologized for any confusion, concern, and fear that resulted from the lack of clarity in the email sent to faculty.
Faculty responses included:
 - A request for the contract with Huron regarding the staff survey to be shared, at least confidentially, with either the Faculty Senate or Faculty Senate leadership.
 - A request for the expected timeline.
 - A request for clarification on the cost of this contract. Additional concerns regarding the budget were raised. In particular, in a strained budget the university is more likely to cut positions and costs rather than add them. One response to this concern was that a solution could be staff reorganization or shifting rather than opening more positions/new hiring.
 - A request for a summary of the final report, with the understanding that some components may require confidentiality and would be omitted.
 - A request for further clarification on why an external tool was needed. Many on the Strategic Imperative committees have information and expertise working on this to provide information for external affairs. The explanation provided was that building a tool like the one AU would be using is prohibitively time- and labor-intensive. Huron is an industry leader in producing these types of analysis and has time-tested tools and methods. Some of this work would have been done as a part of SI9, How AU Works, but much of the time was consumed with the ERP transition to Workday, HR work that needed to be done in a brief period, and other issues.
 - Concerns were raised that faculty are discussing a contract that has already been signed and work that has already begun. Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins reminded faculty about a shared governance working group that is being formed, where these issues can be discussed. Additionally, as faculty are not really involved in this process and are not being counted or surveyed, unless they supervise staff, it did not occur to administration to consider faculty as a stakeholder in the process. Staff Counsel was consulted as it is directly related to staff affairs. Additionally, Huron already has many other contracts with the university, it was not a new company being brought in.
 - Concerns were raised regarding the negative reputation Huron has based on other schools and media publications. In response, Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins mentioned that AU has had positive experiences with Huron in the past with other contracts. Other consulting firms have

similar reputations, it is the nature of the work. Negative reports are also rare compared to the actual number of contracts Huron executes every year. The media is much more likely to report on mass layoffs and programs closing than successful company/school reorganizations. It is also important to hold decision-makers (administration) accountable for their decisions rather than consulting firms who made the initial recommendations.

- Encouragement came from the floor for senators to propose a resolution to cancel the contract with Huron. Some also requested that the timetable for the contract be slowed down.
- Others were satisfied by Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins's explanation, answers to questions, and promise to send out a clarifying email to faculty regarding the purpose and scope of the staff survey. She will also work to provide information regarding the cost of the contract and a summary of contract details.

The Senate Leadership pledged to follow up on this issue. Acting Provost Vicky Wilkins will also be providing additional information and updates.

CFA/DOF Memo Revisions – Priya Doshi, Justin Jacobs, & Monica Jackson

The CFA/DOF Memo is updated annually to provide all dates the CFA requires for tenure and tenure-track files. This year's modifications include minor changes as well as the addition of continuing-line and library continuing-line details. The term "tenure-line" is no longer used, so it has been removed and replaced with "tenure-track and tenured."

Clarifying questions regarding procedures for continuing appointments were also asked by Faculty Senate leadership and answered by Dean of Faculty Monica Jackson.

- When there is a disagreement between the recommendations at the unit and Dean levels, the continuing appointment file will be sent to the CFA for review. However, if one of the reasons for the denial of a continuing appointment is budget-related, the file will go directly to the Dean of Faculty office and will not be reviewed by the CFA.
- It was also pointed out that if there are budgetary reasons for denying a continuing appointment, the individual should be notified as early as possible. This timely notification would save the individual from completing a lengthy teaching portfolio and full application package when it is already known that there is no position available for them. The response to this concern is that these decisions are based on enrollment. Budgets may not be fully set before continuing appointment application packages are already submitted. Ultimately, Deans make the decision on reappointment, but the Dean of Faculty is involved in providing up-to-date budgetary information.
- If the Dean knows in advance the size of their budget shortfall, they may discuss this with faculty who are going through the reappointment process and recommend against a continuing appointment application for that particular cycle. However, faculty who have met the criteria for continuing appointment can still apply, with or without unit/Dean support. All files submitted will reach the Dean of Faculty Monica Jackson.
- Faculty who are denied continuing appointments this cycle may still apply for a terminal, one-year contract for AY20024-2025. After the completion of that contract, no more contracts can be granted.

The CFA/DOF Memo Revisions for Feb 2024 were **VOTED** on and approved 20-0-1.

Teaching Portfolios and Beyond SETs – Max Friedman, Monica Jackson, Priya Doshi, & Justin Jacobs

Over the course of the late summer and fall semester, many concerns were raised by faculty regarding the full teaching portfolio requirement for reappointment and continuing appointment application packages. In response, a waiver was granted, but not for major actions such as promotions. The university has had a history of granting waivers to this policy in the past few years, so the question was raised regarding the level of commitment to the inclusion of the full portfolio.

This fall, waivers were not granted for pre-tenure files as the inclusion of a full teaching portfolio was not a new practice for these files. However, nearly half of the pre-tenure files the CFA initially received were missing one or more portions of their teaching portfolio. The files had to be returned to the unit for completion. Some issues can be alleviated by providing updated checklists with explicit description of the required components. One suggestion also included adding file requirements to various websites, so information is available at all levels instead of only the unit level.

The teaching portfolio is meant to illuminate faculty teaching from several angles; peer-review, self-review, and student-review, as studies have shown that SET scores are biased. For the files that were sent back to the unit to be completed, after their return to the CFA all files were made stronger by the inclusion of the full portfolio. Additional concerns equated SETs to customer satisfaction surveys which do not accurately evaluate teaching. It was also pointed out that teaching cannot be assessed without also assessing learning.

The “student-review” can come in many forms, though the most convenient is to use the SET narratives from one or more classes. Although all narratives from a single course must be included, not all courses from a single semester need to be included. Concerns were raised as to whether this allowance is too much picking and choosing. The selected narratives will elevate a candidate’s file but may not give a full evaluative picture to the faculty committee, chair, and CFA.

Concerns were also raised regarding the “peer-review” component. If reviewers are expected to be of an equivalent or higher rank, as is the case for tenure-track files, then this may create a burden within smaller departments. Clarification questions were asked regarding how often the peer-review needs to be completed. Although not explicitly stated, peer reviews should be completed once in a six-year period for tenure-track files and once in a three-year period for term files.

Faculty were also reminded that the inclusion of the teaching portfolio is a Faculty Senate initiative and faculty were deeply involved in its design. The teaching portfolio requirements were not developed by the administration.

Concerns were raised regarding discrepancies between units, as some still favor SET scores while others value the more holistic review provided by the full teaching portfolio.

Middle States Self-Study Recommendations and Comments – Paula Weissman & Garret Martin

The Self-Study Report draft has been posted and is accessible on the Middle States website. The Self-Study Report addresses the seven standards Middle States has set for reaccreditation:

- I. Mission and Goals
- II. Ethics and Integrity
- III. Design and Delivery of the Learning Experience
- IV. Support of the Student Experience
- V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment (*assessment of student learning*)
- VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
- VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Some universities organize their report by directly addressing each of the above standards as its own chapter. However, to make the report and work more meaningful, AU has chosen to organize their report based on university priorities, namely:

1. Mission
2. Scholarship (*research*)
3. Thriving (*student experience*)
4. Learning (*scholarly environment for students*)
5. Community (*inclusive excellence and partnerships*)

Faculty members are invited to comment on the draft before January. Comments and recommendations will be incorporated into the final Self-Study Report presented to the Middle States visiting team. The visiting team will be appointed this spring and will visit campus in mid-April. Final recommendations and the reaccreditation decision by the visiting team are expected to be announced in the summer.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02pm