



FACULTY SENATE

Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2023

Senators Present: Ann Abraham, Bob Antenucci, Omid Bagheri, Tina Bhargava, Casey Boyd-Swan, Lauren Copeland, Jennifer Cunningham, Mark Dalman, Ed Dauterich, Omar De La Cruz Cabrera, Kimberly DePaul, Vanessa Earp, Julie Evey, Michele Ewing, Michael Fisch, Michelle Foster, Tianyuan Guan, Angela Guercio, David Kaplan, Sean Kennedy, Edgar Kooijman, Velvet Landingham, Tracy Laux, Richard Mangrum, Karen Mascolo, Mahli Mechenbier, Taraneh Meshkani, Oana Mocioalca, Vic Perera, Amy Petrinec, Linda Piccirillo-Smith, Helen Piontkivska, Lydia Rose, Susan Roxburgh, Athena Salaba, Deborah Smith, Jennifer Taber, Eric Taylor, Laurie Wagner, Theresa Walton-Fisette, Sue Wamsley, Christopher Was

Senators Not Present: Claudia Gomez, Todd Hawley, Janice Kroeger, Denise McEnroe-Petitte, Robin Vande Zande,

Ex-Officio Members Present: Provost Melody Tankersley; Senior Vice President Mark Polatajko; Senior Vice President Eboni Pringle*; Vice Presidents: Sean Broghammer, Doug Delahanty, Amoaba Gooden, John Rathje, Charlene Reed, Stephen Ward; Deans: Sonia Alemagno, Christina Bloebaum, Ken Burhanna, James Hannon, Versie Johnson-Mallard, Sharon Wohl for Mark Mistur, Mandy Munro-Stasiuk, Diane Petrella, Elizabeth Piatt*, Amy Reynolds, Deborah Spake, Christa Porter for Manfred van Dulmen

*Interim

Ex-Officio Members Not Present: President Todd Diacon, Senior Vice President Lamar Hylton; Vice Presidents: Tiffany Murray*, Peggy Shadduck, Valoree Vargo, Willis Walker; Deans: Allan Boike, Alison Smith

Observers Present: Emeritus Professor Paul Farrell, Ms. Olivia Eader (USS), unidentified individual for Ms. Emily Erb (GSS)

Observers Not Present:

Guests Present: Denise Bartell, Sue Clement, Taléa Drummer-Ferrell, Nick Gatozzi, Tom Janson, Michael Kavulic, Susan Perry, Amy Quillen, Kevin West

1. Call to Order

Chair Laux called the meeting to order at 3:21 p.m. in the Governance Chambers, Kent Student Center.

2. Roll Call

Secretary Dauterich called the roll.

3. Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda (Bagheri/Mocioalca). The agenda passed unanimously.

4. Approval of the Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2023

Chair Laux asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2023, Faculty Senate meeting. A motion was made and seconded (Wamsley/Salaba).

The minutes were approved unanimously as written.

5. Chair's Remarks

Chair Laux delivered his remarks [attached].

He then invited comments or questions.

Senator Smith mentioned that the tenure-track, academic contract is 24 credit hours and includes a service contract on top of that. She asked whether Chair Laux agreed. He said he thought it was part of the 24 credit hours. Senator Smith clarified that there is no workload equivalency for service unless it is built into the department handbooks.

Chair Laux thanked her for the clarification.

6. Provost's Remarks

Provost Tankersley updated the faculty on the 45 new faculty members that were hired, the large freshman class, welcoming 2,089 international students from 102 countries, New York Fashion Week, and several other opening celebrations and events. She said that we do face a future that requires us to pull together to thrive in the rocky financial landscape. She stressed that faculty, staff, and administration have vital roles to play. She stated that we must approach our work by maximizing efficiencies and growing our resources—this applies to all citizens of the university. In-demand programs must be offered and given resources to invest in for our future. These efforts, she continued, will be led by faculty, the experts in the field. She also suggested revitalizing programs not reaching their potential and supporting students on their journey to graduation. Completion of degree determines the financial health of the university, so we must help students to be active participants in their own education. Faculty are experts in the field and know how to do this. Enrollments need to be examined for efficiency. This is a challenge, but we can do it together. We must work in unison with shared governance and shared responsibility. She concluded by pointing out that universities around us are undergoing massive cuts that can threaten the integrity of their missions. Those universities are not Kent State. We will continue to thrive and make smart decisions. We will maximize efficiencies and grow opportunities together.

She then invited comments or questions.

The chamber members applauded.

There were no further comments or questions.

7. Budget Update (presented by Senior Vice President Mark Polatajko)

Senior Vice President Polatajko stated that the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 23) ended June 30th. Revenues were forecasted at \$670.1 million, which was \$8.7 million higher than in the approved budget. Operating expenses and transfers were projected to be \$666.6 million, which was \$5.2 million dollars higher than the approved budget. The result would be an estimated favorable balance of \$3.5 million or .5% for FY 23.

Senior Vice President Polatajko presented the budget briefing via PowerPoint (click [here](#) for the full presentation). He gave the budget update, the 5-year forecast, and offered time to discuss the next steps and the methodology behind the 5-year forecast. He made it clear anyone could ask questions at any time during the presentation.

He invited questions.

There were none.

He continued that for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24), guiding principles will remain the same. Focusing resources on access to completion, limiting new hires, focusing on limiting administrative and non-academic positions, and protecting our fiscal resources will be the priorities.

The FY 24 budget has a proposed increase of 4% over FY 23 (about \$26 million in revenue). Draft revenue assumptions are broken down on page 6 of the attached (above) presentation, and draft expense assumptions for FY 24 are on page 7.

He paused again for questions.

There were no questions.

He then explained how the budget was balanced. Budgets were cut after the state decisions were made; vacant positions were cut; travel was reduced; endowment scholarship funds were optimized; the downtown ice ring was canceled for the 23-24 season, and investment income was adjusted to recognize increased money market returns.

He then asked for questions.

Chair Laux asked about adjustments (salaries for vacant positions being taken off the books) and wondered whether all the positions were cut. He asked whether more vacant positions will be cut next year.

Senior Vice President Polatajko replied that several vacant positions are still funded. Those without incumbents the previous fiscal year were more likely to be cut.

Chair Laux asked if next year's cuts could be similar.

Senior Vice President Polatajko said that they could.

Chair Laux mentioned changes that negatively impacted the city, particularly altering the ice arena space for the university. He wondered whether the university has been working with City of Kent concerning these situations.

Senior Vice President Polatajko said that with regard to Kent Skates, they reached out to the city, Main Street Kent, and the Chamber of Commerce who fully understood the financial situation. Those organizations will make a public announcement soon.

Provost Tankersley said that Vice President Lawless-Andric (University Engagement & Outreach) is reaching out to the community regularly about issues like this.

Emeritus Professor Farrell asked whether we have reinsurance for catastrophic health cases that are claimed on our insurance.

Senior Vice President Polatajko responded that we do, but there was still a significant increase in costs.

There were no further comments or questions.

He then presented the five-year forecast:

We apply conservative but realistic revenue assumptions and forecast the next five years. If we do nothing, there will be a \$10 million deficit by FY 27. The governor originally presented a budget that would recognize inflation and investment in higher education workforce and need-based aid. We would have gotten \$10 million more per year. This did not pass the legislature. Ohio ended FY 23 with a huge operating surplus (\$7.4 billion total in unencumbered funds over the last three fiscal years). He also showed other aspects of the state budget—Medicaid was funded at 20% higher than in the previous budget, K-12 at 8% higher, corrections at 5% higher, and higher education 3.8%. Dramatic decreases in tax rates and expansion of the tax holiday were also approved by the legislature for FY 25.

He explained what we will do to prepare for the next five years. Strategic programs will be supported; redundancies will be cut; space will be optimized; the athletics model will be

reevaluated; the regional system will be reorganized, and community engagement activities will be reduced.

He finished with the timeline for continuing to inform people about the budget. The Board of Trustees will consider the budget on Sept. 20, 2023.

He then invited comments or questions.

Senator Bhargava asked what “benchmarking” of university benefits meant.

Senior Vice President Polatajko said it means working with consultants to see what actual spending is and optimizing preventative benefits and looking at what peer institutions are doing: researching, analyzing, and engagement with the health benefits review committee.

Senator Mocioalca mentioned the tax cuts given by the legislature and asked whether we can have influence over those.

Senior Vice President Polatajko said he mentioned those to share context for how little was invested in higher education by the state while other areas were increased (including funding the revenues lost from tax cuts).

Executive Director Gatozzi (Government & Community Relations) said this is based on Ohio General Assembly priorities which were increased Medicare spending, increased tax cuts, and increased funding for prisons.

Senator Mocioalca asked what we could do to improve the situation.

Executive Director Gatozzi said we can continue to advocate for State Share of Instruction (SSI) increases.

Senator Kaplan referenced the term “optimizing space” in the presentation and asked what that could mean. He wanted to know if buildings will be decommissioned in the event of current and new construction.

Senior Vice President Polatajko said there will be net zero space growth. When one building goes up, another should go down.

Senator Rose said the East Liverpool campus has two buildings, and she wanted to know what reorganization and optimizing space mean if we have a balanced budget. She wondered if buildings would be consolidated at regionals despite the work of local communities to make them functional. She was concerned that regional reorganization might not be done well if it was done at a universal level—cultural spaces could be destroyed.

Senior Vice President Polatajko agreed that the decisions would be difficult, but he said that not all campuses would be taking the same approach.

Provost Tankersley said that everything is difficult, and it is not always about numbers. Cultural considerations will always be taken in and made in a shared way, even if the decisions are hard.

Senator De La Cruz Cabrera asked how the university's research status could be maintained or improved.

Vice President Delahanty said that funding will be a foremost priority. Investments made last year should be available soon, and grant success can be optimized. The number of dollars coming in should be increased efficiently, essentially, and fiscally responsibly. Corporate engagement will be increased to help with funding. We will work hard to maintain R1 status while insuring fiscal responsibility.

Chair Laux said that the university will have funds for the University Research Council to distribute in the upcoming year.

Vice President Delahanty said about \$750,000 were rolled over last year in addition to the \$500,000 that they receive annually. Investments of this money are being considered at the moment.

There were no further comments or questions.

Faculty Senate applauded the presentation.

Chair Laux mentioned to Senator Rose that he continues to support East Liverpool and said Kent State probably has the biggest impact on that campus over others, and that he mentions East Liverpool and the regional campuses often to President Diacon and Provost Tankersley.

8. Committee on Academic Officers (CAO) Election (voting was done on paper ballots and tabulated as the meeting progressed)

The Faculty Senate held an election for two CAO positions: (1) Faculty Senator position on the CAO and (1) non-Faculty Senator position.

Senators nominated for election were Jennifer Cunningham, Vanessa Earp, and Susan Roxburgh. Senator Roxburgh won the election.

The non-senator candidates were Kimberly Cleveland, Erica Eckert, Kwangtaek Kim, and Dhruba Panthi. Kimberly Cleveland won the election.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Old Business

There was no old business.

11. Announcements/Statements for the Record

Senator Smith said that version 8 of SB 83 is floating around the Higher Education Committee in Columbus. It does not contain the improvements for higher education that were passed in version 7. She said we should look for upcoming emails encouraging us to write letters to the legislature to oppose this new version. She suggested writing to Representative Gail Pavliga in particular—she represents the city of Kent and Kent State and supported the improvements that have been removed in the new version.

Chair Laux announced that the Office of Student Research is looking for judges and moderators for the 3-minute Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) presentation that had been announced in a previous email. He encouraged everyone to participate.

Senator Rose read the following statement for the record:

“As a sociology professor, teaching introduction to Sociology, I was lecturing this morning at the East Liverpool campus about ‘Culture’. After class, I was preparing for my Flashes 101 class, before I drove to Salem Campus for another class.

On the drive to the Salem campus I started thinking about the Faculty Senate and the meeting we had on May 8th. I got so engrossed in my thoughts, I missed my exit and had to take the backroads to Salem.

My thoughts were focused on the unanimous vote to remove the Cybercriminology - B.S. from the agenda. This was a proposal that would greatly impact not just students attending the regional campuses but also the changes our culture due to new technologies. While I do believe that this proposal will eventually be passed at some point, I can’t help but worry that it might suffer the fate, trajectory, and timeline that it took to revamp the FYE class into the Flashes 101 course. While at the training for Flashes 101 and I heard how long this was ‘in the works.’ I was reminded of a conversation I had with members of our campus Faculty Council back in my early days of being a new hire at Kent about doing FYE differently and how it was in the works. It took many years for change to occur.

These thoughts are also coming at time when I am dealing with data collection that was disrupted because of cyber software attack that occur during one of my studies. The enterprise that was in the top of their field was taken hostage by a cyberattack to their software; the company that developed the software was forced to pay a ransom to resume control over their own software so they could provide their customers with what they had promised in terms of cyber health data collection. I am also lending an ear to neighbor that was scammed into compromising their saving account and lost a significant amount of savings. And who is now dealing with cyber experts at their bank to recover the security of their online banking access. There are some things that we should be nimbler at in identifying culture changes so we can keeping our degrees and offerings to students relevant. There is a lot of talk about ‘Students

First,' about the 'enrollment cliff,' and other 'worries' related to maintaining the status quo of this great university, Kent State.

I can't help but feel we as the Faculty Senate were too quick to cancel and remove something that could have been easily finished baking during the summer so we that we could more quickly respond to societies Challenges.

While I respect the wisdom of this group, I do think just as we now have to be more forgiving to students more so than we ever have had to do in the past, that perhaps (just perhaps) we also need some forgiveness when items make it to this body's agenda rather than rushing with an unanimous 'I' with possibly some milquetoast non-responses.

Thank you."

There were no further announcements or statements for the record.

12. Adjournment

Chair Laux adjourned the meeting at 4:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Edward Dauterich
Secretary, Faculty Senate