

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

December 4, 2023

3:30 p.m.

The Faculty Senate of Eastern Kentucky University met on Monday, December 4, 2023 via Zoom. Chair Kay called the fourth meeting of the academic year to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

The following members were absent: J. Brent*, L. Dodd*, S. Hazelmyer*^, J. Hensley, M. Henton, P. Kraska, E. Massey, J. McCardle, L. Rowe, S. Szabo*

* Indicates prior notification of absence

^ ALT Jens Arneson attended for S. Hazelmyer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Senator Buck moved to approve the November 6, 2023 minutes as written, seconded by Senator Bishop-Ross. **Motion carried.** (YES = 41 votes NO = 0 votes ABSTAIN = 1 vote) (See also: [Individual Votes](#))

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT: David McFaddin

EKU Highlights in the News - November 2023

EKU received notable coverage this month in local, state, and national media outlets. (See: [Article links](#) on pp. 1-2) If anyone knows a faculty member who can serve as a subject matter expert for Communications and Brand Management (CBM), please contact Sarah Baker at sarah.baker@eku.edu.

Graduation Success

Fall 2023 Graduation was a great success. Thanks to your hard work as faculty, we recognized 1,313 graduates: 134 certificates, 46 associate degrees, 866 bachelor's degrees, 246 master's degrees, 3 post-master's certificates and 18 doctoral degrees. This year's graduates range in age from 19 to 66. They came from 15 countries, 42 states and 102 Kentucky counties. Of this class, 43% are the first in their families to attain a higher education degree. In addition, we proudly honored EKU alumnus Dr. Aaron Thompson for his distinguished service to humanity with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters.

2024 Legislative Session

The 60-day 2024 legislative session begins on January 2 and will end on April 15. In addition to the state budget, we expect bills regarding higher education related to affordability and student success.

CPE has released the following documents on Senate Joint Resolution 98:

- [SJR 98 Study Recommendations](#)
- [SJR 98 Executive Summary](#)
- [Slides - SJR 98 Study - Nov 2023](#)

Thanks to Dr. Lynnette Noblitt and Dr. Steve Barracca for their hard work on the Colonels at the Capitol Internship Program. During the 2023 legislative session, we had seven interns working with legislators. The program was so successful we asked Dr. Noblitt and Dr. Barracca to try to expand the program. In 2024, we will have 13 interns, assigned to Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate.

If you plan to visit Frankfort with students during the legislative session and need assistance with setting up meetings or logistics, feel free to call Amy Scarborough at 859-353-2104 or email amy.scarborough@eku.edu.

Winter Advantage Schedule

The EKU Winter Advantage Schedule begins the week of December 4, 2023, and will conclude on January 12, 2024. The core University hours during this period will be set at 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Thursday, with a 30-minute lunch period; all University campuses will be closed each Friday during the period. As always, supervisors will have the flexibility to alter employees' schedules for work demands and office coverage as needed.

Calendar of Events

- December 4, 2023-Winter Session Begins
- December 18, 2023-Campus Closes
- January 2, 2024-Campus Opens
- January 15, 2024-Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-Offices Closed
- January 16, 2024-Spring Session Begins

REPORT FROM THE PROVOST: Sara Zeigler

Thank A Professor Reception

The Thank a Professor reception was held last Thursday. We had 549 students submit comments via Slate to thank their professors and 398 distinct faculty members were recognized. It was a great event, but, more importantly what the students had to say was truly heartwarming. Congratulations to all the faculty who were recognized.

Academic Affairs 2023-2024 Faculty Awards

[Applications](#) for the 2023-2024 faculty awards are due by January 15. This award recognizes faculty success in three areas: teaching, leadership, and scholarship.

Update on Working Groups & Some Items from the Board of Regents Meeting

- *LMS Work Group*
The LMS working group has been very active and has closed out their work and delivered a final report. While it's too early yet to announce the chosen platform, the consensus was very clear and very strong and we are going to move forward in a way that represents what the faculty and staff told us they wanted in an LMS. An announcement should be available in the very early spring. We are allowing for a one-year transitional period. Our Blackboard contract does not end until July 2025, and if we're changing the system, we will have plenty of time to take care of that.
- *BoR Item - Academic Curriculum Drafting Team*
At the last Board meeting Regent Marion offered a motion that passed to look at our academic regulations around curriculum. A drafting team is being formed to review those regulations. John Bowes, Associate Dean of CLASS, will chair the group. This will be a faculty-dominated team. The names of the other members will be released soon. Their work will begin in January.

- *BoR Item - Sabbaticals*
In addition, the Board had asked for more data on what other institutions do in terms of Sabbaticals. Right now we're doing the data pull to determine if that needs to be followed with any modifications to the regulation. The people doing the data pull from our benchmarks are Bethany Miller, Jennifer Wies, and Matt Sabin, and the three of them will report back to me once they've gathered a little more information.
- *Working Group on Student Readiness, Student Support Needs, and Admissions Requirements*
This working group is designed to respond to some of the concerns that we've all expressed about the needs of our students and how we can ensure that we're meeting those needs and setting the students up to be successful once they get here. The group is just now getting underway and the charge is still under development. It will be co-chaired by Judy Jenkins, Rusty Carpenter, and Gill Hunter, and additional faculty will be named soon.

NEW BUSINESS:

Committee Vacancies. The following committee vacancies were filled.

Executive Committee – 1 vacancy
Senator Couvillon self-nominated.

Faculty Welfare Committee – 1 vacancy
Senator Bane self-nominated.

Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Committee – 2 vacancies
Senators Merrick and Slijepcevic self-nominated.

GENERAL & STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

REPORT FROM SENATE CHAIR: Senator Kay

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met on November 20, 2023. The committee discussed targeted scholarships for underrepresented groups with University Counsel Dana Fohl. Counsel Fohl has agreed to come to senate in the spring semester to talk about scholarships.

Regent Marion, Vice Chair Blair, and I had a “Problem Solvers” meeting with the Provost on November 16th. Some topics included online sections, class/lab fees, the travel approval process, first-day drops, the catalog, banking for student organizations, curriculum processes, and issues from the Faculty Senate Virtual Suggestion Box.

I am scheduled to meet with the President on December 14th. If there's anything particular you want me to chat with him about, please let me know.

Vice Chair Blair and I are still serving on the 8Kby28 working group, which is drafting some initial plans for increasing the number of online students enrolled at ECU to 8000 by 2028. I emailed faculty to encourage them to fill out the survey regarding ECU Online and 8Kby28. We have not seen a summary of those results yet.

The drafting team tasked with updating the Faculty Grievances Regulation has completed its work after addressing the feedback that was received during the comment period.

Vice Chair Blair and I continue to read all of the comments received via the anonymous virtual suggestion box on the Faculty Senate website, and forward suggestions to relevant individuals or committees as appropriate. We also share the comments with Provost Zeigler and Regent Marion as part of our Problem Solvers meetings. Some of the recent topics include:

- Tuition waivers
- Use of AI tools for grading
- 8Kby28
- Course evaluations

You may recall that course evaluations open at the 78% mark of the relevant term and close at the 94% of the term in order to avoid being open during finals week of the full semester, per a recommendation from the Faculty Senate a few years back.

REPORT FROM FACULTY REGENT: Senator Marion

The Board met on Wednesday, November 15. (See: [agenda](#)) First on the agenda were reports. Summaries of those reports are provided below the information pertaining to the matters on the Board's action agenda.

From the Board's action agenda, the Board took up the following:

- The Board approved [Personnel Actions](#)
- The Board approved the [Sabbatical Program Recommendations](#)
 - There was some discussion regarding the benefit of sabbaticals to the university and the process for evaluating sabbatical application. The Provost and I both spoke towards the benefit of these programs, and included within that discussion was how many sabbaticals have limited or even no cost to the university. Programs including prestigious fellowships from AAAS, ACE, NEA, and Fulbright depend upon sabbaticals. The Provost agreed to put forward a report of prior sabbatical participants, outcomes, university costs, and information on how persons may apply.
- The Board approved the [Model Lab School Policy Updates](#)
- The Board approved [Staff Emeritus status for Tim Matthews](#)
- [The Report from the Council on Academic Affairs](#) was ultimately approved but with some revision.
 - The new program (BFA in Documentary Film Production) was not included in the recommendation from CAA to the Board.
 - The *Program Closures* (Honors Certificate, Applied Creative Thinking Certificate, and MA in History) were approved by the Board. A motion to refer the MA in History closure to the Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) to vote on the matter was seconded and discussed. The motion to refer to CAA failed. Ultimately, the Board was convinced by the Provost's description of current and recent enrollment in the program, career opportunities, changes in legislation reducing the employment-related benefits of the MA History degree for Kentucky educators, and the fact that CAA voted (7-6) not to move the closure item from an informational item on their agenda to their action (voting) agenda.
 - *Board Action on New Programs, Closures/Suspensions*: A motion was made and approved by the Board charging the President and the university's administrative team to bring to the Board a revised (or new) policy or regulation for approving new programs and for program closures/suspensions. The new or revised policy/regulation would require additional stakeholder engagement and would harmonize the academic [program review](#) and [CAA procedures](#).
- The Board approved the [Honorary Degree for Dr. Aaron Thompson](#), which was presented at the commencement ceremony this last weekend.
- The Board approved the Resolution Recognizing Juan Castro's service to ECU and Kentucky.

- The Board accepted its [Annual Evaluation and Assessment of the President](#) as provided by the *ad hoc* Committee on Governance and Evaluation.
 - The annual assessment document provided an assessment of strengths and opportunities for the President as informed by the results of the [survey](#) of stakeholders prescribed by Board [procedures approved](#) for the second-year annual review.
 - The procedures and [university policy](#) indicate that next year (year 3), all faculty eligible to participate in the Faculty Regent election processes will be invited to participate in a questionnaire and process that provides feedback to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee then will use that information to develop and transmit a summary report to the President and Board of Regents.

Audit Report: The first item on the agenda was a presentation and Q&A with the external/independent auditor (Crowe LLP). There were no concerns identified in the report. Based upon feedback received, I inquired about the increase in bond-related liabilities (\$44 million year-over-year). The President confirmed these were related to the ongoing improvements in university housing. A review of the financial update included in the Board Agenda shows that housing is currently generating around \$23 million per year and is operating entirely as a self-sufficient portion of the university from housing revenues. Maintaining a robust on-campus student population in university housing will remain essential for time going forward. Chair Eaves asked if the auditor could confidently state that the audit was a ‘clean audit’, to which the auditor replied yes, it was a clean audit. The [audit report](#) was approved as part of the action agenda at the meeting.

Financial Update: Vice President Poynter presented the [Financial Update](#). The Budget office forecasted an approximate increase of \$10M in tuition and fee revenue across the whole fiscal year from enrollment growth and a modest increase in tuition revenue. Comparing the end-of-month data from September 2023 versus 2022, \$80.02 M in tuition and fee revenue was received versus \$74.95M, respectively, putting the university on track towards meeting the budget target, having increased fall semester revenue by \$5.08M year-over-year. As of the end-of-September 2023, the university also increased expenses in most areas, with scholarships and fellowships being the area where costs increased the most year-over-year.

Overall, in comparing year-over-year revenues and expenses, for all areas, including auxiliaries, the university is in a comparable if not slightly better position than the prior year. Given current state-support levels, the university budget is still very heavily driven by tuition and fee revenue. The revenues from EKU Housing increased as more beds were utilized, and demand has remained strong.

Academic Affairs Update: Dr. Zeigler, Vice President & Provost, provided an [Academic Affairs Update](#). The Provost commended faculty and academic staff for having strong four-week progress report submissions as evidence shows the timing of that feedback contributes appreciably to our retention and enrollment efforts. The Provost also provided positive remarks about the Major Expo involvement by colleges, departments, faculty, and staff that enabled over 600 exploratory students in first-year courses an opportunity to discover possible majors. The value of students having a major and a degree plan early in their college career was highlighted to the Board as another important tool for supporting students to get to graduation. Some highlighted activities were presented regarding the College of Business’s career fairs and community engagement activities, as well as the numerous ways the NOEL Studio and STEM Center are supporting students and doing so peer-to-peer. The Provost presented a Student Profile on Rosalie Richburg from Mathematics, and then shared a summary of the Thank-a-Professor recognitions by EKU students to our faculty.

Student Success (Enrollment) Update: Dr. Tanlee Wasson, Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management, provided an [enrollment update](#). The university's total enrollment was reported as approximately 15,000 students. The total number of freshmen was 2,794, presenting a 1.6% increase year-over-year. EKU Online enrollment is up 9.8%, total underrepresented minority (URM) enrollment is up 8.4%. The report also stated that Hispanic/Latino enrollment increased 17.3%. The *Eastern Progress* recently covered the topic in an article, "[Latinx retention at EKU Experiences increase](#)". Overall, EKU's Freshmen Retention rate was emphasized as vitally important to the university, which experienced 79.6% retention from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. Dr. Wasson also presented year-over-year predicted changes in enrollment for Spring 2023, showing 9.1% increases overall, 5.1% in full-time undergraduates, and 21% in EKU Online. For Fall 2024, EKU has a new freshmen goal of 3,100, and currently applications and admits are up 1% and 2%, respectively. Based upon previous presentations that approximately 50% of the freshmen population has been described as "First Gen", I asked about that population of students and how they are performing this term. Dr. Wasson reported that there was nothing alarming noted through the 4th week progress reports with this freshmen class, which as of the time of the Board meeting, was suggestive that our collective efforts as a university are working well in performing our noble mission as a school of opportunity.

Legislative Affairs Update: Amy Scarborough, Chief Government, Community, and Corporate Relations Officer, presented a [Legislative Preview](#) pertaining to Kentucky's 2024 Legislative Session to start on January 2. In brief, there are 16 alumni in the legislature. Nine legislators have sponsored EKU students as interns. EKU's Legislator Day was summarized where several Board members joined EKU's Faculty and Staff to spotlight programs with hands-on activities and live demos related to Fire Science, Nursing, Aviation, among others. EKU plans to request additional funds for Alumni Coliseum, Model Lab School, and instructional space for aviation at the airport. EKU plans to join other universities and CPE in requesting additional funds to continue "asset preservation" for addressing aging infrastructure and needed upgrades in existing facilities. EKU is asking for updates to our operating budget to account for the rising costs experienced since 2020, funds to address the substantial increase in Kentucky's increased fire/tornado insurance premiums for public assets, funding for vocational rehabilitation and related programs funded by EKU on behalf of that state program, and a per pupil appropriation for the Model Lab School.

Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and SGA Reports: The reports of the three governance organizations were provided in-person. (See: [reports](#))

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Academic Quality Committee. Senator Stevenson stated that the committee met on Monday, November 28 and discussed the trends in student grades. We obtained information through an open records request and discussed ways to analyze the data. Discussions will continue in January.

In addition, we talked about making student parents a priority and possibly offering priority registration. We plan to follow up with Robyn Moreland about this idea.

The Bartleby discussion is on hold until we find out about the LMS and how those things will integrate.

Our next meeting is January 22nd.

Budget Committee. Senator Lauk reported that the committee, along with some members of the Executive Committee, met last Monday with Barry Poynter for a budget overview. The meeting was very helpful and we would like to continue having those kinds of discussions. Therefore, we plan to ask VP Poynter and Budget Director Emily Watters for meetings in January and March, and then with the Provost in February as much of the budget formulation comes from her office. Those meetings are yet to be set.

Elections & University Nominations Committee. Senator Spira stated that the committee met two weeks ago and reviewed and closed two of the charges. One was reviewing and making some minor edits to the internal procedures. The other was the charge on updating the university committees list as that list will now be maintained and updated in Slate each year.

In addition, we also set our schedule for the spring semester.

Our primary focus next semester will be on the adjunct faculty election.

Information Technology Committee. Senator Fry reported that the committee is currently working on a poll to send to Faculty Senate asking about their experiences with IT. The next committee meeting will be in January.

Rules Committee. Senator Bishop-Ross stated that the committee last met on November 13. The committee is still collecting changes from the other standing committee on updates to their internal procedures. Those changes are due by January 31.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 19.

Faculty Welfare Committee. Senator Manning reported that the committee met with Wayne Willis from Assured Partners and discussed the reduction in deductibles, voluntary life insurance maximum, Blue Mine access, and the possible future coverage for some of the GLP-1 medications and the cost of those particular medications for certain employees. There is going to be further exploration of the GLP-1 medications as well as other things such as Telemed, mental health benefits, enhancements, fertility coverage, education on Medicare, long-term care options, substance abuse benefits, and pet insurance.

The next committee meeting is on January 17.

ADJOURNMENT:

Senator Bishop-Ross moved to adjourn, seconded by Senator Moore, at approximately 4:30pm.