

Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2025 @ 3:30pm

I. Call to Order & Meeting Minutes

A. The Senate was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Senators Present: Sandra Cox (Pres), Trent Fawcett (VP), Karen Carter, Alan Christensen, Steve Hart, Wes Jamison, Rachel Keller, Adam Larsen, Charley Roetting, Dennis Schugk, Tony Smith, Jeff Wallace, Hilary Withers

Guests: Jacob Thomas (Parliamentarian), Provost Mike Austin, Assoc. Provost David Allred, Assoc. Provost Kristi Stevens, Mike Brenchley (Deans Rep), Jessica Jones (senator-elect), Lorie Hughes (Dean), A&T Chair Danni Larsen

B. Minutes from February 26

Motion to Approve: A. Christsen; 2nd: D. Schugk
Approval: unanimous of all present

C. Availability of Senate Recordings

J. Thomas reminded senators and guests that video recordings of Senate meetings are not available to anyone who requests them. The only time videos are downloaded and sent to interested parties is if there is some pressing issue. The Senate is not subject to open meetings laws. Its only official record that is distributed freely are the minutes, once they are approved. The video is considered part of the meeting “journal” and therefore private, while the approved minutes are public-facing. Senators had no further comments or questions on this matter.

II. Senate Organization

A. **Remaining Spring 2025 Mtgs:** March 26, April 9, April 23

B. **Feed Your Senate Committees!** (S. Cox; each committee will be covered)

S. Cox reminded senators that they should offer lunch to the Senate committees on which they serve. The Office of Academic Affairs would cover costs for these meals.

C. **Updates from Division Elections**

1. **Business & Tech** - Jay Moosman
2. **Fine Arts** - No updates provided yet. Charley Roetting is eligible for election to a full term.
3. **Humanities** - Rachel Keller
4. **Science & Math** - Trent Fawcett
5. **Social Science** - Jessica Jones
6. ***Faculty Association** - No updates.

D. **At-Large Committee Elections**

1. **GE Committee:** Sannali Dittli and McKay West (Ephraim seats)
2. **College Council:** Jessica Jones is eligible for another term. Nominations are open and will close 3/28. If necessary, an election will be held after that.

E. **Senate Leadership Elections.** One person has agreed to serve as Senate President. The VP election ballot is now available until Friday at 11:59pm.

III. Administrative Updates

A. **Updates from the Office of the President**

Nothing official for the Senate at this time.

B. **Updates from the Office of Academic Affairs** (M. Austin, D. Allred, and K. Stevens)

1. *Legislative Updates.* Provost Austin provided an overview of legislative developments, beginning with [HB265](#), which requires reallocation of funds or “strategic reinvestment” in higher

education. Funds for the Foundations program, which is ending this semester, will be reappropriated to prison education. The institution is secure for the initial phase but must develop a three-year financial plan, with a formal statement due this summer. Early retirement incentive options will also be reviewed.

2. *Prison Education.* The appropriation for a Prison Director was not funded, and overall prison education funding will decline statewide. Snow College will either seek external revenue sources to fund a Prison Director or restructure the role into a Faculty Fellow position. Despite these funding challenges, the program is thriving, with plans to expand from eight courses in Fall 2024 to twelve courses per semester by Fall 2026, reaching full capacity at approximately 125 students. Four hundred are eligible, so there is significant demand. The institution aims to maintain steady offerings while securing long-term funding for a director position.

A. Larsen inquired whether the Board of Education funds prison education, to which the Provost clarified that it does not. Instead, students are vetted for eligibility through Second Chance Pell Grants, and the institution holds a contract with the Utah Department of Corrections. K. Stevens noted the department has expressed interest in supporting the program. Core funding for academic offerings in the prison comes primarily from those Pell Grant allocations.

3. *USU's Center for Civic Responsibility.* Another legislative initiative involves Utah State University receiving funding for a Center for Civic Responsibility, which will shift its curriculum toward a Western Civilization model. State legislation mandates a four-year evaluation period for curricular decisions, and while there are assurances that this is not a pilot program, its long-term impact remains uncertain. The initiative signals a legislative push toward content-heavy, Western Civ-focused education, marking a departure from the recent USHE Cicero Report's skills-based emphasis and the jobs-focused approach in Utah higher ed policy.
4. *Capital Projects.* On the capital projects front, the institution secured \$5.9 million for the Washburn Building in Richfield, with funding determined by space utilization studies. Some logistical challenges

remain, but value-engineering solutions will be explored. Additionally, the Social Science Building remains funded from last year's allocation. With these projects, the institution has received more capital funding per student than any other state school.

C. Stipends & Course Release Revision Ad Hoc Committee (T. Fawcett, D. Schugk, and M. Austin)

1. *Proposed Model.* The committee reviewed a proposed model for revising stipends and course release time for department chairs, committee chairs, and program leads. The model was developed using ten weighted criteria derived from a survey of current and past chairs. These criteria aim to provide a fair, data-driven allocation of release time, replacing the current ad hoc approach.

Under the model, the total available course release hours have increased from 174 to 183, with six departments gaining additional release time and three receiving less. No department will experience a shift greater than three credit hours up or down, and existing contracts will be honored until a chair is replaced or re-elected. Future allocations will follow the new model, with periodic adjustments as departmental structures evolve. The names of the specific departments were anonymized, even to the Provost and T. Fawcett, who designed the model.

2. *Model Coefficients.* The model accounts for various faculty responsibilities, including full-time and adjunct faculty workloads, accreditation requirements, general education enrollment, advisory board participation, and procurement card management. While some faculty questioned specific weightings, the committee emphasized that the model represents a significant improvement over the current system, which lacks transparency and consistency.
3. *Further Discussion.* A request was made to develop a simplified, publicly accessible calculator to help faculty understand how the model applies to their departments. Concerns were also raised about faculty exceeding a 15-credit release threshold, which would classify them as administrators. The committee agreed that while departments could receive additional release time, no individual should exceed the 15-credit cap. Any workload above this limit could be distributed to an associate or co-chair.

A final discussion focused on periodic evaluation of the formula. The committee agreed to revisit the model every five years, with annual reviews to ensure accuracy without making frequent structural changes.

4. *Motion & Vote.* D. Schugk moved that the model be accepted as presented. R. Keller seconded the motion. **The Senate voted unanimously in favor of the motion.**

The next step involves drafting a formal policy, which T. Fawcett agreed to write.

D. Updates from Deans Council (S. Cox, M. Brenchley)

1. *Deleting old Canvas courses.* The institution is considering deleting Canvas courses older than five years to declutter faculty course lists. A notice would be sent in advance, and sandbox courses would not be affected. Some suggested extending the timeframe to seven years, especially to retain materials from the 2020 COVID-19 era. Faculty can download course files, and a reminder email would be sent, perhaps making this length unnecessary. There was discussion about whether faculty should manually delete their own courses, though this option is currently unavailable. Concerns were raised about adjunct faculty who may not teach a course regularly, and communication efforts will specifically address their needs. The process is expected to begin in the fall.
2. *Faculty Position Reallocations.* Eight faculty positions have been vacated due to resignations or retirements. Each position, whether new or a replacement, undergoes review before being reallocated. Deans rank position requests, but final funding decisions are made by the Cabinet, which determines how many positions can be filled based on available resources. However, the Cabinet cannot reorder the ranked list. This process ensures a clear separation of powers, with Deans identifying needs and the Cabinet managing budget constraints. Conversations on this matter will continue, particularly in regards to recent funding changes.

E. College Council Updates (S. Cox)

1. During the most recent College Council meeting, Pres. McIff addressed a number of updates from the recently finished legislative session. The president also noted that there are some policies coming up for review in the next few weeks.

IV. Senate Business

A. Institutional Review Board Committee (T. Smith, W. Jamison)

1. The Senate discussed recent proposed bylaws. W. Jamison asked for any feedback. J. Thomas noted that the bylaws should specify that the IRB Committee is a committee of the Faculty Senate. Minor adjustments were discussed, including language on expedited reviews. A final draft will be sent to Staci Taylor, the Provost, and legal counsel before a formal Senate vote on the finalized version.

B. Microsoft-Only Directive & Impact on Teaching (J. Thomas, D. Allred)

1. *Discussion Background.* J. Thomas described a meeting with IT on Feb. 28; D. Allred was also present. J. Thomas outlined concerns about the proposed Microsoft-only directive, emphasizing that it is not just a technical issue but also a governance, instructional autonomy, student accessibility, and faculty workload issue. The directive, proposed by IT, aims to phase out all non-Microsoft tools in instruction and collaboration due to security concerns. However, faculty were not consulted in the decision-making process. He argued that this policy would create significant disruptions, particularly for faculty workflows and Concurrent Enrollment (CE) students who rely on Google-based devices.

J. Thomas further highlighted the difference between IT's security-first approach and faculty's need for flexibility in teaching. It also raises concerns about enforcement, stating that faculty would effectively become compliance officers, forced to monitor and reject non-Microsoft submissions. Additionally, it points out that while data security laws exist, none explicitly mandate Microsoft exclusivity. J. Thomas urged shared governance, proportional risk management, and a policy that prioritizes training and flexibility rather than strict enforcement.

2. *Senate Discussion.* There was widespread agreement that the Microsoft-only policy, as proposed, was too rigid. Provost Austin noted that while eliminating *legal risk* might seem beneficial, it could introduce significant *business risks*. In its most recent meeting, the Cabinet was largely sympathetic to this concern when the Provost addressed. Further decisions were paused until the new CFO starts April 4. Provost Austin will schedule a meeting with the CFO sometime soon after he arrives.

Concerns were raised about how the policy would impact the CE program, as many CE students use Google-based devices. A. Christensen suggested clarifying which tools were explicitly banned, discouraged, or allowed, given that many instructional materials are integrated with Google products.

3. Provost Austin emphasized that this is not solely an IT decision and that broader discussions are needed. D. Allred supported a more nuanced approach, distinguishing between major security risks (such as using personal gmail for work email) and areas where flexibility is needed. W. Jamison emphasized the importance of staff-faculty collaboration on this and all matters. A. Larsen recognized that IT leadership has been very transparent in the past few years, which he believes is a significant improvement.

C. Institutional Goals Form & Post-Tenure Review (R. Keller)

1. *Goal Streamlining for Faculty.* R. Keller discussed streamlining institutional goal-setting for faculty, which currently operates through two separate channels—A&T and the President's Office—leading to redundancy and inefficiency. Faculty expressed concerns about having to report institutional goals in multiple places, including on the Faculty Development Plan (FDP). There was broad agreement that consolidating these requirements into a single reporting location, such as the annual self-evaluation, would simplify the process. While faculty recognized the necessity of tracking institutional goals for state reporting, some felt that previous goal-setting initiatives had been top-down mandates with unclear outcomes, contributing to skepticism about their usefulness.

2. *Administrative Purpose.* The Provost explained that the President's Office aims to align faculty and staff goal-setting processes to create a unified approach, though differences in timing currently cause complications. Staff set their goals in the fall and evaluate them at year's end, whereas faculty are now being asked to set goals at the end of the academic year and report on them in their evaluations. The Cabinet ultimately wants a cohesive system where institutional goals are integrated into faculty assessments by Deans and A&T. Questions remain about how this process will evolve, but R. Keller agreed to take this feedback back to the concerned faculty for further discussion.

D. Decorum Trainings Ad Hoc Committee (T. Smith, C. Roetting, working in conjunction with Staci Taylor, Risk Manager)

No further discussion. Work will continue next year. For now, this item will be removed from future agendas.

E. Tenured Professor 5-Year Review Subcommittee (W. Jamison, A. Larsen, C. Roetting & D. Schugk from the A&T Committee)

Due to the A&T Committees efforts on this issue, which were reported on by D. Larsen in the previous Senate meeting, the subcommittee has completed its work and recommended disbandment. No further action was needed, and senators expressed gratitude for their efforts.

F. Curriculum Committee (T. Fawcett)

No further report.

G. Supporting Adjunct Faculty Subcommittee (H. Withers)

No further report.

H. Improved Training for Committee Chairs

1. *Background.* Many Senate committee chairs feel underprepared for their roles, often left to figure things out as they go. While some departments provide informal mentoring, the lack of structured training contributes to confusion, particularly as responsibilities evolve. Faculty suggested implementing a mentorship or shadowing system for incoming chairs, similar to department

leadership transitions, to provide guidance before they officially take on the role.

2. *Subcommittee Formation.* To address these concerns, a subcommittee was formed, led by Steve Hart with Rachel Keller and Alan Christensen as members. They plan to develop optional training sessions focused on leadership, communication, and handling difficult faculty situations. The goal is to offer targeted support and resources, with an emphasis on committee chairs while also encouraging mentoring for department chairs.

V. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: T. Smith; 2nd: T. Fawcett

Approval: unanimous of all senators present

The Senate adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

The next Senate meeting will be held on **Wednesday, March 26, 2025 from 3:30-5:00 p.m.** in the Academy Room, Noyes Building.

Minutes by Jacob L. Thomas

Approved: March 26, 2025