

JOURNAL OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The University of Oklahoma (Norman Campus)

Regular session – October 9, 2023 – 3:30 p.m.

Thurman J White Forum Building – Conference Room B

Office: Chemistry Building, Room 207 | Phone: 405-325-6789

Email: FacSen@ou.edu | Website <https://www.ou.edu/facultysenate>*Note: The remarks of the Senators and others are summarized and not verbatim*

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm by Chair Heyck. Senators were asked to read the [Land Acknowledgment](#) on the screen.

PRESENT: Beaulieu (1), Bolino (0), Burns (0), Cavazos (1), Cuccia (0), Cytacki (0), Deacon (0), Demir (0), Fithian (0), Fuenzalida (0), Furtado (0), Gibson (0), Grigo (0), Hill (0), Hott (0), Hougen (0), Jones (0), Kibbey (0), Kraus Steffensen (0), Lamothe, M. (0), Lamothe, S. (0), Larson (0), Lifset (0), Livingood (0), Litov, (0) Lu (0), Lungmus (0), Malestein (0), McLeod (0), Muraleetharan (0), Neeson (0), Nelson (0), Nicholson (0), Nollert (0), Pepper (0), Rai (0), Saho (0), Schmeltzer (0), Scrivener (0), Sharma (0), Tracy (0), Warnken (0), Young (0), Weaver (0)

FS Chair: Hunter Heyck

FS Chair-elect: Lori Jervis

FS Secretary: Sarah Robbins

FS Executive Committee Members (Non-senators): Rokhsana Alavi-Robb, Darren Purcell

FS Administrative Manager: Ann Seely

FS Student Worker: Taylor Fleming

Guests: Stewart Berkinshaw, Marcy Fleming, and Emily Pierce

ABSENT: Abramson (1), Benjamin (1), Busselle (1), Kang (1), Leseney (1)

Note: During the period from June 2023 to May 2024, the Senate holds eight regular sessions. The figures in parentheses above indicate the number of absences.

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APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

The Faculty Senate Journal for the regular meeting of September 18, 2023 was approved with revisions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Senate is sad to note the passing of Professor Irv Wagner, Professor of Music at OU for more than 50 years, on September 15, 2023.

Save the Date: The Shared Governance Reception will be Monday, January 22, 2024 at 3 p.m. in Bizzell Memorial Library, Scholars Lounge, Lower Level 2. More details to come.

SENATE CHAIR'S REPORT, by Chair Heyck

The report was distributed via email. Chair Heyck highlighted the large enrollment class and the challenges it poses. He also called attention to the item regarding training for chairs and directors. Chair Heyck opened the floor to questions. Sen. Muraleetharan asked about faculty involvement in conversations about the changes to scheduling of classes, classroom shortages, etc. Chair Heyck encouraged senators to send the Faculty Senate Executive Committee their questions and concerns. Chair Heyck will be meeting with Dean Hewes about the increasing cost of graduate assistant tuition waivers.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE FACULTY APPEALS BOARD, ABROGATION OF TENURE, TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT, AND SEVERE SANCTIONS POLICIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, NORMAN CAMPUS

Proposed revisions were redistributed via email. Given the number of concerns raised, the senate did not vote on the policy in October as further deliberation was needed. Chair Heyck opened the floor to questions. Sen. Nelson thanked the individuals involved in the revision of the policy and procedures; she recommended that we review the policy to minimize opportunities for retaliation, including timelines for accomplishing tasks. Sen. Muraleetharan shared detailed thoughts via email; those should be circulated to senators. Whenever a policy changes, the original policy should be circulated and compare it to the recommended changes. He indicated there are legitimate concerns; changes could be made incrementally rather than as sweeping revisions. He also recommended that we understand the problems we are trying to solve with the recommended changes. Chair Heyck indicated that these changes are being made at the same time the university is creating a policy database so a lot of language has been modified to fit the new policy formatting and wording. Sen. Rai indicated that FRAC usually meets after the term of the Faculty Appeals Board (FAB) chair, but given changes to administration those meetings did not happen. The previous chairs of FAB have seen issues with the policies, but it is not necessarily the issues addressed by the revisions. It is unclear why these changes are being made, and he feels we should not vote on the revisions until the rationale has been clarified by OU Legal. Sen. Burns indicated that these procedures and policies only work as well as the individuals involved but there are considerable power differentials in this situation. The preamble should indicate this is to be used rarely and only in extraordinary circumstances. We rely on people to behave in good faith. Sen. Malestein read both the original policy and the proposed policy and did think a line by line comparison would be difficult. The FAB is supposed to protect our rights; it does not make sense to vote on something that limits those rights. This is an extreme measure for something that rarely happens. Sen. Nelson has chaired the FAB, and the cases she handled ran smoothly. These revisions seem to be oppressive to the faculty. Sen. Litov talked to constituents at the College of Business who were not supportive of the changes; we must install a mechanism to control the power. We need more thought on a checks and balances mechanism, specifically with the non-disciplinary termination. Chair Heyck would like to separate the discussion to procedural changes and to the non-disciplinary termination.

REMARKS BY STEWART BERKINSHAW, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUDGET & FINANCE (NORMAN), EMILY PIERCE, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE, AND MARCY FLEMING, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES REGARDING UPCOMING TRANSITION TO BIWEEKLY PAYROLL

Associate Vice President Berkinshaw discussed the move to a biweekly payroll schedule for all employees. The move to this pay schedule should reduce errors in pay. Those on a 12-month schedule will transition in April 2024. Those who are on a 9-month contract will shift in August 2024. This shift will standardize OU-Norman with OU-Health Sciences Center. The OU Federal Credit Union will be offering 1 year, 0% interest loans for 1-month of salary to assist with the transition. OU will also be offering financial planning workshops to help with budgeting. Links to the training will be available through the HR training calendar. Faculty should have received an email outlining the details of the transition tailored for their situation. They are also holding meetings with colleges and departments. The slides will be distributed to senators; senators are encouraged to email OUHR (paydaychange@ou.edu) with questions specific to their particular situation.

Chair Heyck opened the floor to questions. Sen. Nelson asked about the first table shown and a “no benefits” comment. There are two benefit premium holidays throughout the year in the biweekly schedule. Sen. Kibbey asked about the first paycheck vs. contract date. AVP Berkinshaw indicated this is a payroll calendar that differs from your contract. Sen. Kibbey asked how summer salary would be handled; summer salary will not be impacted in 2024. Sen. Livingood asked for an email that would show the withholdings. Ms. Pierce indicated they are directing people to external sites to model withholdings for their unique situation. Ms. Fleming indicated that the benefits deductions will be taken out of the first two paychecks of the month. Tax withholdings are already set to be split over the biweekly pay schedule; if you have a set dollar amount withheld for taxes in each paycheck, you will want to revise what is withheld. Sen. Livingood indicated it is clear that the 12-month transition is well-thought; why can faculty not cash out extended sick leave? AVP Berkinshaw indicated that for faculty there is less impact; it is a cash flow issue for faculty but they will be made whole by the end of the academic year. 12-month personnel would not be made whole until they leave the university. Sen. Jones is concerned about the cash flow issue for graduate assistants who start in August. AVP Berkinshaw indicated that we are working on a pay program for graduate assistants that would start in July; this will be announced soon. They are also working with apartments in the area to see if it would be problematic offering relief if asked. They will also be meeting with graduate students to help ease the transition. Ms. Fleming added that the month loan at the credit union is also available to graduate students, even new hires and international graduate students. Sen. Litov asked about the OU Federal Credit Union loans; the terms and conditions will be distributed. Sen. Furtado asked about retirement withholdings. Ms. Fleming indicated retirement will be taken out of every paycheck. Chair Heyck indicated people are concerned they do not receive the same amount of money each month. AVP Berkinshaw indicated that many on campus are already on this model and prefer the pay frequency. The planning seminars can help people with the planning and budgeting. Ms. Fleming indicated that we must comply with state options on payroll cycles. They can provide letters to creditors to help with the transition. Sen. Schmeltzer inquired about how this compares to what other universities are doing across the country. AVP Berkinshaw indicated that they have looked at a number of other universities, and it varies greatly. This is an attempt to make the university processes better; we are reducing the number of pay runs each year. Sen. Kibbey asked if the dates would be the same every year; the dates do vary by year. Sen. S. Lamothe asked about the benefits holiday for health benefits discussed at the September faculty senate meeting; that is separate from the payroll change. Ms. Fleming indicated that this will happen during the monthly pay period; the date has not yet been determined. AVP Berkinshaw reminded senators that they are happy to visit departments and colleges if invited.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Heyck opened the floor for new business. Sen. Schmeltzer has if the Senate has been advised about the delay from the Provost's office to approve shifts from 124 to 120 credit hours for the programs. Chair Heyck indicated we would follow-up with the provost and Mark Morvant. Chair Heyck asked if others were experiencing delays and that senators should let the executive committee know if they are experiencing delays.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm. The next regularly scheduled Faculty Senate Meeting will be held on November 13, 2023 at 3:30 pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Robbins". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Sarah Robbins
2023-24 Faculty Senate Secretary