

Auburn University Senate
October 15, 2024
3:30 p.m.
Via Zoom: <https://aub.ie/senatezoom>

Minutes

Meeting was called to order by Senate Chair, Lori Eckhardt, at 3:30 p.m.

Establish a Quorum

The attendance vote was opened and quorum was established with 52 members present as of 3:33 p.m. When the quorum vote closed at the end of the meeting, 74 Senators or substitutes had responded present. [Senate Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2024](#) were approved by unanimous consent.

Remarks and Announcements

University Senate Chair: Lori Eckhardt

The Senate website is undergoing a redesign and the executive committee is seeking input from all who use the site. Please share your feedback via this survey (https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6DKbtvHfnUoPIaO) by October 25, 2024.

The 2024 Faculty Award winners were announced in Auburn News this morning. The Senate's current Immediate Past Chair, Lisa Kensler, has received the President's Award for Distinguished Faculty Leadership. Congratulations to Dr. Kensler!

President: Chris Roberts

There were some questions after Hurricane Helene and President Roberts wanted to share some aspects of the decision-making process for these situations. Thanks to relationships with the National Weather Service in Birmingham, the university had access to experts and up-to-date information regarding severe weather risks. President Roberts emphasized that the safety of Auburn faculty, staff, and students is always at the forefront of decision making.

The President's team receives monthly updates on the economic outlook for the state of Alabama. While overall the numbers look okay, two of the largest revenues in the education trust fund are combined to be about \$44 million less than they were in the prior year based on individual income tax and sales. Auburn will be okay for FY25 because of rainy day funds and how those calculations are averaged, but we should be vigilant on how we increase our revenue and keep an eye on spending for FY26. Diversifying and increasing revenue streams through mission critical activities continues to be a priority.

Total research extramural awards for FY25 was an all-time high of \$344 million. This is a record for the university and the 15% increase over FY23 indicates the goal to double research output is quite feasible. The advancement team also had a good year moving the university forward and increasing those revenue streams. Auburn Advancement set a fundraising record by securing \$220.5 million in new philanthropic commitments. This came from 29,360 donors who supported 46 different programs/new funds. This exceeded previous fundraising record by more than 8 million dollars.

President Roberts stressed the importance of shared governance, noting that senior leadership meets regularly with various governance groups. Student Government Association (SGA) is an exceptionally run organization. Faculty, Staff, and A&P leaders recently observed SGA leadership meeting. This was an example to learn about and from one another. Likewise, the Senate leaders hosted the senate leadership from South Alabama last week, which allowed the two groups to learn from each other and share best practices.

The new strategic plan—Grounded and Groundbreaking—was released on October 7th. Grounded and groundbreaking are two words that summarize Auburn quite well. Unit level plans and goals are being crafted now to support the strategic plan.

Provost: Vini Nathan

Provost Nathan extended kudos to Dean Newschwander and all the faculty, staff, students, and alumni in the College of Nursing. Last year, the College of Nursing was ranked in the top 10% (67th of 681) of nursing programs nationally. This year the college is ranked at 54 out of 686 programs – in the top 8%. This doesn't come without persistent excellence.

Nathan reminded everyone that earlier today the recipients of this year's Faculty Awards were announced. There will be a celebration later in November.

Nathan reminded everyone that the Board of Trustees charged President Roberts at its February meeting with conducting a comprehensive analysis of faculty compensation, workload, and productivity. Nathan started conversation with four separate firms, but none are set up to do all three pieces; they are more suited to looking at compensation and looking at national, regional, and other peer metrics. Workload and productivity is localized, and a hybrid effort will be required: an external firm working on the compensation piece and one or two nested working groups working alongside them on the other two pieces of workload and productivity. There will be two levels of committees—a steering working group of about 7 folks and larger group called the advisory group of about 13 folks. The steering group will have a significant role in talking to the consultant firms and determining which one needs to be shortlisted or selected. The steering working group will be led by Norman Godwin, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, and Cathleen Erwin, Department Chair of Political Science, as co-chairs. Other members include Jeff Fairbrother, Dean of the College of Education; Allan David, Associate Dean for Research from the Ginn College of Engineering; Salisa Westrick, Department Head of Health Outcomes, Research and Policy in the Harrison College of Pharmacy (also a member of the University Budget Advisory Committee); Wes Collins, faculty member from the College of Architecture, Design and Construction (also member of the Senate Faculty Salaries and Welfare Committee); and Luke Oeding, faculty member from the College of Sciences and Mathematics (also President of the Auburn University chapter of the AAUP).

Nathan will share names of the members of the larger advisory group through her monthly newsletter; there will be 13 members, one from each of the twelve colleges and one from the Libraries. Kelli Shomaker and Nathan will be ex officio of the entire effort and will be assisted by Bryan Elmore, Amanda Malone, and Matt Campbell.

There was an update on a dean-level change. Paul Patterson, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES), will be stepping down from these roles effective January 1, 2025. There will be an internal search for an interim dean and director of AAES, which will be chaired by Mario Eden. A search advisory committee has been established. Today is the deadline for receiving internal candidates. In next couple of weeks a search advisory committee for the permanent dean and director position will be filled out. This national search will use the search firm Breckenridge Partners to assist with the process.

Another dean search is also being conducted at this time. That position is for the Dean of the College of Nursing, and the search committee is being chaired by Jason Hicks, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

Several reminders about faculty recognition and events: On October 17th, there will be an Endowed Faculty Reception. Next Tuesday, there will be a University Faculty Meeting, at which Kelli Shomaker and Nathan will provide a budget presentation as previously requested by the Senate. Next Tuesday immediately after the faculty meeting, Eileen Garvin, author of this year's common book *The Music of Bees*, will be on campus. Faculty awards were announced today and will be presented on November 19th. The deadline for Professional Improvement Leave proposals (for the academic year 2025-2026) is November 22nd. There will be 3 graduation ceremonies in December – Saturday, December 15th at 8 am, 1 pm, and 6 pm. Gerald Pouncey, a graduate of the College of Engineering, will be the speaker for all 3 ceremonies. Charles Gavin will be recognized with an honorary doctorate at the engineering ceremony that evening.

Questions

Liliana Stern, Senator from Economics: We have observed some abnormal raises for administrators this summer (general counsel received a close to \$60k raise), and also some faculty in my department received raises which are not explained by rank/promotion. How and why is this still happening?

Roberts indicated that he would not discuss an individual person's raise in a public forum but noted that he was being careful in decision making and using funds strategically. He added that sometimes that involves rewarding and retaining excellent people and mentioned that the university has defined processes for raises.

Nathan noted that the Senator brought up two examples, one of which was regarding a faculty member in the College of Liberal Arts. She stated that both she and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts have received an email asking that question, and that the dean has a response. Nathan asked the Senator to receive that background and response from the Dean, rather than asking her to present it at an open forum of the Senate.

Action Items

Voting on Nominees to Senate Committees

Presenter: Jaena Alabi

[nominee to Senate Committee](#) (pdf)

Voting Results: 64 yes / 2 no / 4 abstain

Nominee was approved.

Voting on motion to change name and description of Senate DEI Committee

*Requires a 2/3 vote of the Senate body

Presenter: Soledad Peresin

[DEI motion](#) (pdf)

Peresin, chair of the DEI committee presented the motion again. The floor was opened for discussion. Sunny Stalter-Pace, Senator from English, thanked the committee for its work in revising the description and charge rather than dissolving it.

Voting Results: 63 yes / 4 no / 3 abstain

Motion passed.

Information Items

Facilities Update

Presenter: Jim Carroll, Associate Vice President Facilities Management

[Facilities Update slides](#) (pdf)

Carroll narrated a video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yqDjiq-HH4>) that highlighted a number of recently completed or in progress construction projects on campus. Some of the projects included the Parkerson Mill Greenway, College of Education building, Plainsman Park improvements, Recreation and Wellness Center renovation, Stem + Ag Complex, Lowder Hall advising suite, Little and Teague residence hall renovations and construction of a new residence hall on the Haley Concourse, North End Zone project at the stadium, chilled water plant at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Kreher Preserve and Nature Center's new environmental education building, and a sciences lab building at AUM.

Other Board of Trustees-approved projects include a build out of the amphitheater at the Gogue Performing Arts Center and an events center addition to the president's house (re replace the tent structure that currently exists). There were two more updates with regard to facilities operations – a new custodial contract was signed with ABM, which resulted in slightly higher wages for staff and no decrease in service level and cleaning frequency; also, there is a service center model change where units will be charged a percentage instead of hourly fees for architectural and design services.

Questions

Steph Shepherd, Senator from Geosciences: With future buildings, is there any discussion about the student experience and making sure there are spaces for undergraduates in these buildings?

Carroll noted that as the university is programming buildings, they are evaluating where student connections and student spaces are. Facilities is trying to get student spaces in almost every building, though there may be more or less student space in a particular facility depending on its goal/purposes

Sara Wolfe, Senator from Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology: What is the service center model?

Carroll: The service center is not necessarily a physical location on campus. It is a model that Facilities uses to cover costs of salaries and benefits for those involved with planning, design, and construction of buildings (typically within facilities management). A portion of staff within Facilities Management work within a service center model.

Historically, Facilities used to charge an hourly rate to work on design and construction projects. The change means units will now be charged a flat rate (a percentage of the overall cost) for these services.

Business Modernization Plan

Presenter: Charles Hunt, Director of Enterprise Systems

[Business Modernization Plan](#) (pdf)

Hunt shared information about the Business Modernization Program, which was commissioned by President Roberts and mentioned in the strategic plan. It began in early 2024 and currently has no planned end date. Business modernization can include improving student experience or how students interact with systems, or optimizing business processes that are used in human resources, finance, or student administrative areas. The goal is to look for opportunities to streamline and increase efficiency in day-to-day processes. Last fall, the university engaged Deloitte consulting to conduct an overall assessment of business practices and used of technology within those practices. Some of the suggested improvements and pain points include better access to data and reporting; improved decision-making; improved student, faculty, and staff experience (including admissions process, scholarship applications, registration, financial aid, learning management, pre-employment onboarding, benefits selection, etc.); streamlined business processes; and increased efficiency.

Hunt shared details on the program's guiding principles and structure. From the Deloitte assessment, 23 initiatives were identified. These fall into several broad categories: ERP (Banner), Administrative Operations, Information Technology, and Cybersecurity. Notable projects currently in-flight include conducting an ERB (Banner) strategy (i.e., Can Banner meet future needs?); enhancing experience – one of the small wins is the new AU Access portal (the old portal was no longer supported), which is card-based and mobile-friendly; implementation of a new identity and access management system; modernizing the timekeeping system (in progress); and deprecating in-house-developed travel and expense system (currently evaluating options for vendor-based solution).

Hunt encouraged people to visit the website for more detailed information: <https://aub.ie/modernization> and welcomed feedback at modernization@auburn.edu.

Questions

Sara Wolf, Senator from Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology: The business modernization steering committee membership has a very administrator-heavy roster with only 2 faculty members and 1 student. What is the strategy for ensuring a balanced input and perspective from faculty and students is received given imbalance of steering committee?

Hunt noted that the SGA president and deans of colleges from across the university are included, but he can bring that forward and entertain adding more people from across the university if needed. The downside is that too many members makes it hard to get people together to meet, but Hunt said the can look at options to adjust the membership.

New Business

Lori Eckhardt, Senate Chair

None.

Adjournment

Lori Eckhardt, Senate Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 4:38 pm.

Attendance

Senate Officers

Lori Eckhardt

Virginia Davis

Jaena Alabi

Rachel Prado

Lisa Kensler Immediate Past-Chair

Chair

Chair-elect

Secretary

Secretary-elect

Administration

Rob Wellbaum

Dan Surry sub for

Leigh Ann Ross

Susan Hubbard

Jennifer Mueller Phillips

Jason Hicks

Mario Eden

Ed Thomas

Joffrey Gaymon

Steven Taylor

VP for Development

Dean, Harrison College of Pharmacy

Dean, College of Human Sciences

Dean, Harbert College of Business

Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dean, College of Engineering

Dean, COSAM

VP Enrollment Mgmt.

VP of Research

Ex-Officio Members

Vini Nathan

Esther Akinrinde

Thomas Sawyer

Andrew Pendola [Rules appt.]

Tom Leathem [Pres. appt.]

Octavia Tripp [Rules appt.]

J Brian Anderson [Pres. appt.]

Provost

GSC President

A&P Assembly Chair

Steering Committee

Steering Committee

Steering Committee

Steering Committee

Absent without substitute:

Shali Zhang

Jack Hilton

Dean of Libraries

SGA President

Senators by Departments

Xu (Joyce) Cheng

Roy Hartfield

Wendiam Sawadgo

Vinicia Biancardi [2nd]

Paul Dyce

Kevin Moore [2nd]

Sara Gevurtz sub for

Lauren Woods

Russ Chesser

Rebecca Riggs

David Blersch [2nd]

Elizabeth Lipke

Evert Duin

Kevin Smith

Sanjeev Baskiyar

Jung Eun Lee

Jesus Tirado sub for

Christopher Clemons

Murali Dhanasekaran

Liliana Stern [2nd]

Sara Wolf

Accountancy

Aerospace Engineering

Ag Economics & Rural Sociology

Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology

Animal Sciences

Architecture

Art

Aviation

Biological Sciences

Biosystems Engineering

Chemical Engineering

Chemistry and Biochemistry

Communication and Journalism

Computer Science & Software Engineering

Consumer & Design Sciences

Curriculum & Teaching

Drug Discovery and Development

Economics

Educational Foundations, Leadership & Technology

Michael Baginski [2nd]
 Sunny Stalter-Pace
 John Beckmann [2nd]
 Nathan Whelan [2nd]
 Robert Gitzen-[rpl]
 Steph Shepherd
 Jan Kavookjian
 Zachary Schulz [2nd]
 Elina Coneva
 Clark Danderson-[rpl]
 Diana Samek-[rpl]
 Rich Sesek [2nd]
 Christopher (Brooks) Mobley
 Kasia Leousis [2nd]
 Liesl Wesson
 Jeremy Wolter [2nd]
 Hans Werner van Wyk
 Nicholasa Tsolas sub for
 Sabit Adanur [2nd]
 Chris Martin [2nd]
 Kevin Huggins
 Anna Margaret Goldman
 Katherine Horzmann
 Lena McDowell [2nd]
 Spencer Goidel
 Amit Morey
 Alejandro A. Lazarte-
 LTC Michael Quinn
 LTC Laura Fryar
 Danilea Werner
 Latifat Cabirou
 Gregory Spray
 David Strickland [2nd]
 Adrienne Wilson
 Chance Armstrong
 Evelyne Bornier sub for
 Kerri Munoz

Absent without substitute:

Kimberly McCadden
 Geni Payne
 Jeff Kim
 Regina Gramling
 Joel Hayworth [2nd]
 David Han [2nd]
 David Cicero
 David Smith
 Lee Johnson
 David Miller
 Luca Guazzotto [2nd]
 Captain Michael Witherspoon

Electrical & Computer Engineering
 English
 Entomology & Plant Pathology
 Fisheries & Allied Aquaculture
 Forestry, Wildlife, and the Environment
 Geosciences
 Health Outcomes Research and Policy
 History
 Horticulture
 Hospitality Mgmt.
 Human Development & Family Studies
 Industrial and Systems Engineering
 Kinesiology
 Libraries
 Management and Entrepreneurship
 Marketing
 Mathematics and Statistics
 Mechanical Engineering
 Nursing
 Nutritional Sciences
 Outreach
 Pathobiology
 Pharmacy Practice
 Political Science
 Poultry Science
 Psychology
 ROTC Air Force
 ROTC Army
 Socio/Anthro/Social Work
 Special Ed. Rehab. Counseling/School Psych
 Speech Language and Hearing Sciences
 Supply Chain Management (new)
 Theatre and Dance
 Veterinary Clinical Sciences
 World Lang & Literatures

Staff Council Chair
 ACES
 Building Sciences
 Business Analytics and Information Systems
 Civil Engineering
 Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences
 Finance
 Industrial Design
 Music
 Philosophy
 Physics
 ROTC Naval