

Senate Steering Meeting
September 10, 2024
3:30 p.m.
107 Samford

Present: Lori Eckhardt (Chair), Jaena Alabi (Secretary), Virginia Davis (Chair-Elect), Rachel Prado (Secretary-Elect), Lisa Kensler (Immediate Past Chair), Vini Nathan (Provost), Andrew Pendola (Rules Appointee), J. Brian Anderson (Presidential Appointee), L. Octavia Tripp (Rules Appointee), Tom Leathem (Presidential Appointee)

Absent: none

Special Guests: Steve Pelham, Associate Vice Provost for Economic Development and Chair Childcare Task Force; Kerry Inger, Professor, Harbert College of Business and Co-Chair Strategic Planning Committee; Soledad Peresin, Associate Professor, Forestry, Wildlife and Environment and Chair Senate DEI Committee (via zoom); Chris Basgier, Director of University Writing and Co-Chair Senate University Writing Committee; Allison Batts, Senate Parliamentarian; Laura Kloberg, Administrative Assistant; Norman Godwin, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs

Mission: The Steering Committee acts on behalf of the AU Senate on matters requiring attention between meetings of that body and assists the chair of the Senate in setting the agenda for Senate meetings. In addition, it is concerned with the academic affairs of the University, with particular attention given to the need for developing and recommending policies under which these affairs are conducted. It works closely with other Senate committees to aid them in their assignments.

Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm by Lori Eckhardt, Chair.
Guests were welcomed and all present provided introductions.

[Minutes from the August 20, 2024 Steering](#) Committee Meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

Announcements

Provost Nathan noted that she would have some announcements and remarks for the Senate meeting but did not have any to share at this time.

Action Item Presentations

DEI Committee: Soledad Peresin, Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee presented a motion to revise the committee's name and charge. After much discussion amongst committee members, they believe the revised name and charge better reflect the committee's work and is more in alignment with the university's new strategic plan.

University Writing Committee: Chris Basgier, Co-Chair of the University Writing Committee gave a brief presentation on the committee's work. He mentioned the previous Writing Plan Initiative, which was in place from 2011 to 2021, and which allowed the committee to gain a more comprehensive picture of what was happening across campus with undergraduate writing. The committee is now interested in focusing on departmental-level integration of writing and is offering a new certification for Writing Enriched (WE) courses. Courses approved for the WE certification will receive a course registration tag, which will make writing more visible across the curriculum, easily codify high impact teaching practices for annual reviews, and connect these courses to institutional data. So far there have been 31 total courses certified across 18 departments. Next steps: get at least 1 writing enriched certified course in every major on campus. This is a goal, not a mandate. Basgier and the University Writing Committee hope to identify courses that already exist by requesting faculty complete a quick survey by October 17th so these courses can be marked in time for the opening of spring course registration.

There were some questions about whether students were actively looking for (or avoiding) courses marked as writing enriched. Basgier noted that there's no evidence at this point to indicate that is happening. It was also

suggested that some students may appreciate knowing that their grade won't be determined solely by exams. There was another question about whether graduate courses would also be included in this initiative. Basgier responded that the committee is only reviewing undergraduate courses at this time, but his office does support graduate courses and programs as well.

Rules Committee Assignments: Jaena Alabi shared the names of several faculty members who have been approved by the Rules Committee to serve on several Senate Committees.

Information Items

Childcare Task Force Update: Steve Pelham, Chair of the Childcare Task Force provided information on how this committee was established – an outcome from an AAUP Executive Committee report in Fall 2023 – and what progress has been made since the group's first meeting December 2023. He noted that President Roberts sees the issue broadly as an economic development issue. Pelham noted that the subject matter is not unique to Auburn, Lee County, or the state; it is universal across the nation. Alabama has good economic numbers, good unemployment numbers, and growth, but a low labor force participation rate (which is common across the Southeast). He mentioned four factors that affect labor force participation, one of which is childcare. The state legislature passed a package of bills called Working Alabama, which covered a lot of things, including childcare. A number of acts that provide assistance to individuals, companies, and childcare providers were passed and signed into law, mostly done through tax credits. The Childcare Task Force was created about a year ago and has 19 members, including representatives from two of the largest employers in the county (Auburn University and East Alabama Medical Center), as well as others. The committee includes those outside the university committee because this is not just a university issue but a community issue. They've held 4 meetings since December 2023. They've had good participation and good work. The governor's office came and made a presentation and the proposals that became the Working Alabama package. They've created subcommittees and in July gave an interim report to President Roberts. One of the key recommendations is to conduct a detailed market study in Lee County, with the City of Auburn as a partner. The scope is being developed and a vendor will be identified. This type of analysis is fairly expensive (\$40-50k), but the city and university will share the cost. The committee will continue working with a goal of providing final report—one that includes actions that could be considered down the road—to President Roberts in December before the holiday break.

Strategic Plan Update: Kerry Inger, Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee shared a presentation of the university's 10-year strategic plan, which received Board approval on September 6th. The strategic plan is in the final planning stages and moving toward implementation. At the June 2024 Senate Meeting, the committee presented the plan's 5 broad goals and shared sub-goals. This presentation included information about key performance indicators (KPIs) that have been developed. There are 85 KPIs. Inger went through each goal and its sub-goals and pointed out various KPIs assigned to each. She also discussed timeline and next steps, which include sharing the plan more broadly with the campus community, advisory boards, and alumni groups. The final plan will be posted to the President's website. Inger noted that this is a living document, that some KPIs will be reported annually when possible, and there will be ongoing assessment, review, and refreshing of the plan. Units will begin drafting their own plans with a goal of having those completed by December next year. Steering members noted that this is an information-rich presentation and provided recommendations for condensing some content, noting themes, and highlighting one or two KPIs for each goal.

Senator Orientation Evaluation: Jaena Alabi, Secretary, shared the results of the Senator Orientation Evaluation survey.

Approval of the September 17, 2024 Senate Agenda

Draft agenda was approved.

Unfinished or New Business

None.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.