



Minutes from Faculty Senate Meeting Friday, January 12, 2024

Members Present:

COASN – Dr. Curtis Bensch, Judy Unruh (proxy for Dr. Kristy Calloway), Tenoch Ramon

COAE – Dr. Marjory Hall, Dr. Jarrett Kaufman, Stacy Norquist

COBT – Vicki Pasque, Hue Helms

Call meeting to order:

- Meeting called to order by Dr. Bensch at 12:00 PM. Several faculty also attended the meeting in person and remotely via online Teams.

Reading / Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes from previous December 8, 2023 meeting reviewed. Motion to approve minutes by Tenoch Ramon and seconded by Vicki Pasque. Minutes approved.

Unfinished/Old Business:

- Faculty Senate reviewed and discussed motions and resolutions that Faculty Senate passed during the fall semester and the email responses from Dr. Billiot and Dr. Dinger (see attached).
 - Consensus that the email responses from administration were lacking and further explanation and feedback needed for clarification of some responses.
- Lengthy discussion of the ongoing Faculty Credentials process with both faculty senate members and attending non-faculty senate members participating in the discussion. General consensus was that the OPSU administration and the faculty credentials committee made several miscalculations and that the handling of the faculty credentials process has been poorly managed and not applied fairly to all faculty across the campus. Discussion of email from Dr. Dinger about a proposed tuition reimbursement policy (see attached).
- Tenoch Ramon moved that a face-to-face meeting be requested with Dr. Billiot and Dr. Dinger to further discuss these concerns. Dr. Kaufman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

- Enrollment statistics Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 were discussed. Senate members reviewed enrollment data from the Board of Regents (<https://okhighered.org/studies-reports/enrollment>) showing a significant decline in enrollment and credit hours over the recent semesters. A lengthy discussion followed related to possible causes and possible consequences for OPSU related to this decline in numbers.
 - Discussion only, no action taken.

- Changes and possible changes to departmental programs and chairs. A discussion followed about the reasons for possible elimination of programs, as well as the detrimental effects of eliminating programs.
 - Discussion only, no action taken.
- Changing time off for faculty at end of Fall and Spring semesters. Discussion focused on concern regarding lack of communication from administration and the lack of details and plans. Dr. Kaufman said that he was told by Dean Lewis that faculty are to be “available” but do not necessarily have to be in the office during these times.
 - Discussion only, no action taken.

Other Business:

- Concerns were voiced by faculty senate members and attending non-member faculty regarding the sustainability of OPSU under the current administration. Following the discussion, the following motion was made.

“Whereas enrollment has declined significantly; Whereas leadership has been ineffective in growing the university; Whereas community support is declining; Whereas morale of faculty has significantly declined; I hereby move that Faculty Senate conduct a vote of no confidence for the executive leadership of the university to include Dr. Julie Dinger, President and Dr. Theresa Billiot, Vice President of Academics and Student Affairs. Believing their continued leadership is detrimental to the sustainability of Oklahoma Panhandle State University”.

- The motion was seconded and discussion followed.
- A secret vote was taken with each member of the Faculty Senate using an index card, marking the card with a “Yes” or “No”.
 - “Yes” vote indicating the senator is in favor of putting forth a vote of no confidence to full-time faculty.
 - “No” vote indicating the senator not in favor of putting forth a vote of no confidence to full-time faculty.
- Dr. Bensch counted the votes in front of the senators. The motion passed with Yes votes (5), and No votes (2).
- A Faculty Senate meeting was scheduled for Friday, Jan 19, 2024 in SAB 202 at 12:00 noon, a special session of the Faculty Senate to meet and discuss details of how a no confidence referendum could be conducted.

Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Dr. Billiot,

I would like to know if there has been any action taken or any updates regarding the motions and resolutions from Faculty Senate (listed below). I desire to update the Faculty Senate on Friday.

1. Faculty handbook committee consisting of only faculty members including chair.
2. Dr. Maille moved that one faculty member selected by their peers from each college serve on the HLC Credentials Committee. Jarrett Kaufmann seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Dr. Hall recommended that Department Chairs evaluate syllabi each semester to be sure that full- and part-time faculty, including adjuncts, meet all the requirements. Dr. Kaufmann seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Vicki Pasque moved that syllabi be submitted to the Department Chair on the first Friday of the first week of classes. Department chairs have 1 week to approve or complete the required necessary changes and follow appropriate processes after approved. Dr. Maille second. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Faculty resolution. Dr Maille moved: Faculty Senate recommends that the decision to offer HyFlex should be left solely to the individual faculty instructor in consultation with the department chair, considering discipline-specific needs and student experiences. Dr Kaufmann seconded. The motion passes unanimously.
6. Faculty Senate Recommendation. Marjory Hall moved, The Faculty Senate is not in favor of adopting the Langston Fall calendar. Vicki Pasque second. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectively,
Curtis

Dr. Bensch:

I appreciate the recommendations provided by the Faculty Senate. We embrace shared governance.

As a friendly reminder, shared governance also means shared accountability. Furthermore, recommendations presented by the faculty senate may not necessarily be adopted by the university.

1. While I agree with Faculty Senate, Amanda Beasley is also classified as a faculty member, per her employment offer letter. Thus, Amanda's employment classification meets the Faculty Senate's proposed language. Amanda Beasley will remain on the committee and continue to serve as chair. She has done an excellent job, and I cannot identify a better faculty member to chair this committee, which has been stagnant since I arrived to OPSU. Furthermore, Faculty Senate does not oversee committees.
2. I informed Dr. Hall that an ad hoc committee can be established for the AY 24-25 where periodic reviews of faculty credentials can be evaluated. They are likely to meet once per year. No new members will join the current Faculty Credentials Committee; this committee was simply formed as a good faith effort. In addition, this committee is wrapping up their duties very soon, and new business will include thanking committee members for their participation and officially dismissing the committee.
3. I concur with department chairs being tasked to evaluate syllabi for all full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and adjuncts. However, I have also seen other universities have faculty members from one college evaluate syllabi from other colleges. This approach has been determined to be more effective by faculty at those universities.
4. The timeline proposed by the Faculty Senate is not ideal for a positive student learning experience. Students need to receive the correct syllabi by the first day of class. I encourage Faculty Senate to reconsider a more ideal timeline to make sure students receive effective communication about their courses from their instructor. Some universities start requesting fall syllabi in the previous spring semester, with email reminders sent out during the summer.
5. Hyflex courses may be offered to reach certain student populations such as concurrent and adult learners. We will have to make decisions that are in the best interest of increasing enrollment and retention. Conversations will continue to occur with the deans as we determine new pathways of learning and recruiting and retaining students.
6. Conversations are ongoing because of the various advantages and disadvantages for different stakeholders. However, an AY 24-25 academic calendar will need to be adopted very soon (probably in less than a month) so we can receive board approval and to launch the fall 24 schedule for students.

Dr. Bensch, thank you for your leadership. You did an excellent job at the Spring 24 Convocation.



Theresa Billiot, Ph.D.
Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs

From: Dinger, Julie <julie.dinger@opsu.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, January 10, 2024 2:30 PM

To: Bensch, Curtis <cbensch@opsu.edu>; Billiot, Theresa <theresa.billiot@opsu.edu>

Subject: Re: Faculty Senate Minutes

Good Afternoon Dr. Bensch,

Please see attached a proposed Tuition Reimbursement Policy for the Senate's review. I am happy to answer any questions you or the senate may have regarding the policy. We have not yet begun the budgeting process for FY25. I do want to advise the senate that we will prioritize funding the program, but funds may be limited depending on our annual allocation from the state. Our goal is to provide a pathway forward for anyone wanting or needing to take additional courses toward their credentials. I plan to take this policy to our board later this month for approval.

Best,

Julie Dinger, Ph.D.

Tuition Reimbursement Policy - FACULTY (Graduate)

Subject to availability of funds, OPSU reimburses Regular Full-Time Employees who take nonequivalent courses for credit at a public or private institution of higher education other than OPSU (OSU A&M System Institution preferred, if available) for tuition for up to twelve (12) credit hours per calendar year with a maximum of up to \$1,000 per 3 credit hours course. This policy is not intended to limit the total number of credit hours an employee may take. However, credit hours taken in excess of the amounts specified in this policy shall not be reimbursed by OPSU. Additional reimbursement may be available on a case by case basis and must be reviewed and approved by the President. Tuition reimbursement must be approved by the Dean, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and the President prior to the start of coursework for faculty.

The coursework must be within the discipline or subfield and must be directly related to the employee's job requirements.

To be reimbursed for a course, the Regular Full-Time Employee must earn a grade of C or higher for an undergraduate course and B or higher for a graduate course.

Reimbursement is for tuition only. OPSU does not reimburse the cost of fees, books, or other materials.

For reimbursement purposes, if a course is completed over the course of two fiscal years, the said course will be accounted toward the fiscal year in which the course was completed.

The final amount reimbursed to the employee will be calculated after crediting any scholarship, grant, or any other source of financial assistance which does not require any form of repayment.

OPSU does not provide tuition reimbursement if the employee chooses to take undergraduate courses at an institution of higher education other than OPSU. Exceptions to this must be submitted in writing to the Office of Human Resources or Office of Academic and Student Affairs for approval by the Human Resources Director or Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs before the course commences.

OPSU does not provide tuition reimbursement for courses taken by Spouses and Dependent Children.

Requesting Tuition Reimbursement. Employees requesting tuition reimbursement must complete the tuition reimbursement authorization process, as specified by Human Resources. All tuition reimbursement requests must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources ten (10) business days prior to the beginning of the course, along with any documentation required to comply with this policy. The employee shall submit all required additional documentation (e.g. grades, invoice balances) within thirty (30) days following the end of the course. Human Resources shall direct Accounts Payable to issue reimbursement checks.

An employee must be employed for Oklahoma Panhandle State University for at least one year if reimbursed for twelve (12) credit hours or less and must be employed for two years if reimbursed for more than twelve (12) credit hours after receiving a tuition reimbursement, or they will be required to repay the amount of the funds received for tuition and fees. This repayment requirement will be enforced whether or not the degree/coursework is completed.