

**Austin Peay State University  
Faculty Senate  
Meeting of Thursday, March 27, 2025  
Morgan University Center, Room 307 | 3:00 pm  
Minutes**

**Call to Order:** Senate President Dr. Osvaldo Di Paolo Harrison

**Recognition of Guests:** Makenna Biehl, Chad Brooks, Tucker Brown, Kelly Buch, Chris Clarke, Fonda Fields, Madison Mosley, Ashley Puskas, Mickey Wadia, and LaNeeça Williams.

**Roll Call of Senators:** Senate Secretary Nancy Gibson

**Absent Senators:** Allen Chaparadza, Terri Clark, Terri Crutcher, Charles Gonzalez, Mir Hasan, Justin Oelgaetz, Bill Pruitt, Bettina Shank, Lori Smith, and Jennifer Thompson.

**Approval of Today's Agenda:** Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote

**Approval of Minutes from March 20, 2025, Meeting:** Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote

**Remarks**

1. Institutional Culture Coordinator, Ashley Puskas (5 minutes)

Provided information about upcoming campus events including the Employee Appreciation Day on April 9 and Culture Fest on April 5. The Culture Fest will be held at the Dunn Bowl from 11:00 am-2:00 pm and will feature a variety of cultural exhibitions, food trucks, and activities for the community, students, faculty, and staff. Puskas encouraged faculty participation and contributions to the event, suggesting that departments could set up tables to showcase academic programs and cultural content. She also noted that the spring football game would be taking place that morning, followed by a volleyball game at the Dunn Bowl, creating an opportunity for a full day of campus activities.

2. Chief of Institutional Culture and Title IX Coordinator, LaNeeça Williams (10 minutes)

Provided an overview of the Office of Institutional Culture's responsibilities, which include Title IX, Title VII, Title VI, and ADA accommodations. She highlighted current initiatives, including the monthly A&B Hour that recognizes campus employees. Williams also discussed the faculty leadership program that brings together diverse campus leaders to develop succession planning and implement student success proposals. During the Q&A session, several concerns were raised regarding the recent change to the university's non-discrimination statement. Williams acknowledged that while her office implements and enforces policies, the decision to modify the statement came from Legal Affairs following direction from the Government Operations Committee of the Tennessee General Assembly. She explained that the change affects only transgender students, as

other groups remain protected under Title VI and Title VII. Faculty expressed concerns about classroom management of potentially discriminatory discussions, student awareness of policy changes, and protections for faculty who continue to uphold inclusive practices. Williams assured the Senate that her office would protect faculty who treat all students fairly and equitably. She emphasized that the university cares about all students and committed to following up on a suggestion to host an open forum for students to discuss these changes.

3. Director, Human Resources, Fonda Fields (5 minutes)

Announced the upcoming Employee Appreciation Day event on April 9 at the Truck Center from 11:00 am-2:00 pm. She noted that while the National Employee Appreciation Day was in March, the university scheduled its event for April to ensure faculty could participate. The event will feature food trucks, music, dancing, and various activities with faculty and staff involvement, including Terry Clark (line dancing and karaoke), Terry Crutcher (breast cancer awareness), and Lisa Sullivan (ice cream). Fields emphasized that this event is designed to bring faculty and staff together as university employees and encouraged everyone to attend.

4. Vice President, Student Government Association, Madison Mosley (5 minutes)

Shared student reactions to the recent policy changes regarding non-discrimination protections. She reported that many students and faculty members are concerned that removing non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity will put them at risk. Students are seeking information about Title IX resources and how they can protect themselves without these specific protections. Some students have expressed feeling that they cannot effect change on campus, resulting in the loss of a senator who resigned their position. Mosley emphasized that students want to know how faculty and staff will be held accountable for their actions if certain groups are not explicitly protected.

5. Senior Vice Provost and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Tucker Brown (10 minutes)

Encouraged the faculty to stand together during these challenging times, ask hard questions, particularly to the President, and consider what can be done to address current issues. Dr. Brown stated that he believes education is at stake due to potential legislative action. He continued, saying he believes there is a lot of fear and philosophical debate [among legislators] around the role of education which could jeopardize higher education. He reiterated that there is power in solidarity among faculty and with our student government association. He suggested faculty engage with Board of Trustees forms and comment on policies, even if only to request more transparency. Citing his expertise as a sociologist, Dr. Brown expressed his opposition to the changes to policy 6:001 and the University's nondiscrimination statement. He acknowledged the difficulties facing the university community and expressed commitment to supporting faculty and students.

6. Faculty Senate President, Dr. Osvaldo Di Paolo Harrison (5 minutes)

Opted not to make additional remarks to allow the meeting to proceed.

## **New Business**

1. 2:068 Research Integrity and Security Policy, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, Dr. Chad Brooks (5 minutes)

Presented the revised Research Integrity and Security Policy, which had been tabled in November. He explained that the policy had been developed in response to state directives, though most of its requirements were already in place since 2019 federal mandates. The policy establishes a committee with cross-university representation to meet annually to discuss changes in technology, foreign relations, and their impact on research compliance. Addressed several concerns raised about the policy, acknowledging that it does not address tracking non-funded faculty research, security measures for access to research areas, data security on personal devices while traveling to watchlist nations, or financial conflicts of interest from outside funding (noting that Policy 5 on external employment covers this last concern). After clarifying questions about the definition of "reasonable person" in the policy text and addressing concerns raised, the Senate voted to approve the policy.

2. Rules Committee, Senate Vice President, Dr. Brandon Di Paolo Harrison (5 minutes)

The Senate voted to approve changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution and bylaws that had been presented at the previous meeting. The Constitution changes will now go to a vote of the full faculty.

3. Handbook Committee, Dr. Bobette Bouton (5 minutes)

Briefly presented the information item for the Faculty Handbook Committee's proposed changes, which had been reviewed at the previous meeting. The Senate voted to approve these changes.

4. RTP P&G Edits – Faculty RTP Policy Committee (Chair Dr. Uma Iyer, 5 minutes)

Presented relatively minor changes to the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Policy and Guidelines:

- References to the APSU Calendar were updated throughout the document.
- Language in the peer review section was modified to align with Watermark terminology.
- Clarification that student evaluation narrative comments should be omitted.
- References to the obsolete survey system were removed.

- Language regarding years of prior service was updated to apply to RTP (retention, tenure, and promotion) rather than just tenure, with clarification on when prior service should be documented (in the first review period and when going up for tenure).
- A new section was added regarding faculty who start in the spring term, indicating they should follow the cohort from the next fall term rather than the previous fall term.
- Added language clarifying that evaluators should consult their own formative evaluations when writing summative evaluations.
- Added a one-week timeline for faculty to receive peer evaluations.
- Specified that peer evaluations should be typed (not handwritten) and submitted as PDFs.
- Clarified that faculty on sabbatical should disengage from RTP responsibilities.
- Requested that senators share the draft with their departments, noting that there would be one month to suggest further edits. The committee's goal is to help RTP candidates through clarified language.

5. Faculty Senate Staff Service Award, Dr. Jennifer Snyder (10 minutes)

Reported that 13 staff members had been nominated for the Faculty Senate Staff Service Award. The committee narrowed the field to three finalists: Jessica Verrillo (Department of Biology), Deanna Sherry (Woodward Library), and Steve Sawyer (Department of Communication). Dr. Snyder provided highlights of each nominee's contributions:

- Jessica (Jess) Verrillo has been the academic assistant to the chair of Biology for two years, frequently works outside office hours, and has been instrumental in supporting an acting chair
- Deanna Sherry has worked in the Woodward Library for 22 years and currently leads the makerspace initiative, which provides various technologies to students, faculty, staff, and community members
- Steve Sawyer has served as Production Coordinator in the Department of Communication since 2016, working with APSU TV, athletic productions, commencement ceremonies, high school graduations, and Board of Trustees meetings

After a secret ballot vote, an award recipient was selected and will be announced at the April meeting. Noted that at the committee's suggestion, future award criteria might be revisited to remove language indicating that recipients put the university above themselves.

**Adjourn:** Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote