

Austin Peay State University
Faculty Senate
Meeting of Thursday, August 21, 2025
Morgan University Center, Room 307 | 3:00 pm
Minutes

Call to Order: Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison

Recognition of Guests: Mike Licari , Mitch Cordova, Leonard Clemons, Kristie Winters, Soma Banerjee, Mickey Wadia

Roll Call of Senators: Senate Secretary Alice Lin

Absent Senators: Ronnel Berry, John Blake, Matt Hampton, and Lori Smith

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

Approval of Minutes from May 1, 2025, Meeting

Remarks

1. University President, Dr. Mike Licari (10 minutes)

President Licari welcomed faculty and staff back for the new semester and expressed excitement about the year ahead. They emphasized that while the university is in a strong position, continued effort is needed to build on its momentum and serve students effectively. Four enduring institutional priorities were highlighted:

1. Enrollment – The university is currently strong in this area, but sustaining momentum is key. Efforts will focus on continuing to attract students and communicating the value of attending Austin Peay.
2. Student Success – Improvement is needed in both four-year and six-year graduation rates, as well as in ensuring strong career outcomes after graduation. Students and parents have clear expectations that a degree should lead to meaningful opportunities, and both families and the state of Tennessee hold the university accountable.
3. Campus Vitality and Engagement – Faculty and staff should actively support and participate in campus life and student activities, fostering enthusiasm and community.
4. Preparation for the Next Comprehensive Campaign – With the university's Centennial approaching, planning a major fundraising and engagement campaign is critical. This effort will reconnect alumni, involve the community, and support the other three priorities.

President Licari stressed that these four priorities are interconnected, not separate initiatives. They closed by encouraging participation in the upcoming Day of Service

to show unity with both students and the surrounding community.

2. University Provost, Dr. Mitch Cordova (10 minutes)

Provost Cordova thanked everyone for their warm welcome and support since arriving, and expressed appreciation for the positive energy at the annual faculty meeting, where faculty achievements were celebrated at the start of the academic year. They emphasized the importance of open communication, noting how much they value informal conversations with faculty and inviting ongoing dialogue.

They introduced their listening tour, aimed at learning about departments, their cultures, and how they contribute to the university. They also mentioned upcoming policy reviews.

Provost Cordova stressed their commitment to helping faculty succeed through professional development, empowerment, and engagement in meaningful work, alongside the shared mission of supporting students. They highlighted the excitement of the new academic year, encouraged everyone to embrace the energy on campus, and closed with a reminder to enjoy their work, their colleagues, and their students—emphasizing that while higher education is challenging, it should also be fun and fulfilling.

3. Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison (5 minutes)

Senate President Harrison warmly welcomed and expressed enthusiasm for the year ahead. It was noted that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Faculty Senate, with further details to be shared during the committee discussions. Senate President Harrison emphasized the strong start to the year, encouraging members to approach their committee charges with energy and focus to accomplish meaningful work. Following these remarks, Dr. Leonard Clemens was introduced as the next speaker.

4. Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Leonard Clemons (15 minutes)

The Division of Student Affairs shared a year marked by expansion, innovation, and a strong focus on student success. The leadership team grew with new directors for counseling, the University Center, and the Career Success Center. Counseling and Health Services are extending their reach across campus, supported by a new partnership that provides trauma-based care, while disability services have been restructured into the Disability Student Success Center with embedded accommodation coaches. Career readiness efforts advanced with the launch of a Career Success Task Force and career coaches placed within every college, alongside the first paid summer internship program that led to permanent job opportunities. Other highlights included the expansion of the child learning center, growth in housing and dining facilities, the distribution of emergency funds, and increased food pantry support.

Looking forward, the division is positioning the university to achieve Carnegie “Opportunity University” status, which would recognize its commitment to access

and upward mobility. Plans are underway for a new food court and engagement space, the rollout of Gov Connect to track and strengthen student involvement, and a campus-wide well-being strategy to support students' physical, mental, emotional, and financial health. To address rising housing demand, a public-private partnership is being pursued to add capacity without creating institutional debt. Throughout all initiatives, the division emphasized deep collaboration with Academic Affairs, ensuring that every new program is developed in partnership and aligned with the university's mission.

5. Chief of Police, Kristie Winters (10 minutes)

Kristie introduced herself as the long-serving chief of campus police, having worked there for 17 years after starting as a security guard. She described the department's structure—14 certified police officers, five unarmed security guards, and three dispatchers—and clarified that they are a fully authorized law enforcement agency, not just campus rule enforcers. She emphasized that officers provide the same services as city or county police, though the campus does not have its own jail. Alongside law enforcement, they offer motor assistance like jump-starts, fuel runs, and tire help, though some services are limited for liability reasons. She also highlighted safety programs, including 24/7 safety escorts, Operation ID for engraving valuables, alcohol awareness, identity theft prevention, self-defense classes, and campus-wide security systems such as blue light poles and hundreds of cameras. Common challenges include theft from unlocked vehicles and hit-and-runs in parking lots, which cameras don't always solve. Kristie reminded faculty of the rules for carrying concealed weapons on campus, stressing the importance of responsible handling. She closed by noting that a new emergency manager has just started, who will lead future drills and training in response to incidents like the one at UT.

New Business

1. Faculty Trustee, Professor Jane Semler (15 minutes)

Professor Jane Semler gave a detailed report from the June Board of Trustees meeting, their final one as faculty trustee before the role transitioned in July. They highlighted several academic program changes, including the termination of outdated certificates in healthcare administration and undergraduate TESOL, balanced by the launch of a new Master of Education in TESOL—the first of its kind in the state—as well as proposed graduate programs in athletic training and environmental science. The discussion also covered student affairs updates such as Allstate's 95th anniversary, the Success Institute early move-in program, and new tuition rates for Tennessee aspiring administrators, designed to simplify processes without requiring new funding.

In business and finance, the proposed budget was noted as conservative pending reconciliation of carryover funds, with enrollment growth providing cautious

optimism. Capital projects included the military academic building and stadium renovations, while deferred maintenance lists remained long. Other updates covered organizational chart adjustments, audit committee findings on immunization compliance, and new student life systems such as the “Gov Hub.” The meeting also reviewed housing initiatives exploring a long-term private partnership model, Board of Trustees awards, and the significance of the newly passed “One Big Beautiful Bill,” which will have major implications for financial aid policies.

2. Faculty Senate Committees 2025-2026 (5 minutes)

President Harrison focused on several committee and event updates. The four charges for the red and white committees are being finalized this week, with all chairs identified except for the Nominations Budget Committee and Academic Reds, where a recent resignation requires a replacement. Once finalized, chairs will meet to clarify their charges and determine which colleagues across campus they may need to involve. The SASI Committee is facing changes due to the university’s migration to Oracle, which will affect how grants are awarded; members will meet with administrators to resolve questions and adjust processes.

The upcoming 50th anniversary celebration is scheduled for October 3 at the Customs House Museum, with coordination from the Tennessee University Faculty Senate. Tyler Nothing has agreed to chair the committee, and arrangements for food, entertainment, and invitations to past presidents are underway, with many former leaders expected to share stories.

Finally, an ad hoc committee has been formed to examine office hour practices. Current requirements vary significantly, and there is confusion about expectations, especially for faculty teaching online who are sometimes required to maintain in-person hours. The committee will study best practices across institutions to provide clearer guidance. The meeting was briefly extended to complete the discussion before adjourning.

Adjourn