

**Austin Peay State University Faculty  
Senate – Called Meeting  
Meeting of Thursday, September 25, 2025  
Morgan University Center, MUC 307 | 3:00 pm Agenda**

**Call to Order:** Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison

**Recognition of Guests:** 48 guests

**Roll Call of Senators:** Senate Secretary Alice Lin

**Absent Senators:** Mir Hasan, Mahesh Pallikonda, and Perry Scanlan.

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

**Remarks**

During the Faculty Senate meeting, the Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison began by explaining that only sitting senators would be permitted to comment, with each limited to two minutes, before recognizing Senator Rayburn. Senator Rayburn then introduced a resolution addressing the President's admission that not following policy constituted a violation of university governance standards.

WHEREAS, this resolution notes the following points:

At the University President's direction, a faculty member was terminated in violation of policy 2.043: Termination of Faculty Members for Adequate Cause. The tenured full professor was terminated on September 12, 2025, without due process as outlined in APSU Policies 1.025 and 2.043.

Further, at the September 18, 2025, Faculty Senate meeting, the university president was asked, "APSU Policy 2:043, 'Termination of Faculty Members for Adequate Cause,' refers to forming and convening a hearing committee. Was a hearing committee formed and convened? Under what circumstances does policy allow a faculty member to be fired without the convening of a hearing committee?" The University President responded, "We did not follow the process." This statement indicates clear violation of APSU Policy 2.043.

According to reports, the fired faculty member's employment status was subsequently changed to "suspended" pending adherence to the University's due process procedures according to a news article published on *Clarksville Now* on September 23, 2025 - thus creating further uncertainty and confusion regarding the situation.

The September 23, 2025 *Clarksville Now* article referenced above also included a direct quote from an individual identified as a spokesperson for the university, stating that the faculty member "has been placed on suspension. Austin Peay is initiating proceedings to terminate his tenure for adequate cause." If that statement is accurate, it suggests that the process is a sham; a proffered reason being to formalize a decision that has already been made.

The failure of the administration to follow its own policy and procedure has negatively impacted both the specific faculty member that is the focus of the current personnel action and also overall faculty confidence in their employment status and protections.

WHEREAS, the foundation of a successfully functioning university relies on due process to uphold its mission and values, its accountability, and its fair treatment of employees; and

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate of Austin Peay State University is committed to the principles of due process such that faculty, staff, and administrators collaborate in defined roles and in accord with established policies and procedures to make decisions that impact the academic institution; and

WHEREAS, the violation of APSU Policies 1:025 and 2.043 has harmed both the specific faculty member and overall trust in functioning due process and employee safeguards; and

WHEREAS, this violation undermines confidence in the integrity of university policy, shared governance, and morale; and

WHEREAS, this action is inconsistent with APSU's Values of "promotion of integrity", "by maintaining an honest, fair and credible environment", and "experiences that promote loyalty, pride and mutual support;" and

WHEREAS, this action also is inconsistent with APSU's Mission of a "community of learners to make a positive impact regionally and globally"; and

WHEREAS, this action is inconsistent with APSU's Strategic Plan with regard to Pillar 3: The Employee Experience; [Goal 1: Objective 1, Goal 2: Objectives 1 & 2]; and

WHEREAS, these actions collectively demonstrate failure in leadership that undermines the institution in addition to the specific personnel matter;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate of Austin Peay State University hereby expresses its vote of no confidence in University President Michael Licari's leadership; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate of Austin Peay State University calls upon the APSU Board of Trustees to conduct a thorough review into these matters and take appropriate action to address these concerns; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be distributed to the President Michael Licari and the APSU Board of Trustees.

Following the presentation, senators engaged in extensive discussion. One senator raised questions about the correct policy numbers referenced in the resolution, clarifying that both policies 1.025 and 2.043 were relevant and cross-referenced each other. Another senator expressed sympathy for the difficult position the university president faced, suggesting that he likely acted under external pressure and may have felt compelled to respond quickly to outside demands. Despite recognizing the procedural errors, this senator urged colleagues to consider the broader context before voting. Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison then clarified that a vote of no confidence would be informational only, carrying no direct legal or policy consequences, but still serving to inform the Board of Trustees of faculty sentiment.

As the debate continued, several senators spoke passionately about the implications of the president's actions and the importance of upholding due process. One senator emphasized that the issue was not about personal feelings toward President Licari but about whether he had followed university policy and could be trusted to do so in the future. Another senator, while acknowledging the factual accuracy of the resolution, admitted hesitation to vote for it, citing fears that political repercussions could mirror those seen at other Tennessee institutions, such as the turmoil following the Tennessee State University Board

of Trustees' removal. They warned that the university could face similar state interference if the resolution passed.

Other senators countered that emotional or political fears should not override policy violations. One faculty member stressed that the president had openly admitted to disregarding established procedures, a serious breach that must be acknowledged regardless of external pressure. Another pointed out that such a precedent could endanger academic freedom, raising personal concerns about being fired for private political activity posted on social media. Others noted that while the president had claimed legal constraints prevented him from fully discussing the matter, the lack of transparency had contributed to faculty distrust.

Toward the end of the discussion, a senator expressed about the practical effect of a no-confidence vote. They argued that the university had experienced significant growth under President Licari's leadership and that, outside of academia, few people would understand or value the concept of tenure or the symbolism of such a vote. The senator suggested that the Senate could instead issue a statement reaffirming the importance of following policy without declaring no confidence in the president.

After all comments were heard, Senate President called for a secret ballot vote, allowing only senators to remain in the room while ballots were distributed, collected, and counted. When the votes were tallied, there were 35 senators voting: 23 in favor of the resolution and 12 against. Because a two-thirds majority was required, the resolution failed to pass by one vote.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM. Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote