

Austin Peay State University
Faculty Senate
Meeting of Thursday, November 20, 2025
Morgan University Center, 307 | 3:00 pm
Agenda

Call to Order: Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison

Senate President Di Paolo Harrison distributed a sign-in sheet for guests.

Recognition of Guests: Christina Chester-Fangman, Christopher Clarke, Mitch Cordova, Jordan Harmon, Ozzie Di Paolo Harrison, Mike Licari, Keashla Marengo, and Mickey Wadia

Roll Call of Senators: Senate Secretary Alice Lin

Absent Senators: Asit Bandyopadhyay, Laura Barnett, Charles Gonzalez, Matt Hampton, Kathy Heuston, Sergei Markov, Jessica Morris, Mahesh Pallikonda, Bill Pruitt, Michelle Robertson, Bettina Shank, Kristen Sienkiewicz, and Lori Smith

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

Approval of Senate Minutes:

1. 10/23/2025 Meeting Minutes: Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote

Remarks:

1. President Mike Licari (5 minutes)

President Mike Licari delivered an update on the state budget process and campus initiatives. He reported that THEC (Tennessee Higher Education Commission) has requested approximately \$111 million in additional state funding for higher education to support the performance funding model, employee raises, and maintenance. While THEC recommended a non-binding tuition increase range of 0–2.5%, President Licari noted that these numbers will likely change once the governor and legislature finalize funding levels, as happened the previous year.

President Licari also announced a December 8 campus update on progress within the current strategic plan, which will include engagement opportunities and lead into further discussions in the spring about future direction. A major goal moving forward is pursuing the Carnegie Community Engaged Institution designation, aligning with the university's commitment to community service and local impact. The application process gives the campus about three years to prepare and strengthen initiatives.

President Licari shared progress on community engagement efforts, including a

recent event introducing a new food pantry and engagement center funded through a partnership with the Millan Foundation. The facility will expand food access for students—an important need, as more than half of students have previously reported struggling to afford meals. An initial \$25,000 endowment gift and an additional \$80,000 raised at the event will help support operations. President Licari expressed gratitude for community support and invited further participation before concluding his remarks.

2. Provost Mitch Cordova (5 minutes)

Provost Mitch Cordova addressed several academic initiatives and technology improvements. He noted feedback from faculty regarding challenges with AP Navigate and announced that targeted, practical training workshops will be offered in early January to help chairs and faculty better utilize the specific features most relevant to them.

Provost Cordova shared positive results from recent course evaluation efforts, reporting a 50-percentage-point increase in student response rates compared to the prior year's A-term, with full-term evaluation data to be shared later.

Provost Cordova also reported continued progress on academic policy review, with 13 policies currently under legal review before moving into shared governance channels.

Finally, Provost Cordova provided an update on the implementation of the new academic catalog system. A beta version shows improved functionality - better navigation, mobile-friendly design, and clearer presentation of course and program details. Teams led by Jasmine O'Brien and the Registrar, Dr. Felicia Nagel are coordinating catalog and scheduling systems to enhance usability for students and faculty.

3. Dr. Christopher Clarke, Associate Vice President for Community Belonging & Success (10 minutes)

Dr. Christopher Clarke introduced himself and his role within Student Affairs, noting that he oversees several identity-focused areas on campus, including the African-American Cultural Center, Latino Cultural Center, Adult Non-Traditional and Transfer Student Center, Career Success Center, and, most recently, the Disability Success Center.

Dr. Clarke explained that the center, formerly known as the Student Disability Resource Center, transitioned from the Health & Well-Being division to the Community Belonging & Success pillar on August 1. The name was changed to the Disability Success Center to align with a broader student success model, focusing on the full collegiate lifecycle, such as orientation, academic and social engagement, and career or post-graduation preparation.

During his first month assessing the center, Dr. Clarke identified several challenges. These included unclear protocols and procedures, a lack of clarity in staff responsibilities, and opportunities to improve privacy and information protection. Program offerings and campus training were limited, technology resources were not well inventoried, and professional development opportunities for staff were minimal. In addition, student worker roles were not clearly defined, and services appeared decentralized and inconsistent across campus.

Dr. Clarke reported that branding and structural changes have been initiated to integrate the center more closely with the community, belonging, and success framework. Staffing was restructured with the addition of two accommodations coaches and a dedicated testing coordinator. Standard Operating Procedures were created for core areas, such as intake, note-taking, and testing. Staff are now working collaboratively with identity spaces and academic colleges, and the center has committed to supporting major campus events such as convocation and commencement. Dr. Clarke noted that cultural improvement toward clearer structure and accountability is in progress.

Planned initiatives include a workshop series to help students build self-advocacy skills, the creation of a peer mentorship and ambassador program, and the expansion of adaptive technology. Dr. Clarke emphasized increasing faculty partnership through faculty champions and training opportunities, potentially in collaboration with CAFE. An honor society is being explored to recognize high-achieving students with disabilities. He also intends to form a diverse advisory group including students, faculty, staff, and community partners to support continuous improvement. Progress tracking and reporting will be prioritized to ensure accountability.

Dr. Clarke encouraged faculty and campus partners to share concerns, challenges, ideas, and experiences related to the accommodations processes so the center can continue to improve. He invited attendees to reach out to him directly by email.

4. Jordan Harmon, Interim Director of Athletics (5 minutes)

Mr. Jordan Harmon, the Interim Director of Athletics at Austin Peay, shared his personal connection to the university, noting that he came to campus over twelve years ago as a baseball student-athlete and has since built his career there. He emphasized his great pride in the institution and the role it has played in his life and family.

Mr. Harmon outlined the athletics department's guiding values—what he calls the “three C’s”: competition, classroom success, and community engagement. He celebrated the department's current achievements, including a 3.4 GPA across student-athletes and more than 5,000 community service hours this semester. He also highlighted the department's goal to ensure every athlete graduates with both athletic success (“a ring”) and academic success (“a diploma”), while placing increased focus on long-term career placement and support beyond college.

A major priority for Mr. Harmon is strengthening partnerships across campus. He stressed the importance of collaboration with academic leadership and departments to ensure athletics remains integrated within the broader university community.

During the question period, Mr. Harmon addressed the upcoming conference transition. Due to changes within collegiate athletics, the ASUN will split into two conferences. Austin Peay will move fully into the UAC conference on July 1, 2026—an alignment that keeps the school within a familiar competitive footprint. He noted that change remains constant in the athletics landscape, and the department will continue adapting as needed.

5. Keashla Marengo, Director of Career Success Center (5 minutes)

Ms. Keashla Marengo, the relatively new Director of the Career Success Center at Austin Peay (in the role for about eight months), introduced herself and highlighted the university's strong focus on career readiness. With a background in career services at Florida Gulf Coast University and the University of Miami, she is passionate about strengthening career success initiatives on campus through collaboration.

She outlined four guiding pillars for the center's work:

1. Career Success – removing barriers and improving infrastructure, including assigning career success coaches to individual colleges.
2. Career Coaching – training staff to better support students and faculty.
3. Career Development Programming – building a “career everywhere” culture throughout campus.
4. Employer Engagement – improving coordinated partnerships with employers.

Ms. Marengo noted key accomplishments such as expanding the team from five to eight staff members, launching a successful summer internship program, holding a strong career expo, and establishing a campuswide Career Success Task Force.

She also emphasized the importance of the First Destination Survey, which gathers data from graduating students about their plans. The survey has transitioned to the Handshake platform, and she requested faculty support in promoting it.

In response to a question, Ms. Marengo discussed ongoing initiatives for students served by the Disability Student Success Center, including a reverse career fair and a dedicated career success coach who provides tailored support.

6. Dr. Leslie Binford – UCC Report (5 minutes)

Dr. Leslie Binford provided an update on UCC activities, noting that due to an

upcoming transition from Curriculum to CourseDog in December, there has been a significant increase in course and program modification requests. Reports from both the October and November meetings were included for review. The majority of recent updates involve course modifications such as changes to course numbers, credit hours, and titles. Several program changes, particularly in nursing, are driven by accreditation requirements. Additional updates from the math department aim to improve student retention and better support students changing majors.

7. Senate President Brandon Di Paolo Harrison

Senate President Di Paolo Harrison reported that there were no major updates and mentioned an item that would be addressed later under “other matters.” He highlighted the Office of Institutional Culture’s (OIC) Appreciation and Belonging Hour, noting that Professor Sam Ligo was the most recent Faculty Senate honoree. Harrison encouraged members to nominate future recipients by emailing suggestions before each Senate meeting. He also acknowledged the end of the semester and wished everyone a pleasant holiday season.

8. Such other matters

Christina delivered a brief update as chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee. She noted two upcoming issues to be incorporated into the handbook: the federal accessibility mandates taking effect in April and ongoing work related to the Concourse syllabus system. Task forces are currently working on those topics, and further updates will be provided upon completion of their reports. Christina requested faculty input on any needed handbook changes and outlined the review timeline: committee review in spring, followed by submission to the provost’s office and Senate executive committee, with the goal of presenting revisions to the Senate for discussion and voting in March.

Adjournment: 3:50 p.m.

Motion made, seconded, and passed by majority vote