April 17th, 2025, Meeting of the SAU Faculty Senate

Faculty Senators in Attendance: Nelson, Valenzuela, Faucett, Tucker, J. Logan, Ivory, Karim, Lowther, D. Wilson, Djiguimde, Mayo, Filbrun, Samples, Greathouse, Fanning, Wise

Proxies: Faucett served as proxy for Dobbins, Chakaraborty served as proxy for Islam

Ex-officio and guests: Womack, Grippo, K. Landry, Stanberry, McLelland, A. McLaughlin, B. Lenard, T. Almand, McDermott, C. Baker, D. Allen, J. Rowsam, B. Logan, S. Warrick, B. Hicks, R. Sronce, K. Bloss, S. Reed, Bachri

Minutes:

Call to Order 3:42

Nelson – Call to order, identification of proxies, request for motion to approve the minutes from February.

1. **Approval of Minutes** – Sen. D. Wilson moved to approve the March 2025 minutes. Sen. Samples second. No discussion regarding minutes. Motion to approve March minutes passed.

2. **Special Orders of the Day** –

Invitation to Dr. Hicks for remarks.

- Dr. Hicks started by greeting the senate and thanking the senate for a good 1st year. He believes the campus is moving in a positive direction and thanked the senate for their role in campus governance.
- He continued by saying that he recognizes a lot of political uncertainty and turmoil is occurring. Recently, 18 of our international students, including 3 current students, lost their visas. NSF grants the University has received are now up in the air and have been called into question. Dr. Hicks is committed to seeing the University through these times. He noted that the University makes plans in four year cycles because of the expectation that students we admit as freshmen will be supported and continue their educations here for four years until they graduate. Because of the changes and uncertainty, there may be need for potential pivots.
- As such, the budget committee has met and a COLA is not planned for next year. Given the uncertainty, it is better to not include a COLA given we don't know what is coming down the pipe. It would be a shame for us to increase faculty and staff salaries via a COLA which could potentially result in the University being unable to sustain those salaries in the near future and needing to eliminate positions. Instead of a COLA, a one time payment has been incorporated into the budget. Unless enrollment next year drops significantly, that one time money will be paid next year.
- Senator Tucker asked whether the University is expecting a drop in international student enrollment.
- Dr. Hicks said that yes, the University does anticipate this will be the case as visas are now harder to come by.

- At the conclusion of Dr. Hicks remarks, Faculty Senate President Nelson thanked Dr. Hicks for his transparency both in the day's remarks and throughout the year.

Invitation to Dr. Sronce for Remarks:

- Dr. Sronce started by thanking everyone for a good year. She recognized that there have been a great many changes that have occurred this year and she appreciated everyone's efforts.
- She continued by noting that the administration is continuing to think about ways to provide feedback and information.
- She also welcomed Dr. Angela Stanford as the new Dean of the Graduate School. She also thanked Mrs. Vanda McLelland for stepping in as Interim Dean while the Graduate School conducted a new dean search.
- The Rankin College of Business will be hosting finalists for their Dean position on campus the week of 4/21/25.
- Additional events and meetings that will be occurring the week of 4/21/25 include:
  - SOAR conference Wednesday in Reynolds (4/23)
  - Appeals on Wheels Thursday in Reynolds (4/24)
  - The ADHE will be on campus Friday (4/25). That will not include any public forums but she did want to let everyone know that they will be here.
- She also gave the heads up that the not registered list will be coming out soon. It is important to retention efforts that we get students registered as soon as possible.
- In significant news, the ACCESS bill has passed and includes mandates for post-tenure review processes to be developed and implemented at all state universities. The plan must be submitted to the powers that be in Little Rock on 12/1/2025. This will mean that efforts to establish a post tenure review process will need to begin in earnest this summer. She believes the Annual Faculty Performance Review Monitoring Committee will be a good starting point for individuals to undertake the efforts of establishing a post-tenure review policy. However, she recognizes that since this will significantly affect the faculty, more faculty members may be interested in joining the group to work on post tenure review policies. If there is anyone who would like to join the group, they are encouraged to reach out to Dr. Sronce to join in on the efforts. When the campus community returns in August, it will be a priority to get the policies and procedures ironed out so that the proposal can go through the Faculty Senate, Faculty Senate Handbook Committee (since the Handbook will need to be changed), and ultimately the entire Faculty (since changes to the Handbook require two readings and a faculty vote). In order for all of this to occur within the timeframe to allow for submission of the plan by 12/1/25, everyone must be aware that this is coming. She further stated that all colleges on campus will be represented.

3. **Reports of Committees –**

Handbook Committee – Senator Greathouse reported that the edits to the Tenure and Promotion guidelines have been made.

Senator Nelson asked for a motion to consider changes to the language. Senator J. Logan moved and Senator Greathouse 2nd.

Senator Greathouse reported that the edits were made to the existing Tenure and Promotion guidelines in the effort to reduce confusion. Specifically, the addition of language "upon completion" have been added to the 5 year requirement for submitting the application for Tenure and Promotion.

Senator Nelson asked for a motion to approve the changes made. Senator Fanning moved, Senator Tucker 2nd. A vote on changing of the language was held.

In favor – 14

Opposed – 1

Abstained – 1

The motion to approve the changes to the Tenure & Promotion guidelines was passed. The language will now go to the entire faculty for a vote.

Budget Committee – Senator Valenzuela reported that the Budget Committee had met as had the University Budget Committee. Given that a COLA was not included in the budget for next year, the budget committee will meet again to advocate for the addition of a COLA.

Parking, Building, and Grounds Committee – Nothing to report. Have not met.

4. **Old Business –**

None

5. **New Business –**

- Senator Nelson started by pointing out that the first scheduled meeting of the faculty senate for the 2025-2026 academic year is currently scheduled to occur the week school starts. Given how busy that week is for everyone on campus, Senator Nelson proposed to move the first faculty senate meeting back to 8/28/25. Senator Greathouse moved to change the meeting date, Senator Ivory 2nd. A vote was held and unanimously passed to move the first meeting of the 2025-2026 term to 8/28/25.
- Outgoing President Nelson also wanted to thank everyone for participating in shared governance this year and making her year as Senate President a good one. She presented the faculty senators with certificates of appreciation for their efforts.
- Outgoing President Nelson then passed the gavel to President Elect Valenzuela.
- President Elect Valenzuela said that he was glad to serve as next year's president and noted that the post tenure review policy and process would be an immediate priority upon the faculty senate reconvening next year. Given the deadline of 12/1/25, the faculty senate would need to move quickly in making necessary changes to the Faculty Handbook. Another priority next year will be to increase the staff and faculty salaries. Given the recent announcement from the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Jerome Powell that predicted stagflation, he expects that this will be a difficult process.
- The Senate then recognized the senators who were leaving the Senate due to their terms being up. Thanks to Senator Tucker, Senator Fanning, Senator J. Logan, and Senator Dobbins.

- The Senate then recognized the newly elected senators to fill the vacant seats. Senator Stanberry, Senator Warrick, Senator Almand, and Senator McDermott were seated.
- President Elect Valenzuela then nominated members of his cabinet. Senator Filbrun was nominated as Vice President/President Elect, Senator Mayo was nominated as Secretary, and Senator Nelson was nominated as Parliamentarian. A vote was held to approve the slate of nominations and the vote passed unanimously.

President Elect Valenzuela asked for a motion to end the meeting.

Motion to adjourn – Sen. Faucett

Second – Sen. Samples

Vote to adjourn the meeting passes.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02.