

Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2024 @ 3:30pm

I. Call to Order & Welcome

The Senate was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Senators Present: Sandra Cox (Pres), Trent Fawcett (VP), Alan Christensen, Steve Hart, Wes Jamison, Adam Larsen, Rachel Keller, Charley Roetting, Dennis Schugk, Tony Smith, Jeff Wallace, Hilary Withers

Senators Absent: Karen Carter

Guests: Jacob Thomas (Parliamentarian), Mike Brenchley (Deans), Michael Austin (Provost), Kristi Stevens (Assoc Provost)

II. Meeting Minutes

The minutes from 9/25 contained a significant omission, which J. Thomas promised to rectify before the next Senate meeting.

III. Remarks from the College President

President Stacey McIff visited the Senate and shared several updates:

A. Positive Reputation: Snow College continues to receive praise for its positive impact, largely due to faculty and staff interactions with students.

B. Institutional Focus: Dr. Austin's weekly updates have been well-received. Three main areas of focus this year include:

1. Becoming a data-driven institution.

2. Enhancing enrollment through recruitment, retention, and supporting students at risk of dropping out.
3. Improving the employee experience, overseen by the Employee Experience Subcommittee.

C. Marketing Initiatives: Snow College has partnered with a marketing company for two years, leading to increased name recognition through billboards and digital campaigns. The current focus is on promoting specific programs and highlighting specialized degrees. A key issue has been prospective students feeling Snow doesn't offer their desired programs, particularly bachelor's programs.

D. Employee Experience Subcommittee: Faculty members Jess Jones and Brent Reese represent the committee, with Brent leading discussions on improving employee engagement.

E. Budget and Capital Projects: Snow College is anticipating \$4-6 million in state funding for capital projects, with a focus on refreshing the Washburn Building in Richfield. The state board has approved the proposal, and legislative approval is expected in the spring.

F. High School Partnerships: Snow College is working with high school counselors and USHE on a new initiative aimed at students with a 3.0 GPA who are not receiving scholarships. The goal is to help these students plan their futures and encourage them to consider college as part of their broader career goals. This project is in collaboration with Uintah Basin College and will focus on rural students.

G. Direct Admissions Concerns: The recent initiative allowing Utah high school graduates to be directly admitted to institutions (except the University of Utah) raised concerns about competition for admissions. Snow College is addressing potential enrollment challenges and working to simplify the admissions process. The administration will continue to emphasize recruiting students from the college's six-county service area.

H. Mentorship Program: One senator suggested developing a faculty mentorship program for at-risk students, particularly first-generation college students, to provide them with guidance and support during their transition to college.

IV. Senate Organization

A. Senate & Chairs Luncheon Report

T. Fawcett and S. Cox reported on the meeting with committee chairs held on Friday, September 27. Although the event was well-organized and had good food, attendance was low, with only about 20 people present out of 33 invited. There seemed to have been a scheduling mix-up, which may have contributed to the low turnout. Some attendees speculated that the timing, after the semester had started, could have been a factor, and it was noted that last year's meeting held a week before the start of classes had better attendance. Suggestions for improving future scheduling were discussed.

B. GE Committee—Richfield

Senators discussed updates on at-large representation to the General Education Committee from Richfield. There are no updates at this time, but Steve Hart will bring it up if it doesn't get talked about at the next GE Committee meeting.

V. Senate Business

A. Deans Council Report

S. Cox, representing the Senate on the Deans Council

M. Brenchley, representing the Deans Council on the Senate

S. Cox and M. Brenchley reported on business from the most recent Deans Council meeting.

1. Maker Space. S. Cox highlighted the new "Maker Space" on the first floor of the Science Building, where students and faculty can access resources like 3D printers. Faculty are encouraged to schedule in advance if they desire to bring their entire classes for a visit.

2. Travel Requests and Simple Syllabi. Travel requests were briefly mentioned, and the focus shifted to "Simple Syllabi" for individual classes, distinct from master syllabi.

3. Advisors for Student Clubs. A major discussion centered on changes in student club advising. Due to legal concerns, faculty advisors can no longer officially represent the university within clubs. While faculty can still participate, they may not act as institutional spokespersons. The transition to a single overall advisor for all clubs is in progress, with some clubs still attached to departments based on curricular alignment. Senators raised some concerns about how this shift will affect clubs, especially those without a political focus, like the chess club. The Provost emphasized the need to balance faculty participation and freedom of speech with the requirements of HB261, which limits the university's official involvement in clubs. Senators expressed further concerns about how this shift would impact students and club participation, with a call for more feedback from the student body and student government. Provost Austin assured that student officers would continue receiving training, and a neutral club advisor would be available to assist. To track the effects of these changes, the Senate recommended that Academic Affairs or Student Life (or another body) maintain records of club participation before and after the policy shift.

6. Course Scheduling Without Professors' Names. Another topic raised was the scheduling of courses without listing professors' names to ensure more equal enrollment across sections. This idea generated mixed reactions. Some, particularly in the Math Department, supported the move to manage enrollment more equitably. Others, including several senators, voiced concerns that this approach was not "student-first," as students value knowing who their professor is when selecting courses. Senators ultimately agreed to keep the teacher's name on the course but suggested capping early enrollment at 15 students to distribute registration more evenly before all sections are fully available.

B. Curriculum Committee Syllabi Approval

T. Fawcett, Senate representative to the Curriculum Committee

K. Stevens, Associate Provost

Senators discussed how the Office of Academic Affairs (AA) and the Curriculum Committee (CC) have made syllabus management more complicated by gradually adding unnecessary elements, leading to an overburdened system. Key points included:

1. Master Syllabus Complexity. Provost Austin and Associate Provost Stevens indicated that master syllabi should be concise and contain only essential, non-negotiable details like credit hours and learning outcomes; many of Snow College's run upwards of 7-10 pages. They reminded senators that these documents are not class syllabi and have become overloaded with information irrelevant to their primary purpose, such as DEI statements and prescriptive teaching tools.

2. Simplifying the Syllabus. AA's goal is to streamline the master syllabi to include only necessary information, such as catalog details and prerequisites. Extraneous content (e.g. pedagogy statements) will be removed, preserving academic freedom for instructors to customize their class syllabi.

3. Challenges with HB261 Compliance. The changes are partly driven by legal requirements from HB261, which restrict the use of DEI language. There is urgency to revise syllabi before a fast-approaching deadline, as the current system also poses technical difficulties in updating and storing syllabi.

4. Faculty Involvement and Transparency. Faculty voiced concerns about their role in the process, worried they might lose control over course content or that non-experts could revise master syllabi without adequate understanding. However, it was clarified that individual syllabi will remain under faculty control, and only master syllabi will be revised to ensure compliance. If faculty feel further amendments are needed after the initial changes, they can contact Academic Affairs to make revisions.

5. Time Constraints and Logistical Issues. The process is time-sensitive, with over 700 syllabi needing revisions. Faculty volunteers may assist in reviewing and updating syllabi, but the tech platform (Argos) is a bottleneck in streamlining the process.

C. Stipends & Course Releases Ad Hoc Committee

T. Fawcett and D. Schugk, ad hoc committee members

T. Fawcett met with Brent Reese to understand how stipends and course releases are managed in Richfield and Tech Ed. T. Fawcett further reported that a survey has been sent out to department chairs to learn more about how they allocate their time. Provost Austin mentioned this ad hoc committee has identified 14 data-driven factors that contribute to the workload of department

chairs. The plan is to gather and analyze this data, assigning weights to each factor to develop a formula for determining workload.

D. Academic Integrity Policy Update Subcommittee

R. Keller (chair) and A. Christensen

R. Keller shared that the team has identified four key pathways for a new student support system. A simple landing page will guide students based on their input. Depending on their situation—whether it’s academic, financial aid, scholarship, probation, or code of conduct—the system will direct them to the appropriate faculty, staff, student affairs, or financial aid office. Most responses will rely on catalog information, and once students submit the form, they’ll be routed accordingly. She further emphasized that faculty and staff should help ensure students are directed to the correct pathway, making the process more efficient for both faculty and the college.

E. Institutional Review Board Development Subcommittee

W. Jamison (interim chair), Tony Smith

W. Jamison reported the committee met two weeks previously. They are still working on a mission statement, and plan to have leadership figured out by next week.

F. Supporting Adjunct Faculty Subcommittee

H. Withers (chair) and W. Jamison

H. Withers outlined the first three actionable steps for the work of this committee:

1. Meet with Justin Thorpe, Director of the Teaching & Learning Center, to create an adjunct onboarding training on Canvas, which will cover essential knowledge and helpful tips for new adjuncts.
2. Requesting a budget for adjunct support and inclusion, including community-building events like luncheons and get-togethers.
3. Meeting with HR to explore the possibility of establishing a college-wide leave policy for adjuncts (e.g., for paternity, maternity, medical, or emergency leave), as none currently exists beyond individual department policies and practices.

S. Cox mentioned an adjunct facing confusion during an emergency, highlighting the need for better adjunct support. H. Withers also noted responses from adjuncts regarding grade input, services, and early academic warnings.

V. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: A. Larsen; **2nd:** C. Roetting

Approval: unanimous of all present

The Senate adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The next Senate meeting will be held on **October 23, 2024** from 3:30-5:00 p.m. in the Academy Room, Noyes Building.

Minutes by Jacob L. Thomas

Approved: October 23, 2024