

FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

October 05, 2023

4:00-5:30pm

Via Webinar

Approved

Attending: Kelly Goonan, Abigail Larson, Scott Knowles, Daniel Eves, Gary Wallace, Chris Younkin, John Benedict, Christian Bohnenstengel, Cody Bremner, Chris Graves, Scott Hansen, David Hatch, Steven Hawkins, Maren Hirschi, Jon Karpel, Bryan Koenig, Michael Kroff, Elise Leahy, John Meisner, Andrew Misseldine, Michelle Orihel, Rachel Parker, Joshua Price, Amanda Roundy, Grant Shimer, Ryan Siemers, Kyle Thompson, Joel Vallett, Qian Zhang

Not Attending:

Proxies: Alyssa Davis for Mitch Greer

Guests: Mindy Benson, James Sage, John Lisonbee, Jake Johnson, Camille Thomas, Matt McKenzie, Shelly Merrill, Gaby Cox, Alexis McIff

1. Call to order (4:02)
2. Recognition of Presenters and Guests
 - a. Shelly Merrill, HR Benefits Manager
 - b. John Lisonbee, Staff Association President
 - c. Alexis McIff, SUUSA VP of Academics
 - d. Camille Thomas, Asst. Provost of Faculty Engagement
 - e. Jake Johnson, Asst. Provost of Leadership Development and Compliance
 - f. James Sage, Associate Provost
 - g. Jon Anderson, Provost
 - h. Mindy Benson, President
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes: [September 21, 2023 minutes](#) (4:03)
1st motion: Cody Bremner; 2nd motion: Maren Hirchi
4. Events and Announcements (4:04)
 - a. Two faculty needed to serve on the [Residency Appeals Committee](#). If interested, please email Kelly kellygoonan@suu.edu
 - b. TEDxSUU has put out a call for speakers. If you'd like to be considered, go to <https://www.suu.edu/tedx/> for information on how to apply. The event will be held Feb. 2024. If you have questions, ask Chris Younkin chrisyounkin@suu.edu
 - c. #JoinUs Faculty and Staff giving campaign: Giving Wings to T-Bird Dreams. Options for one-time gift or payroll deduction. The campaign will continue until November 24. <https://gift.suu.edu/faculty-staff-giving-wings-to-t-bird-dreams>
 - d. Fall Fun at the SUU Mountain Center, Oct. 11, 4:00-7:00pm
 - e. [Pride Alliance Potluck](#), Oct. 13, 5:00-8:00pm

- f. Save the Date: Health & Wellness Fair, Oct. 19, 10:00am-1:00pm, Ballroom
- g. Save the Date: Disability Resources Center Conference Nov. 16. Will highlight faculty experiences and resources.

5. Information Items: (4:08)

- a. Your Benefits (Shelly Merrill, Benefits Manager) (15 min.)
Benefits update – Gaby Cox and I are here to help you get answers to your questions. We are holding a Health and Wellness Fair for students/staff/faculty Oct 19th 11-3 in the Ballroom. Retirement, one on-ones on 10/20 with Fidelity. On November 2nd with URS and The HUB and also TIAA (date TBA). HR will not be hosting Covid shots. Shots are covered by our insurance plan.

HUB Int'l Investment Services – independent financial planning meetings. Can make appointments with Zac Huish, a Certified Financial Planner for HUB. The calendly link to make appointments with Zac is available on the HR benefits webpage. The Hub also hosts monthly webinars – find link on [SUU Benefits page](#). There is now a Benefits Committee headed by Mary Jo Anderson which will meet October 12th. For claim issues and questions our insurance broker is Patty Nichols, Account Manager/Claims Assistance: 801.715.7052/
pnichols@moreton.com.

6. Action Items: (4:24)

- a. None. Policy 6.3 to be reintroduced for vote Oct. 19. [Feedback document](#) will be open until Monday Oct. 9. Please provide specific recommendations for language rather than general feedback.
Kelly Goonan: I met with Brandon Mackenzie, Mike Humes, and also Lucia Maloy from the legal office today, and I feel pretty good that we were able to address a lot of the concerns that faculty brought up while continuing to protect the university and our students in that policy. You should be getting an updated version of this proposed revision soon – please share with your faculty.

7. Discussion Items: (4:26)

- a. Benefits Committee (Cody Bremner) (15 min.)
The process of making a decision – We use our consulting company, Morton & Company, for help in finding an insurance company. They send out a call for proposals nationally and bids are submitted to them. Sometimes we reach out to companies to ask them to submit a bid. There is an internally created rubric (M&C) with 10 categories that range from price, coverage, accessibility, online assistance and capabilities, etc. They will take that rubric and apply it to all the bids that we receive and create a booklet for the Benefits Company to consider. M&C will then meet with us and break down the rankings, etc. of each bid. The last one had about 10 proposals. We had several discussions and worked to clarify information on each company and considered the pros and cons. We

needed more time and we have lobbied to slow the process down so we could take it to our constituents for more perspectives. We understand we are not going to get coverage for every last condition. But we want to make sure we have enough time to consider the best option, not the perfect option. We are self-insured/self-funded and we hire someone to manage our benefits. Then we vote on what we will recommend to the President. The purpose is for us to have a voice on the direction we take in this. We don't know if UMR will put a bid in this year or how they will rank if they do.

Maren: When services are declined, is that UMR or SUU making those calls?

Cody: When we hire someone they are going to manage it based on the handbook. We could have an appeals committee but this can be complicated – I wouldn't want to be on that committee – we can decide yes or no on whether we have the funds to cover everything. We do have a secondary insurance that will kick in and cover anything over X amount of dollars.

Maren: How do they handle those claims? Maybe a blind committee.

Shelly: SUU has to keep \$200k for every person on the plan and when that is met is when the secondary kicks in. That's where all our premiums go to, to keep that funded. So anything over \$200,000 is when the other insurance will have to come in.

Cody: At our first meeting in October, they'll give us a report on how it went last year –, did we go over the money that we had saved? Did we have to rely on secondary insurance, etc.

Elise: I've been hearing horror stories about all kinds of services being denied and not paid. We need better coverage. EMI had better coverage

Cody: My understanding was that it was the same process with EMI . It was obviously a different company, so they had different rules and different things that they covered. But it was the same idea that we were still self-funded and EMI was just managing the funds for us. I wasn't on the committee at that time, but if I remember right, I think EMI's bid was substantially more expensive. But I agree, I've certainly had a lot of health problems in my family. I felt some of those difficulties with switching from EMI to UMR, so I certainly am sympathetic. I'm hopeful as well that some of these bids might be competitive and potentially provide better options for us.

Kelly: John Lisonbee and I met with Kevin Price last week to bring these concerns to him. He was very receptive to our conversation and took this seriously. A part of the discussion was our medical insurance policy had not been amended since 2002. Since then this little piece of legislation, called the Affordable Care Act, was enacted. So, it is on their radar, and he is hoping to get this updated in time for fall 2024 and new faculty hires. He recognizes that it's going to be a process but that should hopefully address some of the things like who qualifies as a dependent and can be listed on an employee's health insurance through SUU. So that was one thing that we discussed. He also said that in a meeting with M&C they meet with HR to go over how things are going with claims and coverage. Kevin said the #1 reason things are denied is because the doctor did not submit a record/background of the illness, e.g. patient did not respond to treatment X which is why we are proceeding with treatment Y. The other thing that Kevin said is, if you do have a denial, to get in touch with HR as soon as possible, so that they can help you review the details, most of the time it's an error or an omission in the way that the claim was submitted and they are willing/able to get taken care of. If people get to the point where they're getting referred back and forth that's where Patty Nichols can really help. Kevin is very willing to help employees.

b. UBHE Initiatives (Ryan Siemers) (20 min.)

Ryan: There are 4 initiatives that the Utah Board of Higher Education has tasked Scott Wyatt's with researching. Speaking for the English department, we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to those conversations. I forwarded Kelly's email on these 4 initiatives to the English department faculty, and I received a number of questions and comments. The vast majority of them were concerned with the first initiative exploring 90 plus credit bachelor's degrees and there are a few concerns on the other initiatives. I just want to summarize them really quickly and kind of enter them into the record, as it were.

The question that I have regarding the 90 plus credit bachelors degree is, I'd like to see the rationale or argument for exploring shorter bachelors degrees. The question of a feasibility analysis is, can we do this? An important part of the discussion, I think should be: should we do it? I'm sure there is a rationale for a 3 year degree. I just haven't seen it. I did take a look at the UB meeting that Kelly linked to us and the email so I'd like to see that rationale.

Another question that came up is the status of the 3 year degree initiative at SUU and what does that status suggest about the student appetite for finishing their degree in 3 years. How many students have completed their degree in 3 years at SUU? What is summer enrollment like now, relative to before the initiative? And a related question, what are course offerings like now relative to before the initiative? I received a comment that we already have shorter degree options for

students, such as associates degrees, and certificates. So why do we need a 3 year option?

Another question: why is BYU-Idaho seen as a model for public universities in Utah? I recall that BYU-Idaho was referred to with the SUU's 3 year initiative, and seems like it's part of the discussion again. So that's where that question came up. Another comment related to elective credits there seems to be a view that credits that are elective are less important, and the comment is that elective credits are not superfluous, they offer students choices. Anecdotally, someone has been surveying their students related to this 3 year possibility and according to some students, their progress through their degree is determined largely by the structure of their scholarships. That's a huge part of this discussion that will have to be considered: structure of scholarships. Many students are exploring their options and are put off by pressure to enter the workforce as soon as possible.

There were a number of comments related to students and mental health and especially from faculty members who have college-aged children quoting some specific language. Here we say, we care about students' mental health, but many students are already feeling like everything is moving too fast for them to catch their breath or get acclimated to college.

Some overall feasibility questions: do students want 3 year degrees? Do employers want applicants with 3 year degrees, and of course, will faculty support it? Regarding this, do employers want it? A question that I had is, all things being equal, will employers hire an applicant with a 4 year BA over an applicant with a 3 year BA? And, if that's the case, would we be doing students a disservice with a 3 year BA? That is a quick summary of questions and comments that I received relative to that first initiative, and most of the comments were about that.

Quickly, the comment on initiative two about disaggregating the bachelor's degree into smaller units. There is some interest in this because a faculty member I spoke to believes that it might increase enrollment in some of our courses, such as creative writing.

The third initiative is onboarding students and getting them connected to their major earlier – one faculty member commented that some research suggests that underserved communities, such as first generation students, students of color and rural students can benefit from a broader experience early on, and that early major commitments do not necessarily benefit them in the long run.

I did not receive any questions or comments about the fourth initiative, exploring a third party degree granting entity. So that's it for summarizing English

department questions, comments on the UBHE initiatives. So thanks, Kelly, for giving me a little bit of time.

Kelly: Thank you, Ryan. I'll try to touch on these, at least within the context of our conversation. And I would also invite President Benson to maybe share some additional information if she has any. My understanding is these were introduced in 2 minutes during that meeting and they have not been broadly expanded on. The Executive Committee had the opportunity to meet with President Benson and Provost Anderson in preparation for a meeting with Scott Wyatt, and we spent a good amount of time with Scott. And really the question that he asked or that's being asked is about the 120 credits – where did 120 come from? What is the rationale for 120? He said we understand what the value of the major requirements are, we assess it, we have learning outcomes, we understand the value of a GE for our students and our degree requirements. These are not electives within the major, for example, my major has 5 options, but it's because it's providing them with a specific skill or knowledge base that they need for that profession. These are the quote/unquote free electives that students need to accumulate to reach that 120.

If a student finishes their major in less than a 120 credits, do we have to keep them for a 120, or can they go off into the workforce? I will say that several of the questions that were raised we did talk about – what does this mean for admission to graduate programs, will graduate programs accept below a 120 credit degrees. Some programs we know right now, like pharmacy school, you just need to have the course work, and you can apply to pharmacy school. You don't even need your bachelors. That is not the case for other graduate programs. So we did discuss how this would affect students who want to go to grad school.

We did discuss a lot about the difference between traditional students and nontraditional students. There seems to be some interest for non-traditional students who have been working or have other kinds of life experience who are coming back for their education, for a new career. There could be some benefit to getting them out sooner.

We also discussed, would it still be a Bachelor of Science, or a Bachelor of Arts? Or would it be a bachelor of something else? For example, our bachelor of General Studies. Those students still have to have 120 credits but they're not getting, you know, a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts. They're getting a different kind of bachelor's degree. And it was recognized that this would not work for all majors and all degrees. There are a whole host of reasons why degrees are set up a certain way. I hope nobody minds me using specific examples. But Computer Science seemed kind of excited about the possibility of getting students out because they're already leaving to get jobs before they finish

their bachelors. Why not? If we can graduate them with 105 credits? And it was also mentioned that the BFA is at 121, and that's about as low as they can go. Because of what is required for that specific type of degree with the desirability. I don't have a good answer but it seems to be a lot of this is workforce driven, that employers need skilled and educated students, and they have a lack of those. But my understanding was, can we defend why 120 credits is the bar.

We didn't spend as much time on connecting the student earlier to their majors, but some examples were given like the Agriculture program has a really robust club where students may not be in their major courses right away, but they can connect with the club and kind of explore that way. So, it's not necessarily saying, we need to get students into upper division courses within their major within their first year because there is still a lot of value in students being able to explore. But if students have an idea, or they don't have an idea, there are clubs that they can get involved with, etc. that connect them with faculty and disciplines that might be beneficial in at least helping some students decide to stay and finish their degree. So that was kind of the rationale that was given there.

Mindy: We have not taken any action since Scott presented. I wanted us to be ahead of the curve to see how we wanted this to look for SUU if at all. Next step is to see if we want to pursue this and put a group together. Concerns are workforce and cost of a higher education and helping with that by cutting a year off. Are students ready for this? Is it too early? It's a concern for us and we need to run a financial model to see what getting 25% less revenue looks like. Or do we make it up with more students coming? Are students ready for this? Are we pushing them out into the workforce too quickly? Are they capable? Is that some of the anxiety that they are dealing with? There's so many different pieces of this that need to be studied. We aren't just going to jump in to jump in.

BYU-I has a pilot permission from our accrediting body to pilot this. It's a limited opportunity to see how this goes. This will not be a rush to implement this, carefully studying this.

We're also concerned about financial aid and what this does to financial aid and Pell grants for eligible students. There's so much to explore.

Kelly: 120 credits in 3 years is very different from less than 120 credits. They're kind of looking at 90 or 90 plus as being the measure of a 3 year degree.

Elise: Thank you for taking time to consider this. 120 credits has to do with education and skills. What does this mean for students – our job as a university is to educate students and not run after every new idea of how to turn out students quickly to a workforce trend.

James: I quickly assembled some information about Ryan's question about our 3 year degree and I thought I could just share a few highlights. But, Kelly, I'd be happy to engage with the larger Provost office and talk through this more with you and the Executive Committee. I think there's a difference between attempting to accomplish certain things called awarding a bachelor's degree in a 3 year calendar period and the enhancement of the use of summer semester. So when President Wyatt said that he was implementing a 3 year degree some of the talking points for him with lawmakers and others, was the idea that we would have pathways that allowed students to take summer courses to complete all of their 120 credit requirements in a period of 3 years, so by utilizing 2 summers, they could accelerate their time to graduation. And we identified, I think, somewhere around close to 90% of the degree programs, or maybe I should say bachelor's degree programs that could be completed on paper. So he was able to report successfully that we had a pathway for something like 90% of these. Now, that didn't mean that students were utilizing them or in their minds that they were on that path. But I think it was represented as a potential.

We have not tracked the number of students who declared, for example, a 3 year degree intent nor have we tracked the award, because we didn't implement those kinds of metrics. Instead, the metrics that we thought were good for measuring our success at helping students utilize summer would be the number of students enrolled in summer semester. The number of credits attempted, the number of credits awarded, and the average number of credits actually completed. So from 2018, which is before the implementation of this, I'll give you just a couple of data points. So one of them, head count for summer was 4,400 students utilized summer in some capacity. I haven't crunched the numbers for 2023 yet, but by 2022, we went from 4,400 to 7,000 students. That's a unique headcount who were participating in a summer term credit bearing course. The number of credits earned in 2018 was 12,000 credits and that went up to 28,000 in 2022.

We more than doubled the number of credits awarded in the period of time from 2018 to 2022, and the average number of credits jumped from 5.3 credits per student to 7.56. That means not only were there more students taking courses, but the average number of credits each student took also went up. Now it's just average, it's not mean. All you mathematicians – sorry, I don't have more nuanced numbers – these are rough numbers. So that's how we've been measuring our success in promoting the use of summer.

If students are engaged in summer, they can make better progress toward achieving their educational goals. They can repeat that class they struggled in from a previous semester. So there are lots of reasons to try to encourage the use of summer that have nothing to do with getting students out in 3 years. It has to do with serving students well and leveraging our talented faculty to help those faculty help those students accomplish their goals. So that's really how I've always thought about our 3 year degree initiative and I've always looked at it in terms of how we best enhance the summer experience for students so that they can achieve their goals.

Chris: Regarding connecting students sooner with the major – this is all exploratory. Students who tend to drop out early in the process, a lot of the first year experience focuses on social life but that's not what all students are looking for – thinking of ways for faculty to connect with students early on to know more about their ideas for a major. Including more academically rigorous work to challenge and interest students early.

Maren: Engaging students in academic topics they are interested in and not just GE's. As we're looking at the students who are utilizing credits and courses, I hope you are considering the wellbeing of students and faculty/staff matters.

Kelly Goonan: Just a reminder if your departments have initiated the process of developing departmental bylaws that include procedures for assigning workload, including overloads to prevent faculty from spreading themselves thin and risk falling behind on tenure or other things. We are hoping to see that every department has bylaws for workload and overload.

Ryan: Thanks for your comments. I will take Pres Benson's comments back that we're not going to jump in; and thanks James for the numbers. If you're proposing a change to a 3-year degree you should make an argument for this change. Is there a case for workforce demands? If this is our reason then let's take a look at this.

Kelly: It's a good thing to evaluate whether this proposal is going to be able to do what it proposes to do. Scott Wyatt has numbers regarding the number of people who enroll in college versus the number who actually graduate with their bachelor's degree. And then the millions of dollars of student debt that those folks who don't have a degree are carrying. This is something that I expect we will be talking about. I did want to address Amanda, who put a question in the chat (Amanda: Just a clarification, would this 3 year apply to ALL programs? Because I know that's going to be a problem for the nursing department). This is not every program.

Daniel Eves: The 3 year programs are a thought experiment and there will be no one forced to do it. This is an initial request to see if it is possible, is what I understand.

Gary: Spent summer in Europe and a lot of those colleges are shaving off extra credits. I think this is coming, not sure how soon or how. Analysis is needed as a lot of countries are doing this already.

James: So that's partly why we have 15 credits as a full time model. That's like a full time job, 45 hours of effort per week. And so if you add up 15 credits times 8 semesters, you have 120 credits. So our academic calendar is based on agrarian cycles for kids needed back on the farm. We only did fall and spring for the academic calendar. Traditionally, we inherited in North America, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, a tradition that students went to school for 4 years. They may not have had Carnegie credit hours. So you take the tradition of 4 years from Europe, you know, like, in the 1500s and you add a Carnegie credit hour definition. You stack those together, and the result is 120 credits. I think that's part of why 120 credits and a 4 year degree go hand in hand. It's a convergence of how we've traditionally approached study at a university and that it takes 4 years, and why we only go in fall or spring. You add on that definition of a credit hour, you get 120 credits. I wish that there was a more principled reason for this.

Kelly: This will be an ongoing conversation – please direct questions to the executive committee.

- c. Adjunct Faculty representation (Kelly Goonan) (10 min.)
Would we like to explore this more this year? Yes, but not add to their time that they are not being paid for. We will discuss whether they have voting rights, etc.
8. Standing Committee Updates:
- a. Faculty Review Board (Daniel Eves)
 - b. Parking Ticket Arbitration Committee (Daniel Eves)
Issuing tickets – if its your first time you can appeal it (unless you were in the disability spot)
 - c. Staff Association (John Lisonbee)
Starting walking groups. Held a Staff Association opening social.
 - d. General Education Committee (Ryan Siemers)
 - e. University Curriculum Committee (Rachel Parker)
1st meeting last Thursday. Nothing to report.
 - f. Student Association (Alexis McIff)
Held Senate meetings and are passing resolutions. Seeking more ideas on how to improve the student experience. We are having a Town Hall meeting tonight with the executive consulate to discuss what we've been working on and get feedback from students. Considering mid-term feedback surveys to gauge how students

are feeling about their classes rather than the end of the year. Kelly will reach out about the mid-term surveys.

- g. Benefits Committee (Cody Bremner)
- h. Faculty Awards Committees:
 - i. Distinguished Faculty Lecturer and Grace A. Tanner Committee (Christopher Graves) No lecturer selected – working on this.
 - ii. Inclusion & Diversity Awards Committee (Kelly Goonan)
 - iii. Outstanding and Distinguished Educator Award Committee (Bryan Koenig)
 - iv. Distinguished Scholar/Creative Award Committee (Christian Bohnenstengel)
 - v. Distinguished Faculty Service Award Committee (Andrew Misseldine)
- i. Treasurer's Report (Daniel Eves)
- j. Past President's Report (Abigail Larson) - Academic Affairs Committee; University Faculty Leaves Committee
Met with the Academic Affairs Committee and decided to split the committee into sub groups – the individuals that were working on 6.1 will continue to work on cleaning that up. So any feedback that you have for them, you can either send to me or you can send to Wendy. As feedback comes in from Department Chairs and the college P&T Committees, etc., all the way up the chain we will try to make a list of changes that we hope to implement, and then I'll bring that forward toward the end of the semester. Met with James and Jake Johnson about policies on radar to update. Academic Calendar Committee meeting on Oct 19th to solidify our calendar for the next 3/4 years.
- k. President Elect's Report (Scott Knowles) – UCFSL; Workload and Faculty Salary Equity Committee (WaFSEC)
- l. President's Report (Kelly Goonan) - Policy/Procedure Arbitration Committee; President's Council; Dean's Council; EO Director Search
See above for details about meeting with Kevin Price/HR. We are in the process of hiring a new director for the Equal Opportunity Office. We've completed interviews and campus visits so an announcement should be forthcoming soon. Remind folks if you have any ideas or hear anything from your colleague on how the Faculty Senate can be helpful and take on this year, we would like to hear from you.

9. Call for Executive Session - no call made.

10. Adjourn (5:27) 1st motion Chris Younkin ; 2nd motion Elise Leahy.