

**Auburn University Senate**  
**January 28, 2025**  
**3:30 pm**  
**Via Zoom: <https://aub.ie/senatezoom>**

**MINUTES**

Meeting was called to order by Senate Chair, Lori Eckhardt, at 3:30 pm.

**Establish a Quorum**

The attendance vote was opened and quorum was established with 61 members present as of 3:33 p.m. When the quorum vote closed at the end of the meeting, 82 Senators or substitutes had responded present.

The [Senate Meeting Minutes from November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024](#) were approved by unanimous consent.

**Remarks and Announcements**

**University Senate Chair: Lori Eckhardt**

Fall orientation for Senators was well-received. Chair-Elect Virginia Davis and Secretary-Elect Rachel Prado are working on planning another orientation for August 2025. More information will be forthcoming.

In August and December this past fall Senate Committee Chairs met to get to know each other, better understand important role committees play in shared governance, and determine how the Senate Executive team could help support their goals. President Robert joined these events to express his support for the committees' work. Planning is underway for an end of year event this April.

Reminder that the Spring University Faculty Meeting is scheduled for March 25<sup>th</sup>. The quorum for this meeting is defined as the members present. All faculty are encouraged to attend. The agenda will be posted 15 days prior to the meeting. All faculty as defined by the Faculty Handbook have the right to speak and vote at this meeting.

New awards for Outstanding Senate Leadership were announced. There are three awards available: Outstanding New Senator, Outstanding Senator, and Outstanding Senate Committee Chair Award. Each awardee will receive a \$1000 honorarium. More information, including selection criteria and timeline, is available in this meeting's Canvas module and on the Senate website under News.

It is nearly time to volunteer for committees. It is critical that those wishing to serve on Senate and University committees volunteer in the system. Faculty should watch for emails noting that the volunteer system is open.

Elections for University Faculty/Senate Officers will be held this semester.

Auburn University will be hosting the SEC Senate Leadership Conference and the Alabama Council of University Faculty Presidents Leadership Conference in late spring.

President: Chris Roberts

With regret, President Roberts announced that Dr. Tim Boosinger, former Provost and Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, has passed away. Auburn is a stronger and better institution because of Dr. Boosinger's countless contributions.

Regarding an unacceptable, racist word that was marked into the snow outside of a dorm, President Roberts noted that campus safety and security and the Auburn Police are continuing their investigations. The university communicated what it could with its message to the Auburn Plainsman and local media. President Roberts reiterated that individuals who violate the university's discrimination and harassment policies will be held accountable.

With regard to the incident that occurred at Neville Arena on Saturday, President Roberts stated that the extremely low temperatures motivated in a deviation from the traditional method of admission at the arena. Students were asked to begin lining up at 6:30 am on Saturday for access to the game day event. When the doors were opened at 7 am, a security official led a line of students to the door and a small group of people jumped over and knocked over barricades to beat the main line of students. While this incident was brief, it resulted in a few minor injuries and considerable alarm. Six minor injuries were reported by on site medical staff and injuries were addressed locally by EMS. At this time, the university has no verifiable reports of broken bones resulting from Saturday's incident at Neville Arena. The university is continuing to review its game day policies and procedures.

Recent Executives Orders and directives are affecting federal funding priorities, certain of those programs and awarded contracts and grants, and pending funding from federal agencies or sponsors. OVPRED and other offices are closely monitoring communications from various federal agencies and will provide guidance to Auburn faculty and staff. At this time, PIs are encouraged to contact their program officers and understand potential programmatic changes to their awards (if there are any), and to monitor federal websites for changes in proposal deadlines, requirements, or other actions. Unless a sponsor contacts the university with specific instructions to pause or stop an activity on a grant or contract, that work will continue as usual. If a researcher is contacted directly by a program or agency about their project, they should reach out to Tony Ventimiglia in the Contracts & Grants Office.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will take place next Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup> on the AUM campus in Montgomery. There will be 6 facilities-related items on the agenda, and a couple of those may be of interest to faculty: Transformation Garden brought forward by College of Agriculture; Rec & Wellness sportsplex support facility; program to restore and refurbish campus store; a new hangar at the airport; and a couple of athletics projects.

Provost: Vini Nathan

During last week's weather event, the decision to hold class online, incorporate content into future class sessions, or use a make-up day was left up to the faculty. Three optional make-up dates have been set: February 15, February 22, and March 1 (all dates are Saturdays).

There will be an internal search through the Provost's office for the Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness. The search will be led by Jeff Fairbrother.

This year there about 80 dossiers for promotion & tenure and about 39 dossiers for NTTf faculty. The thirteen members of the university P&T committee will have its first deliberative meeting in a couple of weeks.

There are two action items and three information items for the Board of Trustees' upcoming meeting. Action items include a proposal from the department Entomology and Plant Pathology in the College of Agriculture to create the AUBees Center focused on bees and honey and a proposal from the School of Kinesiology in the College of Education to close three nested programs related to physical education and teacher education (a BS, MS, and MS alternate certification). All three information items are from the Ginn College of Engineering: an undergraduate and graduate certificate in healthcare systems engineering (Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering) and a graduate certificate in electronic parts manufacturing and packaging (Department of Mechanical Engineering).

#### Questions:

Gregory Spray, Senator from Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, expressed concern that faculty, staff, and students were not alerted directly regarding the hate speech incident; instead, they learned about it through the media and from other sources. Senator Spray requested that the university commit to sending alerts when future acts of hate or injustice occur. President Roberts noted that this situation developed very quickly and information spread rapidly on social media. Because of this, the administration tried to utilize the Auburn Plainsman, which is able to react quickly and reaches a broad audience. President Roberts said he would take Senator Spray's comment to the leadership team and think about that in terms of the future approach to this.

Steph Shepherd, Senator from Geosciences, noted that in the past 30 minutes, she (and others) had received notification from NSF that even funds for existing grants may be withheld. Senator Shepherd asked how the university plans to support graduate students, undergraduates, and postdocs that are funded and the junior faculty who will be disproportionately impacted if they can't pay their grad students and postdocs. President Roberts said he hadn't seen that most recent communication. Specific projects will be addressed through Tony Ventimiglia, while Steve Taylor and Kelli Shomaker are looking at potential impact and what the institution can carry going forward. President Roberts noted that several years back there had been a pause and the university had managed through that. He encouraged people to work with Steve Taylor's office and when they receive communications like the one mentioned, to send those along. President Roberts said the university would do everything it can to try and keep things moving forward.

## Action Items

### Voting on Motion made by Senator Stern.

*Per the direction of President Roberts, the Senate asks the Board of Trustee or their designee to come to the next Senate meeting to explain why the President and the people he supervises earned higher salary raises than the faculty in this fiscal year.*

Presenter: Liliana Stern

Chair Eckhardt read Liliana Stern's motion from the November 12, 2024 Senate meeting. As she was about to open the floor for discussion, Lisa Kensler, Immediate Past Chair, made a motion objecting to the consideration of the motion stating that the motion was beyond the scope of the Senate's work. This motion did not need a second and was not debatable; it required a two-thirds majority of those voting for it to carry.

The vote on this motion was worded as follows in Canvas:

There has been an objection to the consideration of the main motion. Shall the main motion be considered?

Voting results: 26 yes / 50 no / 4 abstain

The motion objecting to consideration of the main motion did not meet the 2/3 bar and did not carry. At that point, Senator Stern was then given the floor to speak in support of the motion.

Liliana Stern, Senator from Economics, provided background on the motion was made – in the October 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, Michael Stern asked President Roberts why he and others had received raises higher than those given to faculty, to which President Roberts said that the Board determines his raise and that question would need to be taken up with the Board.

David Miller, Senator from Philosophy, spoke against the motion, stating that the AU Senate is advisory to the president and it is not the Senate's job to supervise the Board of Trustees.

Lisa Kensler, Immediate Past Chair, also spoke against the motion, stating that if the Senate wishes as a body to micromanage the Board of Trustees, it is inviting the same from them.

Zachary Schulz, Senator from History, called the question. This was seconded by Senator Kensler. Senator Stern objected to closing debate.

The vote on closing debate was worded as follows in Canvas:

There has been a motion made to close debate.

Voting results: 55 yes / 15 no / 1 abstain

The motion to close debate met the 2/3 bar and carried. Debate was closed and a vote on the main motion occurred.

The vote on this motion was worded as follows in Canvas:

The motion as stated by Senator Liliana Stern (Economics): "I move that, per the direction of President Roberts, the Senate asks the Board of Trustees or their designee to come to the next Senate meeting to explain why the President and the people he supervises earned higher salary raises than the faculty in this fiscal year." Do you support this motion?

**Voting results: 11 yes / 57 no / 1 abstain**

The motion did not carry.

[Voting on the nominees to Senate Committees](#)

Presenter: Jaena Alabi, Secretary

[Rules Committee Nominations](#) (pdf)

**Voting Results: 65 yes / 1 no / 1 abstain**

Nominees were approved.

[Administrator Evaluation Committee Report](#)

Presenter: Michael Pendowski, Chair

[Administrator Evaluation Committee Report](#) (pdf)

Michael Pendowski shared information on the administrator survey sent out by the Senate's Administrator Evaluation Committee. This is a yearly survey seeking feedback on all Department Heads/Chairs and Deans, except those who are involved in a three- or five-year review, which happens at the same time but goes through the Provost's office. The current administrator survey has two forms – a short, one-question form that takes about 10 seconds to answer, and a longer version that takes about 3 minutes. Response rates over the last three years were shared; there has been an increase of over 27%. The committee has been working to implementing various changes over the past four years, including releasing two versions of the survey (short and long), moving to an earlier distribution date, tightening and clarifying wording on some questions, clarifying anonymity/confidentiality statement, and eliminating redundant questions. To further increase response rates, the committee has worked with the Provost's office to alert department chairs to solicit for more participation and announcing the surveys at this Senate meeting, with a goal of asking Senators to encourage their departments/areas to participate. The survey has also been moved earlier in the year, with the first distribution emails going out yesterday and reminders to be sent February 6 and 12; surveys will close Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>.

*Question(s):*

Sara Wolf, Senator from Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology, asked who receives the data collected from these surveys and how is it used. Pendowski responded that the results go to supervisor of the person being evaluation – for Department Heads, the results go to their Deans, and for Deans, the results go to the Provost. How the results are used depends on the Deans and Provost. The committee cannot dictate how the results are used; it can only encourage the Provost's office to use the data collected.

[Academic Standards Committee Report](#)

Presenter: Jaena Alabi on behalf of Damion McIntosh, Chair

[Academic Standards Committee Report](#) (pdf)

Jaena Alabi shared an item that the Academic Standards Committee has been working on. A special task force was updating the final examinations policy and sought feedback from the Academic Standards Committee. Committee members reviewed the draft and provided feedback, which was incorporated. Alabi shared a PDF with the updated final examinations policy, noting that the new policy included specifics regarding online, asynchronous courses, streamlined the process for faculty to use other assessment means (such as final projects/papers), provided more flexibility in when final exams for courses carrying fewer than three credit hours can occur, incorporated the existing policy on number of final examinations in one day, and clarified process when students have three or more final examinations scheduled on one day.

Alabi encouraged those with comments or questions to contact the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, Damion McIntosh, directly.

### **Information Items**

#### [Cybersecurity Update](#)

Presenter: Jim O'Connor

[Cybersecurity Update](#) (pdf)

Jim O'Connor gave a presentation on cybersecurity, focusing on the current risks to education, campus programs to mitigate risk, and what members of the university community can do to protect themselves and their colleagues (both on campus and at home).

Because of time constraints, members were encouraged to contact Jim O'Connor directly with any questions.

#### [Ombuds Program Update](#)

Presenter: Dona Yarbrough

[Ombuds Program Update Presentation](#) (pdf)

[Ombuds Grad Student Flyer Example](#) (png)

[Ombuds Undergrad Student Flyer Example](#) (png)

Dona Yarbrough gave a presentation on the Ombuds office and its new awareness campaign aimed at undergraduates. The program seeks to spread awareness of the office and its services to undergraduate students. Faculty can help by sharing information about the Ombuds office and its Talk to Your Buds campaign with their students (see linked flyers above).

Because of time constraints, members were encouraged to contact Dona Yarbrough directly with any questions.

**New Business**

Lori Eckhardt, Senate Chair

None.

**Adjournment**

Lori Eckhardt, Senate Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 4:49 pm

## Attendance Record for January 28, 2025 Senate Meeting

### Senate Officers

Chair	Lori Eckhardt
Chair-elect	Virginia Davis
Secretary	Jaena Alabi
Secretary-elect	Rachel Prado
Immediate Past-Chair	Lisa Kensler

### Administration

VP for Development	Rob Wellbaum
Dean, Harrison College of Pharmacy	Leigh Ann Ross
Dean, College of Human Sciences	Susan Hubbard
Dean, Harbert College of Business	Jennifer Mueller-Phillips
Dean, College of Liberal Arts	Janaki Alavalapati for Jason Hicks
Dean, SG College of Engineering	Dean Hendrix for Mario Eden
Dean, COSAM	Ed Thomas
VP of Enrollment Management	JuWan Robinson for Joffery Gaymon
VP for Research	Steven Taylor

### Ex-Officio Members

Provost	Vini Nathan
Dean of Libraries	Shali Zhang
GSC President	Esther Akinrinde
Staff Council Chair	Kimberly McCadden
A&P Assembly Chair	Thomas Sawyer
Steering Committee	Andrew Pendola
Steering Committee	L. Octavia Tripp
Steering Committee	Tom Leathem
Steering Committee	J. Brian Anderson

*Absent without substitute*  
*SGA President*

*Jack Hilton*

### Senators by Departments

Accountancy	Xu (Joyce) Cheng
ACES	Geni Payne
Aerospace Engineering	Roy Hartfield
Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology	Wendiam Sawadgo
Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology	Daniel Kroeger for Vinicia Biancardi
Animal Sciences	Paul Dyce
Architecture	Kevin Moore
Art	Lauren Woods
Aviation	Russ Chesser
Biological Sciences	Rebecca Riggs
Biosystems Engineering	David Blersch
Building Sciences	Jeff Kim
Business Analytics and Information Systems	Regina Gramling
Chemical Engineering	Elizabeth Lipke

Chemistry	Evert Duin
Civil Engineering	Joel Hayworth
Communication and Journalism	Kevin Smith
Consumer & Design Sciences	Jung Eun Lee
Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences	David Han
Curriculum & Teaching	Christopher Clemmons
Drug Discovery and Development	Murali Dhanasekaran
Economics	Liliana Stern
Educational Foundations, Leadership & Technology	Sara Wolf
Electrical & Computer Engineering	Jitendra Tugnait for Michael Baginski
English	Sunny Stalter-Pace
Entomology & Plant Pathology	John Beckmann
Finance	David Cicero
Forestry & Wildlife Science	Robert Gitzen
Geosciences	Steph Shepherd
Health Outcomes and Research Policy	Jan Kavvookjian
History	Zachary Schulz
Hospitality Mgmt.	Clark Danderson
Human Development & Family Studies	Diana Samek
Industrial and Systems Engineering	Rich Seseck
Industrial Design	David Smith
Kinesiology	Christopher "Brooks" Mobley
Library	Ali Krzton for Kasia Leousis
Management and Entrepreneurship	Liesl Wesson
Marketing	Jeremy Wolter
Mathematics and Statistics	Hans Werner van Wyk
Mechanical Engineering	Nicholas Tsolas for Sabit Adanur
Nursing	Linda Gibson-Young for Chris Martin
Nutritional Sciences	Kevin Huggins
Outreach	Anna Margaret Goldman
Pathobiology	Katherine Horzmann
Pharmacy Practice	Lena McDowell
Philosophy	David Miller
Physics	Luca Guazzotto
Political Science	Spencer Goidel
Poultry Science	Amit Morey
Psychology	Alejandro A. Lazarte
ROTC Air Force	LTC Michael Quinn
ROTC Army	LTC Laura Pangallo Fryar
Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work	Danilea Werner
Special Ed. Rehabilitation Counseling/School Psych	Latifat Cabirou
Speech Language and Hearing Sciences	Gregory Spray
Supply Chain Management	David Strickland
Theatre and Dance	Adrienne Wilson
Veterinary Clinical Sciences	Chance Armstrong
World Languages & Literatures	Kerri Munoz

*Absent without substitute*  
*Computer Science & Software Engineering*  
*Fisheries & Allied Aquaculture*  
*Horticulture*

*Sanjeev Baskiyar*  
*Nathan Whelan*  
*Elina Coneva*

*Music*  
*ROTC Naval*

*Lee Johnson*  
*Captain Michael Witherspoon*