



FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

Thursday, September 4, 2025 (meeting held via Zoom)

In attendance: Speaker: Ott Walter; Communications Director: McDonnell; Accounting: Briggs; Art, Design, and Art History: Brooks; Biology: L. Doyle; Chemistry: Kokhan; Comm. Sci. and Disorders: Harbick; Comm. Studies: Reynolds; Computer Info. Systems & Bus. Analytics; Computer Science: El-Khadi Rizvi; Early ELED & Reading: Hass; Economics: J. Doyle; Edu. Found. & Exception: Wiley; Engineering: Harper; English: Lo; Finance & Bus. Law: Parker; Foreign Languages: Galarreta; Geol. & Environ. Science: Pyle; Grad. Psych.: LeBlanc; Hart School of HSRM: Hallmon; Health Professions: Harrison; Health Sciences: Zaman; History: McCleary; Justice Studies: Svigelj; Kinesiology: Walters; Learning, Tech., & LE: Jin; Libraries: Price; Marketing: Snyder; Math & Stats: Garren; Media Arts. & Design: Mitchell; Mid, Second, & Math: Shoffner; Military Science: Eshelman; Music: Suggs; Nursing: Armstrong; Phil. & Rel.: van Leeuwen; Physics: Butner; Political Science: Lubert; Psychology: Zinn; Social Work: Miller; Soc. & Anth.: Porter; Strategic Leadership Studies: Selznick; Theatre & Dance: Zazzali; Writing Rhetoric & Tech Comm: Hickman; Part-time Faculty Reps: Harlacker; Smith; Guests—Kolvoord, Nowviskie, Oldmixon, Shackelford, Adams, Hornsby, and others.

- I. **Call to Order**—3:55 p.m.
- II. The minutes from April 2025 were approved.
- III. **Provost's Report**—Dr. Bob Kolvoord
 - The interim provost reviewed important campus successes from the last academic year, including changing the tone and tenor between the administration and faculty, successfully defining and building shared governance, moving the core curriculum conversation forward, resolving the delayed pay for new hires and the 30% salary issue for faculty, and revising Academic Affairs policy 2 (about AUHs). He also outlined six key areas of focus for the current academic year:
 1. GenEd reform: Three groups developed proposals over the summer, on which the Core Curriculum Committee is now seeking feedback. Solicit proposals for revising the GenEd curriculum through a streamlined curriculum approval process. This opportunity for revision—the first in three decades—is galvanizing.
 2. AI: Every unit ought to spend some time this fall talking about teaching, scholarship, and what students need to know. In conversations with alumni and potential employees, this topic comes up first.
 3. Shared governance and the Faculty Handbook: Faculty and administrators have taken a methodical approach to this

important work, which continues this year. Expectations are to complete the handbook's revision this academic year.

4. Strategic Plan: a new strategic plan is being developed. Administrators met with CISE already and will meet with the other units in vision forums. There are QR codes on the website for submitting ideas. "Vision" groups are being created. Faculty will co-chair the groups.
5. Reengineering Madison: Work continues in this area with the effect on faculty expected to be modest for upcoming changes (e.g., broadening the use of the CRM among faculty). The focus now is on Finance and HR platforms, which are in desperate need of upgrading. A replacement infrastructure will help to track extra pay. The timeline for student systems is changes expected in two to two-and-a-half years. Okta times out after fifteen minutes of inactivity to adhere to FERPA laws. New JMU usernames/email addresses are random, which follows best practices in IT. Before, name changes were enormously time consuming.
6. [JMU adopted the Okanagan Charter](#), which puts health and wellbeing at the center of what we do, in the fall of 2024. Shoutout to Bethany Nowviskie for her efforts on this work.

IV. Speaker's Report

- Guest Dr. Bethany Nowviskie discussed [updates](#) to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and our [campus approach to digital accessibility](#).
 - Title II prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Recent updates to Title II are meant to improve web accessibility.
 - Virginia House Bill 2541 mirrors federal Title II web accessibility language. Both state and federal measures were passed with bipartisan support and aim to level the playing field so that people don't have to ask for accommodations to participate in public life.
 - Importantly for course materials in public higher ed, a former Title II exception for password-protected systems was removed.
 - Requirements for JMU officially begin in late April of 2026; therefore, a cross-campus team has been working to provide learning resources, software, and support.
 - Faculty should be taking measures now to understand [campus recommendations](#) and explore [new resources and tools](#) related to course content.
 - The goal for faculty and staff is not to pull down useful materials because they're not 100% compliant on Day 1, but instead to move the needle and make continual progress. Meanwhile, IT has made improvements to our campus websites, and the greatest impact of Title II will come as companies add more accessibility features to software and are held to higher accessibility standards for the content they sell to higher ed.

- [Workshops](#) are being offered to help faculty revise their content. Libraries is working with campus partners to build an [FAQs page](#) and is hosting a [Digital Accessibility Ambassador Program](#). There's a self-guided, asynchronous [Canvas course](#) faculty can enroll in. And the [Anthology Ally](#) system (in Canvas) provides guided help to you as an instructor (e.g., tips and dial icons indicate greater or lesser accessibility and are private to you as the instructor).
- Regarding questions about AI and accessibility, information about JMU data policies is available [here](#).
- Questions? Email them to Kathy Ott Walter (ottwalmk@jmu.edu), who will compile and send them to Dean Nowviskie.
- Find further campus-level AI guidance [here](#). Dean Nowviskie is happy to return to discuss AI in a future meeting.
- The speaker reviewed senators' responsibilities:
 - Different methods are used to communicate with department colleagues (e.g., surveys, emails, a recurring spot on the agenda for meetings). Voting methods also vary by department. Do what works best for your context.
 - Motions: At least a week in advance of the monthly meeting, bring motion ideas/drafts to the Steering Committee of the Faculty Senate, which meets one week before the Faculty Senate meets. The Steering Committee may forward a motion to the full Senate, push it back to the drafter for revision, send it to committee, etc. There's a flow chart on the Senate's Canvas site.
 - Each senator is assigned to a subcommittee. Changes to committees can be made if specially requested; however, a balance among colleges is sought for each subcommittee, so the logistics are complex. Subcommittee meetings are held on "off" Thursdays during the time allotted for Faculty Senate meetings. You should be hearing from your subcommittee's chair to schedule these meetings.
 - Collect \$5 in dues from each full-time faculty member for the donation/flower fund.
 - Publicize the [Engagement Mini-Grants](#) (proposals are due Monday, October 6, 2025).
 - Senate terms last for two years. In the spring of your second year, your department needs to hold an election. There is no limit to the number of terms you can be elected for.
 - Meet as scheduled with your college's dean and fellow senators.
 - Follow *Robert's Rules of Order* for meetings, unless otherwise stipulated in the Senate's bylaws.
- Mark your calendar: The Faculty Senate will hold an in-person meeting in January, which President Schmidt will attend (Hartman Hall, the Forum [room 2120] on January 29, 2026, with refreshments). Note that meetings during the spring semester are held on the last Thursday of each month.
- If you do not have access to the Faculty Senate Canvas site, let Speaker Ott Walter know (ottwalmk@jmu.edu).

- The University Policy Committee issues drafts of revised university-level policies for public comment. When they are released, the speaker sends a message through Canvas. Send feedback to her (ottwalmk@jmu.edu).
- Review the information available on the syllabus page of the provost's website. Send ideas, feedback, suggestions to the speaker (ottwalmk@jmu.edu).
- Volunteers are needed from the Senate for the Employee Advisory Committee, the Handbook Committee (three-year term), and the Online Teaching and Learning Committee.
- The Steering Committee had lunch with the president and the provost. They'll meet again in December.
- Forums are still being held for feedback on the Faculty Handbook draft. Faculty participation in this process is crucial.
- Tim Miller worked with ODS last year to set up more testing center availability. There's also a need for testing center availability for other (non-ODS accommodations) proctored environment testing.
- "Professors of Practice" is a new designation for some faculty (e.g., those who oversee clinicals and the creative arts). The speaker will meet with university counsel to discuss and clarify the classification.

V. **Treasurer's Report—Dr. Talé Mitchell**

- The role of the treasurer is to maintain the Senate's checking and savings accounts, collect dues, arrange bereavements for faculty or their close family members who have passed away, and run the computer lottery. Please remind faculty of these resources. There is a [link on the Faculty Senate website](#) to an online form that any faculty member can fill out.
- Collected funds—\$5 from each full-time faculty member—are due on October 15. The money is used primarily for bereavements but can also be used for other expenditures that the Faculty Senate votes for with a 2/3 majority. You can send the money via Venmo to @talemitchphd or Zelle, hand an envelope in person to the treasurer in Harrison 0236, or send one check (payable to JMU Faculty Senate) through campus mail at Dr. Talé Mitchell / JMU MSC 2104.
- The combined bank accounts currently total \$3,300.
- The email about the Faculty Senate Computer Lottery has been sent.

VI. **Committee Reports**

- A. Faculty Concerns—Chair Sasha Kokhan sent a list of fifteen items of concern to IT's Robin Bryan (e.g., minimize Okta prompts, allow e-PAR access in MyMadison for faculty, clarify extra stipends in pay information).
- B. Policies—no report.
- C. Adjunct Affairs—no report.
- D. Teaching and Student Relations—no report.
- E. Budget & Compensation and Government Relations—no report.

- F. Faculty Appeals—former Chair Talé Mitchell reported that one appeal was heard.
- G. Research and Scholarship—Chair Ben Selznick announced that the president and the provost have agreed again this year to fund the Faculty Senate Mini-Grants. The website is updated to allow proposal submissions. Please encourage colleagues to apply (but also to review the guidelines about what can be funded). [Reports from awarded projects](#) are posted on the website and offer insight into winning ideas. Review of proposals will begin in the October meeting of the committee, and winners will be announced shortly thereafter.

Mini-grant proposals are due on October 6, 2025.

- H. Shared Governance—Chair Kristen McCleary thanked the president and the provost for their continued efforts toward successful shared governance between the administration and faculty. The Shared Governance Task Force was a yearlong joint provost/faculty senate enterprise cochaired by Dean Nowvieskie and Dr. Smita Mathur. The Shared Governance Implementation Team is composed of four administrators and four faculty members. They will be working on communicating about shared governance.
- I. Other Committee Reports
 - Steve Harper can't participate in the Employee Advisory Committee this semester because of a time conflict. The committee advises the president. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month from 1 to 2 p.m.

VII. **No New Business**

VIII. **No Unfinished Business**

IX. **Open Discussion**

- Priorities for the senate's work this year are faculty retention, shared governance, the appeals and grievances process, and the provost search.
- Steve Garren and Ping Wang will serve on the Academic Affairs Policies Committee. The committee will be reviewing AA Policy 12 (disruption of class) and 1304 (outside employment).
- The updated hiring guidelines are coming soon.
- The following questions were raised:
 - What's the status of removing DEI language on front-facing materials?
 - How should faculty deal with AI? There is not a one-size-fits-all approach across campus about how to use/avoid AI in the classroom. There are different appropriate responses. One resource is [the libraries website](#), which is currently being revised.

X. **Adjournment:** 5:29 p.m.