

Faculty Senate Meeting
Tuesday, October 7, 2025, 3:30PM

Senators Present: Anna Muenchrath (SAC), Matt Taylor (COA), Tim Muth (COB), Melissa Borgen (BES), Thomas Eskridge (EECS), Alan Brown (CCE), Tom Marcinkowski (MSE), William Arrasmith (MSE), Robert Weaver (OEMS), Yanek Mieczkowski (SAC), Jessica Wildman (SOP), William Bowman (Library), Marcus Hohlmann (APSS), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Marshall Jones (SOP), Gary Zarillo (OEMS), Robert Joel Deacon (SAC), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Wanfa Zhang (SAC), Angel Otero (COB), Madhur Tiwari (APSS), Charles Bryant (COB), Adam Prinkey (MSE), Chris Bashur (CCE), Mehmet Kaya (BES), Adam Aboueid (COA), Ratan Jha (APSS), Csaba Palotai (APSS), Shawn Scott (COA), David Wilder (SOBA)

Proxies: None

Senators Absent: Sidhartha Bhattacharyya (EECS), Georgio Anagnostopoulos (EECS), Spencer Fire (OEMS), Patrick Converse (SOP), Hamid Najafi (MCE)

Other attendees: John Nicklow (President), Shibo Liu (COES), John Z. Kiss (Provost), Nasri Nesnas (CCE), Nancy Garmer (Library), Kaylee Erdoes (Library), Heidi Hatfield Edwards (SAC), Lisa Steelman (SOP), Jason Martin (Library), Penny Vassar (COB), Rian Mehta (COA), Suzanna Kozaitis (Library), Shibo Liu (MSE), Nick Daher (COB), Rudi Wehmschulte (CCE)

Call to Order

Open Forum/Q&A with University Leadership

Provost Kiss

- Urges faculty to participate in the first candidate for the Chief Research Officer position.

President Nicklow

- Enrollment—we now have Census data, so these are official numbers.
 - Enrollment is 10,030 students
 - We have exceeded 1,000 first time-in-college students, which is the highest since this has been measured.
 - Retention rate is 83.5%, which is up 4%
 - Finances will be gone over in the state of the university address.
 - We saw an 18% decline in international enrollments, which aligns with what is happening nationally. This is tracked by entries into the country on student visas, which is down 20%.
 - ABA program is killing it, which was a large part of the increase in enrollments, but the downside is that we don't keep all of that money.
 - Enrollment is up; retention is up (both of these affect ratings); but the finances are not up.
- QEP
 - SACSCOC has a new president, who suspended the QEP requirement, although we can still submit a QEP if we want (it is now voluntary).

- We will go through with the plan of professional advising and track its success regardless, but the question is whether or not we will do so officially, with all of the reporting requirements of SACSCOC. The only benefit seems to be the possibility of winning an award.
- Thanks to the ad hoc committee on Policy and Compliance.
 - This is a small group of faculty, administrators, and staff, who worked through a recommendation on faculty contracts last year, which was brought to the Senate. They have now worked on the conflict-of-interest form. This is intended to mitigate conflict (disclosing a conflict is not necessarily a problem). The intention is to clarify an existing policy. We are being asked for feedback on this.
- Rankings
 - We are on the list that ranks national research universities (not regional research universities). We ranked 232, which is a decrease of 1 from last year. President Nicklow is optimistic about future increases since we've had increases in retention. US News & World Report uses a three-year average and has a one-year lag, so this information is from fiscal years 2022–2024.
 - We saw increases in social mobility rankings, computer science program, engineering program (156), psychology slipped 7 places from last year.
- Request for feedback on “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education” to be emailed to President Nicklow directly.

Question from Sen. Zarillo: Is there an update on how changes to the H1B Visa will impact Florida Tech?

President Nicklow reports that we are still getting guidance. He believes that all institutions will be held to the new standards. It should not affect renewals or transfers, but it would affect new hires. Starting next year, sponsoring a new hire on an H1B visa would cost Florida Tech about \$110,000 per person, rather than the portion of that that we used to pay. Financially, Florida Tech can't do this. However, it is being argued in court and could be overturned.

Sen. Arrasmith asked what percentage of the student body is currently made up of international students.

President Nicklow reports that it is currently 12%. Last year it was 14.5%. Pre-COVID the figure was 33%.

Sen. Hohlmann asked about the Higher Ed Reauthorization Act that President Nicklow mentioned in his remarks on the Compact.

President Nicklow reports that this is an old Act that is being rewritten by the new Congress. It gives guidance to what educational institutions can do and how funds are distributed. It is a guiding principle for how universities operate under federal programs.

Sen. Zarillo asked if there is an update on indirect cost rates.

President Nicklow reports that this is still in the courts. There was an attempt to mandate a 15% indirect cost rate. In the meantime, there has been an Executive Order surrounding Federal Rulemaking on Grants, which established that there will be a political appointee in the final step of federal grant funding approval who will give preference to schools with lower indirect costs. Florida Tech should be competitive since our rate is lower than some of our peers.

Approval of Minutes

September 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved with two emendations:

- Nasri Nesnas: Adding “staff” to the discussion of who is allowed to park in spots marked for students (in addition to faculty).
- Sen. Marcinkowski: Specify which parking lot was intended in the discussion of limited parking on particular days

Reports

- President, Sen. Wildman
 - A faculty Ombuds Committee exists and is referenced in the faculty handbook. The members are appointed by the Provost and were listed in the meeting. However, their contact information is not available on any Florida Tech website. Sen. Wildman has brought this omission to the attention of the Provost, who has agreed to make this information findable.
 - There has not been a formal announcement, but there will be a Faculty & Staff Halloween Party in the Clemente Center from 3–5pm on October 31st. If you are passionate about events and event planning, get in touch with Sen. Wildman because there are opportunities to get involved.
- Officers & Committee Chairs
 - Secretary
 - Sen. Muenchrath discussed meeting with the provost’s office, Legal Counsel, and the Dean of Students to discuss a recording policy. Although Sen. Muenchrath conceived of this as an academic policy, the provost’s office suggested a syllabus policy. The status of this is that the provost’s office plans to bring a draft of such a policy to the faculty Senate for our November meeting.
 - Sen. Weaver asked clarifying questions about the difference between a syllabus policy and an academic policy.
 - Sen. Muenchrath answer that an academic policy creates a blanket condition, while syllabus policies only apply if faculty put them in the syllabus. We can ask the provost’s office more about why an academic policy is not appropriate here when it presents the policy to us for our feedback.
 - Academic Policies: OPEN POSITION (Chair): no report
 - Administrative Policies, Sen. Kaya: no report
 - Faculty Excellence, Sen. Wilder: The committee is established and the committee will start their work in December.
 - Scholarships, Sen. Brown: All six members of last year’s committee will serve again.
 - Technology Resources and Infrastructure, Sen. Bowman:
 - The committee met with IT last month.

- The new AI Panther Cluster is being installed and will go live early next semester.
- Clarification was sought about the 12-year classroom technology cycle. The cycle is not a formal cycle; it depends on the funding, so it is more of an estimate. Currently they are ahead of the 12-year cycle in terms of updating classroom technology.
- There was a complaint from a faculty member about the software in classrooms, so now IT is working on a workflow that will make sure that classrooms have the software for specific classes prior to the start of classes.
- There are still open spots on this committee particularly, so contact Sen. Bowman
- Sen. Arrasmith asked what the renewal cycle is for faculty technology.
- Sen. Bowman isn't certain of the exact time frame but knows that IT is tracking it. Sen. Arrasmith asked for more specifics on the time frame, and Sen. Bowman agreed to look into it.
- Sen. Wildman requests that Panopto for Windows is downloaded on all classroom computers. Sen. Bowman will bring this to IT.
- Welfare, Sen. Jones: no report

Old Business

Nominations/elections for Academic Policy and Welfare Committee Chairs

- Senate approved Sen. Jones as chair of the Academic Policies Committee and Sen. Arrasmith as chair of the Welfare Committee by voice vote.

New Business

- UCFPT voting (Based on UCFPT resolution, "Members are selected through a nomination and election process conducted by the Faculty Senate"). Senate approved both by voice vote.
 - COB: Dr. Charles Bryant to replace Dr. Amitabh Dutta
 - CoPLA: Dr. Gary Burns to replace Dr. Heidi Edwards
- There were no new motions on the floor.

Open Forum/Discussion

- Sen. Eskridge: discussion around faculty members being required to perform tasks in addition to what is stated in their contracts
 - Sen. Eskridge (EECS) was approached by a faculty member who had a contract for administrative work in addition to teaching one course. At the start of the semester, the faculty member was asked to teach an additional course. The faculty member agreed but asked for a new contract. The request for a new contract was denied. Sen. Eskridge is asking first, what the Senate recommends for the faculty member to do, and second, what the role of the Senate is in situations like this one.
 - There was some clarifying conversation, during which the question of who signs contracts and what is included in them was discussed (Sen. Jones, Sen. Suksawang, Sen. Hohlmann, Sen. Marcinkowski, Sen. Arrasmith, Sen. Taylor). Sen. Jones brought up that an overage policy was recently created by the

Provost's Office, but faculty are being encouraged to apply for grants, without adjunct faculty to teach the classes that they vacate through course buyouts necessarily being available. With enrollments up and tuition flat, faculty being asked to teach more classes may be a sign of things to come. Sen. Muenchrath suggested that confusion over contracts and workloads should be the business of the Faculty Senate since it could potentially affect all faculty. Sen. Marcinkowski, Sen. Holhmann, and Sen. Weaver discussed that we no longer have yearly letters for tenured faculty and updates to pay are made in Workday. Sen. Jones said that the committee that worked on contracts recommended no yearly contracts since it implied that people were year-to-year when they weren't. Sen. Jones asked if people wanted yearly updates on what their duties were. Sen. Taylor said that for year-to-year faculty, having clarity on what their job duties were would be appreciated. Sen. Marcinkowski suggested that for the faculty member Sen. Eskridge is talking about should pursue conversations with the Ombuds Committee. If that is unsatisfactory, they can pursue a grievance. Beyond that, they would need to hire their own lawyer.

- Request for feedback: COI form
 - The Ad Hoc Committee on Policy and Compliance did research on best practices and peer institutes in order to draft a Conflict-of-Interest form. The committee is looking for feedback on the form.
 - Sen. Taylor (COA) suggests that the biggest issue is item 2a, requiring faculty to list any type of secondary employment. The question Sen. Taylor has is: who would make the determination that the secondary employment is or is not a conflict and would there be an appeal process? Sen. Wildman clarified that disclosing secondary employment is not the same as determining that a conflict exists. The job of deciding that would be through the University's legal counsel. Conflicts would be limited to financial or time commitment conflicts. Sen. Jones supported this interpretation of the intent of the form. Sen. Taylor asks whether adjunct teaching employment would count as a conflict. Sen. Jones said that there is a policy on this and it states that if you are teaching a course at a peer university that is also offered at FIT then that would be a conflict. If the course is not available at FIT, then it is not a conflict. A suggestion was made by Sen. Marcinkowski that the wording of the question could include "during the term of your appointment." Sen. Marcinkowski asks whether adjunct faculty are required to sign this. Sen. Wildman and Sen. Jones didn't know. Sen. Wildman does think the form is for all faculty and staff but is not sure whether this includes just fulltime or also part-time contracts. This is a question we plan to bring up. Sen. Eskridge asked about question 2c, which asks if you use your Florida Tech affiliation in your outside employment, which is true of most people doing consulting, and asks what the motivation is to move away from the previous form on Cayuse. Sen. Wildman and Sen. Jones say that Cayuse is a federal form for people working on federal grants, while this COI form would be for internal Florida Tech use.
 - Questions for legal: Is the form for fulltime and part-time faculty? What is the intention behind having people disclose whether or not they use their Florida Tech

affiliation in their outside employment? The deadline to bring feedback is next month.

- Discussion of Faculty Development Budget Proposal
 - Feedback has been sent to Sen. Wildman. Sen. Wildman asks if there is any more feedback that she can bring to the committee in addition to what she has already received. None was offered.
- Sen. Jones: Discussion of incentives for Senate President (starting after his term)
 - Sen. Jones discussed the idea of offering incentives for people to run for Senate President. His suggestions are to codify a uniform course release per semester across all colleges and to offer a parking spot. We also need to do a better job articulating what a uniform service unit looks like. Sen. Brown (CCE) supports the need for a course release, particularly for those from COA and COPLA. Sen. Hohlmann suggested free meals at PDH. Sen. Jones requests input for what other kinds of incentives could be useful. There was some discussion of how Senate Presidents get used to get money. Apparently, this went away when the Gavel Award changed from a cash award to a travel award (Sen. Suksawang, Sen. Arrasmith, Sen. Wildman, Sen. Jones, Sen. Weaver).
- Sen Wildman asked whether there were any questions or comments on the three remaining items on the agenda (numbered below).
 1. Discussion of concerns regarding RSS/IRI program changes
 - a. A summary of General Counsel response regarding legality: The Faculty Handbook Policy states that “the supplements are awarded on a fiscal year basis and may be discontinued and/or the criteria changed as deemed necessary by the president based on the recommendation of the chief academic officer”. This sentence concludes that RSS is considered a discretionary bonus, which is not guaranteed, and is at the employer’s discretion, and thus the pause is legally allowed. This interpretation was made via review of appropriate case law and regulations as well as meetings between legal, HR, and the Provost’s Office.
 2. Invite Kimberly Williams (CFO) to November meeting.
 3. Invite Jessica Vinson (HR) to future meeting.
- Nasri Nesnas asked if there was any further information about the Code of Conduct Policy, and if there was any way of seeing what the policy looked like prior to the changes that were made.
 - Sen. Wildman responded that she received a lot of written feedback which was passed back to the committee that created that form. The committee did not respond when asked what the policy looked like before these changes.
- Sen. Eskridge asked if the Senate would be amenable to a policy that says that policies cannot be updated without showing the previous draft of the policy. Sen. Muenchrath notes that there is a policy about making policies, which may be where such a policy would go. She also notes that there is currently no policy that the Faculty Senate is actually required to be consulted to changes in the policy. This is just done by the provost’s office as a courtesy in attempting to involve all stakeholders of a particular policy. Sen. Eskridge volunteered to spearhead the creation of such a policy.
- Sen. Muth said that he is in favor of inviting the CFO to a future meeting and would be happy to meet with her in order to tailor the presentation to our needs.

- Sen. Marshall mentioned that he would like to find at least one person from each college who is willing to serve on the Academic Affairs Committee. We have a seat on the University's Academic Affairs Council, and we should have a seat at that table.

Announcements/Reminders

1. The [Faculty Senate handbook](#) with all AY24-25 changes made is available on the Senate website. If there are any further corrections or revisions needed, please bring those to our Administrative Policies Committee Chair, Dr. Mehmet Kaya at mkaya@fit.edu.
2. Clarification from President Nicklow based on a question from the last meeting: faculty will NOT be ticketed for parking in student spots.
3. Reminder: faculty should be letting the Event Management System (EMS) know when they engage with the local community so that it counts toward strategic plan tracking.

Adjournment