

**Faculty Senate Meeting**  
**February 6, 2024, 3:30 p.m.**  
**In person in the BOARD OF TRUSTEES' Room with Zoom link:**  
<https://fit.zoom.us/j/98187817280>

**Minutes**

**Senator Present:**

Shawn Scott (Aeronautics), Jordan Poole (Aeronautics), Tolga Turgut(Aeronautics), Charles Bryant(Business), Steven Rivet (Business), Angel Otero (Business Online), Donald Platt(APSS), Csaba Palotai(APSS), Manasvi Lingam (APSS), Melissa Borgen (BES), Mehmet Kaya (BES), Vipuil Kishore(CCE), Alan Brown(CCE), Nasheen Nur(EECS), Sidhartha Bhattacharyya(EECS), Georgio Anagnostopoulos (EECS), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Nakin Suksawang(MCE), Hamidreza Najafi(MCE), Joo Young Park(MSE), Nezamoddin Nezamoddini-Kachouie (MSE), Stanley Snelson (MSE), Rob van Woesik (OEMS), Pallav Ray(OEMS), Gary Zarillo (OEMS), Angela Tenga (SAC), Joe Montelione (SAC), David Wilder(BA), Jessica Wildman(Psy), Marshall Jones(Psy), William Bowman(Library)

**Senator Absent:** Abram Walton((Business), Kevin Burke (SAC), Patrick Converse(Psy), Wanfa Zhang (SAC)

**Proxies:** Ersoy Subasi (Proxy for Shawn Scott)

**Other attendees:** Mark Archambault, Eric Donath, Munevver Mine Subasi, Nasri Nesnas, Yakov Berchenko-Kogan, Raymond Bonhomme, Mary Bonhomme, Nancy Garmer, Penny Vassar, Heidi Hatfield Edwards, Gary Burns, Julie Costopoulos, Jason Griggs, Anna Muenchrath, Chelsea Carroll, Theodore Richardson,

**Call to Order**

Senate Pres. Brown called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

**Guest Speaker:**

Eric Donath, Director, Instructional Technology

*Topic: Attendance-taking technologies and student success*

The meeting was convened to discuss attendance solutions to support student success at Florida Tech, presented by Eric Donath, the Director of Instructional Technology.

Eric Donath introduced himself as the Director of Instructional Technology at Florida Tech, having served for over 15 years. He highlighted the importance of exploring attendance solutions to enhance student success and support teaching and learning.

Eric Donath emphasized that the presented ideas were open for discussion and subject to further dialogue within departments. The focus was identifying at-risk students through attendance data and implementing interventions to support their success.

Various attendance solutions were discussed, including non-integrated and integrated methods, each with its own advantages and limitations. Academic honesty concerns related to attendance were also addressed, with ongoing exploration of policy and technology solutions. The importance of making attendance data actionable outside the classroom was emphasized, particularly for facilitating communication between students, faculty, and support services.

The current technologies and attempted solutions for attendance tracking were reviewed, including Roll Call Attendance, Pull Everywhere, Clickers, Canvas Quizzes, Engage, Google Forms, and the Hub.

Eric Donath outlined plans for short-term and long-term solutions, including the development of a prescriptive guide for using Roll Call Attendance in small classes and exploring alternative technologies for large classes. The potential integration of attendance data into the Hub platform within Canvas was discussed, aiming for full feature parity with Roll Call Attendance.

Eric Donath expressed a vision for the Hub to serve as a central platform for student data exchange and support services, enhancing faculty-student interaction within the Canvas environment and invited any feedback and support for the proposed attendance solutions.

The discussions were about centralizing student data, particularly regarding tracking student attendance through a centralized system. Plans were discussed to integrate attendance tracking into the existing hub system, allowing faculty members to monitor and take action on student attendance easily. A timeline for implementation was proposed to have significant progress made by the fall semester.

Sen. Kachouie raised privacy concerns regarding collecting and centralizing student data, prompting further discussion about ensuring compliance with privacy regulations and redacting sensitive information. The development and sustainability of the hub system were addressed, with plans in place to establish a team responsible for its maintenance and improvement to prevent issues in the future.

Mine Subasi offered comments on the use of an advising tool and the attendance policy. Regarding the advising tool, it was noted that the Hub advising tool developed in-house was found to be more capable and flexible compared to external options. Advisors now have enhanced access to student information and can better support students. Regarding the attendance policy, discussions revolved around clarifying excused absences and encouraging attendance without mandating it. The policy accommodates diverse needs while ensuring fairness and privacy when verifying sensitive documentation for excused absences. Further review of the finalized policy is scheduled with the Graduate Council in February.

## Approval of Minutes:

Sen. Pres. Brown called for approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the minutes of the November 23 meeting by Dr. Rivet, seconded by Senator Bowman. The minutes of November 2023 meeting was approved.

Motion to approve the December 23 Meeting minutes by Senator Wilder, seconded by Senator Jones. The minutes of the December 2023 meeting was approved.

## **Senate President's reports**

Sen. Pres. Brown said President Nicklow was absent today due to an alumni event in Washington, DC. John Kiss was announced as the incoming Provost, to start May 1. The Trustees met on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Rodd Newcombe and two of his assistants gave a detailed presentation on the Student Success and Support Center. There were reports from nine committees. For the Athletics Committee, Jamie Joss reported that the new artificial turf is so good many groups want to use it. (As an Ultimate Frisbee player and faculty advisor to the campus team, it's the best turf I've ever played on, far better than UCF's.) For the Finance Committee, interim CFO Kathy McDermott reported that there's a surplus for FY24 but a (smaller) deficit projected for FY25. The Board approved a consent agenda of eight items, including the Strategic Plan, which appears on the university website. Of interest to the Senate, planned Outcome 4 is to "Expand and diversify externally funded research programs to become a strong R2 research institution which provides all students an opportunity to conduct impactful and innovative research to further position Florida Tech for R1 consideration by 2040." The Board approved a new contract with "Academic Partnerships" to run our online programs, replacing Bisk Online Learning; the change-over will be made in the fall and should be seamless. Major differences between the two contracts are (1) the revenue split will be 50:50, vs 60:40 in favor of Bisk, and (2) the intellectual property will belong to F.I.T. rather than being jointly owned. Academic Partnerships is a much bigger outfit: 60+ partner universities vs a dozen. The Board also approved a new contract with Larson Motorsports. President Nicklow was formally installed on January 26<sup>th</sup>. The sen. Pres. Brown met with the Interim Provost on the 29<sup>th</sup>. It seems the university's General Counsel, Mr Ryan Petersen, has proposed faculty contracts be made much longer and more detailed, mostly to cover various intellectual-property issues; the current version is said to be seven pages long. I have invited Mr. Petersen to discuss his proposal with the Senate; as of Monday afternoon he hasn't responded.

Several faculty members expressed concerns regarding budget constraints and changes in the merit raise policy. The lack of clarity surrounding these issues raised alarm among the faculty, with a consensus that further discussion and transparency are needed. Also, concerns were raised about the length and complexity of upcoming contracts; thus, suggestions were made to seek legal expertise and thoroughly review contracts, especially regarding intellectual property rights.

During the discussion, it was proposed that pre-emptive action regarding contract negotiations be taken and that the general counsel should ask for at least 60 days instead of 30 days for contract acceptance. Some members suggested seeking legal counsel if necessary.

Faculty agreed to arrange a Senate Special meeting with General Counsel Ryan Peterson to address the Senate regarding proposed changes to faculty contracts and to schedule the meeting on Tuesday in two weeks at the same time to discuss this matter.

### ***Committee Reports***

1. Academic Policies – Sen. Kishore

No report

2. Administrative Policies – Sen. Kaya [Faculty Handbook update]

Sen. Kaya gave updates that proposed changes, totaling about 150 items, were sent to the committee by Mark Archambault. However, feedback revealed discrepancies between the hard copy of the handbook and the updated version available online. Additionally, due to the volume of suggested changes, the committee requested prioritization, particularly focusing on accreditation-related matters and sections concerning faculty ranks and committees.

Efforts are being made to reconcile the differences between the hard copy and online versions of the handbook. One member started converting the online handbook into a Word document, but According to Dr. Mine Subasi, they had already completed a similar task in 2022. The website version of the handbook is likely more up-to-date, with changes reflecting updates made since 2022. However, it was emphasized that both versions should be regularly updated and maintained.

There was a discussion regarding the responsibility for maintaining the handbook, with some stating that it's a joint responsibility between the Senate and the administration. It was emphasized that the Senate owns the handbook, and changes must be approved through the Senate, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. The importance of prioritizing changes required for SACS accreditation was highlighted, reminding that necessary updates must be made to avoid any issues during the compliance report submission.

3. Excellence Awards – Sen. Wildman

Sen. Wildman reminded members of the deadline for the nomination.

Kalajian Professorship – Sen. Kishore

Sen. Kishore sent out an email to the COES faculty who are eligible for the award to submit their dossiers in response to this to be eligible for applying for this award. He noted the due date as February 20<sup>th</sup>.

4. Scholarships – Sen. Nezamoddini-Kachouie

Sen. Kachouie noted the application due is February 20<sup>th</sup>, and currently, it's in the process of selecting students. Waiting for the list of eligible students from the Registrar's office

5. Technology Resources and Infrastructure – Sen. Poole

Sen. Poole reported that Issues related to IT concerns were raised, prompting a meeting with the IT team scheduled for the following Wednesday. Faculty members were encouraged to discuss any pressing concerns during the meeting.

6. Welfare Committee Updates:

Announcements were made regarding the upcoming faculty and Staff Picnic on March 15th and efforts to establish a minimum eight-week paid parental leave policy.

**Old Business:**

No old business

**New Business:**

Resolution to Establish a Minimum 8-Week Paid Parental Leave Policy (attached)

**[The resolution passed with a majority vote]**

**Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Sen. Jones and seconded by Sen. Poole. All attendees favored, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joo young Park, Faculty Senate Secretary

## **Resolution to Establish a Minimum 8-Week Paid Parental Leave Policy**

Whereas, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) only provides job protection for 12 unpaid weeks, leaving employees vulnerable to financial strain during parental leave;

Whereas, many new faculty and staff members may not have sufficient accrued sick time to compensate for the loss of income during their parental leave;

Whereas, the current short-term disability policy only allows the mother to claim benefits, which does not adequately address the needs of all parents;

Whereas, it has come to our attention that all other universities in Florida already offer their employees a minimum of 8 weeks of paid parental leave, and the national average for paid parental leave in U.S. private institutions stands at 14.3 weeks for faculty and 8.6 weeks for staff;

Be it Resolved, that Florida Tech should adopt a minimum 8-week paid parental leave policy to better support the needs of our faculty and staff during this important life transition;

Further Resolved, that this policy will be available to all eligible employees, regardless of gender, marital status, or parental role (biological, adoptive, or foster), and will provide employees with full pay during their parental leave.