



Matthew Gowans, President  
Jed Rasmussen, Vice-President  
Jacob L. Thomas, Parliamentarian

## Meeting Agenda

October 25, 2023, 3:30 p.m.

### I. Call to Order & Roll Call

The Senate was called to order at 3:34 p.m.

**Senators Present:** Matthew Gowans (Pres.), Jed Rasmussen (VP), Karen Carter, A. Christensen, Trent Fawcett, Wes Jamison, Rachel Keller, Adam Larsen, Dennis Schugk, Jeff Wallace, \*McKay West, Hilary Withers

**Senators Absent:** Sandra Cox (substitute: McKay West)

**Guests:** Jacob Thomas (Parliamentarian), Michael Austin (Provost), Mike Brenchley (Deans)

### II. Minutes from Previous Meeting

*Minutes for the Oct. 11 Senate meeting were not available at this time and will be provided at the next meeting.*

### **III. Informational Items & General Questions**

**A. Updates from the Faculty Senate President.** M. Gowans reported that his regularly scheduled meeting with Pres. McIff had been canceled due to Fall Break; they planned to reschedule it for a later date. He also mentioned a meeting with Provost Austin, where they discussed academic freedom and the Faculty Senate's role in preserving it. M. Gowans reminded Senators serving on committees to ensure that the committee websites are kept up-to-date and encouraged them to contact Shannon Allred (OfficeComm@snow.edu) for assistance.

The floor was opened for any pressing matters from the committees, and T. Fawcett informed the assembly that the GE Committee would convene its next meeting on the upcoming Monday. M. Gowans added that the GE Committee would discuss the structure of general education in the state of Utah, which could have significant implications for teaching methods. This meeting would involve department chairs and senate presidents. The UCSFL meeting would also take place at this time.

#### **B. Updates from Deans Council**

**1. Associate Dean of the Science & Math Division.** J. Rasmussen reported that the Deans Council had been discussing policy and/or contract language for an Associate Dean position in the Division of Science and Math. This division is in the process of appointing an Associate Dean due to its size, but there is a lack of established language, policies, and procedures for this position. This issue had been raised before Mike Austin became Provost, and there was a need for clearer guidelines on how to select an Associate Dean.

Provost Austin shared that Associate Provost David Allred had led a meeting on this matter, and they had made minor revisions to the language, ultimately approving it for the Associate Dean position.

M. Gowans inquired about who would provide feedback and formal approval for this language. J. Rasmussen explained that the plan was to send it to the Senate for feedback, as suggested by D. Allred, and then it would be forwarded to the College Council. He emphasized that this was not a matter for a vote but

rather aimed at establishing transparent and communicative relationships between faculty and administration.

M. Gowans expressed concerns about the document guiding the selection of Deans and Chairs and its potential impact on academic freedom. The concern revolved around Deans having significant influence over departments due to their close ties with the administration. R. Keller also pointed out that allowing Deans to choose department chairs could affect representation from across the campus.

M. Gowans suggested that the selection process for chairs could work similarly to how Deans were chosen, involving a committee from the respective division to alleviate concerns. He questioned whether more than just input could be provided if there were academic freedom issues. W. Jamison shared experiences from smaller departments where individuals were unwilling to become chairpersons, and he suggested that the process should ideally be democratic.

Provost Austin highlighted the importance of considering who had the authority to *remove* a chair as a key aspect of academic freedom. The ability to remove chairs was critical for both departments and Deans, as they needed to be able to work effectively together. Procedures for removing a chair were crucial for maintaining a functional working relationship between departments and Deans.

M. Brenchley raised the concern that having department members compete against each other in elections for chair could lead to division within departments. M. Gowans argued that having a committee involved in the selection process could ensure faculty buy-in, mitigating potential contention. J. Rasmussen added that department size should be taken into account when determining the selection process.

A. Larsen inquired about the release time granted between the Dean and Associate Dean, expressing concerns about the workload and overload in his division. Provost Austin explained that the release time varied based on the number of people the Associate Dean was supervising, but never exceeding two courses per semester.

M. Gowans questioned whether it was appropriate to have an Associate Dean while allowing the Dean to take on an overload. J. Rasmussen clarified that the Associate Dean should ideally not come from the same department as the Dean, although it was a recommendation, not a strict requirement.

**2. A&T Review of Professional Track.** J. Rasmussen reported the Deans' discussion about how the Advancement and Tenure Committee—a Senate committee—may be empowered to conduct Professional Track reviews in the future in addition to Tenure-Track reviews, which could potentially require significant adjustments to existing policy.

Senators questioned the rationale behind this proposal. Provost Austin explained that there should be a single advancement and tenure system, as maintaining two separate tracks was not considered best practice. He further emphasized the importance of streamlining processes and reducing silos to achieve coherence between the technical and academic sides of Snow College.

A. Larsen pointed out that the history of dual review processes dated back to the merger of Snow College with the Richfield campus, and that such a structure aimed to ensure that faculty were evaluated by their peers.

R. Keller expressed concern about the increased workload on the A&T committee and inquired whether they would receive a course release. M. Gowans answered that a stipend had been provided to A&T this semester due to the increased workload. Provost Austin suggested creating a subcommittee under A&T and splitting its members to handle the expanded workload efficiently.

W. Jamison asked whether there would be a need for Professional Track members on A&T. M. Gowans confirmed that Professional Track members had been part of A&T in the past, and there was often at least one, but it was not a consistent practice.

J. Rasmussen concluded by noting that no final decisions had been made, and they would revisit and revise the language and procedures as needed.

**C. Institutional Review Board.** J. Rasmussen was charged in the last meeting with conducting research on Institutional Review Boards, their organization and bylaws, and associated practices. His research is still underway, and pledged to have a report by the next Senate meeting.

**D. Accommodations & ADA Questions.** In the previous Senate meeting, T. Fawcett had raised the issue of exemptions versus accommodations with student disabilities (particularly temporary disabilities), and whether an exception granted by one faculty member could force all faculty to provide the same for a student in this situation.

He reported that he had conducted research on several definitions and had a meeting with Paula Robison, Director of the ADA Office. The situation that prompted this discussion involved a student experiencing a medical issue, rendering them unable to write. The professor offered to write the answer for the student after they verbalized it, leading the student to believe that all professors would provide such assistance under ADA law.

To gain further clarification on what faculty can and cannot do in terms of providing verbal accommodations, T. Fawcett met with P. Robison and Staci Taylor from Risk Management. It was noted that many issues could have been avoided if the professor had clearly indicated that they were not speaking on behalf of the college. T. Fawcett emphasized the importance of communicating to students that the professor's exemptions only applied to their specific class and encouraged faculty to refer students to P. Robison for accommodations lasting longer than one day.

J. Rasmussen shared his recent experience where this discussion applied, where a student had dislocated a thumb. In this case, he had offered assistance in his class but directed the student to P. Robison for any further accommodations. T. Fawcett expressed concern that students might misinterpret short-term accommodations and raised the issue that other students might also request the same accommodation in similar situations. Senators agreed that faculty awareness of the above principle asserting that such arrangements only applied to *their* specific classes, and that not every professor would do the same without word from the ADA Office.

## IV. Senate Discussions

### A. Academic Integrity Policy

Subcommittee: J. Wallace (chair), T. Fawcett, A. Larsen, and W. Jamison

The subcommittee has been tasked to propose recommendations to changes in the Academic Integrity Policy regarding student use of generative A.I.

J. Wallace highlighted what had previously been discussed in the Senate on this issue: the question whether generative A.I. should be “allowed unless prohibited” or “prohibited unless allowed.” Senators seemed to agree that “allowed unless prohibited” was the most prudent, with some exceptions as noted below.

M. Gowans clarified that under this approach, if a student uses ChatGPT for instance and the faculty member has no policy regarding generative A.I., the professor cannot harshly judge the student’s work and must accept the paper’s submission, grading it no more harshly than a non-A.I. paper.

R. Keller highlighted the idea of academic standards where ignorance of school policy is built into the language of academic standards, but the responsibility lies with the instructor to address generative A.I. usage in their classes. W. Jamison mentioned that this approach provides professors with flexibility, as the tools to detect A.I.-generated work are limited, thus giving instructors discretion in handling such cases. T. Fawcett pointed out that this approach would also help new faculty members understand the policy, preventing them from omitting it from their syllabi unintentionally.

A. Christensen expressed concerns about automatically allowing generative A.I., emphasizing that it's not a foregone conclusion that it should be allowed in an academic setting when the goal is to help students demonstrate their learning. W. Jamison suggested that allowing generative A.I. by default would encourage students to test the boundaries, ultimately improving class assessments and assignments.

A. Christensen raised concerns about the rapid growth of A.I. technology and suggested that the default approach should be “prohibited unless allowed.” R.

Keller pointed out the importance of focusing on the values of academic integrity, as policies alone cannot alter the fact that students may use generative A.I. for academic dishonesty.

M. Gowans noted that the group seemed to lean toward the “allowed unless prohibited” approach. M. Brenchley wondered if this approach reflected the entire faculty’s views and suggested that it should be “prohibited unless allowed.” A. Larsen suggested polling the faculty, but M. Brenchley deferred to the subcommittee’s decision.

J. Wallace emphasized that this approach sets the paradigm for how Snow College views generative A.I. and that the institution should be open to using technology and training students to learn effectively. M. West pointed out that technology continually evolves, and students use tools to achieve their tasks—allowing generative A.I. would thus give professors freedom to set standards without rejecting the technology.

Provost Austin was comfortable with either approach, emphasizing that faculty should have complete discretion and that the policy expectations should be clarified in syllabi.

A. Christensen suggested moving forward with the “allowed unless prohibited” approach and letting people provide comments.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about specific language changes and the need for clarity in addressing generative A.I. usage, with the intention to refine the policy and its language before implementation. The Senate voted to table the policy and return to it in two weeks to finalize it and distribute it to the relevant committees for further input.

## V. Adjournment

**Motion to Adjourn:** J. Rasmussen; **2nd:** W. Jamison

**Approval:** all senators present

The Senate adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

The next Senate meeting will be held on **Wednesday, November 8** from 3:30-5:00 p.m. in the Academy Room, Noyes Building.

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Minutes taken by Jacob L. Thomas

Minutes approved November 8, 2023