

Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2025 @ 3:30pm

I. Call to Order

A. Opening. The Senate was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Senators Present: Sandra Cox (Pres), Trent Fawcett (VP), Karen Carter, Alan Christensen, Steve Hart, Wes Jamison, Rachel Keller, Adam Larsen, Charley Roetting, Dennis Schugk, Tony Smith, Hilary Withers

Senators Absent: Jeff Wallace

Guests: Jacob Thomas (Parliamentarian), Jessica Jones (Senator-Elect), Mike Austin (Provost), David Allred (Assoc. Provost), Mike Brenchley (Deans), Staci Taylor (Risk Manager)

B. Minutes from January 22

R. Keller noted some minor word changes for clarification in the minutes (sec. 4.C), which J. Thomas promised to update before submitting the minutes for publication.

Motion to Approve: A. Larsen; **2nd:** S. Hart

Approval: unanimous of all present

II. Senate Organization

A. Remaining Spring 2025 Mtgs: Feb. 26, March 12, March 26, April 9, April 23

B. Senator Terms Ending. The following senators' terms are ending. Senators eligible for reelection or election to a full term are indicated with an asterisk (*):

Alan Christensen*, Trent Fawcett*, Wes Jamison, Rachel Keller*, Charley Roetting*, and Jeff Wallace (FA VP).

C. Senate Leadership Elections. The positions of Senate President and Senate Vice-President for the 2025-2026 academic year need to be filled. Candidates: Please contact J. Thomas soon about your willingness to serve.

D. At-Large Committee Elections. Updates on at-large committee elections:

1. General Education Committee: Clarification. The GE Committee has clarified: (1) Both Ephraim members will be elected or retained in odd-numbered years, while the Richfield member will follow even-numbered years. (2) After two years, the GE Committee votes on retaining at-large members. A majority vote extends their term by two years, after which they step down. If not retained, the seat reopens for nomination and election.

a. *Ephraim Seats* — In a recent GE vote, **Sannali Dittli** (Science) and **McKay West** (Humanities) have both been retained to continue their terms. (Source: Michael Olson, GE Chair)

b. *Richfield Seat* — **Crystal Stott** (Social Science) has agreed to assume this role beginning July 1.

2. College Council. J. Thomas proposed amending the Senate bylaws to align with General Education's process for at-large seats. Under the current system, at-large College Council representatives are elected every two years, with Ephraim representatives elected in odd years and Richfield representatives in even years. The proposed change would allow the Senate to vote on whether to retain an incumbent for an additional term. If the Senate voted against retention, an election would be held, and the incumbent would be ineligible to run again until after a two-year gap. Senators were asked to bring the proposal back to their divisions for feedback, but there was little discussion or interest in pursuing the change.

III. Administrative Updates

A. College President's Report

S. Cox reported on behalf of Pres. McIff that the taskforce assigned to revise the college's mission statement has drafted several options. These drafts will be sent out soon for feedback.

B. Deans Council Report

1. **Streamlining FETs.** S. Cox provided updates on Faculty Evaluation and Tenure (FET) processes, emphasizing the importance of ensuring they remain on track.
2. **Streamlining Graduation.** At their most recent meeting, the Deans Council had discussed possible ways to streamline graduation, including reducing the duration of the ceremony. One suggestion was to cut down on announcements. Senators briefly discussed some of the ideas the Deans have considered.

Teacher recognition awards presented at graduation were addressed. Senators generally supported retaining them, with one minor objection—if an award recipient preferred not to stand in front of an audience, they could opt out, and only their name would be read.

3. **The Online Excellence Committee** introduced a new checklist that emphasizes ADA standards. Additional support will be available from instructional designers, and a stipend will be offered for faculty updating their online Canvas courses.
4. **Lorenzo Snow Awards.** The council also debated whether to retain the campuswide Lorenzo Snow Awards. The Deans supported maintaining student academic awards, but D. Allred noted that Student Affairs may discontinue recognition of other awards in the future.

C. Academic Affairs Report

1. **Revised Department Chair Stipend & Course Release Proposal.** T. Fawcett and D. Schugk, along with Provost M. Austin, discussed the proposed revision of the stipend and course release structure for department chairs, committee chairs, and some academic program leads.

While no formal proposal has been finalized, multiple models have been considered, including one that would have reduced overall course release credits from 174 to approximately 150 per year. However, concerns about fairness and unintended reductions in compensation led to further adjustments. The primary challenge remains balancing faculty input, department size variations, and workload equity while ensuring minimal disruption.

Transparency. The Provost emphasized that the goal is a transparent and fair system that minimizes drastic changes. He expressed a preference for limiting any reductions to no more than three credit hours per year for individual chairs. Faculty were encouraged to weigh in on whether a gradual implementation or an immediate transition would be preferable.

Finances. Financially, \$50 thousand has been earmarked for standardizing non-instructional compensation and part-time administrative roles. These funds remain unused until a final plan is approved. The Senate will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback once a concrete proposal is drafted.

Response. Several senators supported a gradual rollout, with some advocating for a target implementation by the following spring. Others raised concerns about ensuring timely adjustments, particularly as faculty schedules are due soon. If necessary, one-time stipends may be used as a temporary measure to prevent disruptions. The Provost assured senators that faculty will have ample opportunity to review the data and that the process will remain transparent.

2. Simple Syllabus Rollout Update. The rollout of Simple Syllabus has been largely successful. S. Cox reported that most department chairs and divisions have adopted the system. D. Allred noted that by the second or third week of the semester, all but eight full-time faculty members were using it. While some additional support may be needed for adjunct faculty, overall compliance is strong.

Provost M. Austin clarified that, at present, course schedules and assignment lists are not required to be public-facing in Simple Syllabus. However, it is possible state auditors may require these additions during the upcoming summer audit. While the administration is not proactively

advocating for this change, the Provost wants faculty to be aware of the potential for this additional requirement.

The implementation has met state requirements, and a compliance report has already been submitted to the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE). USHE has recently appointed a Compliance Director and an Associate Compliance Director, who have already begun their audit process.

IV. Senate Business

A. Faculty Concerns on Microsoft-Only IT Policy and AI Tool Restrictions

The Senate discussed faculty concerns regarding the enforcement of Snow College's long-standing policy requiring the use of Microsoft tools instead of Google Docs, Sheets, and Slides. While this policy has existed for years, it was not strictly enforced until a recent IT security audit identified it as a risk. Provost Austin explained that the issue is not that Google itself is inherently insecure but that the college has invested significant resources into securing Microsoft systems. Extending the same level of security to Google would require a comparable financial investment. Currently, five to ten security incidents per week involve Google-related issues.

CE & IVC Impact. Faculty raised concerns about the policy's impact on Concurrent Enrollment (CE) and Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) students, many of whom rely on Google-based tools. Provost Austin noted that students can still use Google Docs but should perhaps save and submit their work as PDFs to comply with security guidelines. He also clarified that this policy does not currently extend to using Zoom instead of Microsoft Teams.

Problem-Solving. Faculty and Academic Affairs are working to find solutions that balance security requirements with academic needs. D. Allred suggested faculty collaborate on practical workarounds. The Senate discussed organizing a meeting with IT to explore options: clarify policy boundaries and ensure faculty have viable alternatives. The importance of preventing a major security breach — which could have significant financial and operational consequences — was emphasized.

B. Proposed Discussions on Shared Governance & Decorum

R. Keller presented a faculty request from Humanities division member Erick Faatz advocating for regular training on shared governance and professional decorum in Senate meetings. Discussion focused on language sensitivity, with differing views on whether certain terms should be reconsidered for inclusivity. Others emphasized that intent and tone matter more than specific word choices.

The conversation expanded to faculty training on sensitivity, including how to support transgender students. Provost Austin clarified that such training could be offered but not required unless tied to Title IX. While opinions varied on the necessity and format of these additional trainings, the Senate agreed to explore options. An ad hoc committee was formed consisting of T. Smith and C. Roetting. This committee was tasked with working with Staci Taylor, the college Risk Manager and Title IX Coordinator, to assess these potential training opportunities.

C. Institutional Goals Form & Post-Tenure Review

R. Keller raised faculty concerns about redundancy in institutional goal-setting and performance review processes. Faculty were recently required to complete Institutional Goals forms while maintaining regular Faculty Development Plans (FDPs) and submitting yearly self-evaluations—all of which seems to have led to potential inefficiencies. Sen. Keller asked whether these processes could be streamlined to reduce duplication.

Provost Austin explained that Institutional Goals are set by the Board, with faculty and staff expected to align at least two of their personal goals with them. These goals factor into performance reviews but follow different timelines for faculty and staff. Faculty report their progress through self-evaluations, while staff use HR-managed forms. The Provost expressed openness to integrating these processes more efficiently while ensuring goal-setting remains in the fall and reporting in the spring. R. Keller will obtain further faculty feedback on these concerns and report back to the Senate.

D. Tenured Professor 5-Year Review Subcommittee

A subcommittee consisting of W. Jamison, A. Larsen, and C. Roetting, along with D. Schugk, senator on the Advancement & Tenure (A&T) Committee, was formed to clarify faculty oversight in the new five-year review process. The

subcommittee aims to ensure transparency, prevent administrative overreach, and allow for future adjustments. A key concern was determining where the review language should be codified, with members agreeing it belongs in the A&T document rather than the Senate bylaws.

Concerns. Faculty expressed concerns about the lack of clearly defined policies and procedures. While Provost Austin assured the Senate that a procedure is already in place and aligned with prior Senate discussions, some senators noted misunderstandings due to the absence of written documentation. It was clarified that the appeals process will follow Section 7 of the A&T document. The Provost confirmed that minor procedural additions could be made, pending legal review for compliance with state and USHE policies.

Cohort Review Selection. Regarding faculty selection for review, Austin explained that initial cohorts were chosen based on those who had not undergone a full review in recent years. The process allows divisions some flexibility, with some using a single faculty panel while others have selected different panels for each review. The subcommittee will continue working with Academic Affairs to refine the process to ensure clarity and consistency.

E. Curriculum Committee: Master Syllabi Revisions

T. Fawcett reported on proposed changes to the role of the Curriculum Committee (CC). Traditionally, the CC has been deeply involved in reviewing course syllabi, particularly student learning outcomes (SLOs), but this level of oversight has become an excessive bureaucratic burden. A proposed shift would move responsibility for ongoing syllabus revisions, including SLOs, to department chairs, while the CC would focus primarily on approving new courses. This change could grant faculty greater academic freedom but also raises concerns about governance, as department chairs report to Deans and the Provost, whereas curriculum decisions traditionally fall under faculty oversight through the Senate.

Senators expressed mixed opinions. Some supported reducing CC's workload and granting faculty more discretion over learning objectives, while others worried that shifting oversight to chairs could diminish shared governance. Concerns were raised about maintaining consistency in courses taught by multiple instructors and ensuring that General Education (GE) courses still meet standardized learning outcomes. Provost Austin emphasized that the goal is not to remove faculty voice but to allow faculty, rather than a committee, to

determine course objectives. Senators agreed to gather faculty feedback before making a decision. Fawcett encouraged faculty to reach out with concerns and noted that an additional CC meeting is scheduled for February 24.

F. Institutional Review Board Committee

Due to time constraints, the Senate will review the proposed bylaws for the committee during the Senate's next meeting. This item will receive higher priority in the following agenda.

G. Tabled Items

Updates from the Supporting Adjunct Faculty Subcommittee and further discussions of improved leadership training for chairs.

V. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: T. Fawcett; **2nd:** S. Cox

Approval: unanimous of all senators present

The Senate adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

The next Senate meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 26, 2025 from 3:30-5:00 p.m.** in the Academy Room, Noyes Building.

Minutes by Jacob L. Thomas

Approved: February 26, 2025