



**Faculty Senate Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 19, 2026 -- 4:00 p.m.**  
**Senate Chambers**  
*Minutes*

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**Call to Order:**

- **Chair Dan Clark called the regular meeting of the WKU Senate to order on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 4:00 pm in the Senate Chambers - DSU 2081. Senate Chambers. A quorum was present.**
  
- **Members' Present: Robin Ayers, David Bell, Kristin Bennett, Pallav Bera, Erica Billingley, Scott Bohnam, Dan Clark, Margaret Crowder, William Czekanski, Susan DeVries, Gihan Edirisinghe, Brian Elliott, Xingang Fan, Sheila Flener, Ashley Fox, Said Ghezal, Amber Giacona, Brooke Gross, Phillip Gunter, Kate Hudepohl, Sara Herbert, Nancy Hulan, Tom Hunley, Angie Jerome, Kerron Joseph, Eric Kondratieff, Yuyun Lei, Jim Lindsey, Mac McKerral, Meghan McKinley, Andrew Mienaltowski, Yaser Mowafi, Miranda Peterson, Yvonne Petkus, Kimberly Pharris, Matt Pruitt, Kelly Reames, Michelle Reece, Pinky Rusli, Sarah Scali, Matthew Shake, Kandy Smith, Jason Stewart, Thomas Blair, and Melissa Travelsted,**
  
- **Alternates Present: Whitley Stone (Kirk Atkinson), Phillip Guster (Dan Strunk),**
  
- **Absent: Brandon Barber, Daniel Boamah, Jenny Burton, Gregory Ellis Griffith, Gary Houchens, Sebastian Leguizamon, Stephanie Riehn, Matt Tullis, Aaron Wichman, and Zhang Rui**
  
- **Guest: Jennifer Hammonds and Rob Hale**

**A. Approval of the previous month's Senate Meeting:**

1. **[Faculty Senate Minutes 1-22-26](#)**

**1st/2nd: Jerome/Reames. The motion passes unanimously**

**B. Visit from Director of Athletics - Todd Stewart**

- **Todd Stewart has been the Athletic director for 14 years.**
  - **32% WKU Athletes are classified as an underrepresented group**
  - **100 student workers getting real-world experience**

- Since the year 2000, WKU Athletics has won 59 CUSA titles
- Volleyball program is stellar
- Grown WKU Athletics will be in post-season play
- We are here to get degrees, 90% graduation rate, a GPA of 3.0 or higher, 379 student athletes, only 5 are below 3.0, and 59 different majors.
- Community impact: 5,000- community service hours
- Exposure: \$44 million of exposure during 2023-24
- 180 streamed or nationally televised games per year.
- We are proud to be a member of this community and be part of the community

#### Questions:

- What is the budget for Athletics? *The actual operation budget is 32 million*
- Do you talk up the academics? *They don't talk about it at press conferences because we are asked questions. They will sell academics and pull in professors to help students who think they want to attend WKU*
- Funding: How will WKU compete with other universities with higher budgets? *It is more challenging*
- Is there a Movement for the SEC or other conferences to break away from the NCAA? *There is ongoing concern about a potential separation between conferences due to spending differences. The biggest issue currently is the transfer portal, which needs clearer parameters. Players should be allowed to transfer once without penalty, after which they would need to sit out a year. Additionally, athletes should be able to transfer alongside their coaches. Many people are reaching out to WKU athletics to inquire about entering the portal.*
- Do Athletes' salaries meet the benchmarks? *Only if you generate money outside of the university, like athletics does, to supplement its budget. Sacramento State is only playing football and is paying its athletes.*
- Will you balance your budget? *It is my responsibility to. Budget cuts and the loss of student fees (fewer students) have hurt.*
  - MAC: Gambling in Athletics? *WKU does its best to educate students not to gamble*
  - *If athletics were consolidated along regions, that would help with student travel budgets. College Athletics is about the best TV deal*
  - Clark: The 44 million, how is it calculated? *Using Neilson ratings, it includes TV, radio, newspaper, and social media exposure.*
  - Compliance report (Herald reporter): *Why has the student fee gone down? Fewer students are attending the university.*
  - Spiller: *Does the NCAA still have to have progress towards their degree? Metric APR* *Yes, but the portal has messed with the metrics.*
  - Gerome: *Transfer center works with the athletes*
  - Jim Lindsey: *Works with soccer teams. Academics bring them in.*
  - Pruitt: *Are we tethered to MTSU? 2030 existing tv contracts will be ending. Where do people land then? Large media markets. It's about big markets now*

Final Comments: He enjoyed being here. Happy to come back, WKU Athletics tries to maximize its resources 2. If you like a tour of buildings, contact me

### C. Officer Reports

#### 1. Chair - Dan Clark

a. **Academic Sustainability Task Force data request (Report Posted)**

b. **Committee chairs: Please give a brief update, even if you have no report.**

**2. Vice-Chair - Brooke Gross**

a. At-large faculty nominations have started. You will receive an email stating that the ballot is on TopNet.

**3. Secretary - Sheila Flener**

a. I have created a QR code to sign in for meetings. It is a work in progress and will be working out the bugs

**D. Standing Committee Reports:**

**1. Academic Quality, Missy Travelsted (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Peterson, motion passes unanimously

- The committee is focused on AI and writing preparedness
  - Fischer: Look at CITIL resources
  - Gross: Library has a resource guide. She can send out a direct link to faculty who are interested.

**2. Budget and Finance, Eric Kondratieff (Chair): (No Report)**

a. **Information Item (Posted)**

1st/2nd: Kondratieff, motion passes unanimously

- Work up questions for Dean Basta; the report wasn't done in time for the SEC meeting. It will show up as an actual report next time.
- Look at two different Dean's reports, one done last year. They are open to suggestions

**3. Colonnade/General Education, Andrew Mienaltowski (Chair): (No Report)**

- Hearing from the colonnade work group, bring to the next colonnade meeting.

**4. Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities, Ashley Orehek (Chair): (Report Posted)**

- Faculty welfare survey done
- a. **Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy (Report Posted)**  
1st/2nd: Orehek, motion passes unanimously
- b. **Bereavement Leave Policy (Report Posted)**  
1st/2nd: Orehek, motion passes unanimously
- c. **Dependent Benefits Eligibility (Report Posted)**  
1st/2nd: Orehek, motion passes unanimously

**5. Graduate Council, Kirk Atkinson (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Stone, motion passes unanimously

- Moving curriculum at a steady pace,

**6. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Ashley Fox (Chair): (Report Posted)**

1st/2nd: Fox, motion passes unanimously

- The committee has been busy and has great communication
  - Gerome: Decreased classes have provided faculty release to teach the class.

**7. Faculty Handbook, Mac McKerral (Chair): (No Report)**

- Meeting in March

**D. Other Committee/Organization Reports:**

**1. American Association of University Professors (AAUP)**

- UK is inviting a lecturer to its campus to lecture on "the erosion of academic freedom." This will be streamed, and a link will be sent out to all faculty.
- Concern: Misalignment of resources HB500. Cuts funding for all education in favor of health care for state workers
- Transfer bill
- Waiver bill: cuts the 65 or older citizen waivers for education

**2. Budget and Executive Committee (BEC)**

- BEC will be discussing budget funding auxiliary units on campus.

### 3. Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership (COSFL) / ONE WKU No Report

#### E. Advisory Member Reports:

##### 1. Faculty Regent, Shane Spiller

- HB490: Tenure has passed the House and is on its way to the Senate. WKU has the same policy. It's a bill to protect bad leadership. AAU policy: if a program closes, another place is found for that faculty if they can be accommodated.
- Waiver policy
- Board meetings tomorrow, lengthy agenda, 10 new programs, and certificates
  - The question becomes "Do we have the resources and faculty to do this?" Can we deliver what the students need?
  - Maritime appoints
  - Cyber security, AI component
  - Finance budget: compliance audit, external audit. Better financial situation. Expenses are going up.
  - Asset preservation report
- Housing: Can WKU enter this venture? Do we have risk? Yes, absolutely, so do academics. It is being thoroughly vetted.
- McKerral: reduce staff, budgets, apply a lot more scrutiny, making sure that we are consulted and are maintained.
  - We are so much leaner now, how do we get through the new and old?  
This starts long before the curriculum reaches UCC. Should UCC look at staffing plans?

##### 2. Provost, Robert "Bud" Fischer

- Curriculum is owned by the faculty, some get held, think about what you need to accomplish this
- FY 27 is being formed, and budgets are due next week
- 2026 budget looks great
- Ramp budget review has 2 committees
- Committees: PHD committee, GLIA, Advising committee, and AI is being put together. AI conference in March.
- Honors is being remodeled
- Weather: There was nothing we could do about this storm. How do we do things better?
  - Eric: Can we do Zoom and record for the students
- Preview Day was a big success
- Applications are up to 8500, orientations are up, and housing is over 1400.
- ASL outcomes assessment is being worked on.
- Students' 24-hour space. Identified two.
- Watch the discussion on Housing at 1:00

### **3. SGA President, Rush Robinson**

- Past, present, future hilltoppers
- Grad school
- SGA outreach committee is giving a faculty award
- Ping-Pong table

### **F. Old Business:**

- Introduction of the Staff Senate representative

### **G. New Business: No report**

### **H. Adjourn 5:36**

**Meeting adjourned. Ayers/Gerome: The motion passes unanimously.**

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Faithfully submitted: Sheila S. Flener