

FACULTY SENATE MEETING Minutes – May 2025

Senators present in person: Nikolay Sirakov, Yasemin Atinc, Brandon Randolph-Seng, Maggie Salem, William Kuracina, Jason Davis, Rusty Fox, Hunkar Gizem Yesilyurt, Hongmei Jia, and Julee Walker.

Senators present online: Kelly Featherston, Mei Jiang, Zachary Palmer, Carrie Klypchak, Tammi Morton, Adam Northern, Jeannette Vaughan, Leslie Ekpe, Josephine Durkin, Stephen Starnes, Dongmei Cheng, Omar Elariss, Jimmy Womack, Stephen Furlich, Jangsup Choi

Date: 05/06/2025

Dr. Atinc started and welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2:02 pm.

Approval of the April meeting minutes. Kelly to update requests from Dr. Sirakov and Dr. Davis (sent via email). A motion was made by Dr. Salem to approve the April meeting minutes (with edits), Dr. Davis 2nd. All approved.

There was an amendment to the meeting agenda to include Dr. Branscum. Dr. Davis made motion to approve, Dr. Randolph-Seng 2nd, all approved.

Eric Branscome reviewed faculty handbook (online), including introduction. It also has a location where faculty can review handbook errors (link to form). It includes links to full information and documentation. There are also faculty guides for student resources (i.e., student ready university to equip faculty to be a resource to our students). Redundancy of content was removed to avoid inconsistencies. It will be fully online and searchable. Including CARE reports and emergency operations. Relevant faculty re-wrote their areas based on their expertise.

- New information available for adjunct faculty.
- Previous updates occurred over 10 years ago, with plans needed for annual review. In other universities, the Faculty Senate has 'owned' the handbook. Right now, it does not have an 'owner.'
- A suggestion from a Senator was made related to the Provost's office as the 'home' for the document.
- A link could be made available on the Faculty Senate website, but Dr. Atinc suggested that ownership be elsewhere (i.e., Faculty Success Center).

Dr. Atinc shared that we have a new International Alternate Workload policy (IAWL regulation), the initial email stated that we (faculty) cannot travel and teach. Updated communication stated a 60 day restriction. The A&M faculty assembly shared that there is a form available for faculty to fill out to travel internationally. Our guests will now share the details.

Faculty Senate welcomed guests: VP Tina Livingston, VP Brent Donham, and VP Tammi Thompson, Director of Payroll Heath Shaffer, and AVP/Controller Sarah Baker (IAWL policy)

VP Donham began by sharing that none of the items have come from campus GA 48, they are coming for the Governor's office or other system regulations (330601). Hardening the state (isolations from certain states). He discussed the most relevant articles:

- Certain countries ("Foreign Adversaries") are listed that have travel and expense funding limited: China (including Hong Kong), North Korea, Iran, Russia, and Cuba (and interactions with the President of Venezuela). You cannot travel for teaching, business, conference or college meeting. Collaborations are allowed (with review) except for travel.
- You cannot accept a gift of any value (ex: \$1) from the above listed countries (i.e., including travel). If you are offered a gift, you should report it to your supervisor and the compliance office (gifts only, not invitations to present).
 - o GA-48 restricts gifts for business and/or professional purposes. If these gifts are personal, then GA-48 restrictions do not apply. Gifts from universities, companies, etc. offered because of an employee's position at the university would be considered a "gift" under GA-48.
 - o Universities or other entities from the restricted counties paying for publishing costs or conference travel expenses is considered a "gift" that would then be prohibited under GA-48.
- A form is being developed to report all gift offers, but right now send requests to Dr. Donham.
- Talent recruitment programs are also not allowed.
- You are allowed to travel to one of those countries on personal travel, but the university must be notified beforehand.
- Question: can materials from a faculty member be presented (even in a country on the list)? Dr. Donham would have to confirm/review.
- 150504 – anything in collaboration with a 'high risk country' it needs to come through Dr. Donham's office then it will go up to additional layers of approval in the A&M system.

- University equipment and software devices are all banned even if traveling for personal (i.e., if traveling to Iran for personal business you cannot access D2L).
- Dr. Atinc gave an example, a faculty receives a plane ticket purchased by their parents to visit them in China...do I need to document what I have done during my travels? Dr. Donham confirms that there is a debriefing that would take place. Many variables would be considered. Similar questions have been coming up.
- Dr. Donham shared that each institution (within the A&M system stored in Workday) will create a mechanism so that employees can document gifts and travel (pre-notification and post-briefing upon return).
- These guidelines are coming from an executive order from the Governor.
- AWL (Alternative Work Location) – a system regulation (2023)
- OGC (Office of General Council [System]) – procedures are being put into place to review and evaluate travel needs (less than 60 days is not an issue), but over 60 days it must be reviewed.
- Dr. Atinc asked about deadline of Summer 1 and 2 dates – is it more than 60 days? Dr. Donham said it is over 60 days (contract dates are the issue).
 - o Study aboard and faculty development leave allows exemptions
- Dr. Atinc asked about tax differences in other countries compared to the US (i.e., Turkey)? Dr. Donham said he cannot speak to that.
- Dr. Jiang asked about the development of a flowchart that may help faculty navigate these changing allowances?
 - o The system and research office are putting together a list of FAQs
- Dr. Jiang also asked about an email from the Provost about pre-trip approval. She asked to get clarification; do we only get the cert in workday for personal travel?
 - o Personal travel = go to Workday
 - o Work travel = request would be denied for restricted countries
 - o Work + personal travel = approval and workday request would be required.
 - o Any country outside of the above 5 listed for personal, requirements are not needed but consider sharing with supervisors.
 - o Virtual conferences? Case by case basis, not prohibited but should be reviewed.
- Dr. Klypchak clarified about summer personal travel (when not on contract), do you still have to follow the process?
 - o Dr. Donham confirmed, because you are on contract. You are still a university employee outside of your contract term, so you are still subject to all requirements.
- Review is required for all visiting scholars, even if contact is from an above listed country.

- Dr. Jiang also asked about collaboration clarifications. Collaborations can be approved with mitigating circumstances (i.e., with training or work only at a distance).
- Faculty should contact Dr. Donham directly with any questions related to these topics.
- Dr. Livingston thanked the Faculty Senate for allowing the VPs to discuss and clarify these topics.
- Dr. Atinc shared that the initial communication around these discussions was very shocking to many faculty members.
- Communications around some of these and other discussions are changing, and the research department is working to stay on top of information.
- You cannot take your university issued computer to the 5 listed countries (a loaner can be requested).
- Example: GAs (from China) going home for personal travel cannot do any work while they are home for the summer.
- Dr. Donham will not be policing this but if it is found out that a student or faculty does not follow regulations, there will be consequences.
 - o Some faculty have been traveling out of the country and attempting to use their university computer.

Dr. Atinc asked about evaluations related to an HR email: When can evaluations be appealed especially related to merit? By May 31st. Discretion is left to the Deans? More information will help junior faculty.

- Appeals will be on a case by case basis.

Sarah Baker shared about parking: Executive Team reviewed all the feedback and determined to maintain the color zone parking, so blue will still be faculty/staff, and green will be students.

- In order to maintain the separate spots, the decision was made to move faculty/staff parking to \$150/year and students will pay \$120/year for a permit.
- Reserved spots will not change and still be \$300/year. The lottery for these spots will open soon.

Conferral of graduations: Dr. Salem made a motion to approve the conferral of degrees in the upcoming Spring and Summer graduations, Dr. Randolph-Seng 2nd. All approved.

Dr. Atinc shared that the CARE Team needs a new representative for the fall – just FYI. We will not need a nominee until the fall.

Dr. Atinc shared that a Summer Work Group will be organized for the summer to discuss the Faculty Compensation Study. A confidentiality agreement will be needed for the individuals who volunteered:

- Dr. Salem, Dr. Fox, Adam Northern, Dr. Knox, Dr. Randolph-Seng, Dr. Morton, Dr. Elariss (Dr. Klypchak is happy to be a back-up).

The floor was opened for nominations for elections. The position that is available is President Elect. Dr. Atinc is serving in her second term, ending in AY 2026. Dr. Salem suggested asking for volunteers rather than nominating.

Dr. Atinc is tabling the elections until next fall.

Senators' terms ending: If Senators' terms are ending, please communicate that information to Dr. Atinc. Senators can confirm the expiration of their terms on the Faculty Senate website.

Dr. Salem moved to adjourn and Dr. Davis 2nd. Meeting was adjourned at 3:36pm.