

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

Senator Present:

Jordan Poole (Aeronautics), Tolga Turgut(Aeronautics), Shawn Scott (Aeronautics), Charles Bryant(Business), Donald Platt(APSS), Csaba Palotai(APSS), Marcus Hohlmann (APSS), Madhur Tiwari (APSS), Mehmet Kaya (BES), Vipuil Kishore(CCE), Alan Brown(CCE), Tom Eskridge (EECS), Nakin Suksawang (MCE), Hamidreza Najafi(MCE), Chiradeep Sen (MCE), Joo Young Park(MSE), William Arrasmith (MSE), Shibo Liu(MSE), Pallav Ray(OEMS), Anna Muenchrath (SAC), Robert Deacon (SAC), Wanfa Zhang (SAC), David Wilder(BA), Jessica Wildman(Psy), Marshall Jones(Psy), Patrick Converse(Psy), William Bowman(Library),

Senator Absent: Joe Montelione (SAC), Melissa Borgen (BES), Abram Walton (Business), Angel Otero (Business Online), Georgio Anagnostopoulos (EECS), Sidhartha Bhattacharyya (EECS), Robert Weaver (OEMS), Gary Zarillo (OEMS)

Proxies: None

Other attendees: John Nicklow, John Kiss, Kimberly Williams, John Harris, Lisa Steelman, Rian Mehta, Kaylee Erdos, Abdullah Aydeger, Rudi Wehmschulte, Jason Martin, Penny Vassar, Ted Richardson, Raymond Bonhomme, Mary Bonhomme, Heidi Hatfield Edwards, Nick Daher, Chelsea Carroll, Andrew Whittall, Nasri Nesnas, Robert van Woesik

Call to Order

Meeting starts at 3:32pm

Discussion and Q&A with University Leadership

President Nicklow Remarks:

Commencement: Scheduled for December 14, 2024, featuring General Sejba as keynote speaker, reflecting a budding partnership with the U.S. Space Command's training operations moving to Patrick Space Force Base.

Strategic Partnerships: President Nicklow discussed the university's efforts to build strategic partnerships with external organizations, particularly in connection with the U.S. Space Command.

- The university is positioning itself as a primary educational provider for graduate programs at Patrick Space Force Base.
- A proposal is being developed to offer localized graduate education options.

SACSCOC Reaffirmation:

- Two findings reported: cooperative agreements and faculty qualifications.
- The next steps include submitting a focus report in February 2025 and hosting a site visit from April 7–10, 2025.
- Faculty and Senate leadership are encouraged to be available during the site visit to address any inquiries.

Q&A with President Nicklow

• Question by Senator Turgut:

Senator Turgut raised concerns about policies related to faculty load being implemented without prior discussion or approval by the Faculty Senate. He emphasized that such decisions could undermine shared governance and affect faculty evaluations, merit raises, and even termination outcomes.

• Response by President Nicklow:

President Nicklow acknowledged the concerns and clarified that the changes were initially made to align practices with institutional policies before the upcoming SACSCOC site visit. He assured that the policies could be revisited after the site visit to address faculty concerns.

• Question by Senator Jones:

Senator Jones inquired about the progress of the equity pay study, emphasizing the importance of using accurate and comprehensive data for comparisons with peer institutions.

• Response by President Nicklow:

President Nicklow acknowledged past data issues and reassured the Senate that the revised study is being conducted in-house by the Chief Data Officer, HR, and the Provost's office to ensure accuracy.

• Follow-Up Question by Senator Jones:

Senator Jones asked how the revised study will address potential gender and departmental equity issues and requested details about the methodology.

• Response by President Nicklow:

The new study will provide actionable insights by breaking down disparities by department and gender. Amanda and Jessica will present the methodology and findings to the Senate once the study is ready.

• Future Actions:

The equity pay study results will be presented to the Senate in Spring 2025, followed by discussions on how to address identified gaps.

Points from Provost John Kiss

- **Research Infrastructure Assessment:**
 - An external consultant, Dr. Terry Shelton, has been engaged to assess and enhance the university's research infrastructure.
 - Dr. Shelton will visit in January 2025 to meet with faculty groups, the Research Council, and other stakeholders.
- **Faculty Survey on Research:**
 - A one-question faculty survey was distributed to gather input on research challenges and needs.

Points from CFO Kimberly Williams

- **Financial Overview:**
 - FY24 closed with a **\$10.5M “operating revenue surplus”**, driven by:
 - Aviation revenues exceeding budget by \$2.6M due to increased enrollment and higher fuel cell usage.
 - Housing revenues \$800K above budget, attributed to higher student retention.
 - Dining revenues \$500K over budget due to increased on-campus dining usage.
 - Sponsored programs contributing \$1.5M over budget.
- **Clarifications on Budget vs. Cash:**
 - The surplus is non-cash and reflects an increase in unrestricted net assets, not additional funds in the bank.
- **Labor and Operating Savings:**
 - \$1.1M saved from unfilled or lower-cost positions due to market conditions.
 - \$760K in unspent operating expenses across departments.
- **Auxiliary Revenue and Budget Variances**
 - Auxiliary revenues (housing, dining, and aviation) came in significantly higher than expected due to improved student retention, increased enrollment, and operational adjustments.
 - Sponsored programs revenue was budgeted at zero but contributed \$1.5M due to timing and carryovers.
 - Conservative enrollment forecasting led to under-budget expectations, which resulted in higher-than-anticipated auxiliary revenue.
- **Future Budgeting Practices:**
 - Monthly closures and reporting have been implemented to improve financial forecasting.

Q&A with CFO Kimberly Williams

Financial Overview and Budget Clarity

1. Clarification on Budget Deficits and Surplus

- **Question by Senator Turgut:**
Senator Turgut sought clarification on the perception of a budget deficit and the recently reported \$10.5M operating revenue surplus.
- **Response by Kimberly Williams:**
The confusion stemmed from the distinction between cash deficits and operating revenue surpluses. While the university had an operating revenue surplus, cash flow challenges created the perception of a deficit.

2. Use of Surplus for Hiring

- **Question by Senator Hohlmann:**
Senator Hohlmann inquired whether the surplus could be reallocate for immediate faculty hiring.
- **Response by Kimberly Williams:**

Budgets are fixed annually, and reallocations are rare unless substantial changes occur in enrollment or revenue. Any surplus is rolled into net assets and not automatically available for spending.

3. Research Overhead

- **Discussion Initiated by Senator Turgut:**
Senator Turgut asked whether the university reinvests sufficient overhead revenue back into research and if there's a gap between research expenses and revenues.
- **Response by Kimberly Williams:**

The university currently invests more into research than it generates from overhead revenue, signaling a commitment to supporting research activities.

4. Capital Budget

- **Question by Senator Turgut:**
Senator Turgut requested clarification on the chiller project and how it fits within the university's overall budget.
- **Response by Kimberly Williams:**

The chiller project is part of the capital budget, which is funded through cash flow and entirely separate from the operating budget.

Travel Partner Travel Policy

Overview:

*CFO Kimberly Williams briefly addressed updates regarding the **Travel Partner Travel Policy**, aimed at aligning university travel guidelines with cost-saving measures and operational efficiency.*

- The policy defines reimbursement and expense guidelines for faculty and staff traveling with external partners or on behalf of the university.
- Focus areas include:
 - Encouraging the use of university-approved travel vendors for bookings to leverage institutional discounts.
 - Clarifying reimbursement timelines and documentation requirements.

Approval of meeting minutes to October and November meetings

Approval of October and November 2024 meeting minutes deferred to January 2025.

Sen. Joo Young Park will be on a sabbatical leave next semester. We will need to nominate and elect a new secretary.

Motion by Senator Turgut: To utilize the meeting recordings from April 9, 16, 23, 25, and May 2 as interim meeting minutes until the official written minutes for those meetings are completed.

Seconded by: Senator Jones

Outcome: Unanimously approved.

Reports:

President – Sen. Suksawang

- **Equity Pay Plan:**
 - The revised pay equity study is underway, correcting errors from the previous consultant’s report.
- **Risepoint and 1099 Forms:**
 - Issues related to Risepoint’s 1099 tax reporting for faculty who engaged in online teaching were discussed.
- **Risepoint Concerns:**
 - Senator Jones requested clarification on teaching loads and associated compensation reporting through Risepoint.
- **Future Actions:**
 - Ensure corrected equity study data is reviewed collaboratively with faculty before implementation.
 - Work with administration to address Risepoint-related concerns and standardize teaching agreements for online courses.

Committee Report

- **Academic Policies** – Sen. Kishore (handled under Old Business)
Discussions continued on doctoral candidate summer session requirements.
- **Administrative Policies** – Sen. Kaya (handled under New Business)
- **Excellence Awards** – Sen. Wildman (No report)
(<https://www.fit.edu/faculty-senate/faculty-excellence-awards/>)
- **Scholarships** – received one nomination: Sen. Brown (see his vision statement)

Voting (route it to New Business for January meeting)

- **Technology Resources and Infrastructure** – Sen. Poole (No report)
- **Welfare** – Sen. Jones (No report)

Faculty Handbook Updates item was addressed prior to the introduction of the *Old Business* section.

Faculty Handbook Updates

President Nicklow and Provost Kiss have both approved the unanimous Senate-approved resolution to remove the Library Committee from the Faculty Handbook.

Dr. van Woesik joined at 4:30 p.m. to address questions and provide context for the proposed changes to the **Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) Charter** under Faculty Handbook Section 1.4, ensuring the independence and functionality of the AFTC.

Discussion Highlights:

- **Independence of AFTC:**
 - *Key Verbatim:* "The AFTC should be an independent body to protect faculty rights and ensure impartiality in tenure and academic freedom matters." – Dr. van Woesik
 - The General Counsel commented that AFTC must remain separate from the Faculty Senate to avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Key Proposed Changes:**

Language modification in the AFTC Charter:

- Replace "The AFTC will make a recommendation to the university President and the Provost, and inform through the President of the Senate of its recommendations" with:
"The AFTC will make a recommendation to the university President and the Provost, and inform the President of the Senate of its recommendations."

- *Key Verbatim*: "Strike 'through' to preserve the AFTC's independence." – Senator Turgut

Election Process for AFTC Members:

- *Key Verbatim*: "It's fine for faculty within each college have the opportunity to nominate and vote for their respective AFTC members"- Senator Turgut
- "Faculty-driven nominations ensure transparency and fairness in member selection." – Senator Bowman
- **Timeline for Changes:**
 - Dr. van Woesik emphasized that the changes must be finalized and approved before April 2025.

Back to Old Business

Discussion on doctoral candidate summer session requirements

- **Overview:**
Senator Kishore outlined proposed changes to the summer session requirements for doctoral candidates, as drafted by the Academic Policies Committee.
- **Key Discussion Points:**
 - **Suggestion by Senate president Suksawang:**
 - Proposed adding language to the policy that allows doctoral candidates the "option to register for this with the approval of their advisors."
 - **Response by Senator Kishore:**
 - Agreed to bring the suggested changes to the committee's constituents for review and feedback.
 - The proposal will be finalized and presented for a vote in January, specifically applying to doctoral students.

New Business:

Discussion on the COES teaching-track promotion criteria.

There is a confusion regarding scholarships component in the COES teaching track promotion criteria, particularly whether it is required for promotion.

• **Summary:**

Concerns were raised about the scholarship component in the promotion criteria for teaching-track faculty in the College of Engineering and Science (COES). The language in the current policy appears to create confusion, as it implies that scholarship is mandatory, unlike in other colleges where it is optional for similar tracks.

Key Verbatims:

- **Senate president Suksawang:** "Unlike other colleges, COES has a scholarship component in its teaching track, but scholarship is not mandatory."
- **Senator Bowman:** "The language in Appendix 2 of the teaching track document implies that the scholarship component is optional."
- **Senator Turgut:** "Each college has a scholarship component, but I suggest COES lighten this requirement for non-tenure-track faculty."
- **Senator Hohlmann:** "The current language could be concerning; it is essential to document the expectations clearly for consistency."
- **Senator Palotai:** "Dr. Cavalho and Dean Harris worked on this issue, but if leadership changes, these interpretations may also change. Faculty Handbook language needs to be clarified to ensure consistency."

- **Proposed Actions:**

- Amend the Faculty Handbook to clarify the language around scholarship requirements for non-tenure-track faculty in COES.
- Work with the COES College Promotion Committee to address ambiguities in the existing promotion criteria.
- Consider aligning COES teaching-track policies with those of other colleges, where the scholarship component is optional.

Discussion on Student Class Attendance During Thanksgiving Break

Many faculty members noted a significant decline in student attendance during the week of Thanksgiving Break. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness of holding classes during this period.

- **Proposed Solution:**
 - Suggestion to eliminate Fall Break and instead combine it with Thanksgiving Break to create a longer, consolidated break.
- **Alignment with Local Practices:**
 - The proposal aims to align the university's academic calendar more closely with Brevard County schools, which already follow a similar schedule.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Further discussions with faculty and administrators to evaluate the feasibility of the proposed calendar change.
 - Considerations include impacts on instructional time, semester structure, and student preferences.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Senator Turgut, seconded by Senator Poole. Meeting adjourned at 5:05pm.

Next MEETING Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 3:30-5:00 p.m. in Board Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

Senate Secretary, Jooyoung Park

The proposed version of FH 1.4 Bylaws, Article II the Faculty Senate, Section 5: Committees, 8. Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee

The purpose of the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) is to oversee and maintain the integrity of academic freedom and the tenure system at the Florida Institute of Technology. The AFTC is responsible for (i) ensuring that tenure and promotions procedures are followed, (ii) ensuring that faculty are treated impartially through the promotions and tenure process, (iii) adjudicating appeals and grievances on procedures from faculty that are in, or have gone through, the tenure or promotions process, and (iv) recommending resolutions to disputes between faculty and the university regarding academic freedom.

The AFTC is a faculty-driven stand-alone committee that makes recommendations to the university President and Provost ~~and informs the Faculty Senate~~ through the President of the Faculty Senate. The AFTC also subsumes responsibilities that include overseeing periodic reviews of the tenure system; communication and coordination with the university administration, colleges, and other tenure system committees; quality assurance in all aspects of the tenure system; establishing and conducting periodic reviews; and, as needed, reporting findings and recommending improvements regarding any/all aspects of the tenure system to the faculty and administration. Any recommendations for revisions to the tenure process and changes in policies regarding the integrity of academic freedom will be reported to the Faculty Senate for endorsement. Policy topics include but are not limited to an appointment in tenure track positions, pre-tenure review, the tenure process, tenure review and recommendation, post-tenure review, and policies for the exceptional, expedited tenure review.

Faculty within each college will have the opportunity to **nominate and** vote for their respective AFTC members and inform the Faculty Senate of the outcome of the vote in writing. One tenured faculty member will be selected from each of the colleges of Aeronautics, Business, and Psychology and Liberal Arts, and two tenured faculty members from the College of Engineering

and Science. Sitting senators cannot simultaneously serve at AFTC. When a senator decides to run for AFTC membership then the Senator, if elected to the AFTC, must resign from the Faculty Senate. Deans, department heads, administrators (i.e., the Chief Academic Officer or their representatives, and any other person directly serving in the upper administration) will not serve on the AFTC. If during their term an AFTC member is promoted to an administrative position within their unit, they will recuse themselves from any appeals involving members of their department or academic unit. AFTC members may not serve on a college promotion and tenure committee, University Committee on Faculty Promotion & Tenure (UCFPT), or University Teaching Track Promotion Committee (UTPC) simultaneously. If a college has too few tenured faculty to independently propagate all said committees, the AFTC member with overlap will recuse themselves from any AFTC appeal relating to their respective college. Elected AFTC members will serve three-year terms and may be elected for consecutive terms but may serve no more than two terms. Terms are staggered so that no more than two AFTC members are elected each year. The members of the AFTC will elect their chairperson each year.

While the AFTC handles a variety of appeals beyond tenure, the general procedures of the AFTC are as follows:

- (1) All appeal-associated documents that are submitted to the AFTC will be carefully and independently read by each AFTC committee member
- (2) The AFTC body will meet to discuss the appeal, which will include whether the faculty member was fairly and impartially treated according to academic freedom and tenure procedures and whether appropriate procedures were followed
- (3) If deemed suitable the AFTC will request additional documents from university-based faculty, staff, administrators, or university committees, which may help the AFTC clarify information regarding the appeal
- (4) If deemed suitable the AFTC will request interviews with university-based faculty, staff, administrators, or chairs of university committees to clarify any ambiguities that may be associated with an appeal
- (5) If deemed suitable the AFTC will interview the faculty member that appealed to clarify any ambiguities or discrepancies
- (6) The AFTC will make a recommendation to the university President and the Provost, ~~and inform~~ **through** the President of the Senate ~~of its recommendations.~~

Vision Statement: Alan B. Brown

11/27/2024 The Senate Scholarship Chair serves two roles: as (1) chief organizer of the Senate Scholarship

program, and (2) a member of the Senate Executive Committee. Since the choice of Senate Scholars only takes three months a year, both roles should be discussed here.

Senate Scholarships are supported by the interest from a fund formed by faculty donations in the past. While modest in size, they make a difference to their student awardees by being scholarships (which needn't be repaid) rather than loans (which become student debt).

The current program has been developed over a period of years by the Scholarships Committee, and was described to me by the outgoing Scholarships Chair, Dr Nezamodini-Kachouie. **If elected I will continue it unchanged.**

The basic idea is to identify second-semester freshmen who are **good-to-excellent students to whom the money would make a difference.** In recent years the Scholarship Fund has yielded enough for one or two new awards @ \$1500 per year for three years. The timeline for choice is roughly January to March; the procedure is as follows. (1) First, the Scholarship Chair asks the Registrar's Office for a list of first-year students with GPA \geq about 3.5; the threshold can be flexed to get candidates from all Colleges. (2) The Scholarship Chair then emails the potential Scholars just identified, to ask if they have scholarships (if so, for what percent of their tuition) or transfer credits. (3) Those with freshman status who do not have full rides are then asked for a one-page essay, on the difference a Scholarship would make to them. **This step tends to select those to whom the money would be important.** (4) Essays in hand, the Scholarships Committee then meets and ranks candidates.

I am already a member of the Executive Committee as Past President; the Scholarship Chair would extend my stay. If elected, **I would continue to advocate as follows:**

Florida Tech is a good technical university which seeks to be great, but has less money than our competition. We should find solutions that are right for us, through the lens of cost-effectiveness (not minimum expenditure). **Teaching and research are the central purposes of the university; both are essential to our mission.** (Certain non-academic offices sometimes need to be gently reminded.) The most cost-effective way to improve the Faculty is to help those in place. **The Senate's focus should be on the practical good of the University, which includes that of the Faculty.** We have the right President and Provost to lead us forward.

Personal: Faculty, 36 years; Professor of Chemistry. Organic chemist and NMR spectroscopist.

87 refereed papers, \$626,000 total funding, 30 assorted teaching and service awards.

Senate, 24 years; four presidential cycles; two terms as Secretary; chairman,

Administrative Policies Committee (three years) and Excellence Awards Committee (two years). **I respectfully request your vote.**