

Faculty Senate Minutes

March 24th, 2026: CB 409 & Teams, 2:30-4:30 PM

Call to Order; Silent Roll Call (0 min.)

[session start time 2:30]

Present:

Senator (S), ExCo (E), Other Non-Voting Member (O), Designee (D)

Abbie Fisher (E)	Erin Jones (S)	Laura Ricaldi (S)	Noelle Taylor (E)
Ahmed Alsharif (S)	Evelyn Porter (E)	Laurie Toro (E)	Nyree-Dawn Nichols (S)
Alma Laney (S)	Frank Jones (S)	Machiel Van Frankenhuijsen (S)	Rich Paustenbaugh (E)
Amin Zollanvari (S)	Heather Thiesset (S)	Maria Blevins (S)	Richard Cho (S)
Brett Breton (S)	Howard Fullmer (S) (E)	Matt Flint (S)	Sean Crossland (S)
Chris Lindquist (S)	James Cox (S)	Matthew Duffin (S)	Sean Tolman (E)
Colleen Hough (S)	Jeff Packer (S)	Matti Smith (S)	Shelton Weech (S) (E)
Craig Thulin (S)	Jennifer Shubert (E)	Max Aeschbacher (S)	Summer Karafiath (S)
Dan Perry (S)	Jim Oldham (S)	Mel Gurr (S)	Tom Smith (S)
Darin Eckton (S)	John Cornell (S)	Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer (S)	Tracy Sermon (S)
David Connelly (E)	John Newman (S)	Nate Jeppson (S)	Tyler Schnese (S)
Deb Dowd (S)	Jordan Allen (E)	Nicolas Clark (S)	Vince Rossi (S)
Diego Alvarado Karste (S)	Joshua Fagan (S)	Nicole Gearing (E)	Wayne Vaught (E)
Douglas Gardner (E)	Kevin Smith (S)	Nizhone Meza (E)	

Absent/Excused:

Abdennour Seibi (S)	Doug Czajka (S)	Kat Brown (E)	Ron Miller (S)
Carolyn Howard (S)	Karen Arteaga (E)	Paul Morrey (S)	

Welcome & Updates, Evelyn Porter, Faculty Senate President

[2:30-2:30]

Approval of Previous Minutes (available in Faculty Senate Teams/[website](#))

- Minutes stand approved

Academic Affairs, Wayne Vaught, Provost

[2:35-2:55]

- **Faculty Hiring Process**
 - Screening interviews are underway for several key positions, including Associate Provost for Academic Programs Assessment, the Dean of the College of Engineering & Technology, and the Innovation Academy
 - Plans to bring candidates to campus in April for public engagement
- **Academic Calendar Decision**
 - Decision was made to maintain the current academic calendar for the 2026-2027 year, with a Wednesday start for fall and Monday start for spring
- **Enrollment & Course Offerings**
 - Decrease in summer enrollment by ~400 students compared with the previous year
- **Accreditation & Data Governance**
 - Ongoing work following the recent accreditation site visit, emphasizing the importance of data accessibility for faculty and academic leaders, the provision of training for data use, and the expectation

that the incoming Associate Provost for Assessment will lead further improvements in data-driven decision-making

- **Leadership Transition & Tenure Process**

- Provost will service as interim president starting May 1st, with Kat Brown deputized as Deputy Provost to handle rank advancement recommendations

Presentations, Geoff Landward, Commissioner of Higher Education

- **Campus Safety, September 10th, and Statewide Security Initiatives**

[2:55-3:45]

- Clarified that the independent investigation into the September 10th event is managed by state risk management, with the intent to make the final report public, unless it contains information that could compromise individual safety, and that findings will inform both institutional and statewide safety recommendations
- Described the creation of a statewide task force including representatives from institutions, law enforcement, and security experts, tasked with assessing campus safety practices, resource gaps, and training needs across all higher education institutions, with the goal of producing a comprehensive report and recommendations for the legislature within approximately 6 weeks
- Emphasized a shift toward system-wide sharing of safety resources and best practices, setting expectations for institutional collaboration and seeking legislative support to address funding and training gaps
- Questions were raised by faculty about the challenges posed by Utah's permissive gun laws, including the elimination of open carry restrictions and the requirement for departments to fund event security; these constraints were acknowledged, explained the legislative context, and stated that recommendations for event security and safety protocols will still be made despite legal limitations
- Faculty questioned the mechanisms for holding executive leadership accountable for safety failures; the Commissioner described ongoing efforts to improve presidential performance management, the use of executive coaching, and the role of independent investigations in identifying areas for accountability and systemic improvement

- **Shared Governance, Faculty Representation, and Academic Freedom**

[3:45-4:00]

- Faculty noted that, unlike student body presidents, faculty senate presidents are not voting members of boards of trustees and sometimes lack even observer status; this disparity was acknowledged and expressed intent to standardize faculty involvement in board operations and to provide external staff support for boards of trustees
- Described ongoing legislative skepticism toward faculty and shared governance, referencing past legislative attempts to restrict faculty authority, and highlighted behind-the-scenes advocacy to preserve faculty roles in academic matters and to protect academic freedom
- Discussed recent legislative developments, including the passage of laws protecting academic freedom and the intention to codify principles of academic freedom and responsibility in state law, as well as the use of post-tenure review as an alternative to eliminating tenure
- Described efforts to increase faculty input at the state level, such as regular meetings with faculty senate presidents from all institutions and proposals to have faculty representatives present to the Board of Higher Education

- **Presidential Performance Metrics and Compensation**

[4:00-4:20]

- Clarified that recent news about presidential bonuses refers to cost-of-living adjustments and raises withheld from presidents, to be awarded as one-time bonuses only if performance metrics are met, rather than automatic salary increases
- Faculty expressed concerns that using retention and completion rates as primary metrics for presidential performance is overly simplistic and may not reflect the president's actual influence or the quality of education, suggesting instead the use of assessment data, climate surveys, and qualitative measures
- Faculty offered to share expertise and resources on assessment design to help develop more meaningful and measurable performance expectations for presidents; the Commissioner welcomed this input for the ongoing formulation of evaluation criteria

- Faculty voiced a desire for university presidents to prioritize the entire institution, including less-prominent departments, and to focus on educational quality and institutional culture rather than solely on growth metrics or fundraising
- **Presidential Transition, Interim Leadership, and Succession Planning** [4:20-4:30]
 - The Commissioner explained that the initial plan for a three-person executive transition team was replaced with the more traditional appointment, with Provost Vaught as interim president, due to concerns about the effectiveness of the team approach and the need for clear leadership
 - Faculty raised concerns about the Provost's office being understaffed and the risk of operational gaps during the transition, especially with Provost Vaught taking on interim presidential duties; the Commissioner encouraged faculty to communicate any issues directly so they can be addressed promptly
 - The Commissioner clarified that the transition team will now focus on supporting the incoming president after their appointment, rather than managing day-to-day operations during the interim period, and that Provost Vaught and President Tuminez are coordinating to ensure continuity until the official leadership change
 - Faculty were advised to report any operational concerns or evidence of declining performance during the transition directly to the Commissioner or through established faculty leadership channels, so that adjustments can be made if necessary
 - Explained the board's longstanding policy of providing a transition year salary for presidents in good standing, with provisions for adjustment if post-transition findings warrant

Good of the Order

[4:30]

- Faculty Forum on Thursday, March 26th, CB 104 @ 2:30-4:30pm
- Reminder for nominations for ExCo Policy Liaison and Council on Academic Standards Chair

Adjourn

[session end time 4:30]

- Meeting ended at 4:30pm

Next Meeting: March 31st; CB 104 & Teams

Announcements

No time allocated. Please review and send to your departments, as applicable.

Don't Miss this Event!



Join us this **Thursday & Friday** for the 3rd Annual Symposium on Teaching and Learning: **Joy in Teaching**, hosted by the Utah Valley University Faculty Senate's Advancement of Teaching Committee (AoT) in collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL). **March 26 - 27, 2026.**

This symposium provides a collegial forum for sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and engaging in meaningful dialogue about teaching and learning. It also offers space for thoughtful reflection on foundational teaching practices and for rediscovering the joy and purpose of teaching.

Over the course of this two-day symposium, participants will hear from faculty who have received teaching awards, are conducting research on innovative pedagogical approaches, or are implementing distinctive and engaging practices in their courses. Each day will feature sessions aligned with these topics, highlighting both practice-based insights and scholarly perspectives on teaching and learning.

[Register for Symposium](#)

[Schedule of Sessions](#)

Faculty Senate Email: Faculty Senate has a generic Faculty Senate email address: facultysenate@uvu.edu.

Provost Questions: If you would like to submit questions for the Provost to address at the next Senate meeting, please email facultysenate@uvu.edu.