



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

FACULTY
SENATE

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13, 2025

12:45 pm

Wingo 315

I. Call to order: FS President Dunlap, 12:45 pm.

Present: President Davis & Provost Hargis

Faculty Senate President Dunlap, Faculty Senate Vice-President Thomas.

At Large Senators: Mukherjee, Rosenow

CAHSS Senators: Mayhew, Burley, Craun

CHBS Senators: Rose, Downey, Jamerson

COB Senators: Appiah-Otto, McCalman, Britton

COE Senators: Buchanan, McClellan, Couture

COSE Senators: Yarberry

Honors: Frank

Library: Lebeau-Ford

Previously Excused Absences: Naumiec + Johnson

II. Notification of Approval of Minutes from Faculty Senate meeting 12/9/2025

Minutes approved with 16 Ayes & 4 Abstentions

III. Executive Comments

A. President Davis

Nothing new to report today. Welcome to another semester! One update from an item in December is that we are continuing to consider options to improve the safety concerns regarding the curve area near Wingo and Schichtl. Improved signage may be the best option, but we plan to address that soon.

Question from Senator: When is the deadline for implementing the newly standardized course number system?

- A. **(Answer by Provost Hargis) We must have them ready for students to use in registration for the Fall 2027 semester (so practically Spring 2027).**

B. Provost Hargis

Welcome back, Faculty! I wish you a good semester and appreciate your service to our students.

- 1) Some good news—First Year Retention is approaching 88% (although drop/add is still in effect through today). This is due to everyone who works to support student success, including faculty. Thank you.
- 2) Undergraduate enrollment also increased by 350+ students for the Spring semester (transfers and new admits).
- 3) Graduate enrollment continues to trend down, and we are examining that issue to develop enrollment strategies for those programs.
- 4) Please Report Non-Attendance and be supportive of new students who may be adding your classes at the last minute.

As always, thank you for your leadership and service!

C. FS President Dunlap

I also welcome everyone back to a new semester. Please continue to look for opportunities to engage with faculty. In particular, we need to:

- 1) Promote the forthcoming constitutional amendment vote.
- 2) Meet with faculty—perhaps visiting Department meetings or hosting another College gathering.
- 3) Senators should also gather faculty questions regarding UCA's compliance with Federal guidelines for online programs. The deadline for UCA's compliance is April 24, 2026, and both the Office of Accessibility, Resources, and Services (OARS) and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Academic Leadership (CETAL) have been working towards that goal. To supplement these efforts, the Faculty Senate is launching an *Online Accessibility Compliance Questionnaire* (a Google-Form) in order to collect faculty questions pertaining to specific courses. These questions will be passed on to OARS and CETAL, and we hope this will facilitate their ability to answer your concerns.
<https://uca.edu/facultysenate/online-accessibility-compliance-question-form/>

Looking ahead, the Faculty Senate's final meeting of the semester is scheduled for April 14—which is the same time as the Faculty and Staff Recognition Ceremony. I realize most of us want to attend that meeting, but due to the semester schedule, we would lose our April meeting if we cancel. Instead, I suggest we move the April 14 meeting to another time.

Question from a Senator: what about Thursday (April 16) or Tuesday (April 7)?

- a. **I will create a Google-Form with possible alternatives. We will vote on the best possible date after senators have had a chance to check their schedules.**

IV. Constituent Concerns

1. The UCA vision plan (Superior Vision also known as Versant Health Vision) will no longer be accepted as "in network" by Conway Family Eye Care starting on January 1, 2026. This clinic, and in particular Dr. DeBlack, is one of the best vision health care providers in Conway, and dozens of UCA faculty and staff use this clinic. It will be a burden for these people to have reduced coverage. Had many of us known that this change was coming, we would not have renewed our vision coverage. Please investigate better eye care coverage for the UCA plan - we must do better to ensure that our plans are actually beneficial to patients and empower them to obtain the

best health care possible, especially in these current times when medical coverage is being cut nationwide.

- a. **We discussed this at the December meeting, and HR has since investigated and responded via email. This is the only clinic affected and there are still 13 providers in Conway that are in-network, and this list was sent out in the email from HR. As the open-enrollment period is over, employees cannot un-enroll from Superior Vision for the year.**
- b. What remains is this question from the last meeting: Whose responsibility is it to tell employees when a provider is no longer “in-network” with an insurance provider?

Every provider would have to know which of their patients are UCA employees and report to UCA that they are no longer accepting our insurance. Then, UCA would have to either send out blanket emails to campus about providers going out-of-network or identify specific employees that are patients of those providers, which I’m guessing is a HIPPA violation. Additionally, this would still not solve the problem that spawned this constituent concern because the provider may not let UCA know before the end of open enrollment. In short, this is a complicated problem that cannot be solved by any single entity.

President Davis informed the Senate that the university’s contract with Superior is due for review and renewal in 2026, and that this issue will be part of that review.

2. Faculty members who work in Win Thompson Hall have repeatedly brought concerns to our building administrator's attention with regard to the cleanliness of our building.

The full text of this concern has been sent to Kevin Carter, Associate Vice President for Facilities. It has been abbreviated for these minutes because it presented several Human Resource issues that the Senate has no jurisdiction over and no way to verify. Kevin Carter’s team is aware of the cleaning issue and they are actively working to resolve it. In the short term, this will mean a deep clean of Thompson Hall to bring it back up to standards. In the long term, changes will be made to ensure the building is well maintained.

3. After grades are posted, students who do not get the grade they want (but the grade they worked for) often write mean evaluations for their instructors. This is especially bad when students try without success to convince the instructor to bump up their grade. Is there any chance that the deadline to submit student evaluations could be study day instead of the Sunday after exams?
 - a. **We understand faculty concern regarding retaliatory, poor student evaluations. This concern has been shared with Dr. Jacob Held, Assistant Provost for Academic Assessment and General Education. The student evaluation schedule has been set such that evaluations close before final grades are due. If a faculty has given students their final exam grade and/or final class grade before evaluations close and grades are due, then, yes, a student may give a poor evaluation when frustrated with their final grade, but the current schedule is set to avoid this where possible while still giving students ample time to complete evaluations. One argument for placing the evaluation after Course Finals is because the evaluation covers the entire “student experience” in the course, and the final is an important part of that experience.**
 - b. **We often view student evaluations as the main metric for our teaching success, especially as we consider criteria for promotion and tenure. The numbers, and even comments, are concrete and easy to point to, yet they come with the uncertainty of response rates and student subjectivity. UCA (and higher education in general) has wrestled with how much weight to give student evaluations, and there are no easy answers. However, I would like to encourage faculty to remember and seek out other metrics of teaching evaluation in addition to student evaluations: CETAL teaching observations, annual reviews with your chair or director, asking departmental colleagues to evaluate your teaching, and how your teaching aligns with accepted pedagogical standards for your discipline. Chapter 3, Section V:A of the Faculty Handbook (Page 21) has several examples. Ideally, we should develop a culture that values multiple forms of teaching evaluation.**
 - c. **Provost Hargis echoed this sentiment by stressing that:**

Student evaluations should be considered ONE data point in a complex and comprehensive evaluation process
4. Faculty Salary: How will UCA calculate our salaries when they are brought up to 90% of the market value? Last June the HR informed me that my salary was 88% of the market value. But in reality, it was 87.75%. If UCA simply brings my salary up by

2% based on my current salary, the result will be about 400.00 dollars lower than 90% of my actual market value.

a. Institutional Research does the calculation (market value * 0.9) and informs the Budget Office. All salaries will be rounded to the nearest dollar.

5. I appreciate the Faculty Senate's acknowledgment that moving commencement to Friday of finals week was intended to serve multiple stakeholders. I remain concerned, however, about several claims in the 11/11/25 minutes that lack clear evidence.

The minutes state that "data analysis indicated that the change affected only a small number of students" and that the impact on faculty schedules was minimal. It is unclear what data informed this conclusion, how "small number" and "minimal impact" were defined, or whether impacts were considered for students with multiple finals on the same day, long-distance travel needs, or families with limited work flexibility. I respectfully request that the Faculty Senate or relevant university office share the underlying data, methodology, and assumptions that led to this determination. The fact that faculty are now being asked to document any effects on student performance after the fact suggests that such data may not have been available before the decision to compress finals week and move graduation to Friday.

The claim that "many of our students' families work on weekends" and that Friday graduation reduces conflicts is also unsubstantiated. For many families, particularly those traveling long distances or working hourly jobs, a Friday ceremony requires taking multiple days off, paying for lodging, and managing additional logistical challenges. The change shifts, rather than eliminates, burdens and disproportionately affects families with the least scheduling flexibility.

Finally, as someone who attends commencement routinely, I have observed a noticeable decline in the quality of graduation ceremonies since (and even before) the move. The events have felt perfunctory and uninspired, relying heavily on recorded content and generic messaging. The president's remarks were identical to prior ceremonies, reinforcing a sense that efficiency, not celebration, is the priority. If families are being asked to adjust work schedules, travel, and incur expenses for a Friday ceremony, the university has an obligation to deliver a commencement that feels intentional, engaging, and worthy of the moment. Currently, the experience does not reflect that commitment to graduates and their supporters.

Calendar decisions are complex, but transparency about the data, clear evidence supporting equity claims, and attention to the student and family experience are critical. The timing and format of commencement should prioritize meaningful engagement for the graduates and those who support them, not merely administrative convenience.

- a. In the 11/25/25 FS minutes Kevin Thomas, VP for Enrollment Services and Student Success, outlined the offices involved in the decision making and indicated that they did utilize available data regarding student schedules to make the decisions, and we as Faculty Senate expressed that the decision was to benefit multiple stakeholders, not administration. The specifics of that process lay outside of the Faculty Senate's purview. If you have any further questions regarding the data analysis, please feel free to contact these offices directly. Additionally, the mention of Faculty gathering and reporting any harmful effects of this change came from a Faculty Senate discussion regarding the impact of an abbreviated finals week. It was suggested that evidence of harm could be presented to the administration.
- b. President Davis assured us that if there were negative impacts on attendance, it would be in the university's best interest to address the problem, not ignore it—but no negative impacts on attendance and participation have been noted thus far.

6. Library Senator Renee LeBeau-Ford announced that she would step down as Web-Archivist. This facilitated a request for senators to consider volunteering for this role.

President Davis left the meeting at 1:40 pm.

V. Senate Committee Reports

Faculty Advocacy & Engagement Committee: Meeting set-up with CETAL to discuss faculty support initiatives

Academic Affairs Committee: Application Deadline for next wave of Faculty Enrichment Grants is Feb. 1st.

Quote for FS signage (reusable outdoor signs to promote voting/activities) is \$295. Signs are 18 inches X 24 inches, double sided, and include metal stakes. There was a question whether the QR code would be printed on the signs. It will not; instead there will be a sleeve where messages (including QR codes) can be mounted.

Senator Frank moved to approve the purchase of 20 signs. Senator Rose Seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Faculty Affairs Committee: Nothing to report at this time.

Committee on Committees: We will be contacting Deans to fill committees and may need Senators' help recruiting applicants if that process falters.

VI. New Business

Vice-President Thomas:

Evidence suggests that there is a general lack of awareness regarding the federal and state laws governing service animals on campus. Therefore, I (with the aid of the Provost's office, OARS, and UCA's General Counsel) am building an information sheet to help educate faculty. This will be presented to the Faculty Senate and published in the minutes when completed. In the meantime, faculty with questions or concerns regarding service-animals in their classrooms are directed to speak with OARS. They may also contact Vice-President Thomas directly.

VII. For the Good of the Faculty

- 1) Take care of yourselves this semester! Eat properly, stay hydrated, and get enough sleep!
- 2) See the upcoming professional development announcement below (Appendix A)

VIII. Reminders and Announcements:

- 1) Faculty Senate meetings are now held on the second and last Tuesday of each month.
- 2) Next regular meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 12:45pm

Senator McCalman moved to adjourn. Meeting Adjourned at 2:23pm.

Appendix A: Announcement: Upcoming Professional Development from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs: Finding Funding

Looking for funding opportunities but not sure where to start—or feeling like you're seeing the same calls over and over again? Join us for an interactive professional development session designed to make the funding search process more strategic, more transparent, and more useful for your work.

Finding Funding: Hidden Gems and the Tried and True | Helping Me Help You

 **Tuesday, January 27, 2026**



2:40–3:30 p.m. (X-Period)



Torreyson West, Suite 328

In this session, we'll explore both well-known funding sources and lesser-known opportunities that often fly under the radar. We'll also focus on how sharing the right kind of project information helps me conduct more targeted, efficient prospect research on your behalf—so the process truly becomes a partnership.

What to expect:

- We'll generate key search words using AI.
- We'll briefly cover using the Grants Resource Center's Grant Search™ database.
- We'll play a game of "Find the Funder."
- We'll crowdsource unusual places to search for funding.



Please bring a laptop to get the most out of this hands-on workshop.



Seating is limited, so advance registration is required.



Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/CfsroG7TDvHsQwKm7>

Whether you're new to seeking external funding or looking to refine your approach, this session is designed to meet you where you are. I hope you'll join us!

Appendix B

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is pleased to announce the call for nominations for the Award for Excellence in Grant Impact, Seeking, and Stewardship (AEGISS).

The annual Award for Excellence in Grants Impact, Seeking, and Stewardship (AEGISS) was established in November of 2018 (originally as the External Funding Impact Award) to...

- *recognize both faculty and staff for professionalism in obtaining and managing grants,
- *to promote a culture of grant writing among faculty and staff, and
- *to encourage grant recipients to track the impact of their grant work on the university community (faculty, staff, and students), the public (from the local to the global), and their disciplines/fields.

Awardees will receive a framed certificate and \$500. All applicants will receive a certificate of recognition.

Nomination Process

The nominating period will be announced with a link to the nomination form by

November 1. The nomination period will close on January 31. The AEGISS selection committee chair will verify eligibility of nominees and email eligible applicants within five business days, providing further instructions for applying for the award. The nomination form is available at <https://forms.gle/kbi8sRUZchjFCgR87>.

Applicants may nominate themselves.

For more information, please see the AEGISS foundational document:
uca.edu/sponsoredprogram/aegiss.