

JSU Faculty Senate Meeting

November 3, 2025, B01 Merrill Hall

Minutes

Senators Present: Allen Gilbert, Allison Boswell, Andres Crawley, Ashley Rattner, Barbie Norvell, Brianna Turgeon, Chris Clark, Chris Hosmer, Courtney Peppers, David Thornton, Diane Best, Jeffrey Zanzig, Jody Long, Kathryn Catlin, Kazi Rahman, Kimberly Southwick-Thompson, Lance Ingwersen, Laura Barrow, Leah Simmons, Maureen McGuire, Mike Burns, Noureddine Bekhouche, Patrick McGrail, Randal Blades, Shellie Beeman, Stacy Mikel, Wendy Key, Yajun Lu

Senators Absent: Chan Wang, Eddie Walker, Stacey Gill

Ex Officio Members Present: Heidi Dempsey, David Dempsey

Ex Officio Members Absent: Christie Shelton, Mica Mecham, Shelena Cofield, Staff Council President, Department Head Council representative, SGA President

Guests:

Agenda Items

1. Approval of Minutes (October 13, 2025), **Chris Clark motioned to approve, Diane Best seconded, approved**
2. Shared Governance Items
 - a. Scholars' Code – Updates from the ad-hoc committee (highlighted yellow) with a few edits from Executive Committee (highlighted green)
 - i. **Appeals Process Clarification:** The ad hoc committee revised the Scholars Code to clarify that students wishing to appeal a sanction must follow the process outlined in Appendix A, with the right to appeal sanctions as described in Appendix C. The process mirrors current grade appeals, starting with the department head and escalating to the Dean if necessary.
 - ii. **Timing of Sanctions:** Sanctions, such as an F in the course, will only be imposed after the review and appeal timeframe expires or if the appeal is unsuccessful, addressing concerns about students being removed from courses before their appeals are resolved.
 - iii. **Distinction Between Plagiarism and AI Use:** The executive committee decided to keep generative AI use and plagiarism as separate violations, clarifying that using generative AI without authorization is distinct from plagiarizing an entity, such as a government report.
 - iv. **Feedback and Next Steps:** Heidi requested that members gather departmental feedback on the revised language, especially regarding the appeals process and specific clarifications, with the aim to integrate suggestions at the next executive committee meeting and bring the revised policy back to the Senate.

- b. III.23-ScooterPolicy-draft-09.09.25
 - i. Discussed concerns about e-bikes with Chris Haney (Chair, Safety Committee). He said the distinction between scooters and e-bikes is vague and that UPD will probably have to make judgement calls since there are no clear lines in current laws. Additionally, they will be working on getting more bike racks outside of academic buildings to accommodate scooter parking. – **Allen Gilbert motioned to approve, David Thornton seconded, approved**
- c. JSU Accessible Events and Programs Policy
 - i. Sean Creech's response to the concern raised was: If the “university” is sponsoring an event or conference, then this policy would apply. If individual student groups are sponsoring an event, then it would not apply. If an outside group is holding an event at JSU (e.g., Alabama Academy of Science conference) then it would not apply. It's only if a university-level event (e.g., sponsored by the Dean of Students, Provost's Office, Student Success Summit, etc.) or a departmental event with the goal of community outreach (e.g., theatre or choir performance, public reading, art show, etc.) that it would have to comply with this. – **tabled for further clarification on the definition of “university event.”**
- d. JSU Digital Accessibility Policy
 - i. David Dempsey and Heidi Dempsey have worked with Sean Creech to go through all of the concerns about this policy. He is working with math to address their concerns. We have extensively discussed what is covered and not covered in this policy and how it aligns with other institutions, and I think it is a good policy. Heidi anticipates we will have to adjust it in the future as we put things in place and figure out where gaps are, but it is a good faith attempt to align our institutional practices with federal law and not place undue burdens on faculty. **David Thornton motioned to approve, Stacy Mikel seconded, approved.**
- e. JSU Fundamental Alterations in Courses and Programs Policy
 - i. I received no feedback about this. **Stacy Mikel motioned to approve, David Thornton seconded, approved.**

3. President's Report Highlights

- a. Parental Leave Policy
 - i. **Policy Approval and Scope:** The Board of Trustees approved the parental leave policy, which covers biological, adoptive, and foster parents, but requires a legal definition of parent for eligibility; the policy is now in effect and any changes would require reopening the shared governance process.
 - ii. **Language and Inclusivity Issues:** Concerns were raised about the policy's use of gendered terms such as 'female' and 'male,' with suggestions to

use 'birthing parent' and 'non-birthing parent' for greater inclusivity, especially for non-binary and same-sex parents.

- iii. **Legal and Administrative Constraints:** University Counsel indicated that the current language is based on legal definitions and that all employees are covered, but acknowledged that changing the language would require a formal policy revision process; the Board only approves new policies, not revisions.
- iv. **Proposed Actions:** The group discussed drafting a resolution or preferred text for future policy revisions, with the advocacy committee tasked to propose inclusive language and present it to the executive committee and Provost, aiming for a collaborative approach with policy writers.

b. Higher Ed Compact

- i. **Higher Ed Compact Status:** The university is in the early stages of considering how to respond to President Trump's higher ed compact, with concerns about compliance and potential legislative consequences; a Senator noted only one of the targeted universities has shown interest in complying.

c. Academic Freedom

- i. **Academic Freedom Policy:** The group discussed the current focus of the handbook's academic freedom statement on individual faculty, with suggestions to broaden the definition to encompass higher education as a public good, especially in light of the compact.
- ii. **Academic Freedom Speaker Event:** Scott Schneider, a lawyer specializing in academic freedom, is scheduled to visit on December 4th to meet with deans, department heads, and faculty, and to review the university's academic freedom policy with the handbook committee and Senate.

4. Committee Updates

- a. Executive Committee – Heidi Dempsey, chair
- b. Advocacy Committee – Kathryn Catlin, chair
 - i. See report below
- c. Student Retention Committee – Courtney Peppers, chair
- d. Policies and Campus Planning – Mike Burns, chair
- e. Elections – Jeff Zanzig, chair
 - i. Officer elections are coming up – please let Jeff know if you'd like to throw your hat in the ring.
 - 1. Secretary and Historian are one-year terms and they serve on Executive Committee (must be a member of Senate next year)
 - a. **Secretary and Historian Roles:** The secretary is primarily responsible for meeting minutes, now aided by AI-generated drafts, while the historian's role has shifted to

being an at-large executive committee member, with less emphasis on archiving due to digital tools.

2. President-elect is two one-year terms and then an automatic two-year term as President
 - a. **Officer Term Lengths and Preparation:** Extended officer terms allow for better preparation and continuity, with the president-elect gaining experience before assuming the presidency, and prior executive committee experience considered helpful but not required.
 - b. **Benefits:** President-elect gets 1 course release per semester and \$500 in the summer; when this officer becomes President they get 2 course releases in Fall and 1 in spring, plus \$7500 in summer. This person must commit to being available every summer during their terms.
- f. Promotion and Tenure – Barbie Norvell, chair

5. New Business
 - a. **Senate's Role in Student Success:** The Provost encouraged the Senate to make proposals regarding the optimal percentage of online classes and other factors affecting student success, offering to provide data from institutional research to support these efforts.
6. **Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Stacy Mikel, seconded by Diane Best, approved.**

President's Report

November 3, 2025

- **Dean Brent Cunningham** will be **retiring** as the Dean of the College of Business and Industry in December. Dean John-Bauer Graham of the Library will be the interim dean while they conduct a search. The Provost has asked Dean Tracey Matthews of the College of Health Professions and Wellness to take over as the dean representative on the Faculty Handbook Committee.
- The **summer calendar** adjustments we had proposed to align the summer terms for graduate and undergraduate and move graduation back a week have been approved by President Killingsworth and are now posted on the Academic Calendar website through Summer 2032.
- **Higher Ed Compact** – President and Provost will be discussing this with Cabinet
- **Graduate Program Fair** – Tuesday, November 4 10:00-12:00
- **Celebrate 10,000 Students** – Wednesday, November 5
 - Free lunch 11-1 in the Cafeteria for all Faculty and Staff

- Celebration Event 4:30-6:30 in the UREC MAC Gym – a commemorative item, live music and games along with light refreshments, beer, and wine!
- **Faculty Research Symposium** – Thursday November 6
 - Come support your colleagues!
- **Academic Freedom Speaker – Scott Schneider**
 - 1:00-3:00 Full Faculty Presentation (Merrill B-10 Auditorium/TEAMS)
 - 3:15-4:45 Handbook Committee and Senate (Merrill B-01)
- **Parental Leave** was approved by the BOT in October. This is a huge win for Senate since we have been working on this since 2023.
 - Some questions were raised to Kat Catlin as advocacy chair about whether any of the language in the policy was exclusionary. Heidi Dempsey discussed with University Counsel and she said that no employees who qualified as “parents,” either through the biological birth process or the adoptive/fostering process, are excluded from the policy.
 - Another question raised is whether any language can be changed before this goes into effect. The short answer is “no” because it is already published policy. Revision would have to go through the shared governance process to re-open the policy and propose revisions.

Jax State Faculty Advocacy Committee Report to Faculty Senate, 03 Nov. 2025

If you have questions, feel that your department’s concerns are not being adequately addressed, or if you have additional concerns to bring up, please reach out to the Advocacy chair, Dr. Kathryn Catlin (kcatlin@jsu.edu).

- A small win: there are now changing tables in the bathrooms at the caf!
- Parental leave policy passed BOT: Yay!
 - Advocacy will continue working to address the issues faculty have noted with gendered language in the policy.
- Academic/Athletic relations: Allen and the Athletics committee have some good ideas that will be shared soon.
- Program coordinators: continuing to compile information about program coordinator compensation and job descriptions; ask applicable faculty to reach out to David Dempsey and Stacey Gill.
- We continue to have our eye on JaxBooks, AI, and other issues raised in our informal survey in Sept, as well as other concerns that have come to light since that time. Please do not hesitate to reach out if there is something we need to address.