

# University Faculty Senate Minutes

**October 27, 2025**

Online Zoom meeting

Please note that a complete audio recording of this senate meeting is available at [UNI Scholarworks](#). The timestamps noted throughout these minutes refer to that recording.

Faculty Senate meetings are open, and any faculty member may attend. If you wish to attend, email a member of Senate leadership for the Zoom link.

The summary below was generated using Microsoft Copilot and reviewed for accuracy.

## **Senators in attendance:**

Alexa Clements (Chair), Timothy Dooley (Vice-Chair), Kenneth Elgersma (Faculty Chair, Past Senate Chair), Shelley Price-Williams (Parliamentarian), Allison Pattee, Ana Kogl, Andrea Johnson, Andrew Berns, Babara Cutter, Cathi Bowler, Danya Miller, Erika Bass, Eva Chen, Evette Edmister, Jeff Morgan, John Preston, Julie Kang, Karen Breitbach, Mark Hecimovic, Matt Weedman, Melanie Hill, Nick Bailey, Rebecca Diskinson, Reza Lahroodi, Rob Hitlan, Ronnie Chen, Scott Giese, Suan Moore, Syed Kirmani, Tom Hall

(Fifty percent quorum met, with 29/31 voting senators present. The Faculty Chair is non-voting, as provided in the Faculty Constitution, and the Senate Chair votes only in case of a tie.)

## **Call to Order at 3:30 PM**

### **Call for Press Identification**

None Present

## **Introduction of Guests**

**Regular Guests:** Mark Nook, José Herrera, Alli Webster, Chris Martin

**Other Guests:** Amy Nielsen, Fernando Calderon, Julianne Gassman, Deirdre Heistad, Jennifer McNabb, John Burnight, Mary Black, Brenda Bass

## **Courtesy Announcements**

### **Comments from President Nook**

00:00:46 – 00:08:41

- Next meeting: December 1; November reserved for planning. Board of Regents (Nov 12–13) expected to have no major items; Jose may present an academic update.
- Jose's department visits highlight UNI's uniqueness and gathers stories/data for stakeholders.
- Jason Chapman, new State Relations Officer and UNI alum, engaging with campus groups.
- Gallagher Bluedorn celebrated 25th anniversary with donor event and Yo-Yo Ma performance.
- UNI volleyball: 46-match MVC win streak, 10-0 season, strong academics. Homecoming events praised for turnout and alumni engagement.

- President's Distinguished Awards saw strong turnout from alumni and community; social media videos showcased alumni and educator impact. Gold and Bold awardee recognized for global work with animals.
- President Nook extended early Thanksgiving wishes and thanked faculty for student success.

### **Comments from Provost Herrera**

00:08:59 – 00:12:26

- Jose Herrera previewed the November Board of Regents meeting, noting a collaborative report with UNI, Iowa, and Iowa State will be discussed soon.
- Enrollment update: 752 freshman applications from neighboring states (up from 746 last year); total applications slightly ahead of last year (3,576 vs. 3,566). Iowa recruitment still needed.
- Emphasized converting applicants to enrollees and thanked departments for collaboration.
- Closed with holiday greetings and handed off to Deedee for WAR Council update.

00:12:27 – 00:17:35

- Deirdre Heistad outlined WAR Council updates: report presentation scheduled for Nov 13; public release Nov 4.
- Possible Board actions: receive report, direct implementation, or revisit later.
- Shared ROI one-pagers for academic programs using public data and repeatable methods.
- ROI assumptions included loans, but fewer than half of graduates have debt; alternative calculations show faster ROI for low/no debt.
- Addressed broader program vitality metrics (teaching load, faculty count, mission centrality) as outside current study but acknowledged their importance.
- Encouraged watching the livestream of the Board meeting.

00:17:44 – 00:22:19

- Alexa Clements invited questions on WAR Council report.
- Karen Breitbach asked if challenges were shared by Iowa and Iowa State; Heistad confirmed uniform metrics across Regent's institutions.
- Clements raised concerns about ROI one-pager accuracy; Heistad explained there had been revisions with deans and focus on graduate outcomes.
- Heistad noted data may not reflect departmental contributions like general education or accreditation.
- Clements thanked Heistad and emphasized the importance of this context for departmental discussions.

### **Comments from Faculty Chair Elgersma**

00:22:22 – 00:24:01

- Chair Elgersma announced that open enrollment will begin in the coming days and encouraged senators to share this information with their departments. He emphasized that this year's changes include new coverage tiers, which may affect prescription costs and other benefits, making it especially important for faculty and staff to review their options carefully.

- He also noted that Human Resources is still working to verify dependent information for a few employees. Faculty and staff unsure of their status are encouraged to contact HR directly for clarification, which can be done easily via email.

### **Comments from United Faculty President Martin**

00:24:11 – 00:25:29

- Christopher Martin shared that UNI, in collaboration with Iowa and Iowa State through the Iowa Higher Ed Coalition, issued a joint statement on October 15 rejecting the proposal to join the federal Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.
- One of the primary concerns was the compact's call for a five-year tuition freeze, which the coalition argued would be financially harmful to UNI and the other institutions. Supporting materials, including graphics and data, were included to illustrate the impact.
- Martin noted that research shows tuition freezes can disproportionately affect low-resource students, ultimately increasing costs for them and their families. He encouraged attendees to review the statement, available at [ufaculty.uni.edu](http://ufaculty.uni.edu), and expressed appreciation for the collaboration with faculty at Iowa and Iowa State.

### **Comments from NISG President Webster**

00:25:41 – 00:26:13

- Alli Webster shared that she and her vice president, Gabe, are preparing to attend the upcoming Board of Regents meeting in November. She noted that their current focus includes monitoring developments related to the Iowa Higher Ed Coalition and the suggestions mentioned earlier by President Martin.
- Webster did not have additional updates but welcomed any questions from attendees.

### **Comments from Senate Chair Clements**

00:26:22 – 00:30:29

- Senate Chair Clements shared info on HR Benefits October newsletter link for guidance on open enrollment, tiered plans, prescriptions, and flex benefits; additional resources on HR website.
- A colleague of Alexa's predicts a snowier winter due to weak El Niño; faculty advised to plan January courses accordingly.
- President Nook noted winter weather is the only reason UNI has canceled classes since COVID; campus remains open. Closure decisions made by provost and VP for finance/operations.
- Senator Barbara Cutter asked about next year's insurance premiums; Alexa and Kenneth Elgersma suggested contacting HR and confirmed premiums were likely reported at last Board meeting.

## Minutes for Approval

00:30:36 – 00:33:25

- Motion introduced by Alexa Clements to approve previous meeting minutes.
- Senator Moore moved to approve; Senator Kogl seconded.
- Discussion included:
  - Correction of Charlie Kirk's name (was incorrectly spelled as "Cook").
  - Correction of NASG President Alli Webster's name (remove "e" at the end).
  - Update number of senators in attendance from 25 to 26.
- Vice Chair Dooley confirmed the attendance correction.
- Motion voted on and passed (25 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain).

## Docketed Items

Consultations:

1660 [CONSULTATION: Michael Hager University Budget](#)

00:33:30 – 00:33:55

- Michael Hager unable to attend. Chair Clements reached out to reschedule.

1661 [CONSULTATION: UNI's Day of Service Update](#)

00:34:07 – 00:48:43

- Alexa introduced Julianne Gassman, Chair of the Service and Giving Committee, for an update on UNI Day of Service.
- Julianne highlighted **Spring Into Service: Cats Who Care**, continuing sesquicentennial celebrations with a focus on service and giving throughout spring semester.
- UNI Day of Service scheduled for **April 8, 2026**; campus invited to participate in community-focused projects.
- Faculty options for April 8:
  - Hold class as usual.
  - Require student participation in service activities curated by the committee.
  - Embed service projects into coursework or department-wide initiatives.
- Committee is collecting volunteer opportunities, ranging from hands-on activities to ideation sessions with nonprofits.
- Encouraged early planning for faculty teaching on April 8; flexibility needed for students balancing multiple commitments.
- Resources available on the website for integrating service into courses, including reflection activities.
- Emphasized collaboration and creativity to ensure meaningful, mutually beneficial experiences.
- Julianne shared an example project: delivering **150 beds** to families in need for UNI's 150th anniversary, coordinated by Love, Inc.
- Department heads asked to complete a survey on class plans for April 8 (hold class, require service, or embed projects) to help plan volunteer opportunities.
- Vice Chair Dooley asked about volunteer listings; Julianne confirmed opportunities will be shared before semester ends, with registration opening in January.
- Priority deadline for submitting volunteer projects: **Nov 13**; funding applications open **Dec 1**.

- Shelley Price-Williams asked about project locations; Julianne said primarily Cedar Valley but open to surrounding communities and virtual options. Transportation funding and vehicles reserved for off-campus projects.
- Julianne emphasized flexibility for students balancing multiple commitments and encouraged faculty to plan early.
- Alexa thanked Julianne and noted updates can be shared with Senate as planning progresses.

1662 [CONSULTATION: Merger of the departments of History and Philosophy & World Religions](#)

00:48:48 – 01:00:26

- Chair Clements welcomed Brenda Bass, Jennifer McNabb, John Burnight, and Mary Black for an update on the proposed merger of History and Philosophy & World Religions (PWR).
- Brenda Bass explained the initiative began with department heads exploring synergies and efficiencies; both deans expressed support.
- Jennifer McNabb shared background:
  - Discussions with interim PWR head Mike Graziano since May.
  - Faculty retreats held; both departments voted to proceed.
  - Plan: PWR programs join History in CSBS; steering committee formed to review programs and explore shared opportunities.
- John Burnight emphasized strong faculty enthusiasm and potential for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Mary Black noted the merger is faculty-driven, focused on academic alignment rather than cost savings, with anticipated benefits for both programs.
- Senator Cutter affirmed faculty enthusiasm for the merger, emphasizing collaboration and synergies over efficiency.
- Chair Elgersma asked about staff involvement; Jennifer McNabb noted PWR's administrator is retiring, minimizing impact.
- Jennifer clarified merger discussions predated the WAR review and stemmed from civic literacy and interdisciplinary initiatives.
- Steering committee will address faculty evaluation concerns; initial plan is to maintain separate department papers during transition.
- Goal: ensure transparency and avoid sudden changes for faculty pursuing promotion.
- Senator Cutter stressed the process will remain open and democratic, with no pressure on programs.
- Alexa reiterated importance of faculty involvement in evaluation and promotion discussions.

Curriculum Proposals:

1663 [CURRICULUM PROPOSAL: CHAS Undergraduate Curriculum Proposals](#)

01:00:59 – 01:05:06

- Alexa introduced discussion on curriculum proposals, starting with CHAS undergraduate proposals.
- Motion to approve CHAS undergraduate curriculum proposals:
  - Moved by Chair Elgersma; seconded by Senator Burns.
- Discussion:

- Elgersma noted a discrepancy: Chemistry BS proposal appeared in LeapFrog but not in cover letter.
  - Heistad clarified BS change was editorial and approved by dean, not UCC.
- Alexa praised cover letter organization; Heistad credited Cheryl Nedrow.
- Motion voted on and passed: **24 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.**

1664 [CURRICULUM PROPOSAL: CSBS Graduate Curriculum Proposals](#)

01:05:07 – 01:06:11

- Alexa introduced CSBS graduate curriculum proposals.
- Motion to approve:
  - Moved by Chair Elgersma; seconded by Senator Hall.
- No discussion; motion voted on and passed: **24 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.**

1665 [CURRICULUM PROPOSAL: WLSN and Interdisciplinary Graduate Curriculum Proposals](#)

01:06:14 – 01:07:27

- Alexa introduced WLSN and Interdisciplinary Graduate Curriculum proposals.
- Motion to approve:
  - Moved by Senator Moore; seconded by Senator Kogl.
- No discussion; motion voted on and passed: **23 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.**

1666 [CURRICULUM PROPOSAL: CHAS Graduate Curriculum Proposals](#)

01:07:29 – 01:13:49

- Alexa introduced CHAS graduate curriculum proposals.
- Motion to approve:
  - Moved by Senator Kirmani; seconded by Senator Bass.
- Discussion:
  - Elgersma asked about cost implications of added math courses; Heistad explained dean review ensures feasibility and noted additions relate to new AI emphasis in Math MA.
  - Senator Kirmani clarified LeapFrog requires justification and cost details; some courses reduced in frequency to offset additions.
  - Dean Black confirmed no additional cost; adjustments in course rotation will accommodate new offerings.
- Motion voted on and passed: **26 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.**

Emeritus Requests:

1667: [EMERITUS REQUEST: Ellen Neuhaus](#)

01:13:52 – 01:17:49

- Alexa introduced emeritus request for Ellen Neuhaus (Rod Library).
- Motion to approve:
  - Moved by Senator Moore; seconded by Senator Bass.

- Discussion:
  - Senator Moore praised Ellen's role in establishing UNI's institutional repository, enabling global access to UNI research.
  - Chair Elgersma and Alexa commended Ellen's collaboration and organizational support for Senate leadership.
- Motion voted on and passed: **24 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.**

01:17:55 – 01:20:26

- Alexa noted two emeritus requests for department heads were approved outside Senate vote:
  - Dr. Susan Hili (Philosophy & World Religions)
  - Dr. Bill Harwood (Chemistry)
- Alexa acknowledged their contributions:
  - Hill: leadership in establishing CETL and supporting new faculty.
  - Harwood: fostering interdepartmental collaboration and expanding access to chemistry instruments.

## New Business

## Adjournment

01:20:23 – 01:20:43

- Motion to adjourn introduced by Alexa Clements.
- Moved by Chair Elgersma; seconded by Senator Bass.
- Meeting adjourned at **4:50 PM.**
- Alexa wished attendees a happy Halloween and Thanksgiving.

Minutes were prepared and submitted by Vice-Chair Timothy Dooley.

Summaries of comments were generated using Microsoft Copilot and reviewed for errors.

## Appended Zoom Chat

2025-10-27 15:28:35 From Susan Moore to Everyone:

I noticed a typo in the minutes. It should be Charlie Kirk, not Charlie Cook.

2025-10-27 15:30:58 From Jennifer McNabb to Everyone:

Jen McNabb, Head of History

2025-10-27 15:30:58 From Julianne Gassman to Everyone:

Julianne Gassman, Community Engagement

2025-10-27 15:30:59 From John Burnight to Everyone:

John Burnight, Philosophy and World Religions

2025-10-27 15:56:48 From Alexa Clements to Everyone:

<https://hrs.uni.edu/your-benefits/benefits-and-wellbeing-newsletter/october-2025>

## HR Benefits October Newsletter

2025-10-27 16:01:08 From Timothy Dooley to Everyone:

Replying to "I noticed a typo in the minutes. It should be Char...":

Thanks for catching that. There is a typo as to number of senators also.

2025-10-27 16:04:35 From Julianne Gassman to Everyone:

UNI's Day of Service | Community Engagement

2025-10-27 16:42:18 From Mary Black to Everyone:

It is my understanding that the new courses will fit into current math faculty load with a change in the course rotation for a few other lower enrolled courses.