

If you have questions, please contact K. Sivakumar (kasg@lehigh.edu).

MEETING OF THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Minutes of the Meeting held on March 7, 2025, at 1:10 pm

UC 375 and Via Zoom

Do the Minutes include R&P Changes? Yes/~~No~~
Do they require a vote of the entire Lehigh Faculty? Yes/~~No~~
Do they require Board of Trustees approval? – Yes/~~No~~

The roster of senators present for the meeting appears in Appendix 1.

[Appendix 1 available at <https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/meeting-minutes>]

1. Minutes of the Prior Faculty Senate Meeting

The 02/07/2025 meeting minutes were included in the consent calendar. The minutes were deemed approved since no request to discuss them separately was made.

The approved minutes are available at <https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/meeting-minutes>.

2. Senate Chair's Announcements

Professor Peter Zeitler noted that (1) the annual Faculty Senate Retreat would be on 05/06/2025, 12-4; (2) President Joe Helble would attend the April 2025 Senate meeting to provide an update on academic freedom and Lehigh's response to Federal Government's Executive orders and other announcements.

3. Consent Calendar: Second Reading of R&P Changes 2.2.6.7, 2.2.6.9, and 2.2.6.11

The changes are available at

<https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/sites/facultysenate.lehigh.edu/files/R%26P%20Changes%202.2.6.7%2C%202.2.6.9%2C%20and%202.2.6.11%20for%20Consent%20Calendar.pdf>

No request was made to pull out any item for a separate discussion. The changes are deemed approved.

4. First Reading: Student Code of Conduct and Associated R&P Changes

The proposed changes are available at

<https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/sites/facultysenate.lehigh.edu/files/Proposed%20R%26P%20Changes%20related%20to%20the%20University%20Committee%20on%20Discipline%20and%20the%20Disciplinary%20Appeals%20Committee.pdf>

Associate Dean of Students Chris Mulvihill provided an update. It was agreed that suitable modifications would be made to the text to clarify issues related to the number of faculty serving in the Disciplinary Committee and Disciplinary Appeals Committee (Professor Angela Hicks) and ensuring that the same faculty member does not serve on both processes for the same student (Professor Frank Gunter). Provost Nathan Urban suggested that Deputy Provost for Faculty Affairs Larry Snyder be consulted in revising the language.

This item will come up for a second reading at the next Faculty Senate Meeting.

5. Second Reading: Senate Bylaws

Professor Jenna Lay provided an overview. The details are available at

<https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/sites/facultysenate.lehigh.edu/files/FS%20BYLAWS%202ND.pdf>

The motion to approve the changes was made and seconded. During the follow-up discussion, Professor Peter Zeitler noted that Roberts' Rules will be followed regarding anonymous voting (in response to Professors Angela Hicks and Wenxin Liu). Professor Mike Spear noted that it is best to move forward with the current version and revisit the issues related to voting separately and later.

The motion was put to vote and passed (23 yes; 1 no).

The approved text is available in Appendix 2.

[Appendix 2 available at <https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/meeting-minutes>]

6. Campus Master Plan

Vice President for Facilities Nancy Trainer provided an update.

Vice President Nancy Trainer noted that faculty have provided positive feedback about the overall plan and sought additional feedback. She noted that Facilities would work collaboratively with the Office of the Registrar and other campus units to address issues related to transportation, scheduling issues, and class size-enrollment balancing at the main campus and the Mountaintop Campus (in response to Professors Frank Gunter, Angela Hicks, Haiyan Jia, Wenxin Liu, and Mike Spear). Registrar Michael Dills-Allen noted that smaller classes being held in larger classrooms exacerbate the problems with classroom spaces. Provost Nathan Urban noted that the University Leadership is aware of the potential benefits of faculty having shared office space closer to the Research Centers/Labs the faculty are associated with.

7. Changes to the name of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (as well as names of subunits)

Vice President Donald Outing provided an update.

Vice President Donald Outing noted that an audit of the mission and purpose statements of various programs are being conducted to ensure that Lehigh is in compliance with antidiscrimination laws. Changes in specific phrases, as well as the deletion of some words and phrases, are being made in response to the findings of the audit (in response to Professors Haiyan Jia, Mike Spear, Frank Gunter, and Jenna Lay). Vice President Donald Outing noted that in some cases, wording changes would not satisfy the requirements – in those cases, suitable changes would be made to ensure that they are consistent with Lehigh’s strategic plan and our aspirations of inclusive excellence. Vice President Donald Outing further noted that Lehigh’s Board of Trustees is still focused on equity, but the term “anti-racist university” will not be used (in response to Professor Frank Gunter, who asked about Lehigh BOT’s statements on DEI and Lehigh being an anti-racist university).

6. Update by the Provost

Provost Nathan Urban provided an update on three items: (1) fostering teaching innovations and associated changes in promotion and tenure documentation by not requiring the reporting of teaching evaluations, (2) impact of federal government orders and actions, and (3) how Lehigh is handling the budget shortfall.

The following were the salient points made. Unless otherwise noted, the points were made by Provost Nathan Urban.

Changes in Promotion and Tenure Documentation to Accommodate Educational Innovation

- This reduces the risk of experimentation and innovation since some students may not favorably assess some educational innovations.
- If we are relying solely on teaching evaluations, we have already missed the larger point of evaluating teaching holistically [Professors Angela Hicks and Mike Spear; Provost Nathan Urban concurred].
- This is a short-term measure to encourage faculty innovation in teaching without perceived negative consequences.
- The Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Innovation in Education Bill Gaudelli can support faculty members in designing, implementing, and assessing these innovations.
- Departments should attempt to conduct a holistic evaluation of a faculty member's teaching, especially when only a few course evaluation data points are available for early-career faculty members. Furthermore, some differences in teaching evaluation scores may not be useful in indicating differences in teaching effectiveness [Provost Nathan Urban in response to (1) Professor Subhrajit Bhattacharya who noted that fewer teaching evaluation data points would be available if we do not include teaching evaluations from experimental courses; (2) Professor Kristi Morin's comment about the need to reward faculty efforts even when the outcomes would take time to assess; and (3) Professor Angela Hicks' remark about the need to include classroom observation reports as part of the promotion and tenure documentation].
- The Provost's Office is willing to work with the departments and colleges to assess the teaching evaluation process at Lehigh. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professor Frank Gunter's comments about flaws in student evaluation scores]
- The language relating to the documentation for promotion and tenure will be modified after consultation with college deans. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professor Jenna Lay about the next steps]

Update on Federal Government Actions and Lehigh's response

- Lehigh is reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure that we are in compliance. Changes are being made where necessary.
- There is some uncertainty related to the issue. Other universities are in a similar situation due to the fast pace of change. Universities are being put in an uncomfortable situation due to uncertainty, but they are trying their best to make suitable changes.

- Regarding educational programs, we are evaluating the risks to ensure that faculty can teach per their expertise and that we can protect students from perceived negative experiences. While reviewing is going on, no curricular changes are being made at this time. If we are found not in compliance, the main consequence is the University losing federal funds and not on individual faculty. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professor Peter Zeitler]
- The faculty's concern and uncertainty will likely be greater in required courses than in optional/elective courses. [Deputy Provost for Faculty Affairs Larry Snyder]
- Currently, the curriculum is not a high-concern item; similarly, we do not have student organizations that restrict memberships to only certain groups, so we are less concerned about this. Admission and endowment management are more important aspects for the university to focus on currently. Any events specifically aimed at a particular race or ethnicity must be discontinued. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professors Jenna Lay, Anders Knospe, and Angela Hicks]

University Budget Matters

- In the absence of concerns related to federal grants, Lehigh is in a strong position financially. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professors Angela Hicks, Jenna Lay, and Peter Zeitler]
- Some Relevant Budgeting Points: We ended up spending more than the budgeted amount for student financial aid – the tuition discount rate is now higher at 42%; for every inch of snowfall, we spend an additional \$100,000; we are improving our forecasting models to help us better manage future uncertainties. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professors Angela Hicks and Jenna Lay]
- One long-term concern is our high reliance on undergraduate tuition; thus, increased revenue should come from graduate tuition; the graduate program application numbers are higher this year than last year.
- We are not currently instituting a hiring freeze.

Respectfully submitted by

K. Sivakumar ("Siva")

Arthur Tauck Chair and Professor of Marketing
Secretary of the Faculty