

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Minutes of the Meeting held on February 3, 2023, at 1:10 pm

RBC 141 and Via Zoom

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

Faculty Senate Chair Professor Frank Gunter called the meeting to order.

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

Professor Frank Gunter called for any corrections to the minutes of the Faculty Senate meeting of 12/02/2022. A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made and seconded. The Senate unanimously approved the minutes.

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

2. Memorial Resolution for Professor Richard J. Aronson

Professors Judy McDonald and Vince Munley presented a Memorial Resolution for Professor J. Richard Aronson (Emeritus Professor, Department of Economics). Senators observed a moment of silence to honor Professor Aronson's memory. They approved the motion to include the resolution in the meeting minutes. The memorial resolution is available in Appendix 2.

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

3. Memorial Resolution for Professor Bruce Fritchman

Professor Rick Blum presented a Memorial Resolution for Professor Bruce Fritchman (Emeritus Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering). Senators observed a moment

of silence to honor Professor Aronson's memory. They approved the motion to include the resolution in the meeting minutes. The memorial resolution is available in Appendix 3.

[Appendix 3 available at <https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/meeting-minutes>]

4. Chairperson's Comments

Professor Frank Gunter noted the following:

- The annual University faculty meeting will be combined with the March Faculty Senate Meeting; the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will finalize the agenda for the meeting.
- A proposal to allow one-time expenditure to purchase academic regalia from Faculty Professional Development Fund is being discussed by the Senate Executive Committee. This flexibility will increase faculty attendance at commencement and other robed ceremonies. Adding a question on PAR for faculty to indicate whether they attended commencement is another discussed idea.

5. Provost's Remarks

Provost Nathan Urban provided an update. The following were the salient points discussed.

- Faculty are invited to attend the open forum to discuss strategic planning on 02/23/2023.
- President Joe Helble, Provost Nathan Urban, and Vice President Chris Cook are currently synthesizing the reports from the four strategic planning working groups. This document will be available to the faculty members for the 02/23/2023 meeting. A framework document will be available for the faculty meeting on 03/03/2023, and a completed draft will be ready in June 2023. The formal release of the strategic plan is slated for August 2023.
- Some common research themes emerging from the strategic planning exercise are (1) health-related topics at the interface of data, technology, underserved communities, and equity, (2) sustainability and climate-related issues, and (3) interdisciplinary topics related to arts and humanities. Regarding the educational themes, those that seem to be having traction are: (1) universal design for education, (2) Lehigh's role as a regional economic engine, (3) expanding the partnerships and scope of the mountaintop initiative, (4) providing improved staff support to enable faculty effectiveness, and (5) simplifying/integrating faculty evaluation process for promotion and tenure and annual merit review. [In response to Professor Parveen Gupta]

- Not all the above topics are well formed at the current time and are being discussed further.

6. Campus Safety: Campus and Community Safety

Mr. Jason Schiffer provided an update. The following are the salient points made during the discussion. Unless otherwise noted, the points were made by Mr. Jason Schiffer.

- Bethlehem has seen a 25%-35% decrease in various crimes; it is considered the safest among cities with a population of 30,000 or more.
- Most crimes are crimes of opportunity (e.g., unlocked cars and homes).
- The unusual spike in crimes in 2015 was due to a reporting anomaly resulting from a new classification of simple assault crimes. [In response to Professor Dinissa Duvanova]
- There are cases of reported incidents for which the public will never find out the result of the investigation due to different federal regulations governing the reporting of incidents and their resolutions. President Joe Helble wants transparency in reporting campus crimes while not resorting to overcommunicating. [In response to Professor Frank Gunter]
- Lehigh Police and Bethlehem police are two different and independent entities. Lehigh Police's jurisdiction is limited to Lehigh and the immediately surrounding areas. The two police departments work collaboratively in addressing campus crime issues. [In response to Professor Clay Naito]
- There are formal "ride-along" procedures to be followed. [In response to Professor Frank Gunter]

7. Human Resources: Medical Benefits

Associate Vice President of Human Resources Chris Halladay and Director of Benefits Patti Florkowski made a presentation. The two sets of slides are available at

https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/sites/facultysenate.lehigh.edu/files/Mercer%20Health%20Report%2002032023_Lehigh%20Faculty%20Senate%20Meeting_V2.pdf

<https://facultysenate.lehigh.edu/sites/facultysenate.lehigh.edu/files/Actual%20Health%20Cost%20vs%20Projections%203Feb23.pdf>

The following were the salient points discussed.

- Lehigh is self-insured. Reinsurance applies only in the case of “stop loss” cases involving catastrophic claims. Since Lehigh is not a large employer, a few large claims can affect Lehigh’s claim statistics. [AVP Chris Halladay in response to Professor Frank Gunter]
- Lehigh is not able to hire staff. As a result, faculty do jobs originally performed by staff, and productivity suffers. This seems to counter Lehigh’s goal of attracting and retaining faculty and staff. [Professor Parveen Gupta]
- Staffing is a problem; although we are competitive with our peers, we are not as competitive with many corporate jobs when looking at salary alone. Also, we are not as nimble as private corporations. [AVP Chris Halladay]
- The percentage of people planning to leave higher education is currently at one of the highest levels. Reasons include burnout, an expectation of flexibility with remote work, and a decreased willingness to accept lower pay for mission-driven work. [Provost Nathan Urban]
- It is difficult to assess whether staff leaving is the result of or the cause of low morale. [Provost Nathan Urban in response to Professor Dinissa Nuvanova]
- We have to ensure that Lehigh is negotiating correctly with the insurance companies. [Professor Damien Thévenin]
- Because Lehigh is self-insured, most of the premium goes to servicing the claims, with very large claims handled by our separate “stop loss” insurance policy. [Provost Nathan Urban]
- Lehigh has to balance the premium and the deductible. [Director of Benefits Patti Florkowski]
- Faculty are not aware that Lehigh is self-insured. [Professor Mayuresh Kothare]
- Lehigh and other higher educational institutions tend to choose the self-insurance option (unlike corporate entities) because, overall, the higher-education employees are healthier than the general population, and it is not preferable to join the general pool. [Provost Nathan Urban]
- Lehigh decides on the relative premium contribution between the University and the employees by analyzing peer group organizations and budgetary parameters and balancing between pay and benefits. The increasing trend in employee premiums is seen in other universities as well. [AVP Chris Halladay in response to questions from Professors Sara Kangas, Chad Kautzer, and Clay Naito about the increasing percentage of employee contribution to insurance premiums, to Professor Sara Kangas’s question regarding how Lehigh Board of Trustees (BOT) are involved in these decisions]

- Premium increases are, in a sense, a pay cut for employees. [Professor Frank Gunter]
- Benchmarking with other institutions need not always be good. [Professor Parveen Gupta]
- The BOT is more focused on student tuition, and faculty/staff health insurance is not a topic discussed in detail at the BOT. [Professor Parveen Gupta; Provost Nathan Urban concurred]
- Once the contract is decided between Capital Blue Cross and Lehigh, Capital Blue Cross independently or through an independent medical review board, approves treatments and services based on medical necessity. [Director of Benefits Patti Florkowski in response to Professor Mayuresh Kothare’s concern about potential conflicts of interest due to Lehigh being self-insured by Capital Blue Cross and to Professor Wenxin Liu’s comment that expensive procedures are more likely to be discouraged]
- Tradeoffs between premiums and deductibles and the proportion of premium paid by the employee versus Lehigh are not decided at the BOT. Who decides these things? [Professor Frank Gunter]
- It seems that the people who make these decisions are unaware of the plight of lower-level employees. [Professor Sara Kangas]

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Siva". The signature is written in black ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

K. Sivakumar (“Siva”)
Arthur Tauck Chair and Professor of Marketing
Secretary of the Faculty