

**MINUTES
FACULTY SENATE
JANUARY 26, 2026**

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Present: Senators Adler, Apanovich, Barefoot, Braitberg, Brochin, Cerny, Cochran, Coletta, Cornelison, Craig, Diaz, Downing, Eaton, Engineer, Figler, Friesen, Garcia, Giacobazzi, Gregory, S. Harris, W. Harris, Heileman, Hingle, Hudson (Chair), Hymel (Vice Chair), Jens, Kennedy, Knox, Leafgren, Lin, Little, Lowell, Mars, Meyer, Miller-Cochran (Parliamentarian), Neumann, Nolan, O'Leary, Paschke-Wood, Pau, Pollard, Prelock (Provost), Rafelski, Rishel, Rocha, Roman-Palacios, Russell, Slepian, J. Smith, M. Smith, Spece, Stegeman, Stephan, Su, Van Haren, Waddell, Witte, Wittman, Zeiders (Secretary), Zhupanska, Ziurys

Absent: Senators Abdennebi, Baker, Buxner, Chandrasekar, Cooper, Coletta, Díaz de la Rubia, Eckert, Garimella (President), Goetz, Grijalva, Guzman, Huffman, Levy, Lucas, Maggert, McCallum, Perez

1. CALL TO ORDER [00:00:03]

Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate, Mona Hymel called the January 26, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting to order at 3:00 PM in Silver and Sage and via Zoom. Secretary Zeiders was also present. Vice Chair Hymel thanked individuals who submitted their names to run for shared governance positions and stated she appreciates their service.

2. ACTION ITEM: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – VICE CHAIR OF THE FACULTY, MONA HYMEL [00:01:19]

Chair Hudson moved **[Motion 2025/26-20]** to approve the agenda of the January 26, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting. Motion was seconded. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

- Vice Chair Hymel stated there will be a report on IT Centralization soon. Vice Chair Hymel offered Vice President Cheu's administration the 65-page report and recommendations on IT centralization and it seems they have implemented quite a few. It seems be worth putting this discussion off until the future to ensure everyone is ready.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE DECEMBER 1, 2025 FACULTY SENATE MEETING [00:04:00]

- Chair Hudson moved **[Motion 2025/26-21]** to approve the minutes for the December 1, 2025, Faculty Senate Meeting. Motion was seconded. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

4. OPEN SESSION [00:01:23]

Steve Schwartz, Regents Professor, Chemistry & Biochemistry [00:04:42]

Okay, so thank you all for listening to me, and I'd also especially like to thank Lucy Ziurys, who ceded her time for me to speak today. So, the reason I'm here is a problem that I think the Senate should be aware of regarding federal grants in my expertise in science.

The background is that the way federal grants are normally given is even though the grant may be for two, three, four, or five, it's given in one-year increments. Once the grant is awarded, you get your first year of funding, you write a progress report, and that is usually submitted with some kind of attestation from the university that they've not been naughty, and they're still following all the appropriate federal guidelines. Then the second year of money comes in, and that second year of money is presaged by something that's called an NOA, or a Notice of Award.

So, for people who have not been involved in this, there have not been NOAs issued to this university for over two months now. The reason for this was there was some kind of a requirement for some sort of state audit of our universities. I do not know exactly what the audit was auditing. It was just something that was required by the federal funding agencies. The people who fell down on this, or who did not want to provide this, were, I want to make it very clear, not the University of Arizona. This was not the university's fault. This was the state which did not provide the appropriate information. The problem was that as a result of not providing that, people's research funds were essentially locked up in Washington or wherever they were. So, people were not getting increments on their grants and programs were desperately threatened.

So, the reason I'm here, if it was not the University of Arizona's fault, is not to complain about the University of Arizona, because this happened, but to complain about the University of Arizona's response to the problem. So, the problem is this. The university should have been providing, and under normal circumstances, would have been providing what we in the biz call "a backstop." That is a loan in which they give you money to continue your research program until the actual dollars show up. As an example, when you get an NOA, that does not have a big envelope with dollars in it, it's just a notice that there will be dollars coming, but the university still provides it.

What has been happening is in some cases, no backstops, in some cases, small backstops. If you're expecting, as an example, a half a million dollar increment on your federal grant, and the only response of the university is to tell you that you should write some bridge funding application. By the way, this was on a grant that had already been reviewed and approved by a funding agency, you should write some request for \$50,000, that's not going to help you very much. The problem here is that this can result, as an example, in the loss of major research resources.

For people who are biologists, it could result in the loss of colonies of animals that they have been studying. It can result in the firing of staff. These can be long-term effects that end up killing research programs. So, the reason I'm here is not to complain about the audit, but to suggest that if we still have a standing research committee, there should be some immediate requests made to the university to have some kind of more robust response plan. Because let's face it, there are going to be three more years of chaos in this country. Thanks.

Melanie Madden, Program Manager, Curricular Affairs and UASC Chair [00:09:25]

I am here today not as Chair of Staff Council or Undergraduate Program Manager for Curricular Affairs, but as an alumna of the College of Humanities and an advocate of the literary arts. I want to highlight the excellent work that's happening at the University of Arizona Poetry Center, which just announced the addition of three new endowed events for their world-class reading and lecture series. These include the H.D./Bryher Residency for LGBTQ Poets, the Allison Hawthorne Deming Residency for Environmental Writers, and the Ofelia Zepeda Reading for Indigenous Poets.

The inaugural reading of the first H.D./Bryher Residency for LGBTQ Poets took place on January 15th at the Poetry Center, and was also livestreamed online. This was a much-needed space of refuge for our LGBTQ poetry community still freshly mourning the killing of a poet, Renee Goode. Thank you for allowing me this moment to publicly applaud our beloved Poetry Center and to encourage any soul who is weary to seek solace in this tremendous university resource. Whether browsing the stacks in person in their beautiful building just north of Speedway. or listening to recordings from the VOCA archive found online at poetry.arizona.edu. Thank you.

Lisa Elfring, Vice Provost, Assessment, Teaching and Technology [00:14:03]

Good afternoon, everybody. I'm here today representing the University Center of Assessment for assessment, teaching, and technology with my colleague, Melody Buckner. We are here to give you some advance notice about three changes UCAT will be making to the Brightspace D2L learning management system effective in Fall 2026.

The first change is to promote transparency for students about their grades while reducing instructor workload. The default gradebook setting will be on "Show Calculated Final Grade." We encourage all instructors to retain this setting as it supports our imperative for increasing student success. for all students.

Melody Buckner, Associate Vice Provost, Digital Learning Initiatives and Online, Associate Professor of Practice [00:14:50]

There's two more. The other one is to promote a more consistent student experience that I am navigating their course materials. The instructors will no longer be able to edit the current default navigation bar. That's the navigation bar at the very top. We want that to be consistent for all students as they enter into their courses.

The next one is really not our choice. D2L Brightspace is no longer going to be supporting the current version of the content area. We've stayed on this content area for a while. They are not going to be supporting it any longer. Therefore, we will be adopting the new content experience. We will be offering webinars and other trainings to support instructors in this modernization of the content experience. In our experience, the new version is more streamlined to promote student navigation in this area. I've been in it, it's not that different. It actually gives you a little bit more white space. it's much cleaner and easier to look at. I wouldn't get too upset about all of that.

Lisa Elfring, Vice Provost, Assessment, Teaching and Technology [00:15:58]

So, these changes are in response to consistent feedback we've had from students about their experiences using D2L Brightspace. The changes will allow us to better support consistent course site structures. We will be communicating these changes to all instructors within the next 2 weeks. Our first informational webinar for campus users will be on February 4th.

Melody Buckner, Associate Vice Provost, Digital Learning Initiatives and Online, Associate Professor of Practice [00:16:26]

So, as always, if you want more information, please go to our site. It's ucatt.arizona.edu and there's a little button

about halfway down that says Brightspace Next. If you click on that button, you'll get to the information. If you can't find that button, what you can do is go to the technology. tool at the top, and scroll down, you'll get a drop-down and you can go to Brightspace Next there, and you can get all the information, including places to register for any webinars and workshops trainings. It hits in the fall of 2026. Be prepared. So, you have some time this summer. Plenty of time. Come see us! Thank you very much.

5. **Q and A with University and Faculty Leadership [00:18:10]**

A. Chair Hudson – [Honorary Degree Draft Motion](#) first reading [00:18:16]

Yes, the Provost is in Phoenix, meeting with the Governor, so we gave her a little hall pass. She can do her presentation when she arrives on Zoom, as I hope she is will.

So, welcome back, and Happy New Year. The Imperial Boomerang that Aimé Césaire and Hannah Arendt warned us about in the middle of the 20th century, has come back and is heading right for us. What we practice abroad, what we consent to abroad, what we fund with our taxes, what we fail to call out comes home eventually. But even I, who study these things, didn't think it would happen quite so quickly. As the Epstein cover-ups continue. As our mainstream media distract us. As our two-party system fails to protect the checks and balances of our vintage republic. Paramilitary thugs threaten our neighborhoods, our people, our constitutional nonpartisan values and rights.

This time last year, I sent Know Your Rights cards out to our whole faculty listserv. And now, a year later, I think people in our community know better their constitutional rights. The protections of your private spaces, your home and private work areas. More people know the difference between a valid warrant signed by a judge looking for a specific person, and the kind of administrative warrants that are being brandished these days.

I think we all know enough to be horrified at the current situation, no matter what our perspective or political orientation may be. Today, I've offered many of your emergency whistles. You can take one and clip it to your keychain. It's good if you hike and fall, or if you walk alone at night, or if you ever need any kind of help or backup or warning to the community. It's a good old-fashioned analog signal, loud and clear, still uncorrupted and unspoofed. As of yet, that alerts the helpers and warns the community of any kind of trouble. On the positive side, I've never had more confidence in our community and our people. Especially our young people, our students. I have less confidence in our institutions.

The honeymoon with the Garimella administration has wound down and not without some important collaborative successes. As you may remember, our work in faculty governance has resulted in more multi-year contracts for career track faculty at their promotion milestones. Thanks to Katie Zeiders for really spearheading that. The university knows now, without a doubt, that it must give at least 90 days' notice for non-renewal of career track faculty.

We worked with the Provost office, especially with Greg Heilman, to come up with a pathway for civics and other gen ed reforms that you can read about in Jeremy Vetter's written report, in spite of disruption and obstruction from various sources. Most importantly, when President Garimella faced a huge test and stood in the national spotlight on the Department of Education's proposed compact. He called on us, and we answered and contribute, and together, we all face down an existential threat with principle and with dignity. When the heat was on, faculty and shared governance was there, and it was one of the first places that he turned.

But there's still much to talk about, much to negotiate. I have concerns, which you may have read about in the paper, about the administrative undermining or even sabotaging the kind of due process conciliation in the dismissal of tenured faculty members and other disciplinary actions, which we will continue to work very hard on. I have issues with the way that administrative reviews of deans and other administrators are being run, and there are questions about how we hold the leadership of our decentralized colleges accountable. I have concerns about the bypassing of faculty in our public-private partnerships.

Most recently, Tomas invited me at the last minute to a very large symposium for the introduction of the Kyl Institute for National Security, where I learned many things about a new public-private partnership, the successor to UA-ARC (University of Arizona Applied Research Corporation) but I was disturbed that the faculty whose research was cited in the brochure distributed to our partners, at least in the few that I have asked, did not have knowledge that their research was being highlighted as part of our national security public-private partnership.

I have concerns about UAGC which continues to undercut our University of Arizona programs and offer unvalidated new programs of substantially fewer credits than normal undergraduate degrees. And the lack of supervision of these new programs by anyone who is not interested and making money within the business model where we have no oversight and no purview. A new and important concern is the neglect of our infrastructure, particularly some acute cases of lab safety that are being neglected where complaints of faculty are not being heard.

What I want to focus on today, however, is a double problem, and you'll see it reflected on the honorary degree resolution that is linked to the agenda, and I have a couple of copies of it on each. table. The university administration has proposed, as of November 17th, to cut the Faculty Senate out of the review and approval of honorary degrees. So, the resolution before you, which I hope you'll read and consider, and that we can vote on next Monday, a week from today, involves

two important problems. On the one hand, the administration is making policy outside of our shared governance processes. That is a problem, whether you call it, as some have, repealing a policy, or it's not actually policy, it's procedure. Faculty Senate and shared governance are being cut out of policy making. That flies in the face of regulations, but also Arizona revised statute. So, we want no more policymaking without 30-day review periods, at the very least, and preferably active consultation with faculty governance.

The substance of the change that is being proposed is to sideline the faculty in the granting of honorary degrees. The process of having confidential executive sessions around February or March of each year long predates any of our presence here in the Senate. The proposed policy would no longer grant that confidential process of review, voting and approval of the candidates for honorary degrees. I've spoken with the President and the Provost about this numerous times and let them know that the Senate would like to discuss and vote on this issue. So, after the meeting, Jane is going to make available a Box folder full of the documents pertaining to honorary degrees. Well, you might say that honorary degrees are highly symbolic. They're something of a bell and a whistle, a frill on the serious business of granting academic degrees. I would submit to you that any degree, whether it is earned or honorary, real or symbolic, cannot be outside the purview of the elected representatives of the faculty.

So, I ask you to look at my proposed resolution, and if you'd like to review the history of this issue. We found Senate discussions on this dating back to 2003, 2006. You can also see the President's memo of November 17th proposing to take this important, crucial, critical, in fact, the most meaningful step out of the honorary degree process. I have shared my feelings with the President and the Provost on numerous occasions and even told them some stories, which I can't tell here, about the ways in which, we prevented corrupt honorary degrees from being granted, and huge embarrassment to the university and the regents in this process.

I hope you will consider this and be ready to vote on its one way or another next time. With that, I think I've got enough here, and I can take some questions.

Questions and Comments [00:29:09]

- Secretary Zeiders stated her thanks for Chair Hudson's motion and shared she chairs the Honorary Degrees Advisory Committee and it's her signature that goes on all the honorary degrees. She takes this work very seriously and she has expressed her disapproval with the change in policy to both the President, the Chief of Staff, and the Provost many different times.
- Secretary Zeiders stated for her, it comes down to her concerns on how the policy is not in line with faculty bylaws, Article 8 Section 1, which states that one of the functions of Faculty Senate is to act upon nominations for recipients of honorary degrees. This has been interpreted to mean that Faculty Senate votes on these degrees that have been vetted already by the honorary degree committee and approved by the President. Removing the role of the Faculty Senate vote in this process seems to contradict the faculty bylaws.
- Secretary Zeiders stated she supports this motion and has a friendly amendment to propose, that this motion includes language around the bylaws. She thinks it is important given that ABOR 1-113 recognizes the university's bylaws and constitution.
- Chair Hudson stated she will accept the friendly amendment, and she will try and reflect that and circulate it between now and next week.
- Senator Russell asked at commencement, when the President says "on the advice and recommendation of the faculty, I confer this degree" is he saying he's going to cut out the part where the Faculty Senate gives advice and recommendation from the faculty? This would make the degree "toilet paper."
- Chair Hudson stated yes, that is accurate and her and him have had numerous, rather heated discussions, about this very topic.
- Senator Russell stated the Faculty Senate either consents or they do not, this is not okay.
- Secretary Zeiders stated there are faculty still involved in the process which will include regent professors and herself. This process is taken very seriously. Most certainly on the Senate level, this is where there won't be a final vote on that, and that is what she has disapproved of.
- Chair Hudson stated she will provide everyone with a copy of the November 17th memo, which basically says the Secretary will go from being the Chair of the committee to a member of the committee and the Chair of the Faculty will be asked to propose the names of a number of Regent's professors, of whom the President will choose three. That will be the full extent of faculty participation which she has rejected.
- Senator Russell stated this should specifically be on the advice and recommendation of "the" faculty, not faculty and this is a radical change.
- Chair Hudson stated she agrees that this is a radical change, and the Faculty Senate has explicit purview under the powers delegated to the President by ABOR for academic and personnel policy, and an open obligation to review all policy. The rather tendentious argument being made is that a policy was repealed and a procedure was put in place. She told the president that she did not approve or agree to that, and neither, in my opinion, will the Senate.
- Senator Cochran stated it should also be brought to the Faculty Senate awareness that no career track faculty are included in this process.
- Chair Hudson stated for everyone to study up on her proposed resolution which she will make friendly amendments to including Secretary Zeiders suggestion. She intends to have a vote on this Monday as it is a radical departure from academic tradition and the Senate's own policies.

- Senator Downing stated he wants to point out that when one looks at the documents, the key difference between one of the proposed new forms of selecting honorary degrees is that the committee is composed of selected faculty rather than elected faculty. He believes it's really important in terms of something that Secretary Zeiders pointed out.
- Senator Downing stated underlying this issue is money and if one watches what's going on, a tendency has become available that people that wish to be considered are wine and dining. Members of the deans and administration, including overseas trips, in hopes of being nominated. If it keeps up, and he said this in the Senate Executive, there should just be a vending machine on the patio of Old Main that says, "Honorary Degrees" and one put your money in and gets their degree.
- Senator Downing stated this is ridiculous and that's just ridiculous. On that list is the foundation who has nothing to do with the governance faculty structure. The foundation is on this new committee that kind of waves the idea of a donation in front of the recipient.
- Chair Hudson stated one has only to look at the relationship between Jeffrey Epstein and Harvard to get an idea for what it looks like when the billionaire class has its way in the academy, and she raised the related issue, again, that UAGC is purveying degrees which are unsupervised by the University of Arizona faculty. This is coming dangerously close to detaching the faculty from the degree, with all the different forms of ill that can come of that.
- Senator Ziurys asked if ABOR has been informed of this, or if ABOR approves of this.
- Chair Hudson stated she believes that ABOR approves of the President's initiative, because the only substantive reason that has been given for making this change is because that is how NAU and ASU do it. They have long since severed their faculty governance granting of honorary degrees.
- Chair Hudson stated she informed the President that faculty have not yet been emasculated like that.

B. Patricia Prelock, Provost [01:20:18]

Thank you so much, Mona, and thank you for accommodating my schedule. I really appreciate it. I'm just going to highlight a couple of things, and please feel free to ask questions, but you got the report. Big congratulations to Dr. Brian Anderson, who became our Dean for Optical Sciences. As you know, he served as interim dean, and after a national search with four top candidates, he rose to the top, so we're very excited to have him.

January 5th through 7th, I took a group of Deans and Associate Deans and staff across the campus to Yuma so that we could really look at the partnerships that we have with Arizona Western College, with our on-site Yuma UA program with Onvita Health, which is our new three-year MD program. The last 18 months of their program, they do their clinical placements there with industry partners, agriculture. A couple of our Faculty Senators, including, Katie, was there. We looked at experiment station, Cooperative Extension, and YCEDA. It was a great opportunity for us to really develop and brainstorm for a strategy in Yuma that would facilitate internships for students, co-op programs, industry partnerships, and invest in our rural communities in a way that meets their healthcare educational, and agricultural needs. That was very exciting, more to come. We have working groups, and several people are being asked to work on the strategies that we came up with.

The other things in terms of what's going on in enrollment management and admissions, for the first year, we did early action here at the University of Arizona. We had over 25,000 applications on November 1st, which is unusual because we usually have rolling applications. The strength of the students is pretty significant. We had record numbers qualifying for the Honors College, which is very exciting. Other regular decisions will be going out in February, March, and April. Students have to make their decisions by May 1st.

With that, there's also a new housing expectation for all first-year students, because the data's clear that students who live on campus retain better, build community and a sense of belonging, progress better in their framework. We're also looking at some new discovery communities in the residential halls. Student Affairs is looking at for the future.

What's very exciting is we selected our Provost Fellows for the Academic Success Goals who are going to be working with our administrative lead, so it's a wonderful faculty and staff collaboration. Those people who are boots on the ground working with our Vice Provosts, our Deans, our Associate Deans, etc, who are leads for the academic success goals, which Faculty Senate has been a part of. Again, several members of Faculty Senate are part of that. Melanie Hingle who is a longtime member of Faculty Senate and currently co-chairs SPBAC is going to be our Senior Provost Fellow to make sure that we integrate the Faculty and Staff activities that are going on in each of the academic areas. Also, in my report. I identified we have two for success for every student, and two in research. Our own Katie Zeiders, the faculty representative for our research faculty fellow for research that shapes the future, as well as Danielle Barefoot, who's also a member. Our Provost Fellow for engagement and communities to create opportunities, also, wonderful people. What we did learn is that there were almost 60 applications for 6 slots. Then I realized we needed a coordination. We have several people, about 33 already who were not selected but were outstanding and we're creating a community of practice with faculty and staff who can provide advice and support as we're moving forward on implementing our academic success goals.

The last thing is, be sure to check out is our newly established set of peer institutions. There is a link for you to look at those, and it was done very well. There was a critical framework that was used, and those are the peer institutions that we're going to now be using as our comparators when we're doing some benchmarks. Mona, thank you so much for the time and the flexibility.

- Vice Chair Hymel stated she would like to offer a round of applause for Senate colleagues who have won these awards.
- Provost Prelock stated it was a standout crowd, and this is why she felt it was very important to make the decision to create this community of practice, to keep a significant amount of community and staff involved in the goals.

Questions and Comments [01:26:00]

- Senator Russell asked if there is a link in the report to the new list of peers.
- Provost Prelock stated there is.
- Provost Prelock stated she thinks everyone will like it and the criteria that needed to be used. They looked what is an institution that is an AAU, an R1, and size of the universities. There's an article that came out in Higher Ed that if information is put in, one can identify who is seen as a peer. This was interesting and academic analytics were used in terms of performance.
- Provost Prelock stated she thinks some of them were on the old list. There are some that are no longer on that list. This includes places like Colorado, Purdue, UC Davis, three California schools, University of Texas, Austin, and those kinds of universities that are AAU, and Private. She believes University of Wisconsin-Madison was also included. All good institutions that she believes everyone would be proud to be a part of and many of them saw the UA as their players as well.
- Senator Su stated regarding the recent announcement of the first-year students being required to stay in campus housing, a lot of students are from the local Tucson community. Whether they must stay in campus versus they could stay at home would be about a \$10,000 difference each year. She asked if there will be additional financial support for them because of this housing situation.
- Provost Prelock stated there are exceptions to this, and this is typical of other institutions she has been at. If students live within 30 miles of campus, they can stay at home, they just must request in. If they have financial challenges, they can request an opt-out, and that is reviewed. The advantage of the students living on campus, if they can't live at home and there. trying to live off campus, one of the things that was found, is that a financial aid package can be created that meets their needs because then cost of attendance is not just tuition and will also include room and board. There are exceptions for students who live within a certain mile radius, or students have a hardship and need to be able to live at home.
- Vice Chair Hymel stated her thanks for Provost Prelock's willingness to complete her report out of order.

6. ACTION ITEM: CONSENT AGENDA - Joost Van Haren, Chair of the Graduate Council – Proposal Personal Brand and Money Management, Proposal BS Cyber Operations [00:37:33]

There are two programs that were moved forward through the Undergraduate Council. The first is a minor in personal brand and money management. The other one is a Bachelor of Science in Cyber Operations. The minor will help students, especially college athletes, navigate the NCAA name, image, and likeness. There are opportunities for future entrepreneurs, influencers, media specialists with their personal branding and money management through financial and digital literacy

The BS in cyber operations is to serve students that want to become the next generation of cyber professionals. This is a new major that is mainly the result of restructuring and refocus within information science to better align with NSA designations, security, cyber, and cyber defense. This builds on the long-term success of the BAS in Cyber Operations and Cyber Engineering.

Both proposals were seriously vetted in the Academic Program's Subcommittee, and then moved forward to the full UGC committee, where they were unanimously approved.

- Chair Hudson asked whether the personal branding minor is exclusive to athletic students.
- Chair of UGC, Joost Van Haren stated no it is not.
- Chair Hudson stated so it's open to all students with an intellectual interest in personal branding.
- Chair of UGC, Joost Van Haren stated it is within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in the Norton School of Family and Nutritional Studies

Chair Hudson moved **[Motion 2025/26-22]** and **[Motion 2025/26-23]** to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion was seconded. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

7. OLD BUSINESS [00:45:42]

A. Discussion on ABOR 6-201K – Senator Roy Spece, Senator Keith Maggert [00:46:08]

Senator Roy Spece [00:40:44]

I have a full committee, we had to accommodate many people's schedules, to undertake the task assigned to us previously, and we'll have our first meeting the first Friday of February. Since we have a lot of data and an evidence bank from the first committee, I anticipate this could go expeditiously.

Vice Chair Hymel [00:42:06]

Thank you, Senator Spece. Just in case we don't remember or recall, the micro-campuses in Asia were closed down. The College of Law had a profitable program. The instructors under that program, asked under the ABOR Policy 6-201, which sets out the conditions of faculty service, that their program was discontinued without the President having followed the proper steps as outlined in the ABOR rule. Those individuals contacted the President who did not respond.

One of the requirements under 6-201K is that a Faculty Senate committee be set up to take a look at the issues. However, the President is supposed to do that. He has not done that. We feel that we have the same obligation under 15-1601B, as do the administration. The plan is to set up this this faculty committee and to carry out their duties so that the faculty will have, at least, in our opinion, carried our obligations.

Questions and Comments [00:43:51]

- Secretary Zeiders stated she emailed Senator Spece this, but there was a report linked in the agenda, and she asked whether this was the final report or recommendation.
- Senator Spece stated he did not see what was attached.
- Secretary Zeiders stated it has four bullet points which have very little information about the case. She was left with so many questions about what university programs are being referred to, what contracts are being referred to, what the working definition of reorganization is, and whether this is consistent with ABOR.
- Senator Spece stated they are focusing on one issue which is shutting down of the joint program of the Law school in China which was bringing in a million dollars to the university and to the law school.
- Senator Spece stated, already, Vice Chair Hymel has mentioned that then the professors were summarily fired and made a petition under the appropriate Arizona Board of Regents policy manual, and the President ignored it. Then, an original committee was created to see what the proper remedy for these professors would be. The focus is the Law school and the dismissals of the Professors.
- Secretary Zeiders stated she suggests that Senator Spece double check the report that was linked on the agenda because it has absolutely no information and does not provide senators any information to be informed about the issue.
- Senator Spece stated he previously made a presentation at other meetings and maybe Secretary Zeiders wasn't there.
- Vice Chair Hymel stated what Secretary Zeiders is referring to is a letter that was prepared by the ad hoc committee created by Chair Hudson and considered whether the issue of the micro campus closures and the applicability of the ABOR rules should be looked at, including whatever was required of Faculty Senate under their obligations of shared governance. There is virtually no information, and at this point, she doesn't think it would be right to provide anything without an investigation of the situation.
- Vice Chair Hymel stated the work that will come forward will be from a Senate-created committee based on the ABOR Statute 6-201K.
- Senator Ziurys states she heard there was a lawsuit against the university by some of these professors or people involved. She asked if anyone knows if that's correct or the status of it.
- Senator Spece stated she has not heard of that, and I've been in touch with these people because they're important witnesses. He thinks they would have informed him, but that's just speculation.
- Vice Chair Hymel stated she has no information on this either. The individuals listed on the memo are the folks who will be on that committee.
- Senator Cochran asked if there is an anticipated timeline for this committee to meet.
- Senator Spece stated the first meeting is on the first Friday of February and he anticipates it can go expeditiously because of the background collection of evidence. The committee will look further on this and they also plan to have a digital seminar on this which will be open to the community and anyone who is interested in commenting and giving their perspective on what is occurring.
- Senator Cochran asked how long this committee will be convening for as this issue is likely urgent for these faculty.
- Senator Spece stated the letter he received asking him to Chair the committee spoke of ninety days.
- Chair Hudson stated her thanks for everyone for their interest in this technical and obscure process. ABOR policy requires that the dismissed faculty have an expeditious hearing with a timetable of about 90 days from when their petition is first received. President Garimella has not acknowledged receipt of their petition, which is what has sent all of this to the Senate's advisory committee.
- Chair Hudson stated ABOR Policy 6-201 is triggered by the President receiving a petition from the dismissed faculty. He then asks the Faculty Senate to conduct the investigation within 90 days, including a public forum

where the faculty can basically make victim statements and the committee can get feedback. Then a recommendation is made back to the president.

- Chair Hudson stated to the best of her knowledge, she does not know about any pending litigation, but she does know that the flaunting of ABOR Policy 6-201, which involves positive action by the Faculty Senate is not something that her and others want to shirt their duty on. There is a hope that this entire process will happen during the spring, but there are persistent questions about other micro-campus faculty, including the faculty of the writing programs who may well seek to take advantage of the expertise and processes developed by Senator Spece's Committee. She is very open to extending the lifespan of the committee until there is a clear consensus on how the ABOR binding policy is done at this university.
- Senator Spece stated there are 90 days, but he believes this could be cut in half possibly. It is important that there is a decision on this as soon as possible which he appreciates.
- Chair Hudson stated yes, their colleagues certainly deserve that.

8. **NEW BUSINESS** [00:52:15]

A. **University Budget, overview of All Funds budget, projections for FY 2027, Provost Patricia Prelock, Chief Financial Officer, John Arnold** [00:52:20]

Chief Financial Officer, John Arnold [00:53:03]

Thank you. I appreciate the time and invitation to come and update you on the status of the budget and next steps for this fiscal year as we lead into next fiscal year, which is going to be here before we know it. It's already time to start preparing for that thing again.

Before I get into the slides, a couple of points of good news on the budget. One, through two quarters, we are on track to end this fiscal year with a fully balanced budget. We'll talk about that a little bit more, but we are continuing to measure balance by the impact on our days cash on hand which should be positive this year, which we're very grateful for everybody's hard work, collaboration and cooperation to get us to this point. It's really, I think, a great achievement. that we've been able to accomplish over these last two years, and I don't want to minimize the difficulty in getting us to this point for everybody. So, just really grateful for the work for that front. This was recently recognized by Standard & Poor's. We work with them on the university's rating.

Standard & Poor's had the university with a negative outlook, and last month they changed that to a stable outlook. Which, again, just really, really terrific news. Now both Moody's and Standard & Poor's recognized the university with a stable outlook. We'd like to now improve our rating, that's going to take some additional work. They still are citing our liquidity position as a reason why we're a little bit lower than we'd like to be. Having said that, both Standard and Poor's and Moody's have given higher education as an industry, a negative outlook. They cite federal government actions, demographics, rising costs in the industry as why there's a negative outlook on the overall industry. So, we're not out of the woods, you know, there's always things that we're going to have to deal with over the next coming years.

On this slide is this is the university budget update. This is a picture of the university budget. You've seen something like this. We've been playing with the titles a little bit. We really think about the University budget in three big buckets. Big bucket number one is the general operating budget; these are the allocated funds. This is really the operating dollars of the university. When we talk about deficits, this is generally what we're talking about, this general operating chunk. Restricted dollars are dollars that have an external restriction on them. This is generally gifting funds, contracts, grants that come to the university where we have to spend it for that specific purpose. Enterprise funds are dollars that are generated outside of our normal academic missions. The auxiliaries are in there, campus store, the union, Athletics. Beyond that, almost every college does some retail-like activities, conferences, that type of stuff. So, that lives down there

Most of the time when we're budgeting, we're talking about this general operating chunk. So let's drill into general operating a little bit more. The revenue streams for that general operating piece, really is five major categories. Net tuition and fees, it's exactly what you'd think. The state appropriation. When you look at that total pie that we saw in the last screen, it's only about 12-13%, but when you look at our operating dollars, it's 26%. So, just a huge and important number for the university. We spend a lot, a lot of time with the state explaining what we do, why we do it, how it benefits the state, and how it benefits our students. I'm trying to protect that number and drive it up where we can. F&A cost recovery, so this is the budget number for 2026. We budgeted \$118 million. We typically run around \$130 million or so. But we wrote it down this year because, hey, who knows? We're actually running just above that so far through the year. For fiscal 26, we feel comfortable with that number. Fiscal 27 is another story, you know, the federal government still really hasn't adopted a budget, and we had the federal shutdown period that slowed the processing of grants. I think you're all aware of that, so how FNA is going to come in 27, we're a little nervous around that. This other category includes a whole bunch of different things in there. The biggest piece in there is what we call the overhead service charge. which we charge the auxiliary units for all the support they get from the university, so it's moving money from that enterprise fund up to the General Operating Fund. Then we earn some money on the cash that we have, so just investment income.

So, where do we spend that money? You know, where do those revenues and that general operating money go? This is by function. \$720 million, about 52%, goes straight out to the colleges. About 12% for business operations, that's me, that's HR, it's the President's office, etc. Facilities and Utilities, about \$100 million. Majority of that is utilities and that number is under pressure. I think anyone that lives in Tucson knows utilities costs continue to go up, water and electricity. IT is UITS budget. Some other expenses which is a whole slew of different things, including some insurance payments. We call them unallocated costs, because they're paid from the center of the university. Student engagement, that is out of the Provost's office, so Dean of students, those types of activities, Registrar. Community engagement is our marketing office, external outreach offices, government, community service offices, those pieces.

Days, cash on hand. How are we doing? You've seen this picture, I'm assuming. Days cash on hand is a metric that the Board of Regents uses. It's a common metric used across the United States. It's based on a calculation that was developed by Moody's. What Moody's does is measure this for every university in the country and then they set a median. The board policy is that we should be within 25% of the median, so we should be at least 75% of the median, if that makes sense. It isn't just a made-up number; it's built around national best practice. The current median, the 75% is 132 days, it's that lower edge where we're supposed to be. We're supposed to be at least 75% of the median, that 75% of 132. We're sitting there at 78, so we still have some work to do. You can see these patterns. The university dropped in the late twenty teens in days cash on hand. There was a spend down, bump up, that was around COVID, and the federal dollars that flowed into the university through COVID reset those numbers. Then it's been done again, and that dropped from \$149 to \$110 is really what triggered the interest in the University's financial position that led to a lot of discussion and changes and dialogue. We've been able to arrest the drop and hope to start driving that number back up. Hope's not the right word. We plan to start driving that number back up, but as we've discussed this, certainly a priority to bring that number back up, but not the priority. We're going to be wise about how we do that, and this is not panic time or anything. We need to bring that up, but we also need to continue to invest in the success of the university and plan to do that with some balance, knowing that we've got to bring that number up.

A little bit about fund balances. We need to work to eliminate all negative fund balances so that day's cash on hand sits in funds across the university. There are hundreds and hundreds of them. Some department, some down to the faculty level. There's a handful of those funds that are negative. We want to bring all of those negatives up to at least zero so that we have a clear picture of how much cash is out there. I get nervous that you have a department head that has a fund balance of \$3 million. There's another department somewhere that has a negative balance of \$3 million. So how much cash is there? Department Head A thinks they've got \$3 million, but there's not the cash behind that balance. So, we want to fix that problem so everyone's clear that we're going back on the cash standard, for a lack of a better term. When you look at a piece of paper and say, my fund balance says \$2.5 million, there's actually \$2.5 million behind that fund balance. We're developing a policy around fund balances that will set required minimum targets for the colleges, for the auxiliary units, for the non-academic budgets. Once we get to that point, we believe we'll be able to build additional flexibility into the fund balance restrictions so that we can have conversations about where should we invest, can we take a one-time opportunity and put some money towards it?

2027 budget process. Colleges began in fiscal 27 in a similar position relative to 2026. There was a lot of discussion about moving towards a new budget model. We want everyone to understand that fiscal 27 will start about the same position as 26 with some caveats, we'll get into that. All colleges will have their meeting with the Provost, CFO, and other senior leaders. The 27-budget process really started in about November where we released some budget instructions. Each budget unit submitted a budget update that consisted of a re-forecasting for fiscal 26. How are we doing this year? And then a forecast for 27 and budget requests for fiscal 27. Those documents came in December. Our budget team goes through those documents, cleans them, asks appropriate questions, takes the errors out of them, and makes sure we have consistent data across all these budget documents. They're finishing that process now. We'll start these meetings with the deans and other senior leaders coming over the next few months. We're not there to drill down into the budget minutiae. It's really to sit down and talk about the direction of the college or the other unit. What are your strategic goals for fiscal 27? How are things going? What are the resources that you need?

We have asked all leaders to come in prepared with reduction scenarios. We did that so that we can have all of the information that we can gather in case we do have to make decisions to reduce budgets over the coming months. As mentioned, there's still some unknowns that we have moving into fiscal 27. We want to be prepared to face those unknowns if some of those scenarios should arise. Like I said, right now, we feel like, as we're looking into fiscal 27, we should be close to where we're at in fiscal 26, but we want to be able to have that information and those dialogues to make those types of decisions. Regarding final decisions, every year we try to do it as early as possible, and I always say mid-April, and it ends up being a little later than that. So, I'm going to say mid-April, and then it'll probably end up being a little later than that. It is an election year with the state. Historically, that meant that they adopted the budget a little bit earlier in the spring, so they can get out and campaign. Ted, you know about that? Hopefully that happens this year, and we're not drugging to June, waiting for those budget decisions. That's the plan, and we hope that we can get there. With that, I'm happy to take a few questions.

Provost Patricia Prelock [01:09:00]

Hi everyone, sorry I can't be there in person, but thank you, John for taking care. I was meeting with the OIE office and the governor's staff so that we could look at the Rural Health opportunities that we have going forward for the University and for the state to improve rural health. It was an important place to be, but happy to be online, so I'm here

also to answer any questions.

Questions and Comments [01:09:30]

- Senator Ziurys stated her thanks for CFO Arnold for attending the meeting. She stated she did not see athletics in any of the pie charts and asked if he can explain how much money is being spent on athletics, and which of the sections it comes out of.
- CFO John Arnold stated athletics is in that enterprise section. They're an auxiliary where they generate their own revenue as part of their activities. For fiscal 25, the University did allocate some budget over to athletics, about \$8 million is what was built into the budget for them this year.
- Senator Ziurys asked if all the university put in, in the past year, is \$8 million into athletics. She asked if he knows what was put in in previous years.
- CFO John Arnold stated this is correct. What was happening in previous years is athletics was just running a deficit. That meant the university was basically covering the bills of the athletics department under a loan structure. That loan has not been forgiven, and they are working with Athletics on the repayments of those loans. It didn't make sense to keep them in that type of structure in perpetuity where imaginary debts were being ran up. This year, athletics moved to a position where they were revenue positive except for the revenue share that had to be taken on this year. There is now \$20 million in revenue being shared with the athletes. Athletics is only being given about \$8 million. They were able to not only balance their own budgets but cover about half of that revenue share.
- CFO John Arnold stated the goal is to get them completely off the university budget over the next couple of years, but new revenue streams are still being build out, and there is still aid being given to them to control costs.
- CFO John Arnold stated he wants to reiterate, what a great job Desiree, her team, coaches and everybody in athletics has done, setting a budget, living within a budget, developing new revenue streams for the university, and continuing to be successful at the same time. It's really a terrific success story over there.
- Secretary Zeiders stated first, it's important to point out to new senators and faculty that budgets aren't neutral for each college. Colleges are still, in fact, getting a cut because the fiscal year 27 budget will be based on fiscal year 26 expenditures. Fiscal year 26 had raises that were not throughout the entire year. It would be most fair, or at least a true statement on neutral budgets, if additional funds could be allocated for colleges, so they are, in fact, starting out neutrally.
- Secretary Zeiders stated she would like to discuss concern that Steve Schwartz brought up. This may not be totally on CFO Arnold's radar, but it should be because the NIH grant situation that are being held, not being able to be issued, and colleges are being asked to backstop those grants. Colleges aren't in positions to backstop those grants on their spending authority, so there needs to be some very quick action to support NIH researchers and to help figure out ways to backstop them centrally.
- Secretary Zeiders stated for years, she has been following the issues of cash balances with faculty. For the past two years, faculty have funds and accounts, startup funds, internal awards, cash and sales. An example is Cooperative Extension individuals in Yuma County who run a plant sale, and then they can't use those funds to continue their program and reinvest because they're not free, they can't be used. When they try to use it, they must enter this kind of bureaucratic nightmare that usually ends with them giving up or feeling defeated, and with this thought that eventually their funds would be swept to Central. She knows that that is not the plan, but this lack of policy and thought, has really been a major issue for colleges and faculty. It has really impacted morale and getting real work done.
- Secretary Zeiders stated she has heard CFO Arnold on the policy part of cash balances, but she really wants to know when that policy will happen, and if he has consulted deans, college deans, especially extension individuals on that policy and if his idea of policy makes sense.
- CFO John Arnold stated they are in the final stages of implementing the policy, and some of the corrections on that. They've had lengthy discussions with the financial officers in the various colleges about this policy and gotten feedback, talked to the deans and will continue to do so around this. He thanked Secretary Zeiders for her comments on this.
- CFO John Arnold stated they agree there was a lot of work that needed to be done in the fund balance world across the university, and the colleges have already done a lot of that work, which they're grateful for. They've made significant headway and that's why they think we're close to being able to allow more flexibility around the use of some of those fund balances.
- Senator Downing stated CFO Arnold has been in the saddle a little while now at the university, and he has discovered, as most of everyone, that there is a habit of not doing financial risk management very well, when things happen like UAGC. When these initiatives begin, there are big Hail Mary passes, like the latest one. He asked how CFO Arnold is handling and organizing risk assessment including those coming in for partnership and is it in a way that faculty can see it so they can all understand the stress that is upon him.
- CFO John Arnold stated Senator Downing is correct in the fact that the University needs to carefully review where the University is making agreements and the types of investments they are making. One of the first things President Garimella did when he got here is revoked signature authority across campus. There are now four people that have this. Some of this has been delegated down to research and procurement teams to keep the engines running, to ensure things are not stopped, where things can be assessed and the machinery of the University can be rolling at the same time. There are strict limits on what a procurement officer can agree to that

doesn't have to roll up to the CFO's or Presidential review. There is more to come.

- Senator Miller-Cochran stated the timeline of when reductions would be determined was mentioned by CFO Arnold. She completely understands there are a lot of things that can interfere with the timeline and can push it out a little bit. Her concern goes back to the earlier conversation about the micro-campuses and career track faculty, and the need to have that 90-day period honored so that units know whether or not reductions are being required. That would mean about the week after graduation. She asked if decisions would be made by then, and if units are expected to make reductions.
- CFO John Arnold stated that type of information will be out to the units by then. They've been able to do that the last couple of years, for the most part, and they believe they will be able to do that as it is their intention to honor those requirements.
- CFO Arnold stated his thanks to the Senate as it is always a pleasure, and he hopes to see everyone again soon.

B. Legislative Update – Chief Government Relations Officer, Steve Voeller [01:30:00]

Thank you very much, I appreciate the time. Here we are in the very beginning of the state legislative session. Governor Hobbs introduced her budget when she had her State of the State Address on the 12th and then introduced her budget on the 15th. We call it near baseline budget. Not a lot of additional spending, nothing proposed from the ABOR request.

Every year, the three universities working with the Board of Regents put together our legislative budget request. This year, it was about \$285 million, everything from Arizona Healthy Tomorrow, Promise Scholarships, Engineering. U of A's portion included Arizona Healthy Tomorrow, which expanded capacity at our medical schools and allied health workforce. About \$15 million for water resiliency research, \$10 million for cooperative extension. We knew this was going to be a tight budget cycle and so, the decision was made at the Regent's level, with the President's input not to make a very large ask. \$285 million, is still a decent size, but it was not included in the Governor's budget. That's just the first step in a long process.

Now the legislature begins their budgeting process and they're hearing bills. There were already more than 1,100 bills introduced this year. Then they'll go through the budget process. As John Arnold pointed out, because this is an election year, there's some hope that the session doesn't go all the way to June 30, like it has the previous couple of years, but we'll see. With all these bills and campaigns in November, sometimes these things just drag on.

Regarding the expected outlook in 26, in the governor's budget, it anticipated savings from a few different parts of the budget, including the state and federal. So, it assumed that the state would be reimbursed more than \$700 million for work that was done on the southern border with Mexico. We are not certain that that money is going to come in, and so if it does not, that's a \$700 million gap that we'll have to find.

Another one that has been in the news a lot that you may have paid attention to is what's called tax conformity. In last year's H.R. 1, which is also called the One Big Beautiful Bil, which is President Trump's tax cut package. States now have to decide whether they're going to conform with that bill and have the state match what the feds did. One of the biggest reasons to do it is to make it easier on Arizona taxpayers. If the forms are the same, that it's a much easier filing. But the amount of money is so big this time that there's a debate going on about how much Arizona state system should conform with the federal tax package. The Governor included a smaller conformity measure which totaled about \$250 million a year and the Republican-led legislature passed immediately full conformity, 100% of the H.R. 1, which is about \$440 million a year, and over 3 years, that's over a billion dollars. The governor vetoed it immediately. We're in this place where that was sort of expected and they'll try to work out the differences as the legislative session moves on.

In addition to these higher ed priorities and tax packages and a budget that is required to be passed by June 30, I wanted to note that, Senator Tim Dunn from Yuma, is working on what he thinks should be the next great land-grant university investment package. He sees how committed the leadership is and the university is to our land-grant mission, and we've made multiple visits to Yuma, but it's not just in Yuma. Our land-grant mission extends to every county in the state, and he knows that. He's leading a group of stakeholders and other lawmakers, with our support, to really help educate everybody about what this is, what the service are that we provide in all four corners of the state. Then to start a process where the state allocates and appropriates money to the U of A to carry out these services that are needed all over the state.

Because it's a tough budget year this year, we're not expecting to get a significant amount of investment, but it starts the process. Over the next 2, 3, 4 years his goal is that we get funded for what he likes to call it, the Jetsons Vision. We're almost already in the Jetsons vision with all the AI and drones and everything that's being used to provide for the services in cooperative extension and experiment stations. It's the next Jetsons, Jetsons 2.0. That's an exciting thing that we're working closely with CALES leadership on and our extension directors in every county to arm everyone with the right background, the right talking points, educating stakeholders, educating lawmakers.. That'll be a process that we do all year this year, and even in legislative session and in the interim.

In the legislature, when committees get started, they oftentimes have time for presentations instead of hearing bills and passing bills they're doing in the very beginning of the presentation. They want presentations, and what they want from

the U of A is some presentations on our core. research initiatives. We have a health presentation coming up, we have a fusion energy coming up, and water in the natural resources committee. Those are in their infancy right now, but we're working with the committee chairmanships to help educate all members from all over the state, what the U of A's priorities are. It's really great because these members see what our priorities are, how they advance the state in these different areas that are of major concern to them, energy regarding data centers, and healthcare. The Onvida partnership in Yuma has really woken people up to see that we can do this, we can help solve the workforce shortage in healthcare all over the state, and in these, especially in rural counties. It just takes a little bit of money from the hospital, partners, or counties and we can address some of these issues. It's an exciting time to be U of A, especially in this budget cycle even with limited funds.

Questions and Comments [01:38:35]

- Chair Hudson stated her thanks for the presentation and stated she appreciates Steve Voeller for attending. She asked if there is any pending legislation going through different education committees that should be kept an eye on over the course of the session which have to do with education policy, governance, and other similar topics.
- Chief Government Relations Officer, Steve Voeller stated there are a handful that have been introduced which he can provide. This includes guns on campus, currently ABOR allows Universities to prohibit firearms on campus. There is always a bill to block that policy from being implemented and in the past, there has been success in killing it. He believes they will be successful again. If it does go through, he believes the Governor will immediately veto it. He plans to send Chair Hudson the other education-related bills to track.
- Secretary Zeiders stated her thanks for Chief Government Relations Officer, Steve Voeller attending the Senate meeting and it is great to hear that Senator Dunn is taking the initiative for Cooperative Extension and that Voeller is supporting his efforts. It is known that the Cooperative Extension CALES mission has been underfunded in several ways.
- Secretary Zeiders stated Cooperative Extension state appropriations have remained stagnant for about fifteen years which is astonishing given it is in a mostly red legislature. There is failing infrastructure at Arizona Experiment Stations, She is unsure if Steve Voeller has personally been out to them, but she has.
- Chief Government Relations Officer, Steve Voeller stated he has been out to them.
- Secretary Zeiders stated that is important. The University has cut Cooperative Extension funds in past budget cycles despite funding being designated to Cooperative Extension. She has spoken out about that time and time again, so hopefully this year the same problem doesn't arise.
- Secretary Zeiders stated her thanks for the support for Senator Dunn as it comes at an important time, and it should have been done quite a while ago, in terms of the university's lobbying efforts.
- Chief Government Relations Officer, Steve Voeller stated the thanks really goes to everybody not only in CALES, but in the administration, and for showing the commitment that there is to Cooperative Extension and the experiment stations. The President has been to Yuma a couple of times, SVP Díaz de la Rubia has been there a few times and Provost Prelock has been there a few times. They have also been to Yavapai, Cochise, and Flagstaff. It is more than just lip service about being a land grant, it is real boots on the ground and striking these partnerships with the local communities about what they need, then coming back to campus and saying, this is what we have to do. This senator recognizes that and just wants to make sure that we don't do that completely on U of A's time. This is a state service, it is federally mandated, but we benefit the entire state. All universities benefit, all research benefits. It's a credit to everybody. Voeller stated his thanks.
- Provost Prelock stated her she wants to thank Secretary Zeiders for her comment. Senator Dunn has been a wonderful supporter and understands the big picture. When they were in Yuma, she was very clear that their implementation of the land-grant mission is not just the responsibility of CALES, it's the responsibility of the entire institution, our government and the supports around the system.
- Provost Prelock stated what's so great about Yuma and other places that they've been to is the partners in those communities want to work with the University. It's always good to give more attention, and she sent her preliminary vision that is from all of the debriefings with Senator Dunn, and they are already working on questions to ask back and are very excited. It could be a model for what is done for all the cooperative extensions across the state.

C. Action Item: Motion for open national search for CIO position – Senator Downing [01:43:58]

You'll notice that the original scheduled item was about a discussion of the Senate's. I was proposing a motion for how we do competitive searches for executive-level positions at the university. That was anticipating that the position that has now been filled by Elliot Cheu would still be open. Individuals in the administration knew that was on the agenda item, he was subsequently selected as the Chief Executive Officer. To quote a Master of Human Resources, Gomer Pyle, "surprise, surprise, surprise."

I'm going to go ahead and make a motion. I've got to now address this issue. The motion is to be looked at late, so it's now in front of you, you can have until the next time to take a look at it. President Garimella's decision to open national competition for avoiding opening the Chief Executive Officer for national competition, sends a clear signal of institutional weakness. Continued reliance on internal appointments and limited searches reflects a fear of open competition and a failure of risk management. Over time, this culture dulls our faculty's competitive edge. Here's how: Without Senate participation, the University of Arizona wants to expand its role in its National Defense Research including participation in a highly sensitive program such as the Department of Defense's Golden Dome Initiative. Our

chair can tell you about it. These programs involve defense systems, space surveillance and advanced cyber security. They operate under strict federal standards, and I won't read those numbers, but some of you that have security clearances will recognize them.

In this environment, credibility is everything. The Department of Defense evaluates universities on four things: Technical strength, past performance, management, and security. The CIO is central in the last two. Since the programs, the CIO is not supporting staff. The CIO is the institution's chief guardian and the nation's chief guardian of cyber risk, compliance, and audit readiness. National security is threatened not only by enemies but by incompetence. DOD reviews steady leadership records, they look at security plans, they formally ask who owns the security risk? Who has survived federal audits? A new state audit, and who can manage a crisis at 2 in the morning? These answers shape future funding decisions; there's about fifty faculty listed in this brochure who will be presenting requests for funding.

By these standards, the admission has created a serious and avoidable disadvantage. For nearly a decade, the University of Arizona lacked a nationally competitive, professionally recognized enterprise CIO. Instead, we have relied on interim leaders and internal transitions. That has weakened not only defense research, but astronomy, medicine, climate science, data intensive scholarship. The current CIO's public record reflects a fine career in physics and academic administration and has a recent transition to be an interim IT CIO. There is no public evidence of prior enterprise CIO experience, federal cyber governance and long-term audit leadership. His main documented accomplishments include an email migration, a digital rollout of the CAT card. These are responsible, but they are not defense-grade governmental portfolio. A mandatory cybersecurity training effort even disrupted \$5,800 employees without having adequate planning. When compared to the R1 finalists, the independent AI assessment found there's only a 22% chance that someone with this background would be a finalist in an open search. You could run it yourself, put his resume in, ask AI whether or not he would be a finalist in an open search at an R1 University.

This record is compounded with institutionally non-compliance with audits, with an auto record. The Senate asked me, and I helped with Wolfgang and others. The Auditor General's audits in 2018 and 2022 found that the U of A failed to implement most cybersecurity reforms and showed no sustained progress. This was taken all the way to the state legislature, and I hope that our representative is listening. The Auditor General stopped his follow-up because there was no remediation plan offered by this university. None. That's what they report at the legislature. To federal sponsors, this signals an unresolved risk. Meanwhile, peer institutions, Purdue, Texas, A&M, Georgia Tech, Penn State, maintain formal security standards, dedicated research security offices and secure computing environments. Their systems are visible, enforceable, and led by experienced professionals. Ours are not.

In a competitive procurement, that difference is decisive. It leads to lower confidence ratings, higher oversight and moderate risk labels instead of low risk. When proposals are close, these labels can decide who wins and who does not. The challenge is not limited to defense. Artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, secure data platforms, privacy preserving research are now central to teaching and scholarship. Without a first-rate IT leadership, we fall behind in preparing our faculty and students. So, reopening this search is not an option. It is a strategic imperative. Brochures and slogans and claiming things that we can do will not settle that security issue. It is visible, it's visible to our competitors and I asked for a re-entry and a reopening of the search. Thank you.

Questions and Comments [01:51:16]

- Senator Russell stated she completely disagrees, fundamentally there needs to be an academic to be the Chief Information Officer. Elliot Cheu is not only an exceptionally fine administrator and excellent at IT, but he's also a great scientist, an academic, and a fabulous professor. For the Faculty Senate to be arguing that we need someone who is a less qualified academic, who is more of a security specialist than a power of creative amazingness, she is stunned.
- Senator Russell stated she does not approve, nor does she love the language that was used. It feels like trashing a very good person and she us shocked and a little upset, frankly.
- Senator Downing stated this is concerning national security and the ability of faculty to compete with other universities in a national security competition. In this case, there is a question of whether he has a security clearance.
- Senator Downing stated this is the National Dome serving as a protector, including Greenland, from incoming risk. This is being handed to academics. He doesn't think the National Defense is only a question of academic credentials. It has to do with decisions made by the Department of Defense.
- Senator Ziurys stated she saw the Auditor General's report and wrote something to the Senate about it. It's not good when U of A is the only institution that couldn't address the security concerns when NAU and ASU did it, and it was no problem. So that's an initial problem there.
- Senator Ziurys stated she is a little disappointed in Dr. Cheu, she believes he is a great guy and she admires his work in physics. There was the centralization of the IT, and apparently the number of IT employees under his management has increased by a factor of two. She has certainly seen the efficiency to handle IT issues decrease by more than a factor of two. She is a little current happening concerning IT issues with Dr. Cheu.
- Secretary Zeiders stated she agrees with Senator Russell. This is an interesting resolution, and she wants other senators to think about this. Administrators have always been asked to be prudent with funds that the university

has. Now they're being asked to conduct an external search that would cost the university more money, a search firm. This must be thought about carefully. In some ways, this is also discouraging internal searches that promote internal individuals with talents.

- Secretary Zeiders stated she is not commenting on Dr. Cheu now, but the entire idea that there must be an external search for administrative appointments should be thought about carefully, and what is really being said should be considered.
- Senator Ziurys stated she agrees with Secretary Zeiders as it's good to consider internal people. It must also be recognized that there may not be internal talent, which would require searches elsewhere to meet the talent needs, and job qualifications to advance the University.
- Chair Hudson stated she would like for this discussion to proceed with Dr. Cheu in the room, where is he able to answer some of the topical questions before this is advanced any further.
- Senator Su stated she is from the Physics department, and Elliot Cheu is a part of her faculty. She is biased, but on the other hand, she totally agrees with what Senator Russell and Secretary Zeiders stated. UITS centralization has a lot of problems, and so does centralization itself, but she doesn't think Dr. Cheu is the only person to be blamed for all of this. There are a lot of benefits with internal candidates, the candidate is very familiar with the university system already. Of course, there are also benefits with external ones, but there should be a balanced view. Personally, she doesn't think the Senate should totally believe in what AI says, this is why there is a real search conducted.

9. **Adjournment [01:57:39]**

Chair Hudson moved **[Motion 2025/26-24]** to adjourn the January 26, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting. Motion was seconded. Motion passed by unanimous consent. Vice Chair Hymel adjourned the January 26, 2026, meeting at 4:58 PM.

Katie Zeiders, Secretary of the Faculty
Jasmin Espino, Recording Secretary

Motions of January 26, 2026 Faculty Senate Meeting

[Motion 2025/26-20] to approve the January 26, 2026, Faculty Senate Agenda. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

[Motion 2025/26-21] to approve the minutes for the December 1, 2025, Faculty Senate Meeting. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

[Motion 2025/26-22] to approve seconded motion from Undergraduate Council, Minor in Personal Brand and Money Management. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

[Motion 2025/26-23] to approve seconded motion from Undergraduate Council, BS in Cyber Operations. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

[Motion 2025/26-24] to adjourn the January 26, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

Attachments Within the Minutes

1. Page 1, Action Item 2: Approval of the [Agenda](#)
2. Page 1, Action Item 3: Approval of the [minutes of December 1, 2025](#).
3. Page 3, Item 5: Q&A with University and Faculty Leadership
 - a. Chair Hudson – [Honorary Degree Draft Motion](#) *first reading*
4. Page 6, Action Item 6: Consent Agenda
 - a. [Proposal Personal Brand and Money Management](#)
 - b. [Proposal BS Cyber Operations](#)
5. Page 6. Old Business Item A: Discussion on [ABOR 6-201K](#) – Senator Roy Spece
6. Written reports from the
 - a. [Gen Ed Office with UWGEC](#)
 - b. [President](#)
 - c. [Provost](#)

d. [SAPC](#)

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