

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

February 9, 2026, 3:30 p.m.

The Faculty Senate of Eastern Kentucky University met for a hybrid meeting on Monday, February 9, 2026. Chair Brent called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

ABSENT: Senators Bane, Riffe, Paulsen, Dacci, Emanuel, Hammond, Proide, Turner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Senator Stevenson moved to approve the November 3, 2025, minutes as written, seconded by Senator Lauk. (YES = 45 votes NO = 0 votes ABSTAIN = 1 vote) **Motion carried.**

Senator Day moved to approve the December 1, 2025, minutes as written, seconded by Senator Lauk. (YES = 37 votes NO = 0 votes ABSTAIN = 0 vote) **Motion carried.**

Minor stylistic corrections made:

- “Bluegrass Writers Studio” corrected.
- “Signal National Award” corrected to “Significant National Award.”

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT: David McFaddin

President McFaddin thanked faculty and staff for their flexibility and commitment during recent winter weather events. He noted that ECU successfully transitioned to Plan A instruction without closing campus operations. Facilities, dining, and athletics teams were commended for ensuring the safety and well-being of residential students during the storms.

EKU College of Medicine Update

President McFaddin reported that ECU is prepared to present the College of Medicine proposal at a special-called meeting of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). The University anticipates approval to advance the proposal to the General Assembly in compliance with SB 77 (2025).

Block Scheduling (Beginning Fall 2026)

Beginning Fall 2026, ECU will implement a Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday block scheduling format with fewer but longer class meetings. The decision follows faculty discussions, survey feedback, and analysis of existing scheduling patterns, which indicate most students already follow this model. The University will continue to operate on a five-day business schedule, and all student services will remain open during regular business hours.

Legislative Update

As of the 23rd day of the 60-day General Assembly session, nearly 1,000 bills have been filed. ECU is actively tracking more than 125 bills that could impact the University. Key legislative deadlines include March 2 (last day for Senate bills), March 4 (last day for House bills), and adjournment on April 15.

Notable bills include:

- **HB 500** – Executive Branch Operating Budget bill proposing reductions of approximately 3% in FY 26–27 and 4% in FY 27–28. The proposed biennium budget would result in an estimated \$6,223,100 reduction to ECU by FY 2028.
- **HB 376** – Tuition Freeze
- **HB 457** – Increased CPE oversight of financial matters and presidential searches
- **HB 490** – Adds financial criteria for removal of faculty beyond cause.
- **HB 497** – Tuition Waivers (adds FAFSA requirement and last-dollar provision)
- Additional bills related to performance funding, healthcare workforce investment, concealed carry-on postsecondary campuses, and teacher apprenticeship programs.

President McFaddin noted that HB 500 is expected to undergo revisions as it moves through the legislative process.

Budget Planning

The President acknowledged the work of the Faculty Senate Budget Committee and Campus Budget Workgroup. The University is focused on closing FY 2025–2026 in a strong financial position while preparing for potential state reductions in FY 2027–2028.

President's Excellence Awards

Nominations are open in the areas of leadership, engagement and hospitality, community and belonging, innovation, student support, research, and emerging leader. Each recipient will receive \$3,000 and finalists will receive \$1,000. The nomination deadline is February 27, 2026.

ECU in the News (December & January Highlights)

President McFaddin highlighted several recent media features and recognitions, including:

- ECU researcher leading global bee conservation efforts
- Recognition of ECU among top marketable degrees for career success
- Research and expert features in dementia studies and artificial intelligence
- Stories of student success at Fall 2025 Commencement
- Chief Justice Debra Lambert recognized as a first-generation college graduate
- Drone detection research initiatives
- ECU receiving the KEMI Destiny Award for the seventh consecutive year
- Continued partnership with Lockheed Martin

- Recognition of innovative injury prevention research and workforce-focused academic programs

Upcoming Events

- February 25 – Board of Regents Meeting
- March 9–13 – Spring Break
- April 16 – President’s Excellence Awards Ceremony
- April 22 – Giving Day
- May 7–8 – Commencement at Alumni Coliseum

President McFaddin concluded his report by reaffirming the University’s commitment to fiscal responsibility, legislative engagement, and continued support of faculty, staff, and students.

REPORT FROM THE PROVOST: Sara Zeigler

Provost Zeigler provided updates on research funding, faculty development initiatives, accreditation, and academic success programming.

Sponsored Programs and Research Administration

EKU awarded \$159,000 in Research Seed Funding during the Fall 2025 University Funded Scholarship competition. Sixteen projects were funded, including ten major awards (up to \$15,000 each) and six mini awards (up to \$3,000 each). Twenty-seven proposals were submitted, representing a 300% increase over the previous year. Faculty from five of the six academic colleges received awards, and twelve faculty members representing all colleges served on the assessment committee. A smaller spring competition focusing on major awards has been announced.

College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education accepted ECU’s biennial continuation report, maintaining full accreditation. Alumni survey data from June 2025 indicated that 92% of responding ASL graduates (n=24) entered the interpreting field immediately or within 6–12 months of graduation, despite rigorous licensure requirements.

Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning (FCT&L)

Applications were solicited for the 2025–2026 Noel Faculty Awards, recognizing excellence in innovation in teaching, transformative teaching, graduate faculty achievement, leadership, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

Faculty and staff who demonstrate intentional implementation of the 10 Essential Skills of the Graduate Profile will be recognized at the annual Faculty Awards & Recognition Ceremony on April 21, 2026.

Essential Skills for Essential Education – Spring 2026 Workshop Series

A structured workshop series is being offered to support integration of the 10 Essential Skills into General Education curriculum. The intended audience includes Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, and Program Coordinators. Participation will result in shared assignments aligned with Essential Skills competencies. Senators were encouraged to promote attendance within their colleges.

2026 Provost's Leadership Institute

The 2026 Provost's Leadership Institute will take place February 12–13 at the Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning. Thirty-one faculty members, nominated by their Deans, will participate in this year's cohort. Participants include Alisha Ashby, Lauren Baney, David Brown, Jill Campbell*, Tyler Caviness, Shelby Champlin, Anne Cizmar*, Allen Copenhaver, Kayla Davidson, Brittany Davis, Cassie Davison, Annette DeLage, Julia Graham, Jamie Hisel, Matthew Howell*, Charlie Hughes, Tim Jansky, Shijin Kozhumal*, Emily Lang, Jilliane McCardle, Lisa Middleton*, Vicki Modisette, Trenia Napier, Jeffrey Neugebauer, Beth Polin, Karina Powell, Jeff Reed, Erin Stevenson, Cody West, Jillian White, and Cassie Whitt. (*Denotes 2025–2026 Provost's Faculty Intern.)

Spring 2026 Course Leads Collaborative

The Course Leads Collaborative brings together faculty teaching courses with high drop or withdrawal rates to identify barriers to student success and develop engagement strategies. Spring 2026 courses include ENG 101 and 102, MAT 112A/B, STA 215, PHI 110, MUH 171, GEO 210, and PHY 101. Collaborators include Drs. Garrett Yoder, Jade Robinson, Myra Beth Bundy, Nedim Slijepcevic, and Emily Zuccaro.

Provost Zeigler concluded her report by emphasizing continued faculty engagement in research development, Essential Skills implementation, leadership programming, and student success initiatives.

REPORT FROM FACULTY REGENT: Lynnette Noblitt

Regent Noblitt reported that the ECU Board of Regents will meet on February 25, 2026. While the full agenda has not yet been released, she provided an update on recent Executive Committee activity and anticipated Board discussions.

Executive Committee Meeting (December 17, 2025)

The Executive Committee reviewed proposed changes to General Education and the Four-Day Instructional Week (Block Scheduling). Executive Committee members expressed concern regarding the Faculty Senate's vote on the Essential Education proposal and requested additional background information prior to the February full Board meeting. The Committee also reviewed the proposed Air Traffic Control Program, leases and agreements related to the Flight School and Baptist Health and received a presentation on the University Master Plan. These items generated minimal comment or concern.

Educational Session (February 18, 2026)

At the request of the Board Chair, the President will host an educational session for the full Board on February 18 at 1:00 p.m. in the Case Dining Regents Room. Topics are expected to include tuition proposals and Essential Education. No formal action will be taken at this session; it is intended for information and discussion. A full agenda will be distributed to Faculty Senate when available.

Legislative Session

Several Board members have traveled to Frankfort to meet with legislators regarding funding and higher education priorities. Legislators indicated that budget discussions remain fluid and that no final decisions have been made. Board members emphasized the importance of higher education as an economic driver and highlighted initiatives such as the Air Traffic Control Program, Flight School improvements, and the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Program as strategic investments. Regent Noblitt encouraged faculty to remain engaged in legislative developments and to share concerns so that faculty perspectives can be accurately represented during ongoing discussions.

Finance & Administration Committee

The Finance & Administration Committee has not yet met but is expected to convene soon. The Committee will review the University Audit and meet with Interim CFO Jackie Dudley, who began her tenure on February 1, 2026. Ms. Dudley will assess the operations and staffing of the finance division prior to beginning the University's budget development process.

Regent Noblitt concluded by encouraging faculty to reach out with questions or concerns as the Board continues its work.

FACULTY QUESTIONS:

Legislative Concerns

Discussion of HB 500 and HB 490 and potential implications for faculty governance and financial exigency.

Automated Advising Emails

Faculty raised concerns regarding automated advising emails sent from faculty accounts without direct authorship. Issues included tone, student confusion, and professional standards. Administration will review process and communication practices.

Student Progress Reports

Concerns regarding removal of the default "satisfactory" setting and increased faculty workload. Registrar reviewing.

First-Day Drop Form

Filtering issues noted. Workaround provided; review ongoing.

Syllabus Timing & Messaging

Automated reminder timing misalignment discussed; review ongoing.

Time Gaps Between Courses

Block scheduling transition times discussed; administrative response indicated logistical constraints.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Policy Updates and University Counsel Communication

Chair Brent explained that policy update communications from the Office of University Counsel will now be accompanied by summary memoranda outlining revisions. Discussion followed regarding the availability of tracked changes in policy revisions. The University Counsel's Office indicated that tracked versions may be provided at their discretion and that summaries accompany revised policies. Senators expressed concerns regarding transparency, consistency, and clarity in the policy revision process. Additional discussion is anticipated, particularly in connection with future policy reviews.

Council on Academic Affairs

Air Traffic Management, Associate of Applied Science

A motion was made to approve the addition of the Air Traffic Management AAS program in the College of Justice, Safety, and Military Science. Senator Stumbo made a motion to approve the new program. This was seconded by Senator Nachtwey. (YES = 44 votes NO = 0 votes ABSTAIN = 1 vote) **Motion passed.**

Gastronomic Tourism, Undergraduate Certificate (Program Closure)

Due to low enrollment trends, a motion was made to approve closure of the Gastronomic Tourism Undergraduate Certificate in the College of Education and Applied Human Sciences. Senator Lauk made a motion to close program. This was seconded by Senator Settimi. (YES = 38 votes NO = 1 votes ABSTAIN = 2 vote) **Motion passed.**

EKU Graduate Profile & Essential Skills Integration

Information was provided regarding ongoing implementation of the Graduate Profile and Essential Skills within the General Education framework. Faculty development workshops are being offered to support coordinated assignment design and assessment alignment across departments.

Vacant and Future Vacant Positions

The following upcoming vacancies were noted:

- Faculty Grievance Liaison (effective next academic year)
- Part-Time Faculty Senate Representative
- Adjunct Faculty Regent (election forthcoming)
- One vacancy each on the Budget Committee, Rules Committee, and Academic Quality Committee

Senators were encouraged to identify nominees in preparation for upcoming elections.

Legislative Updates and Faculty Concerns

Discussion included House Bill 500 and potential budget reductions, as well as House Bill 490 regarding financial criteria for faculty removal beyond cause. Senators expressed concern regarding the implications of these proposals and emphasized continued monitoring of legislative developments.

Automated Advising Emails

Faculty raised concerns regarding automated advising emails being sent from faculty email accounts without direct authorship. Issues discussed included professional tone, student confusion, authorization, and ethical considerations. Administration will review the process and communication practices.

Student Progress Reports

Faculty noted increased workload resulting from removal of the default “satisfactory” setting in progress reports. The matter is under review.

First-Day Drop Form

Concerns were raised regarding alphabetical filtering by first name rather than last name. A search function workaround was identified; review is ongoing.

Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement

Administration indicated that continuation of the Carnegie Community Engagement classification is not currently being pursued due to resource considerations.

Syllabus Preparation and Messaging

Faculty noted misalignment between departmental syllabus deadlines and automated reminder communications. Adjustments are being reviewed.

Time Gaps Between Courses Under Block Scheduling

Concerns were raised regarding 10-minute transition times between classes. Administration indicated that increasing transition time is not feasible due to scheduling constraints.

OLD BUSINESS:

Policy Work – Policy 1.1.1 (Faculty Grievance Policy)

Discussion regarding Policy 1.1.1 will resume later in the academic year. The Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Committee will provide contextual background and historical information prior to formal review and revision. A timeline for continued discussion is anticipated.

Update to the Faculty Senate Bylaws

Recent bylaw revisions are being compiled into a consolidated document. The intent is to present all accumulated changes for faculty-wide review and approval by mid-April.

Faculty Senate Composition

Adjustments to departmental representation are underway. Chair Brent and the Secretary are working with departments that are either over- or under-represented. Changes are expected to take effect next academic year.

Faculty Senate Meeting Format (AY 2026–2027)

An informal poll was conducted regarding:

- Moving Faculty Senate meetings from Mondays to Fridays, and
- Transitioning to fully in-person meetings.

Senators were asked to consult with their departments prior to a formal vote at a future meeting.

Planetarium

Discussion continues regarding renovation and modernization options. The Board will review additional information prior to making a final determination.

REPORTS & QUESTIONS:

- None to report

STANDING COMMITTEES:**Executive Committee – Senator Brent**

Updates were incorporated throughout the meeting agenda. No additional report.

Academic Quality Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators Campbell & Yoder

The Committee has scheduled its next meeting. No additional report at this time.

Budget Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators Lauk & Liddell

It was reported that fall tuition revenue is slightly below projections but has been offset by scholarship adjustments. An athletic budget analysis will be presented at a future meeting.

Elections and University Nominations Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators MacDonald & Sizemore

The Adjunct Faculty Regent election is forthcoming. Additional election timelines will be communicated.

Information Technology Committee – Chair, Senator Ginn

Website usability and system functionality concerns were noted. Review is ongoing.

Faculty Rights & Responsibilities Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators Ginn & Nachtwey

The Committee is preparing contextual information related to upcoming policy review discussions.

Rules Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators Bishop-Ross & Stevenson

The Committee continues reviewing internal procedures and bylaw revisions.

Faculty Welfare Committee – Co-Chairs, Senators Nachtwey & Bane

The Committee is reviewing faculty workload trends and exploring faculty engagement initiatives.

ADJOURNMENT:

Senator Lauk moved to adjourn, seconded by Senator Day, at approximately 5:30 pm.

