

Faculty Senate Steering Committee
September 3, 2025
MINUTES

Present: Shohreh Amini (President, CST), Mike Bognanno (Vice President, CLA), Chad Curtis (TYL), Robin Kolodny (Secretary), Fauzia Ahmad (COE), Jason Gallagher (Pharm), Dale Haines (LKSOM), Gareth Jones (STHM), Di Liu (CEHD), Barry McCarthy (Law), Sabrina Minhas (TSPM), Jason Norris (TFMA), Rafael Porrata-Doria (Past-President, Law), Deborah Racano (KMC), Michael Schirmer (FSB), Jeffrey Solow (BCMD), Ryan Tierney (CPH)

Absent: James D. Brown (TUI)-*excused*, Renee Fennell (KSoD), Lisa Ferretti (SSW), Stan McDonald (CLA, Fac. Herald)

Admin: Sean Starosta

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes: April 8, 2025; May 8, 2025
The minutes were approved unanimously.
3. Guest: Dustin Kidd, Director of General Education
Dustin Kidd provided an overview of the reform process, highlighting the need for changes based on an external review from 2023.

He explained highlighting the reduction of competencies from 8 to 6, and the addition of an environmental literacy requirement. Some introductory courses for majors will be allowed double-count for Gen Ed. They will develop a new program name and marketing strategy, and establish new governance structures. The new proposal will be approved this year, with the new program launching in the fall 2027.

- Kevin Delaney in the Provost's office will serve as chair of the Gen Ed steering committee.
- General Education Reform Task Force will continue working on program details
- Departments will:
 - Review their courses for potential inclusion in the General Education catalog, identifying opportunities for double-counting courses between majors/minors and Gen Ed requirements. [OBJ]
 - Evaluate their existing 800-level classes to determine which ones to maintain in the new General Education program.
- Transfer Committee: Will review and revise agreements with community colleges to align with the new Gen Ed requirements and establish new channels of communication with Enrollment Management regarding transfer policies.

4. President's Report: Shohreh Amini

The Faculty Senate formed an Ad Hoc committee to address academic freedom and institutional integrity in May 2025. Over the summer, committee members held weekly meetings, often with speakers from other institutions. Several members of this committee will serve on a university committee on this topic organized by President Fry.

We have opportunities to give our opinions in the search for a new provost (in FSSC and RFS), highlighting the importance of finding someone with academic experience and the need for faculty input in the process. She encouraged faculty to participate in listening sessions.

5. Vice President's Report: Mike Bognanno

Reported on various committee vacancies across campus.

There is an ongoing concern about tenure and promotion criteria for faculty in biomedical fields. The discussion concluded with emphasis on the need for improved faculty mentorship programs, as several departments have lost senior faculty members and face challenges with pre-tenure mentoring.

6. Old Business

Faculty Senate Constitution & By-laws Review – Ad Hoc Committee

Robin Kolodny reported that the committee met to discuss the Faculty Senate Constitution and bylaws. An immediate issue was the role of the Board of Trustees in approving these documents. They discovered that the Board does not have a role in approving Faculty Senate bylaws, which was news to both the Board and the administration. This means there are serious issues with the Committee on Administrative and Trustee Appointments (CATA), noting that its authority to influence trustee appointments is unclear and potentially unenforceable. The discussion touched on the need for improved communication channels between the Faculty Senate and the Board, as well as the Provost's office.

7. New Business

- Budget Cuts and Faculty Challenges

Mike Bognanno discussed how recent budget cuts are affecting various departments and colleges, including increased course caps and reduced funding for graduate programs. The group also discussed faculty losses, particularly in neuroscience and chemistry, and the need for proper training and mentorship. A faculty member shared concerns about student retention and graduation rates, and the importance of focusing on long-term investments in faculty.

8. Adjournment: 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Kolodny, Secretary, Faculty Senate

Upcoming Meetings:

· FSSC, Wednesday, September 17 – 1:00 pm, Conference Room 3B, Conwell Hall

· Representative Faculty Senate, Monday, September 22, 2025 – 1:45 pm,
Center for Anti-Racism Mazur Hall, room 140 Polett Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19122