

Sul Ross State University

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, September 11, 2026

Time: 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Location: President's Meeting Room and Microsoft Teams (Webinar Format)

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting – Fall 2026 Semester, First Meeting

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:29 PM by Faculty Senate President Jennifer Miller-Ray. As this was the first Faculty Senate meeting of the 2026–2027 academic year, senators and guests went around and introduced themselves.

2. Attendance

Faculty Senate Officers and Senators Present: Jennifer Miller-Ray (President), Ferhat Ozturk (Secretary), Jose Mora, Gayle White, Wesley Wynne, Billy Jack Ray, Rachel Johnson, Antonio Cantu, Oguzhan Basibuyuk, and Ryan Luna.

Guests Present: Provost Bernie Cantens; Hugh Morrissey (incoming Faculty Athletics Representative).

Noted as attending as webinar observers (non-speaking): Michel Torres and other webinar attendees.

Absent: Jessica Velasco (Vice President).

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the July 27, 2026 Special Meeting, previously circulated to faculty on August 13, 2026, were presented for approval.

Motion to approve: Billy Jack Ray. Second: Jose Mora. Motion carried; no objections.

4. Provost's Report (Dr. Bernie Cantens)

4.1 Post-Tenure Review Policy: Provost Cantens reported that, per state legislative mandate, a post-tenure review policy for the Faculty Handbook (believed to be Policy 2.21, covering performance evaluation of tenured faculty) has already been submitted to the state but has not yet gone through Faculty Senate review. He asked the Senate to review the existing draft and provide feedback as soon as possible, with a goal of finalizing it by the end of the semester.

4.2 Adjunct Faculty Compensation: Provost Cantens reviewed the history of adjunct pay, noting that adjunct faculty were previously paid a flat \$1,130 per class per semester regardless of experience, degree, or class size. Approximately four years ago, this was raised to a base of \$2,700 per class, with an additional \$500 (up to \$3,200 total) for classes of 20

or more students. No further increase has been made since. Dr. Wynne suggested the Senate consider a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) mechanism, similar to that used by Social Security, to automatically adjust pay for inflation going forward and avoid recurring multi-year lapses.

4.3 Faculty and Staff Salary Equity: Provost Cantens reviewed a previously developed, but only partially implemented, three-year salary equity plan intended to bring Assistant Professors to a \$60,000 minimum (a 20% increase over three years), Associate Professors to a \$70,000 minimum (a 17% increase; the current minimum is \$67,000), and Full Professors to an increase of approximately 23% over three years. Instructor-track minimums were also targeted for increases. Only the first two years of the three-year phase-in were implemented; the third year was paused, resulting in some newly hired faculty earning more than longer-tenured colleagues. A parallel plan had also targeted a \$15/hour minimum for staff. Provost Cantens agreed to calculate the cost of completing the third year of implementation and share it with the Faculty Senate Budget Advisory Working Group. President Miller-Ray asked that the Budget Advisory Working Group prioritize this issue, noting several faculty have not yet received previously promised raises.

4.4 Enrollment Update: Provost Cantens reported that Eagle Pass/International Campus enrollment is up approximately 30% year-over-year in several categories, including Dual Credit and undergraduate enrollment, based on preliminary September 3 data (with September 10 data to follow). The Senate requested that this presentation be shared with Alpine faculty as well.

5. Committee and Working Group Slate for 2026–2027

Secretary Ozturk displayed the working group slate compiled by Vice President Jessica Velasco (absent) based on a summer faculty survey.

5.1 Discussion: Senators discussed several open seats, particularly the need for College of Business and Rio Grande College representation on the Athletic Working Group and discussed whether individual senators should serve on multiple working groups given the Senate's goal of broadening faculty participation. Dr. Mora requested to step down from the Academic Integrity and Library & Information Technology working groups in order to focus on the Research Working Group, in the interest of opening seats for newer faculty. The Senate also discussed appropriate placement of first-year faculty, noting that groups such as Curriculum, Tenure & Promotion, and Budget Advisory require more experienced faculty, while Academic Integrity may be a better fit for newer faculty.

5.2 Motion: Motion to approve the working group slate as amended, with noted vacancies to be filled: Ryan Luna. Second: Wesley Wynne/Oguzhan Basibuyuk. Motion carried; no opposition.

Remaining Vacancies Identified:

- Athletic Working Group: two openings (Business/Rio Grande College representation needed)

- Academic Integrity Working Group: openings for a Health Sciences and an Education representative, following Dr. Mora's departure from the group
- Library & Information Technology Working Group: one opening, following Dr. Mora's departure
- Honors Working Group: current membership count to be reconciled against bylaw requirements

The Senate agreed to treat the slate as a working document for continued corrections, with vacancy approvals to occur by future email vote as positions are filled.

6. New and Ad Hoc Working Groups

- **AI Working Group:** Requested by the Provost's Office; to be led by Bushra Sajid, who is compiling a proposed membership list to bring to a future meeting.
- **Freshman Seminar Working Group:** Requested by Provost Cantens to help determine how the university will handle freshman seminar going forward, across all campuses. Jessica Velasco has offered to lead; President Miller-Ray will also approach Dr. Igo about co-leading given his prior involvement.
- **Faculty Handbook Working Group:** Continuing under Dr. Joey Velasco.
- **Website and Enrollment Working Group (Ad Hoc):** President Miller-Ray provided an update on ongoing biweekly meetings with OIT (Vince) and university leadership. Progress has been slow; a glossary of terms was the primary deliverable to date. Concerns were raised regarding decentralized, department-level website creation (e.g., separate domains for BRI and Athletics), including Title II accessibility compliance and cybersecurity/auditing risk. Dr. Wynne noted that detailed recommendations developed previously (with Dr. Andria Rusk and Dr. Mainuddin Shaik) have not yet been implemented and no clear timeline exists. Oguzhan Basibuyuk reported that his department has been granted direct web-administrator access to design and publish its own pages without waiting on OIT approval, which was new information to the Senate.
- **Proposed International (Eagle Pass) Working Group:** Dr. Wynne proposed forming a working group to represent faculty communication and input specific to the growing International/Eagle Pass Campus. He suggested Dr. Ferhat Ozturk, already a Senate representative from Eagle Pass, as a strong candidate to chair. Dr. Ozturk expressed interest but asked to first better understand the group's proposed scope and responsibilities; he and Dr. Wynne agreed to discuss further by phone before a chair is finalized.

7. Policy and Document Approvals

7.1 APM 1.08 – Faculty Governance: Secretary Ozturk presented a revised version of APM 1.08 prepared by Vice President Velasco, which removes references to "council" (per direction from System legal counsel Nelly Herrera) and clarifies the distinction between committees (governed by the President's Office) and working groups (governed by the

Provost's Office and led by faculty). Motion to approve: Ferhat Ozturk. Second: Jose Mora. Motion carried; no opposition.

7.2 Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) Job Description: A job description document prepared by Vice President Velasco was presented, outlining the three-year term, annual Senate review/approval and presidential appointment process, stipend, and travel support to the NCAA convention and FARA meeting/seminar. Motion to approve: Ferhat Ozturk. Second: Billy Jack Ray. Motion carried; no opposition.

7.3 Revised Faculty Athletics Working Group Document: A revised working group description was presented, updated to remove "council" language and incorporating discussion topics for the FAR to bring to the working group. A motion to approve was made and seconded. Motion carried; no opposition.

8. Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) Update – Hugh Morrissey

Dr. Morrissey, newly appointed FAR (succeeding Dr. Jessica Velasco), reported that he is still transitioning into the role with Dr. Velasco's support, and that his first meeting with committee members has been rescheduled for the following week. He reported that grade checks are nearly complete, pending entry for one or two remaining teams, and reminded the Senate of their importance to coaches. He also reported on a new NCAA eligibility rule extending student-athlete eligibility from four to five years ("5-for-5"), which is expected to benefit graduate program enrollment as athletes remain enrolled longer. President Miller-Ray encouraged Dr. Morrissey to continue communicating athletic event schedules to faculty to support attendance at games.

9. Faculty Senate Communications Update (Secretary Ozturk)

Secretary Ozturk reported on updates to the Faculty Senate website, including a reorganized meeting page (date, time, webinar link, agenda, and minutes together for each meeting), consolidated webinar links, updated profile links for new faculty senators, and an online agenda-item request form. He noted that individual working-group membership rosters will no longer be posted statically on the website due to frequent changes, and that faculty are welcome to attend meetings as non-speaking observers unless invited to speak or serving as a voting participant. He reviewed the Faculty Senate Bylaws with new members and noted that "council" references in the bylaws and website will need to be corrected consistent with the APM 1.08 changes. Ozturk also reported that he is developing a Faculty Senate newsletter template, in coordination with the library, to summarize votes and decisions from each meeting for broader faculty distribution, in addition to continuing to distribute minutes within 14 days of each meeting and agendas in advance of each meeting.

10. Open Discussion – College and Faculty Concerns

10.1 Tuition Discount Policy: In response to a faculty question about tuition discounts for faculty family members, Secretary Ozturk reported that current HR policy provides a benefit only to the employee, not dependents, covering tuition for up to six credit hours per semester (with the employee still responsible for a \$50 per-class fee and other associated

fees). The Senate noted a discrepancy with earlier information from HR regarding dependent benefits and agreed to raise the issue with the President/Provost for clarification.

10.2 Faculty Compensation Strategy: Building on the earlier salary discussion, Dr. Wynne reiterated a written proposal that, given a nationwide decline in college enrollment expected to ease competition for high-quality remote adjunct instructors, the university could reduce costs by relying more on remote adjuncts and redirect savings toward compensation for currently tenured and tenure-track faculty. Billy Jack Ray raised a counterpoint that increased reliance on remote faculty would further concentrate committee and service workload among the smaller on-site tenured faculty pool. Dr. Mora added that low starting salaries relative to the private sector and to local K-12 teacher salaries (citing a reported \$70,000 starting salary for new ISD teachers) contribute to high faculty and staff turnover, and that recent faculty searches in some fields drew primarily international rather than domestic applicants. The Senate agreed to forward these points to the Budget Advisory Working Group for consideration in its forthcoming compensation recommendations.

10.3 Strategic Planning Survey: President Miller-Ray reminded senators to complete the university's Strategic Plan survey, circulated the same day, and noted that Dr. Mora is serving on the Strategic Planning process, with President Miller-Ray attending as a non-voting observer on behalf of the Senate.

10.4 Athletics at the International Campus: In response to a question from Secretary Ozturk regarding long-term plans for athletics at the Eagle Pass/International Campus, President Miller-Ray indicated this question would be directed to University President Dr. Hernandez at a future meeting.

11. Adjournment

Having concluded the agenda approximately nine minutes ahead of schedule, President Miller-Ray thanked all attendees for their continued service. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:21 PM.

Minutes Prepared By

Ferhat Ozturk, Ph.D.

Secretary, Faculty Senate

Sul Ross State University **Date Prepared:** 09/16/2026