

MINUTES OF
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
September 17, 2024

The first Faculty Senate meeting of the 2024-2025 academic year was called to order by Associate Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences Aaron Beedle, Faculty Senate chair, at 11:46 a.m. in Old Union Hall.

1. Minutes

Minutes from the April 30, 2024, meeting minutes were approved with no opposition and one abstention.

2. Obituary Notices

Chair Beedle notified the body that Prof. Bruce E. Borton, Music; Prof. Emeritus Mario DiCesare, English and Comparative Literature; Retired Prof. Ralph Hocking, Video and Computer Art, Cinema; Prof. Emeritus Clifford R. Kern, Economics; Retired Prof. Daniel D. Konowalow, Physical Chemistry; Prof. Emeritus Nicholas Jason Sterling Jr., Math; and Prof. Emeritus Dale W. Tomich, Sociology, had passed away. Chair Beedle spoke about each colleague and then asked for a moment of silence to remember them.

3. Reports

Chair Beedle noted that the 2023-2024 annual reports were posted on the Faculty Senate agenda webpage for this meeting. Each committee of the Faculty Senate and each joint committee shall submit an annual report, with a summary of its activities for the academic year, by June 15. All such reports shall be received by the Faculty Senate and placed on the agenda of the following academic year's first meeting for information or proposed action. She then asked if the Senate had any questions. The senators did not ask any questions.

Chair Beedle noted that the 2024-2025 committee memberships were posted in the committee section of the Faculty Senate webpage. The FSEC has approved the committee membership.

4. Curriculum Items (PRC)

Chair Beedle reported three curricular program revisions. These program revisions were reviewed and approved by the Program Review Committee and Faculty Senate Executive Committee:

- **Comparative Literature revision:** this is a simple revision/update to the COLI major. The two changes are to the numeric range of classes counted toward the language requirement and specifying two of the five upper-division courses required for the major.
- **Mathematics MS statistics:** This is a revision to the master's in statistics, now to be called Data Science and Statistics. Apart from the name change, there are changes to reduce the number of credits from 42 to 40 by (a) merging two 4-credit introductory

courses into one and (b) replacing two 1-credit capstones with a single 4-credit capstone.

- **Mathematics BA and BS revisions:** these revisions rename their statistics track to "Data Science and Statistics," and make the track available to both BA and BS programs; previously it was only BA. They also have a change for the actuarial track that replaces a 2-credit scientific computing course with a 4-credit computing course requirement.

Chair Beedle reported one program proposal in the Harpur College of Arts and Sciences, the Harpur/System Science MS 4+1 program. This new program is a blanket 4+1, where three graduate SSIE courses can be double-counted as upper-division undergraduate credit for a Harpur degree. The Systems Science MS 4+1 is available to all except the following Harpur Undergraduate Programs:

- Art BA
- Theatre BA
- Music BA
- Geology BA
- Geology BS

The Program Review Committee (PRC) and Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) have recommended this program proposal to the Faculty Senate (FS) for approval.

Chair Beedle asked the Senate if there were any comments or questions about this program proposal.

After the proposal was presented without comments from the Senate, Chair Beedle requested a motion to approve the program proposal. A motion was made and seconded. After no discussion, the motion was approved with no opposition and one abstention.

5. New Business

Chair Beedle discussed promoting a positive campus culture and introduced the Civil Dialogue Resources available for students, faculty, staff, and the community. The resources are on the Binghamton University Center for Civic Engagement webpage. The webpage provides a variety of activities and training. She asked the Senate if there were any additional resources related to Civil Dialogue to let her know, and we will update those available resources.

Chair Beedle welcomed Bathabile Mthombeni, University Ombudsman, to discuss facilitating difficult conversations.

Bathabile Mthombeni, University Ombudsman, discussed the following suggestions for promoting civil discourse in the classroom:

- Key questions that guide facilitating difficult conversations:
 - What is your purpose as a facilitator?
 - What are your intentions as a facilitator?

- What do you intend to teach? Some suggestions include:
 - Capacity for discomfort
 - Comfort with uncertainty
 - Self-regulation
 - Capacity to consider opposing viewpoints
 - Capacity for empathy by identifying feelings and needs
- What to do:
 - Avoid taking a position; ask questions
 - Avoid arguing for a particular outcome; ask questions
 - Let go of the desire to be right; be curious
 - Be sure your questions are genuine and open-ended rather than conclusions that pretend to be a question.
 - Let go of the desire to change their beliefs
 - Let go of the need to arrive at a consensus
 - Be aware of threat response; attend to feelings (indicators) and needs

Bathabile Mthombeni, the University Ombudsman, ended her presentation and noted that she hopes to see everyone at the open forum session on Monday.

Chair Beedle thanked Bathabile for her presentation. The time and date for the open forum session will be posted on Dateline. All are invited to attend.

Chair Beedle then discussed where to find the campus expression and protest policies and the time, place, and manner restrictions. Her goal is to ensure the Senators know where to find the information. She then presented the following resources and encouraged the Senators to review them:

- [Office of the President, University Statements](#)

A statement was sent to faculty on August 19, 2024:

“Welcoming a New Academic Year and Upholding Our Campus Values, August 19, 2024”

Without the right to express ideas — especially controversial ideas — education and discovery are limited, dialogue is restricted, and our capacity to educate engaged citizens is compromised. For those reasons and our obligations as a public university to respect the First Amendment, we place a high value on freedom of expression, association, and assembly. No right, however, is absolute. Binghamton will not permit protest and expression that disrupts the University’s academic mission, interferes with the free expression of others, or threatens members of the campus community or campus property. We urge all of you to accept your responsibility to maintain a campus environment that respects those boundaries. In that way, we can be a model for other universities to follow through with our willingness to confront difficult questions in a community with the maturity and perspective to respect the rights of all in a supportive learning community.

- [Guidelines for Non-credit Use of Campus Facilities](#)

Demonstrations:

Binghamton University students, faculty, and staff are guaranteed the right of free inquiry and expression. Subject to applicable content-neutral policy as stated herein

and in other applicable campus policies, members of the University community may hold public meetings and engage in peaceful and orderly assemblies—including, but not limited to, protests, demonstrations, rallies, vigils, marches, and picketing—in and upon designated public areas of campus grounds and buildings.

- [Demonstration Policy, Student Handbook](#)
- Students are free to voice dissent and to demonstrate in an orderly and peaceful manner. Picketing or demonstrating must not interfere with the normal flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic or with the entrances to buildings and must not interfere with the normal functioning of the University. Sticks, or other objects that may prove to be dangerous in a crowd, are not permitted for use in support of signs or banners or for other purposes. [Rules for the Maintenance of Public Order](#) may be used if necessary.

Individuals wishing to organize a demonstration on campus should follow the normal space reservation procedures, which are available on the [B There Portal](#).

- Overview of the Do's and Do Not's when it comes to expression and protests on campus

Do:

- Use standard space reservation procedures to book events (B-There portal), contact the University Union office and UPD to arrange the event
- Review SUNY [Rules for the Maintenance of Public Order \(suny.edu\)](#) for appropriate conduct, prohibited behavior, and conduct violations
- Plan events of <12 hr and within 8 am – 10 pm
- Allow campus operations and movement around your event
- Support civil dialogue around controversial ideas within boundaries and policies

Do Not:

- Disrupt university operations
- Obstruct free movement of vehicles or persons
- Engage in conduct that could cause injury or damage
- Use audio that conflicts with operations or violates city ordinance
- Erect structures
- Possess open flame
- Exceed 12 hours in one day and/or between hours of 10p and 8a
- Engage in activities in violation of SUNY Policy 3653, Rules for Maintenance of Public Order
- Enter university areas without authorization/permission
- Occupy buildings after regular closing hours

Chair Beedle then discussed Academic Freedom and resources. Academic Freedom allows faculty to teach, research, and speak about public concerns without punishment, even where their views, feelings, or methods are controversial. Educators on college campuses must be free to speak their minds, ask tough questions, and facilitate learning without the threat of institutional censorship, correction, or intimidation. The academic freedom of an individual faculty member is subject to

- **The collective:** The faculty responsible for a particular course of study may share responsibility for determining courses to be offered or texts to be assigned to students. The shared academic freedom to make this decision trumps the freedom of an individual faculty member to assign a textbook that he or she alone prefers.
- **Professional ethics:** A faculty member must act ethically in their teaching and research, for example, by following regulations on human subject research.
- **Professional competence:** In order to produce and disseminate the highest quality of knowledge in a given field, academics are regulated by other academics who are in a position to judge the work of their peers. A faculty member is not entitled to teach something that their academic peers judge is invalid--for example, teaching that $2+2=5$ would not be protected; neither would teaching intelligent design in an evolutionary biology class.

The Academic Freedom Resources include:

- [AAUP](#) American Association of University Professors
- [FIRE | Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression \(thefire.org\)](https://www.thefire.org/)

Chair Beedle explained the difference between Academic Freedom and free speech. Academic Freedom is the idea of engaging in responsible professional activities without the threat of censure from administrative officials, and it is a principle that we hold at this University. Free speech is the right of an individual to voice their opinion. Such speech should be non-violent and should be distinguished as not speaking for or on behalf of the institution.

Chair Beedle noted that the Faculty received the following message from Provost Hall, distributed on July 23, 2024, and August 19, 2024.

Statement by Provost on Support for Academic Freedom:

As we begin the fall semester, I wanted to affirm this university's commitment to academic freedom. Our mission, as a public research institution, is built upon the twin pillars of scholarship and education, and of encouraging each without fear. This is how we make all feel welcome and safe, and how we play our part in nurturing an engaged and educated citizenry. A university campus can and should encourage the free exploration of knowledge and ideas, without regard to external threats or pressures. This is especially urgent at moments when such free inquiry and expression appear to be most risky, for example, at our current moment with respect to international (e.g. Palestine and Israel) and national (e.g. the presidential election) political conflict. As a public university, it is our responsibility to deepen difficult conversations through our commitment to pursuing the truth, providing contextual knowledge, and modeling the free exchange and rigorous assessment of conflicting ideas, in a context of deep respect for those who hold differing beliefs and opinions. Now, more than ever, it is important that faculty contribute their research and expertise to bear on the most salient questions of our time.

This campus stands firm on the key principles of freedom of thought and opinion in an atmosphere of mutual regard and tolerance of difference. We will continue to condemn

all forms of violence and hate speech, as well as any uncivil language or behavior that does not conform to our expectation of respect and responsibility.

It is helpful here to cite the language of the UUP contract by which we all abide:

ARTICLE 9

Academic Freedom

9.1 It is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching, and research. In the exercise of this freedom faculty members may, without limitation, discuss their own subject in the classroom; they may not, however, claim as their right the privilege of discussing in their classroom controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.

9.2 The principle of academic freedom shall be accompanied by a corresponding principle of responsibility.

9.3 In their role as citizens, employees have the same freedoms as other citizens. However, in their extramural utterances employees have an obligation to indicate that they are not institutional spokespersons.

In this moment of sharp controversy and acute disagreement, I believe it is essential to explicitly reassert our commitment to the first principles of a university campus – as a place of learning, critical inquiry, and responsible debate. We owe that to our students, who look to us as models of civic engagement, respect, and responsibility. I thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to the pursuit of truth and understanding.

Sincerely,

Donald

Chair Beedle invited Provost Hall to speak about how these messages were developed and sent out.

Provost Hall discussed the following:

- Tension and fear during the spring semester in response to international crises, political conflict, and targeting of faculty nationally when addressing controversial topics.
- Provost Hall met with a group of faculty several times over the summer to discuss their concerns on our campus. One of the items they requested of Provost Hall was to put out a public assurance that the administration was committed to protecting their research and teaching in their fields without fear of retribution or institutional response.
- Provost Hall then worked with the faculty to craft a statement, which was sent out before the start of classes. He explained that he felt it was a sincere assurance that this University is a place where faculty should feel safe and secure in teaching their

subject matters and conducting research that is supported, celebrated, and recognized, even in controversial areas.

Provost Hall would like to submit this statement annually to the faculty before the classes begin.

Chair Beedle then asked the senators to endorse this annual statement provided by the Provost. She then opened the floor for discussion from the Senate.

Prof. Marina Sitrin, Sociology, asked to discuss Provost Hall's statement before endorsing it. She suggested having a chance to take the conversation back to her department so they could have a say collectively.

Chair Beedle responded with the Senate's option to table this discussion and bring it up at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Prof. Bridget Whearty, English, also expressed that she would share the statement with her department before discussing it further.

After hearing from the Senators, Chair Beedle suggested two options: Separating the components into two pieces.

- Endorse the statement as written
- Endorsing the principle, the Faculty Senators support distributing the annual statement on academic freedom with consultation from their units. Then, discuss at a future faculty Senate meeting.

Prof. Matt Gallagher, Libraries, requested clarification of what the Senate was voting on.

Chair Beedle clarified at the moment, noting whether the Senate endorses the statement as written and provided or endorse the statement on the principle that the Faculty Senators distribute to their areas and have a discussion, then discuss it at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

After no further discussion, Chair Beedle requested a motion to table this discussion for a future Faculty Senate meeting. A motion was made and seconded. The motion was approved with one opposition and two abstentions.

Chair Beedle noted she was contacted by a group of faculty with a letter of concern. This letter was provided to the Senate for review. It is not the product of an elected or appointed group of the Faculty Senate and is not an official Faculty Senate document. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee did not endorse the letter.

Chair Beedle then invited representatives of the group to address the letter that was provided.

Prof. Surya Parekh, English, Prof. Monica Mehta, English, and Leo Wilton, CCPA, came forward.

Prof. Surya Parekh, English, outlined the proposal, noting the following:

1. We call on the Faculty Senate to pass a resolution supporting the guaranteed rights of faculty, students, and staff to engage in speech and assembly about Palestine/Israel, in line with core principles of academic freedom and rights to free speech and free assembly.
2. We ask the Faculty Senate to pass a resolution noting concern about the Administration's response to the student encampment last year, specifically the immediate deployment of police and the preemptive letters threatening punitive action to the students.
3. We, therefore, also ask the Faculty Senate to pass a resolution calling on the Administration to refrain from calling the police and threatening heavy-handed punitive actions in response to peaceful student protests

Prof. Monica Mehta, English, expressed that the administration should protect faculty and have a stance on Academic Freedom. In addition, called for the Faculty Senate to:

- Demand that the administration protect us when we exercise our academic freedom and publicly declare that calls to fire faculty and staff are unacceptable.
- Demand that the University adhere to the university policies equally and refrain from biased statements and actions.
- Demand that the administration has a plan to stand firm against outside political forces.
- Demand that the administration live up to the promise in Provost Hall's [Op Ed](#) in the Miami Herald:

“At places like Binghamton University, State University of New York, a strong commitment to academic freedom is essential for a fully functioning democracy and cutting-edge research; a pedagogy that embraces different perspectives results in students who are more resilient and better prepared for the careers that await them. Numerous studies have shown that diversity of thought and backgrounds leads to innovative research and to business success. A diverse environment and mindset are what best prepares students and researchers for the challenges our society faces.”

Chair Beedle thanked the presenters for addressing the Senate. She noted that we would allow the administration to respond, provide any context they wished, and then open the floor for discussion.

Chair Beedle welcomed Brian Rose, Vice President for Student Affairs.

Brian Rose provided background and details of the encampment that occurred in May, explaining the staff and police's response. He then explained the preexisting policy about camping (encampments) on campus. That policy prohibits overnight camping but provides a process for exceptions. Those who organized the encampment did not make any request for an exception. Those administrators who were monitoring the encampment decided to proactively provide an exception and communicated the timetable of the exception to the students. Throughout the encampment, the administration was in contact with SUNY System Administration, which desired a quick end to the encampment. Vice President Rose met multiple times with students who were leaders within the encampment on Thursday and Friday (the last day). VP Rose explained that the university leadership would willingly meet with students about demands, but not while there was an encampment that extended beyond the established deadline. VP Rose further explained that the encampment's use of the Peace Quad area had displaced organizations and departments who had reserved the space and that, should the encampment extend beyond the deadline previously communicated, police would respond to enforce the deadline, prevent further displacement of activities from the area and that students would face potential charges under campus rules of student conduct. At various times on Friday, VP Rose shared with the leaders a statement the university was prepared to issue if the students broke down the encampment by the deadline, a promise of a meeting that day (Friday) to include President Stenger and Provost Hall (again conditioned on meeting the deadline) as well as advance warning of conduct letters and police mobilization. The students voluntarily broke down the encampment before the deadline, and the promised meeting occurred, and the shared statement was issued. No conduct charges or police action was necessary.

The President, Provost and VP Rose met with the students three additional times over the summer and also arranged meetings for them with the Binghamton University Foundation (2x) and the Fleishman Career Services staff. The President, Provost, and Vice President will continue this dialog with the students for as long as they are willing to meet.

Chair Beedle thanked Brian for the information and for attending the meeting.

Due to time constraints, there was no opportunity for further discussion.

Chair Beedle proposed that senators ponder issues raised today. At our next faculty senate meeting, some time will be allotted to discussion. At such time, the senate may vote on whether to refer any specific items raised for senate follow-up. If so voted, these issues would be tasked to a committee to consider in depth.

Prof. Marina Sitrin, Sociology, asked about taking the information given back to her department.

Chair Beedle replied yes and reminded the Senate that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee must first review any motion being put forth to the Senate.

After no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Present: Meaghan Altman, Ming An, Laura Anderson, Nathanael Andrade, Christina Balderrama-Durbin, Aaron Beedle, Lina Begdache, Megan Benson, Ramaesh Bhagirat, Peter Borgesen, David Campbell, Kenneth Chiu, Sungdai Cho, Laura Cook, Leon Cosler, Weiying Dai, Tara Dhakal, Sean Dunwoody, Gregory Evans, Mikhail Filippov, Anthony Fiumera, Rodney Gabel, Matt Gallagher, Donald Hall, Tiffany Keller Hansbrough, Melissa Hardesty, John Havard, Laura Fine Hawkes, Nora Henry, Barry Jones, Rebecca Kissling, Ahyeon Koh, Wei-Cheng Lee, Meg Leja, Shuxia Lu, Jeffrey Lum, Colin Lyons, Andre Mathis, Marcin Mazur, Tom McDonough, Anjani Praneet Meruvu, Debi Mishra, Vladimir Nikulin, Thomas O'Brien, Julien Panetier, Andreas Pape, Heather Parks, Sabina Perrino, James Rea, Erin Rushton, Anton Schick, Tarek Shamma, Olga Shvetsova, Timothy Singler, Marina Sitrin, John Starks, Harvey Stenger, Marina Sitran, Sofia Theodore-Pierce, Cyma Van Petten, Bridget Whearty, Melvin Whitehead, Bogum Yoon

Excused: Jeremy Blackburn, Michael Buck, Mateo Duque, Praseeda Gopinath, Gladys Jimenez-Munoz, Adriane Lam, Anthony Meder, Gail Rattinger, Jodi Sutherland, Melissa Zinkin

Absent: Nancy Abashian, Paul Chiarot, Luca Cassidy, Robyn Cope, Sidney Dement, Kimberly Jaussi, Joseph Keith, Michael Lawler, Nkiru Nzegwu, Mark Poliks, Kirsten Prior, Shay Rabineau, Marguerite Wilson