Marshall University Faculty Senate

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 24, 2026, 4:00 PM

MSC Don Morris Room (Microsoft Teams Streaming Only)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah McDermott, Heather Stark, Phil Vallejo, Amamda Thompon-Abbott, Uday Tate, Mike Huesmann, Lanai Jennings-Knotts, Conrae Lucas-Adkins, Tim Melvin, Jerica Wesley, Ananya Jana, Ross Salary, Nikki Dvorak, Angela Graham, Shikeal Harris, Lisa Muto, Alysha Nichols, Laura Stephens, Marybeth Beller, Puspa Damai, Shoshannah Diehl, Nick Shangler, Marianna Linz, Megan Marshall, Dalton Monk, Boniface Noyongoyo, Josh Williams, Jana Tigchelaar, Antony Viola, Raid Al-Aqtash, Kelly Beatty, Rick Gage, Billy Gardner, Philippe Georgel, Herman Mays, Sean McBride, Jim Denvir, Raj Khanna, Ruhul Amin, Tiffany Davis, Mindy Varney, Kari Mika-Lude, Heather Lauer, Eryn Roles

MEMBERS ABSENT: Leah Turley, Sandy York, Jamey Halleck, Kevin Levine, Boniface Yemba, Ammar Alzarad, Pingping Zhu, Sujoy Bose, Zach Garrett, Shane Welch, Jessica Buerck, Sudipta Chowdhury, Bryan Burk (substitute), Chatrawee Shepard (substitute), Jinju Wang (substitute), Hasan Koc (substitute), Jen Sparks (substitute)

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Alissa Davis, Richard Egleton, Amine Oudghiri-Otmani

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:

PARLIAMENTARIAN: Andrew Morelock

SENATE STAFF: Hailey Bibbee

GUESTS: In-person - Brad Smith, Diane Petrella, D. Scott Davis, Brian Morgan, Chris Morrow, Carl Mummert, Brandi Jacobs-Jones, Kateryna Schray, Kelly Bradley, Rohan Christie-David, Maria Gindhart, Jodie Penrod, Mohammad Abdulrahman, Deepak Subedi, Anna Mummert, Wesley Stites, Susan Lanham, Vicki Stroeher, Allison Carey, Bruce Felder
Virtual - Monica Brooks, Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, David Dampier, Brandon Dennison, Stephen Deterding, David Gozal, Lindsey Harper, Gerald Harrison, Eric Himes, Pam Holland, Carol Hurula, Brandi Jacobs, Nicolas Karagosian, Craig Kimble, Ainslie McKinney, Glen Midkiff, Shannon Miller-Mace, Faitha Nassir, Carleen O'Neill, Ginny Painter, Gautam Pillay, Max Remy, Jerry Ross, Niki Rowe-Fortner, Marcie Simms, Dave Traube, Susan Tusing, Stephanie Walker, Jinju Wang, Charlotte Weber, Mark Zanter

The meeting was convened at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Rick Gage. Chair Gage reviewed meeting procedures and expectations.

1. Approval of Proposed Agenda – approved
2. Approval of Minutes from September 3, 2026 – accepted

3. Announcements - Chair
    a. **Standing Committee Liaisons** – The Chair thanked faculty who volunteered to serve as standing committee liaisons and reported that most appointments have been finalized. Volunteer opportunities remain available for liaison positions on the following committees:
        i. Athletics
        ii. Undergraduate Curriculum
        iii. Faculty Technology
        iv. Facilities
        v. Government Affairs

    b. **Representing Faculty on Steering Committee for Academic Portfolio Review** – The Chair noted that he was asked by the provost to serve on this committee. Faculty have identified several university policies that contain outdated language, broken cross-references, or require revision. Initial discussions with the provost have confirmed the need for policy cleanup and review. Current areas under consideration include:
        i. Faculty workload policies
        ii. Annual review procedures
        iii. Department chair roles and responsibilities
        iv. Sabbatical policies
        v. Other related policies connected to the implementation of AA-6

    Specific policy proposals will be referred to the appropriate committees and the full Senate as the work develops.

    c. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy Working Group** - The AI Policy Working Group continues to make progress toward a university AI policy.
        i. A representative from the Graduate Council has been added to the group.
        ii. A working draft has been circulated to the Faculty Technology Committee and Administrative Technology Committee for review and feedback.

    Following committee feedback and review of comments from the Strategic Planning Survey, the group will finalize its proposal and forward it to BAPC and subsequently to the Faculty Senate.

    d. **Academic Calendar Development** - The Chair informed senators that development of the 2028–2032 Academic Calendar has begun. The committee is seeking stakeholder input early in the process to identify and address potential concerns before a formal recommendation reaches BAPC and Faculty Senate.

    e. **Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree Nominations** – The nomination portal for commencement speaker and honorary degree candidates remains open through October 1, 2026. Senators and faculty are encouraged to submit nominations to broaden the pool of potential candidates. The committee will review nominations in

October and will present a recommendation to the Faculty Senate at our November meeting.

f. **Strategic Planning Survey** – Faculty were reminded that the university Strategic Planning Survey closes on October 1. The Chair encouraged faculty, staff, students, and administrators to participate and to encourage others to provide feedback.

g. **Upcoming Dates** –

i. **General Faculty Meeting** – Scheduled for October 1 at 4:00 p.m. in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse. The meeting will include introductions of new faculty and administrators and an update from the President on the state of the university.

ii. **Executive Committee Meeting** – Scheduled for October 12.

iii. **Faculty Senate Meeting** – Scheduled for October 22.

iv. **Recommendations and Resolutions Deadline** – Recommendations and resolutions for the October Senate cycle are due to the Senate Office by October 2.

4. Recommendations/Resolutions - None
5. Regular Reports
    a. President – Brad Smith (15 minutes)
        i. **Opening Remarks and Campus Recognition** – President Smith welcomed faculty and staff, wished everyone a happy Homecoming Week, and reflected on the rapid pace of the fall semester, noting that the university was already six weeks into the academic year.
        ii. **Enrollment Update and Financial Outlook** – President Smith provided the following updates and statistics:
            1. Marshall enrolled 1,921 first-year students and that overall enrollment is projected to increase by approximately 1.7% when dual-enrollment students are included.
            2. Approximately 40% of dual-enrollment students ultimately enroll at Marshall and 60% graduate within four years, making dual enrollment an important recruitment and student success strategy.
            3. Excluding dual-enrollment students, overall enrollment is approximately flat, with undergraduate enrollment slightly up and graduate enrollment lower than anticipated.
            4. Enrollment shifts created an estimated $800,000 financial headwind, primarily due to enrollment declines among West Virginia students associated with the demographic enrollment cliff.
            5. The university anticipated these challenges and developed contingency plans in advance.

President Smith noted the strong energy surrounding the start of the academic year and reported that Marshall welcomed more than 1,900 students. He thanked faculty and staff for helping students and families feel welcomed and supported.

iii. **Enrollment Growth and Student Recruitment Initiatives** – President Smith reaffirmed Marshall's commitment to growth-oriented enrollment strategies. Current initiatives include:

1. Expansion of the Metro/Border-State Benefit to additional counties in Kentucky and Ohio.
2. Direct Admission Programs for qualified students with a GPA of 2.5 or higher.
3. Expansion of recruitment efforts across all 55 West Virginia counties.

He noted that these efforts are helping Marshall remain competitive and outperform many peer institutions in student recruitment.

iv. **Planning for the Enrollment Cliff/Current Strategic Work Streams** – President Smith stated that the university anticipated long-term demographic declines and began planning proactively during the previous academic year. He referenced four strategic work streams established to prepare the institution for future enrollment challenges and maintain financial sustainability.

1. Budget Advisory Committee – Created to evaluate multiple enrollment scenarios and identify financial strategies needed to avoid more drastic actions experienced at some institutions.
2. Student Success Action Learning Team – Charged with improving retention, supporting student success, and increasing graduation rates.
3. External Assessment and Academic Portfolio Review – Administrative reviews were completed during the summer, identifying opportunities for operational improvement. The academic review process has now begun and is expected to continue through January.
4. Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Planning – A series of workshops and campus engagement efforts have involved students, faculty, department chairs, deans, administrators, and the Board of Governors in discussions about Marshall's future in the AI era.

v. **Academic Portfolio Review Process** – President Smith emphasized that the academic review process will be transparent, collaborative, and grounded in Marshall's culture and values. He encouraged the campus

community not to assume Marshall's process will mirror outcomes experienced at institutions that have previously worked with the same consulting firm. He pledged ongoing communication, faculty engagement, and shared governance participation throughout the review.

vi. **AI Strategic Planning Survey and Institutional Vision** – President Smith reported that survey responses from faculty, staff, students, and administrators continue to inform the university's strategic planning process.

Three guiding questions are being used to gather campus input:

1. What do we believe?
2. What do we refuse to give up?
3. What do we aspire to achieve?

vii. **Themes Emerging from AI and Strategic Planning Discussions**

1. What We Believe
    a. Every student deserves opportunity, dignity, economic mobility, and meaningful contribution.
    b. The future requires both technical capability and distinctly human skills, including creativity, ethics, resilience, empathy, and judgment.
    c. Universities must prepare students for lifelong adaptation and leadership.
    d. Marshall's mission extends beyond producing graduates to developing thoughtful, ethical citizens.
    e. Marshall has a responsibility to ensure AI and innovation benefit rural communities, working families, veterans, first-generation students, and underserved populations.
2. What We Refuse
    a. To prepare students for outdated realities.
    b. To allow technology to diminish human relationships and learning.
    c. To lose Marshall's culture, compassion, and community.
    d. To discourage experimentation, curiosity, and innovation.
3. What We Aspire to Achieve
    a. Graduating students who are AI-literate, ethically grounded, workforce-ready, and deeply human.
    b. Using technology to enhance rather than replace human connections.
    c. Fostering lifelong learning and adaptability.

d. Shifting assessment toward critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and demonstrated competency.
e. Using AI to reduce administrative burdens and increase opportunities for mentoring, scholarship, and relationship-building.
f. Becoming a model institution for rural innovation and shared prosperity.

viii. **Plan-on-a-Page Refresh** – President Smith reported that strong support remains for Marshall's existing mission statement and institutional creed, with few proposed changes. Feedback has focused primarily on refining strategic goals and priorities.

Emerging Strategic Goal Revisions

1. Individual Success: Responses suggested to continue emphasizing career outcomes and debt reduction, while adding a focus on durable human skills and AI mastery.
2. Innovative Ideas: Responses suggested that we maintain research growth and job creation goals, while adding emphasis on critical thinking and design thinking competencies.
3. Economic Impact: Responses suggested that we maintain goals related to return on investment and economic development, while adding aspirations related to full development and utilization of the Idea District.

Marshall for All Strategy Refresh

1. Campus feedback has increasingly centered around the phrase "Marshall for All, Marshall Forever. Human-Centered. AI-Amplified. Lifetime-Empowered."
2. President Smith noted that the university's distinctive academic pillars will be reduced from six to five, as Advanced Energy has not yet demonstrated sufficient momentum to be identified as a distinctive area of excellence.

Emerging Institutional Priorities

1. The following themes are emerging as core institutional priorities:
    a. Provide Superior Access and Value: Expand direct admissions. Maintain affordability and low student debt. Increase return on investment for students.
    b. Deliver a Personalized Learning Experience: Strengthen student success initiatives. Utilize AI to enhance learning and student support. Preserve faculty mentoring and engagement.

c. Build Human Skills for Life: Emphasize critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and adaptability. Incorporate durable skills and micro-credential initiatives.
d. Develop an AI-Amplified Campus: Provide AI training, access, support, policies, and governance structures. Ensure equitable access to AI resources across campus.
e. Strengthen Institutional Resilience: Implement recommendations from the Budget Advisory Committee and academic review processes. Position Marshall to remain financially and operationally sustainable amid demographic and economic challenges.

ix. **Closing Remarks** - President Smith expressed confidence that Marshall can remain true to its mission and culture while embracing innovation and AI.

x. He emphasized that campus feedback consistently reflects a vision of Marshall as a human-centered, AI-amplified university that prepares students for lifelong success in a rapidly changing world.

xi. He encouraged attendance at the Fall General Faculty Meeting, where additional details regarding strategic planning feedback and proposed revisions to the university's plan will be presented.

Questions for President Smith: None

b. Provost – Diane Helfers Petrella (15 minutes)

i. **Opening Remarks and Campus Engagement** – Provost Petrella reported that she has been actively engaging with faculty, staff, students, and campus stakeholders through a series of listening sessions and campus meetings. She expressed appreciation for the positive, collaborative, and forward-looking nature of the discussions, noting that participants have been candid while remaining constructive and optimistic. She emphasized that the willingness of the Marshall community to engage in thoughtful dialogue reflects the institution's strong culture of shared purpose and continuous improvement.

ii. **Using Campus Feedback to Inform Planning** – Provost Petrella stated that feedback gathered through listening sessions and day-to-day interactions will be used to inform future planning and decision-making. Information collected from these discussions will be evaluated, organized around common themes, and shared broadly with the university community. She emphasized that future planning efforts will

be guided by campus input and institutional priorities identified through these conversations.

iii. **Faculty Affairs and Policy Coordination** – Provost Petrella noted the growing need for coordinated oversight of faculty-related policies, procedures, and governance matters within Academic Affairs. She explained that faculty affairs functions provide support for policy interpretation, implementation, compliance, and communication between faculty and administration. Recent policies regarding faculty conduct and faculty fitness for duty, along with ongoing policy revisions, have reinforced the need for focused oversight in this area.

iv. **Faculty Affairs Team** – Provost Petrella stated that to address faculty affairs needs without creating additional administrative positions, Academic Affairs will utilize existing personnel resources. Faculty Affairs Team has been established consisting of:

1. Carl Mummert
2. Allison Carey
3. A representative from the Office of General Counsel

The team will assist with faculty policy interpretation, faculty conduct and fitness-for-duty procedures, governance-related questions, and other faculty affairs matters. Provost Petrella expressed appreciation for the willingness of those individuals to assume these responsibilities and support the work of Academic Affairs.

v. **Overview of the Academic Portfolio Review** – Provost Petrella addressed faculty questions regarding the Academic Portfolio Review and acknowledged concerns raised by members of the university community. She emphasized that the review is intended to provide Marshall University with data and analytical tools needed to make informed decisions over the next ten to fifteen years. The review is designed to evaluate academic programs comprehensively and should not be viewed solely as a process focused on reduction or elimination of programs.

vi. **Scope of the Academic Portfolio Review** – Review activities will examine multiple dimensions of academic programs, including:

1. Enrollment trends
2. Retention and student success outcomes
3. Workforce and market demand
4. Program delivery models
5. Faculty deployment
6. Program and administrative costs
7. Overall effectiveness and sustainability

The goal is to develop a holistic understanding of Marshall's academic portfolio and identify opportunities for future success.

vii. **Representative Steering Committee and Transparency** – Provost Petrella reported that a broadly representative steering committee has been assembled to guide the review process. Membership includes representation from:

1. Faculty Senate
2. Council of Chairs
3. Graduate Council
4. Academic Advising
5. Students
6. Deans
7. Academic and administrative leadership

She emphasized that transparency will remain a guiding principle throughout the review process and that committee members should share information with their respective constituencies. Faculty are encouraged to communicate with steering committee representatives and ask questions throughout the process.

viii. **Role of Huron Consulting** - Provost Petrella clarified that Huron's role is to facilitate the review process, organize and analyze institutional data, and provide recommendations. Huron will not make decisions on behalf of Marshall University. All decisions regarding academic programs, resource allocation, and strategic priorities will remain the responsibility of Marshall University and its governance structures.

ix. **Commitment to Shared Governance** – Any recommendations resulting from the Academic Portfolio Review will move through established shared governance channels. Provost Petrella reaffirmed that Faculty Senate, academic leadership, and other governance bodies will remain involved in reviewing and considering any proposed actions. She emphasized that recommendations will inform discussion and decision-making but will not bypass existing governance processes.

x. **Importance of Proactive Planning** – Provost Petrella stressed the importance of conducting the review before demographic and enrollment challenges become more severe. Because academic program changes often require several years before financial impacts are realized, the institution must begin evaluating options now rather than waiting for a potential crisis. She described the review as a long-term planning tool intended to help Marshall remain resilient and adaptable.

xi. **Growth Opportunities and Institutional Investment** – In addition to examining efficiency and sustainability, the review is intended to identify opportunities for growth and innovation. Huron has been asked to evaluate areas where Marshall may be able to expand programs, leverage existing strengths, and attract additional students. Provost Petrella emphasized that the objective is not solely cost reduction but also strategic investment and revenue growth. She noted that continuous program assessment is a hallmark of healthy institutions committed to mission alignment and long-term success.

xii. **Institutional Community and Collaboration and Concluding Remarks** – Provost Petrella expressed gratitude for the welcoming and supportive nature of the Marshall community. She highlighted the strong sense of collegiality, engagement, and institutional pride she has experienced through campus interactions and university events. She concluded by expressing confidence that Marshall's collaborative culture will enable the university to navigate future challenges successfully while continuing to grow and strengthen its mission.

Questions for Provost Petrella: None

c. Board of Governors – Robin Riner (5 minutes)
   i. Chair Gage addressed that Dr. Riner was not able to make it to the meeting and she sent a message stating that there is no Board of Governors report. The board has not met. Their next meeting is October 7th, so we can expect a report at our next meeting.

d. Advisory Council of Faculty – Amine Oudghiri-Otmani (5 minutes)
   i. ACF has not met since our last faculty senate meeting. The next meeting is October 16th and 17th in Bridgeport, and that'll be our yearly retreat.

e. Graduate Council – Richard Egleton (5 minutes)
   i. The Graduate Council held its first meeting of the academic year on August 28th. We assigned committee memberships and reviewed rules of the committee.
   ii. Upcoming Graduate Council Meeting – The next Graduate Council meeting is scheduled for September 25th. The Council is expected to:
      1. Hear remarks and updates from Provost Diane Helfers Petrella regarding ongoing academic initiatives and university priorities.
      2. Address graduate faculty credentialing reviews and several planning-related discussions.
      3. Discuss a proposed planning policy revision – The Graduate Council is considering a policy change establishing March 1 as the final submission deadline for proposals involving new

graduate majors, new graduate programs, and new graduate certificates. The proposed deadline is intended to provide sufficient time for thorough review and evaluation before the conclusion of the academic year and to avoid expedited end-of-semester consideration.

4. Discuss the timeline for program review for the 14 graduate programs that are being reviewed.

f. Student Government Association – Alissa Davis (5 minutes)
   i. Student well-being: Keep that in mind as you move through midterms and then up toward finals, that there are students that might be struggling a little bit more than usual. Miss Davis discussed meeting with struggling students at an increased rate. She suggested that faculty and staff please make those reports to the behavioral intervention team or any other necessary and appropriate channels if you see students that are exhibiting any concerning behaviors. She mentioned that you may be the only person that worries or wonders about them all day and to keep that in mind as you move through midterms and then up toward finals.
   ii. Student representatives: There is a full roster of students that are willing to serve on any committee that you may need them to. Reach out when you start looking for those student representatives. We will have them ready and there for you.
   iii. Student volunteers: If you have any events coming up that you need student volunteers for, I can always have them there for you. Please reach out.

6. Standing Committee Liaison Reports
   a. Government Affairs Committee – Kari Mika-Lude (4 minutes)
      i. Government Affairs Committee had its first meeting of the academic year on September 3rd. We had some follow-up discussion on several legislative issues from last year, including some concerns about the return-on-investment measures in determining financial aid eligibility and the potential reintroduction of legislation establishing the West Virginia Collaboratory. We also began discussing priorities for this year, including possible ways to gather faculty and student input on legislative concerns. We will likely follow up with Alissa on that. Our meeting schedule is set for the first Thursday of each month at 1.30p.m. and we meet next on October 1st.
   b. University Curriculum Committee – Faculty Senate Chair Rick Gage (4 minutes)
      i. There is still no liaison for this committee.

ii. UCC met on September 18th and approved several proposals in CIM. These will be upcoming recommendations for the Faculty Senate to review in October.

iii. The next UCC meeting is scheduled for October 16th.

c. Faculty Personnel Committee – Billy Gardner, Jr. (4 minutes)

i. We met on September the 18th. Our primary focus is on each college's sabbatical procedures to ensure they innclude an evaluation rubric, a post-sabbatical review process, and a college-level faculty review committee. We hope to approve these policies before the next sabbatical review cycle. We took the sabbatical policies of each college and formed teams to review them. Those reviews will come back to the larger committee.

ii. We also discussed whether faculty misconduct policy AA17 applies to administrators, which was a question that came up. We did not have an answer. It requires clarification, we think.

iii. Our next meeting will be near the end of October.

d. Research Committee – Shane Welch (report read by Faculty Senate Chair Rick Gage) (4 minutes)

i. The research committee has met twice this academic year. At their first meeting, Mohammad Karim was elected as chair. At the September 22nd meeting, the committee moved to restore the three-cycle funding year for Quinlan travel awards. The following schedule was approved for Quinlan: Cycle one deadline - September 1st, Cycle 2 deadline – January 10th, and Cycle 3 deadline - April 20th.

ii. The research committee will be meeting with Faculty Senate Chair Gage soon to begin working on implementing this schedule. The Quinlan Award evaluation rubric will be revised to clarify metrics for the award. For this academic year, Quinlan deadlines remain October 1st and April 1st. The new dates will go into effect next year.

iii. The research committee also revisited a past initiative to compose an institutional white paper outlining critical university research needs, infrastructural deficiencies, and funding recommendations. The committee will be meeting with the Senate Chair and MURC soon to discuss these white paper initiatives further, hoping to have something finalized by early 2027.

e. Student Conduct and Welfare Committee – Marianna Linz (4 minutes)

i. The committee has not met.

f. Faculty Technology Committee – Chair/Liaison (report read by Faculty Senate Chair Rick Gage) (4 minutes)

i. There is still no liaison for this committee.

ii. The FTC met on September 14th. Laura Stapleton was elected as the Chair and Stephen Tipler was elected as the Recording Secretary.

iii. Technology updates were discussed. These include the MUIT operations activity wheel that provides timelines for planned outages, updates, and operational activities and Marsha, the AI service agent that can help with general tech issues or can escalate an issue to a live agent.

iv. Blackboard course access for students was discussed, and it was concluded that additional feedback will be sought due to faculty workload concerns. They're considering a recommendation in the coming months, so definitely speak to your FTC representative if you have any concerns.

v. Usage of Zoom on campus was discussed. The university will continue permitting departmental Zoom spending in the current fiscal year, but it is considering ending the Zoom purchasing arrangement in fiscal year 28 to reduce duplicative technology spending. The committee will be in contact with departments who may be affected by this before any further decisions are made.

vi. The committee held a first reading of a proposed policy on generative AI in teaching and learning. This is the AI work group policy. The initial draft established a default permission for student AI use and affirms faculty authority to determine how AI may be used in their courses. This policy will undergo additional review with ATC and FTC before a 30-day shared governance period during which faculty can comment openly. The goal is to establish a policy before the end of this year. The full minutes from this meeting are posted on the Faculty Senate website and on the Faculty Technology Committee's page. You can also find the information for your college's FTC representatives there. I recommend reaching out to them with any questions or concerns.

Questions/Comments: Richard Egleton, Graduate Council requested that Graduate Council have representation on that AI committee, stating that the AI policy is going to impact graduate as well as undergraduate programs.

7. Other Requests to Speak – None
8. Adjournment - approved

The meeting was adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Marshall University Faculty Senate

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 24, 2026, 4:00 PM

MSC Don Morris Room (Microsoft Teams Streaming Only)

Respectfully Submitted:

/s/ Melinda Varney

Melinda Varney, Recording Secretary

MINUTES APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Rick Gage, Chair
Faculty Senate

10/26/2026
Date Signed

MINUTES READ:

Brad Smith, President
Marshall University

10/29/2026
Date Signed