Marshall University Faculty Senate

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 22, 2026, 4:00 PM

MSC Don Morris Room (Microsoft Teams Streaming Only)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah McDermott, Leah Turley, Phil Vallejo, Sandy York, Jamey Halleck, Kevin Levine, Amanda Thompson-Abbott, Uday Tate, Boniface Yemba, Mike Huesmann, Lanai Jennings-Knotts, Conrae Lucas-Adkins, Ammar Alzarrad, Ananya Jana, Ross Salary, Pingping Zhu, Sujoy Bose, Nikki Dvorak, Zach Garrett, Angela Graham, Shikeal Harris, Lisa Muto, Alysha Nichols, Laura Stephens, Marybeth Beller, Puspa Damai, Nick Shangler (for Sara Henning). Marianna Linz, Megan Marshall, Dalton Monk, Boniface Noyongoyo, Josh Williams (for Daniel O'Malley), Jana Tigchelaar, Raid Al-Aqtash, Kelly Beatty, Rick Gage, Herman Mays, Sean McBride, Shane Welch, Jessica Buerck, Jim Denvir, Raj Khanna, Ruhul Amin, Mindy Varney, Heather Lauer, Eryn Roles.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Heather Stark, Tim Melvin, Jerica Wesley, Shoshannah Diehl, Anthony Viola, Billy Gardner, Jr., Philippe Georgel, Bryan Burk (substitute), Chatrawee Shepherd (substitute), Jinju Wang (substitute), Tiffany Davis, Hasan Koc (substitute), Jen Sparks (substitute), Kari Mika-Lude.

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Egleton

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Alissa Davis, Amine Oudghiri-Otmani

PARLIAMENTARIAN: Andrew Morelock

SENATE STAFF: Hailey Bibbee

GUESTS: In-person – Kelly Bradley, Allison Carey, Rohan Christie-David, Scott Davis, Bruce Felder, Brandi Jacobs-Jones, Susan Lanham, Karen McComas, Brian Morgan, Anna Mummert, Ginny Painter, Diane Petrella, Kateryna Schray, Marcie Simms, Brad D. Smith, Wes Stites.
Virtual – Mohammad Abdulrahman, Eric Blough, Monica Brooks Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, Maria Gindhart, Lindsey Harper, Jim Harris, Eric Himes, Craig Kimble, Jessica Lowman, Carleen O'Neill, Jodie Penrod, Jerry Ross, Niki Rowe-Fortner, Julia Spears, Heather Stark, Matt Tidd, Susan Tusing.

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 24, 2026 – accepted with minor adjustments to typographical errors
3. Announcements - Chair
    a. **Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree Process** – The review committee has completed its initial work, and the list of recommended Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree candidates has been sent to President Smith. President Smith has begun exploring the candidates and assessing availability and feasibility. Additional

updates will be provided as the process moves forward, but details regarding individual candidates will remain confidential.

b. **Honorary Degree Conferral and Rescission Procedures** – A new Board of Governors rule and accompanying administrative procedure are being developed to govern the conferral and possible rescission of honorary degrees. The conferral language will largely codify the process already established through previous Faculty Senate recommendations. The new material will also establish a formal process for rescinding an honorary degree if that ever becomes necessary. Drafts will move through the appropriate review process before final adoption.

c. **Marshall Educational Experience (MEE)/General Education Proposal** – A draft of the proposed Marshall Educational Experience was submitted to the Executive Committee. EC determined that the proposal needed additional clarification and development before moving to the full Senate for consideration. The task force and Academic Affairs are reviewing the comments and concerns that have been raised, and conversations are continuing about possible revisions. The current goal is to have an updated proposal ready for further consideration in November, although the timeline will depend on the progress of that work.

d. **MUBOG-AA-6 Review** – As colleges and departments have begun working through MUBOG-AA-6, several substantive and procedural concerns have surfaced. The policy is now receiving a closer review, and revisions are expected before its planned implementation in 2028. Faculty and committees that identify additional concerns with AA-6 are encouraged to document them in writing and send them to the Faculty Senate office for inclusion in the broader review.

e. **Standing Committee Liaisons** - The Faculty Senate still needs liaisons for three standing committees: Athletics, Curriculum, and Physical Facilities and Planning. This is the last call for volunteers. Faculty interested in serving should contact the Faculty Senate office as soon as possible. If no volunteers come forward following this meeting, appointments will be made so that all three committees have Senate representation.

f. **Standing Committee Review** - One priority for this year is to review the roles, responsibilities, membership, and operations of the standing committees. Given the extent of institutional change currently underway, this is an appropriate time for committees to consider what they are formally charged to do, what they currently do, and what they could contribute moving forward. The review will also consider committee membership and representation, scheduling, expected time commitments, recordkeeping, reporting responsibilities, public access to meeting information, and possible areas of overlap or gaps among committees. The goal is not to assume that every committee needs to change or become busier. It is to preserve what works, clarify responsibilities where needed, and help committees identify their most meaningful role in the university's governance system. A small pilot review with selected committees will begin before the process is expanded more broadly.

g. **Academic Portfolio Review** – This group met in person on campus yesterday, and the process is approximately halfway through, with additional analysis and consultation still underway. The current expectation is that a final report will be available in December or January. Faculty should be cautious about rumors suggesting that the process has been completed or final recommendations have already been made. If there are any questions about the process, please reach out to the Faculty Senate office or Academic Affairs.

h. **Bookstore Transition** – Several faculty members have communicated that the transition to Barnes & Noble has been a bit rocky in some cases. We are trying to better understand the scope of the concerns and determine how they can best be addressed. If you or your colleagues have experienced problems, please send me a brief description by email. Information about the affected course, the nature and timing of the problem, its effect on students or instruction, and whether the issue has been resolved will be especially helpful.

i. **Upcoming Dates** –

i. **Executive Committee Meeting –** Scheduled for November 9.

ii. **Faculty Senate Meeting** – Scheduled for November 19.

iii. **Recommendations and Resolutions Deadline** – Recommendations and resolutions for the November Senate cycle are due to the Senate Office by October 30.

4. Recommendations/Resolutions - None

a. **SR 26-27-01 CC** – Recommends **Approval of the Listed UG Program Additions, Deletions, and Changes:** Changes - **BFA, Visual Art; Graphic Design; Studio Art BFA, Visual Art Emphasis.** Approved

b. **SR 26-27-02 CC –** Recommends **Approval of the Listed UG Course Additions, Deletions, and Changes**: Additions – **ART 388; ART 495;** Changes – **CHM 365;** Deletions – **DFIA 445; DFIA 454; DFIA 461; DFIA 470.** Approved

5. Regular Reports

a. President – Brad Smith (15 minutes)

i. **Opening Remarks and Campus Updates** – President Smith opened by noting positive developments across the university, including favorable news from the Higher Learning Commission regarding several programs and recent athletics victories. He thanked employees for participating in the annual employee survey, which received a 76% campus response rate, two percentage points higher than the previous year and significantly higher than participation in recent years.

ii. **Fall General Faculty Meeting and State of the University** – President Smith encouraged faculty who did not attend the Fall General Faculty Meeting to watch the video replay. He stated that the presentation provides a comprehensive update on university activities and

establishes a foundation for Marshall's work over the next three to five years.

iii. **Enrollment Growth and Demographic Cliff** – President Smith acknowledged that the demographic enrollment cliff is affecting higher education. Current Power BI data indicated that total enrollment was approximately 1% higher when dual-enrollment students were included, but enrollment was lower by approximately two dozen students when high school dual enrollment was excluded. He noted that some peer institutions are reporting more difficult enrollment conditions and that Marshall continues to perform relatively well, while emphasizing that the broader demographic challenge is now affecting institutions across the region.

iv. **Artificial Intelligence and Policy Changes** – President Smith stated that artificial intelligence has accelerated considerably since the Marshall for All plan was developed in 2023, requiring the university to reassess its strategy. He also cited ongoing federal and state policy changes affecting research, the U.S. Department of Education, and higher education more broadly. Drawing on President John F. Kennedy's observation that the best time to repair a roof is when the sun is shining, he emphasized the importance of acting proactively while the university remains strong.

Campus Listening Tour and Strategic Work Streams – Feedback from the spring campus listening tour informed four major work streams conducted over the summer and synthesized during the past 90 days:

1. Budget Advisory Committee - The Budget Advisory Committee was asked to prepare for multiple enrollment outcomes and identify options that would allow Marshall to remain true to its mission, protect institutional priorities, respond with agility, and avoid returning to a budget deficit.
2. External Benchmarking and Academic Portfolio Review – Marshall engaged Huron to conduct data analysis and benchmarking. President Smith emphasized that Huron is not making decisions; recommendations and decisions remain with Marshall's representative steering committee and will be guided by the university's priorities. The administrative and staff review was conducted during the summer, and the academic portfolio review began after faculty returned in the fall. The review is approximately halfway complete. The steering committee is expected to receive its final report on December 10, with a final

set of recommendations anticipated in January for subsequent communication to the campus.

3. **Student Success Action Learning Team** – The Student Success Action Learning Team, led by Brian Morgan and colleagues, benchmarked 24 peer institutions and examined successful practices already operating across Marshall. The university established goals of exceeding an 80% retention rate and improving four- and six-year graduation rates. The team's work has concluded, and its recommendations will be communicated to the campus.
4. **AI Workshops and Emerging Institutional Strategy** – Summer AI workshops engaged students, department chairs, deans, members of the Board of Governors, Cabinet, and other campus stakeholders. President Smith summarized the resulting strategy in six words: "Human-centered, AI-amplified, lifetime-empowered." He stated that these concepts emerged from campus-wide listening sessions and collaborative work rather than from a top-down directive or an external consulting study.

v. **Emerging Institutional Priorities** – President Smith outlined five priorities supporting the university's human-centered, AI-amplified, and lifetime-empowered strategy:

1. Provide superior access to education and strong value through low net tuition and high civic and financial returns,
2. Deliver a personalized learning experience for every student,
3. Build durable life skills,
4. Create an AI-amplified campus that supports and trains faculty and staff while ensuring that every student graduates with AI literacy and field-specific AI mastery, and
5. Ensure institutional resiliency.

vi. **Plan-on-a-Page Review and Campus Feedback** – President Smith reported that the idea-development phase has concluded and that the major concepts are now established. Campus-wide communication included a six-minute contextual video and an updated plan-on-a-page presented at the Fall General Faculty Meeting. The plan contains nine orange boxes for campus review. Although the underlying ideas have been established, the university is seeking feedback on whether the language communicates those ideas effectively and clearly. A 30-day comment period will remain open through Thanksgiving. Faculty, staff,

and students were encouraged to review the material and provide feedback in each of the nine areas.

vii. **Upcoming Communications** – Following the current Marshall at the Moment video, the university will issue two additional campus communications the following week. One will present recommendations from the Student Success Action Learning Team. The other will address institutional resiliency, including recommendations from the Budget Advisory Committee, recommendations involving staff and administration, and initiatives such as the Strategic Hiring Committee. President Smith stated that the university will communicate these recommendations transparently.

viii. **Request to the Campus Community** – President Smith asked members of the university community to watch the video, encourage colleagues to do the same, participate in the comment process, and offer suggestions for making the plan clearer and more understandable. He also asked the campus to remain focused on students and Marshall's mission, emphasizing that the university will navigate this period together and continue to grow stronger.

ix. **Closing Remarks** – President Smith concluded by expressing confidence in Marshall's strength and future and invited questions from the Faculty Senate.

Questions for President Smith: Senator Marybeth Beller (COLA) asked about construction on 3rd Avenue and if these were Marshall University properties. President Smith addressed this question, mentioning that the Kroger Marketplace groundbreaking took place. He mentioned that Marshall worked with the city (due each entity owning part of the property in that area) and that we have worked to divest it. He said that two other businesses committed to that property and that they are going to be in high demand for our campus community. Given that contracts are not yet finalized, he mentioned that he cannot announce them yet.

b. Provost – Diane Helfers Petrella (15 minutes)

i. **Opening Remarks and First 100 Days** – The provost reflected on completing approximately her first 100 days at Marshall and thanked faculty, academic leaders, the President, the Provost's Office team, and the deans for their engagement, patience, and support. She noted that campus listening sessions and conversations have helped her learn about the institution and expressed appreciation for the thoughtful and welcoming response she has received.

ii. **Student Success Action Learning Team Recommendations** – Provost Petrella stated that recommendations from the Student Success Action

Learning Team will significantly affect Academic Affairs, particularly the university's engagement with students. Academic leadership is already reviewing portions of the recommendations, with additional information expected the following week. She committed to meaningful consultation with Faculty Senate leadership and faculty whenever proposed changes affect curriculum, advising, faculty responsibilities, or the academic work of the university.

iii. **Retention and Graduation** – Provost Petrella emphasized that improving student retention and graduation can offset some enrollment losses associated with the demographic cliff. Although staffing, systems, structures, and one-stop student services are important, she stressed that faculty members' daily work is central to recruiting, retaining, and graduating students. Deans have been asked to examine retention and graduation rates within each college, department, and academic program and to work with faculty to identify where students are being lost.

iv. **Courses with High DFW Rates** – Academic units were encouraged to examine courses in which more than 30% of students receive a grade of D or F or withdraw. The purpose is to understand barriers to student success and consider teaching strategies, support mechanisms, and other interventions that may help students progress. The provost also emphasized the need to ensure that faculty, staff, and students understand the student-success resources already available on campus.

v. **Predictable Degree Pathways and Course Scheduling** – Provost Petrella stressed that students should be able to enter the university with a clear four-year graduation plan, understand which courses they need, and rely on the institution to deliver the promised course sequence. Greater clarity and predictability in degree plans and course rotations will make the university easier to navigate and help students remain on track for graduation.

vi. **Institutional Resiliency and Foundation Funds** – As part of the university's institutional resiliency work, the provost is reviewing how academic units use foundation funds. Questions are being evaluated against the original memorandum of understanding, donor intent, the needs of academic units, student support, and the university's academic mission. She clarified that this review is intended to promote responsible stewardship rather than signal a lack of trust.

vii. **Strategic Hiring** – Provost Petrella has been working with deans to ensure that hiring decisions are data-informed, strategic, and aligned

with successful academic programs and anticipated institutional needs. Proposed hires are being considered in light of possible programmatic changes and the continuing need for each faculty position. She described faculty as both Marshall's greatest investment and its greatest asset and emphasized the importance of deploying faculty resources in ways that best support students and institutional success.

viii. **Travel Requests and Resource Review** - Provost Petrella has also reviewed travel requests to better understand how colleges use institutional resources. She characterized the additional review as part of learning the university, its colleges, and their operational needs and thanked the campus for its patience during that process.

ix. **MUBOG-AA-6 Review** – The underlying intent of MUBOG-AA-6 is sound, but the document requires additional work to ensure that policy language is clear and durable and that operational procedures are separated from policy. The Faculty Affairs team is reviewing the document. The goal is to preserve the original intent of faculty and committees while placing flexible operational details in procedures that can be updated as technology and administrative practices change. The review is not intended to fundamentally alter Marshall's promotion and tenure evaluation process.

x. **Faculty Workload Procedure** – Academic Affairs is developing a faculty workload procedure under the recently approved workload policy. An earlier draft procedure remained unpublished in final form. Faculty representatives, deans, Faculty Senate leadership, and the Faculty Affairs team are revising the procedure to establish a shared baseline for faculty workload and a consistent process for awarding administrative, research, grant-related, creative, and other workload releases. The provost emphasized that the policy itself is not being changed and that the procedure will move through the appropriate committees for broad review and feedback.

xi. **Faculty Absence from Campus** – Provost Petrella discussed implementation of the existing faculty absence-from-campus policy. Practices have varied across academic units, and the university has not consistently tracked approved absences or instructional coverage. Documentation is intended to protect faculty and help the university respond accurately when questions arise about canceled classes or an instructor's absence. Faculty will document approval and explain how instructional responsibilities were covered, such as through recorded lectures, graduate assistants, guest lecturers, or other arrangements.

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Requests will continue to move through department chairs, with deans compiling the information for institutional access.

xii. **Policy Implementation, Accountability, and Consistency** – The Provost stated that several current efforts are intended to address gaps between existing policy and campus implementation. The goal is to improve accountability, transparency, documentation, and consistency across academic units rather than create changes without consultation.

xiii. **Academic Portfolio Review** – The Provost reinforced that the academic portfolio review is intended to provide information and identify opportunities rather than dictate decisions. The review may reveal areas where the university can operate more efficiently, reinvest, or move resources to support institutional priorities. She described the results as tools that will help the campus collectively make informed decisions over the next 10 to 15 years.

xiv. **Steering Committee Engagement** – Based on her prior experience with similar reviews at two universities, both as a faculty member and an administrator, the provost praised the academic portfolio review steering committee for its exceptional level of engagement. Members are asking difficult questions, examining details closely, reading materials thoroughly, and participating respectfully and productively. She stated that the committee provides strong campus representation and that its work has been encouraging during a process that can otherwise become difficult or divisive.

xv. **Closing Remarks** – Provost Petrella thanked the campus community for its support and welcome and expressed hope that the university will continue working collaboratively and positively as it addresses difficult issues during the coming months. She concluded by inviting questions.

Questions for Provost Petrella: Senator Marybeth Beller (COLA) made a request regarding how double majors are counted in the software for the academic review. She suggested that there be way to come back to department units to ask if there are additional majors that the software did not pick up on. Provost Petrella reassured everyone that even though there are always nuanced things that are difficult to capture, they will go back to academic units and allow you to provide context and additional information. Senator Jana Tigchelaar aske about the faculty absence from campus form as it relates to faculty who teach largely online when they travel for professional purposes. Provost Petrell suggested that the form is designed to protect both the institution and the faculty member and that it does not hurt to fill it out, even if you are not having to cover your classes in a different way. She mentioned that filling out the form also has to do with liability, workman's comp, and knowing where faculty are.

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. Their next meeting is December 2, so we can expect a report in our January meeting.

d. Advisory Council of Faculty – Amine Oudghiri-Otmani (5 minutes)
   i. Chair Gage addressed that Dr. Oudghiri-Otmani was not able to make it to the meeting.

e. Graduate Council – Richard Egleton (5 minutes)
   i. When they last met, the Graduate Council approved graduate faculty status for multiple faculty members. They also approved changes in graduate programs for CAM, COEPD, COHP, SOM, and COS. They have all been approved by the president. A proposal also passed to change the last submission date of new programs or majors to March 1 (the deadline for the GC penultimate meeting of the year).
   ii. Upcoming Graduate Council Meeting – The next Graduate Council meeting is scheduled for October 30 in MSC 2W16-b at 1 p.m.

f. Student Government Association – Alissa Davis (5 minutes)
   i. Chair Gage addressed that Alissa Davis was not able to make it to the meeting, but that she said that there is nothing to report that cannot wait until next month. She also mentioned that student representatives have been identified for standing committees.

6. Standing Committee Liaison Reports
   a. Academic Planning Committee – Tim Melvin (4 minutes)
      i. Chair Gage addressed that Dr. Melvin was not able to make it to the meeting. He did provide information. APC met on September 30 and October 19. At the September meeting, the committee approved a revised program review rubric that gives greater weight to student outcomes like graduation or graduate success, enrollment, and completion. At the October meeting, the APC began reviewing recommendations for the BA in elementary education, secondary education, and early childhood education. Recommendations will be coming to the senate soon. The full APC report is on the Senate website.
   b. Athletic Committee – Josh Williams (4 minutes)
      i. The committee has not met yet. There is nothing to report at this time.
   c. Budget and Academic Policy Committee – Philippe Georgel (4 minutes)
      i. Chair Gage addressed that Dr. Georgel was not able to make it to the meeting and that Dr. Jim Denvir, the BAPC Chair, will provide the report.
      ii. BAPC met on September 28, approved the agenda and previous meeting minutes. There was a discussion focused on several academic policies that may require clarification.

1. Medical withdrawal medical leave policy (UPAA4) - This policy probably needs some clarification and wording changes. The committee is working with Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Anna Williams (Legal) to make sure that those policies come through in a clean manner. They will come back to us at the next meeting, and you will see those as a proposal in an upcoming faculty senate meeting.
2. Attendance policy (UPAA2) - Clarification was required for military leave. This will come up in an upcoming faculty senate meeting once they have been around the appropriate people.

iii. Academic calendar – The committee is going to propose four more years of the academic calendar. The syllabus policy will need some revisions and will be coming around again.

iv. There are no recommendations to forward to Faculty Senate at this time, but there will be some for future meetings.

v. The next meeting will be November 16 at 4 p.m.

d. Library Committee – Heather Lauer (4 minutes)

i. The library had a flat budget this year, but there are still challenges. There are issues at the state level with the payment process. Purchasing and legal are assisting with these issues. Some publishers have issues with this; however, most vendors understand and are working with us through these delays. Connecting with Dr. Pillay (MURC) has helped in strategizing how to fund the library while also addressing strategic collection needs that support research.

ii. An October change in leadership from Dr. Nate Floyd to Dr. Anne Marie Casey occurred.

iii. The ALA pre-candidacy application was completed on Oct. 1, and we are waiting for feedback from the ALA. The next application round occurs this summer.

iv. There is a stacks project underway. It is approximately 20% complete. Volumes are being moved from Morrow to Drinko to make room for a large incoming archives collection. No materials are being discarded. New locations are being added to the signage and catalog to assist users.

e. Faculty Development Committee – Jerica Wesley (4 minutes)

i. Chair Gage addressed that Dr. Wesley was not able to make it to the meeting. She did provide him with a short report. FDC met on October 21 to review INCO applications. Award letters will go out tomorrow. To faculty who applied, the committee will meet again in February to review the second round of INCO applications.

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f. Physical Facilities and Planning Committee – Jamie Halleck (4 minutes)
   i. The committee met on September 21. They received construction updates and discussed several campus facility concerns (elevators in Corbly Hall, deteriorating brickwork around the science building, and winter preparedness). The next meeting is planned for late October or early November. Brandi Jones-Jacob and Travis Bailey will discuss the findings from the Space Usage and Facility Action Learning Team. That discussion will help the committee identify priorities for classroom updates, and then we will use classroom usage.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

/s/ Melinda Varney

Melinda Varney, Recording Secretary

MINUTES APPROVED BY FACULTY SENATE:

_____ _____

Rick Gage, Chair
Faculty Senate

Date Signed

MINUTES READ:

_____ _____

Brad Smith, President
Marshall University

Date Signed

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