

Faculty Senate Minutes of Meeting

Regularly scheduled meeting of the Faculty Senate of Rochester Institute of Technology

Thursday, February 6, 2025

12:15 - 1:50 PM

Slaughter Hall 2220-2240

Attendance: See Below

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order; S. Malachowsky (12:18)

Agenda Item No. 2: Approval of Agenda; S. Malachowsky (12:18)

Agenda approved by acclamation

Agenda Item No. 3: Communications Officer's Report/Approval of Minutes; S. Aldersley (12:19)

Minutes of 1/16 and 1/23 meetings approved by acclamation

[January 16, 2025 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes](#)

[January 23, 2025 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes](#)

Agenda Item No. 4: Executive Committee Report; S. Malachowsky (12:21)

- As a reminder, please note the column on the agenda marked "Level" that indicates whether an item is up for introduction, discussion and/or action.
- The hold on the 2/27 meeting has been activated in Zoom format.
- Provost David will present on the University's reaction to federal executive orders at the 3/6 meeting
- The Provost has indicated that where faculty have been impacted by recent federal actions, they may include an Impact Statement in tenure documentation and annual evaluations, etc.
- The Compensation Benchmark Committee has been charged to present its recommendations to the Provost by April 1.

Agenda Item No. 5: Staff Council Update; N/A

No representative of Staff Council present

Agenda Item No. 6: Student Government Update; J. Anderson (12:25)

Update on various Paw Prints

Agenda Item No. 7: University Grading Scale; B. Herring (12:27)

The AAC received a request at the end of last year to consider the introduction of a university-wide grading scale. The 3-part rationale given was that a standard numerical scale would 1) reduce confusion among students, 2) remove the problem of having a different scale in multiple sections of the same course, and 3) remove the problem of having different scales impacting the Outstanding Undergraduate Scholar Award in a negative way. The AAC would like to take this on as a self-charge

S. Johnson: The AAC looked at this a few years ago and determined it was not a good thing. Quoting from their report, they found that final course grades are the sole responsibility of the course instructor and that a single Institute-wide system would not be appropriate for the diverse collection of colleges, departments and programs found at RIT, and that a top-down imposition of grading practices would not be effective.

C. Hull: We discussed something like this a few years ago in our college and it was pretty close to unanimously rejected. I think I can speak on behalf of my constituents that this is not something we want anybody spending time on because we don't want it.

E. Williams: Can you speak more specifically to what problem this would solve?

B. Herring: Just the general level of confusion around what a particular number grade means.

Senator ?: How long ago was this looked at?

S. Johnson: I think this report was written in 2017.

S. Malachowsky: This is a charge that comes in almost every summer. It can be a major point of confusion. 2017 to 2024 is more than enough time for a reconsideration of policy.

C. Hull: While I take your point that it's been seven years, the idea behind reconsideration is that something might have changed. I would like to know what is different between now and 2017 that warrants us reconsidering the matter. Because if the data that would be considered is exactly the same, there is no need to reconsider the data.

B. Herring: I'm not sure what the data was that was collected in 2017.

R. Zanibbi: The 2017 report is in the official collection of senate documents. Perhaps the committee might want to review it because it's actually a carefully sourced document that goes through logical arguments from previous publications related to evaluation.

M. Laver: We have a subcommittee of the Senate asking to look into this thing and I don't have a problem with that.

J. Lanzafame: I can give an exam that has an average by design of 50%. Am I then therefore forced to fail all the students? Our standardized ACS final by design has an average of 50% because it then gives you a Gaussian distribution around the middle, whereas if it had an average of 80%, you'd lose the top end. As a scientist, as much as I want to embrace the numbers, they're somewhat arbitrary. So creating an automatic match between a 75 and a C assumes the 75 means something more absolute than it really does

M. Ruhling: It sounds from the comments that are being made that maybe it's something the AAC should consider.

C. Hull: I would like to propose that if we're going to give this charge that we explicitly include in the charge that they read the 2017 report before proceeding with doing new work.

H. Ghazle: Second.

S. Malachowsky: The friendly amendment is to require the committee to consider the prior document from 2017.

Motion: Senate approves the ACC's self-charge, with friendly amendment

Passed: 17/13/7

[University Grading Scale Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 8: Policy E01.2 (Nepotism) Edits; M. Polowchak (12:42)

The presenter did not appear.

Agenda Item No. 9: Academic Freedom - Motion to Adopt Chicago Statement (Policy E02.0 Principles of Academic Freedom); M. Reed (12:44)

M. Reed: I chaired the ad hoc committee on academic freedom and freedom of expression and we presented last April. The committee was charged to review effective policies on academic freedom and freedom of expression and we're now asking you to take action on one of our recommendations. As part of our work, we looked at COACHE survey results, conducted a faculty survey and reviewed external resources, including the Chicago statement.

The main takeaway from the survey was that 22% of the respondents indicated they have experienced or believed they've experienced some sort of issue related to academic freedom. That said, there were a lot of issues labeled as academic freedom issues, which might not have been; for example, 'I want to teach

this course and my department head won't let me teach it.' Many of the respondents indicated that they would like more education regarding academic freedom issues, so another takeaway is that we should consider having some type of training on this issue.

We made several recommendations. The most controversial one was to create a training module, but we thought it might be a good thing, especially if it was not mandatory. We also recommended a working group on academic freedom, whose primary task would be educational and informational, for example, going to college-wide meetings, discussing issues, taking questions, and reviewing policies. The main recommendation, and the one I'm bringing you today, is that we should adopt the freedom of expression resolution that originated at the University of Chicago, with specific articulation for RIT. And if that is approved, then it could be incorporated into our E.02 Principles of Academic Freedom document.

The Chicago statement is pretty strong and a lot of universities have adopted it. I should also mention, as you'll see in the red-line document, that we recommended some word changes in E.02, the most substantial being that we struck out the line about faculty not introducing controversial topics into their courses, because the committee felt pretty strongly that in today's world, that's a pretty subjective thing.

M. Laver: I've read the Chicago Statement in its entirety, and I'm gratified to see that something like 113 schools have approved it. I think it's an excellent statement and I urge the Senate to adopt it.

E. Williams: I'm looking at the red line document and the statement is not simply that they shall not teach controversial material. It says with no relation to their subjects, in other words, don't teach controversial stuff that has nothing to do with your class. That seems different.

M. Reed: Thank you for clarifying that. But again, it's still pretty subjective. I mean I teach statistics, and I use climate change examples in my class. Is that connected to my subject? These things are subjective.

I. Puchades: Are you asking us to vote on adoption of the Chicago Statement as well as the changes to E.02?

M. Reed: Both.

S.. Malachowsky: We view this as a continuation of prior action, meaning this was considered pretty heavily last year, and so this is now up for a vote.

J. Capps: I think it makes a lot of sense to update the statement that we have. The previous one is older than most people in this room and having something a little bit more current makes a lot of sense. Plus the fact that it's been embraced by such a wide range of universities is a sign that this is well thought out.

P. Padmanabhan: Since I am a new senator, I haven't seen this document before. I have one clarification question. The previous version said faculty administration and board of trustees. Why was 'board of trustees' struck out?

C. Reed: We considered the board of trustees to be part of the administration. We didn't think they needed to be specifically named.

C. Hull: I'm wondering if a faculty member's prerogative to decide how they grade their classes falls under the umbrella of academic freedom?

C. Reed: That's an interesting point. There are a lot of gray areas, but I don't think that's one of them.

G. Tsouri: How do we prevent a classroom from becoming a platform?

C. Reed: I don't have the language in front of me, but I believe the statement that we landed on would prevent that.

R. Zanibbi: I have the document in front of me. The preceding sentence actually addresses the issue. It says you're entitled to freedom in the classroom and discussing your subject and material relating directly to it. So there is already this idea that it has to be contextualized.

C. Kray: You wanted to recommend that we develop a training module and establish a working group. I don't know if we have the power to do that.

S. Malachowsky: This only relates to the adoption of this statement and the changes to E.02 in the red line document.

Motion: Senate approves the inclusion of the Chicago Statement and the red-line changes to E.02

Passed: 36:0:1

[Academic Freedom Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 10: Policy B02.0 (Charter of Academic Governance) Final Votes; S. Malachowsky (1:00)

S. Malachowsky: Our goal is to assemble the changes to the Charter approved by Senate and submit them for a vote by the greater faculty. The first two on the list today relate to the ICC and its subcommittees. The red line document showing the proposed language changes can be found in Senate Google Docs. The first motion, #8.1, proposes to remove the requirement that the ICC ask the Senate to form its subcommittees in favor of allowing the ICC to do it themselves. The language pertaining to the formation of the three subcommittees would be moved from B2 to D.01, Policies for Curriculum Development.

A. Ray: I think we pretty much agree that it should say the way it is.

Senator ?: Am I right in understanding that the executive committee is proposing this but the ICC is opposed to it.

A. Ray: The rationale is that the Senate has more ability to pull together this kind of committee. Right now the GEC is effectively a standing committee with an immense annual load.

B. Dell: I'm not on the committee, but when I read the policy, it seems like it's saying that if they need members to serve on their subcommittees, they are going to have to ask Senate to secure them.

R. Zanibbi: How many standing committees and roughly how many bodies are we talking about? How many seats do we have to fill on these subcommittees? Potentially dozens of people, correct?

P. Padmanabhan: Can somebody clarify why ICC subcommittees are special? So if you look at B2, ICC is the only one with subcommittees.

J. Lanzafame: I understand the reticence to change, but if these committees are considered to be permanently standing subcommittees, if you require the Senate to activate them, you would not have a GEC until sometime in the fall when Senate got around to acting on it, so making it automatic should actually help you fill the roles more efficiently.

C. Hull: If this motion were to pass, ICC could decide unilaterally to not have these subcommittees anymore. And then if Senate wanted the work done, ICC could say, well if you want the work done, form your own committees to do it. ICC would then have less work to do, which might make this more palatable to their members. Is that what Senate wants?

S. Malachowsky: That's the way it is now. The Senate has been doing it automatically, but we're not required to unless the ICC formally asks us to.

M. Ruhling: I'm wondering if perhaps these subcommittees should themselves be committees.

C. Newman: It would be nice to have a concise summary of the positions on both sides, so we could understand the pros and cons.

E. Williams: I agree. And if in that discussion, if there could also be an introduction, what are the subcommittees, what is special about ICC? Why does it need subcommittees? What are these subcommittees doing? That would help build context for those of us who are less familiar.

H. Ghazle: There has been a lot of discussion on the functions of ICC and its subcommittees. For many years we've been trying to populate those committees and the difficulty has been to find people to serve. It's been a lot of work and Tamara can attest to that. Oftentimes, we have to beg colleges to nominate representatives to serve on those committees. There is no doubt that the work of the ICC is tremendous, and the GEC's workload too is very substantial. But we're dealing with over 400 faculty members to serve on the different committees and it's a daunting task which takes a long time. Clearly there are different opinions on this proposed change, but the Executive Committee is not proposing to do away with these committees.

Senator?: I would like to get more input from the ICC, perhaps a presentation, and not just one person speaking for the entire committee.

S. Johnson: I think there is some confusion between creating the committee and populating the committee. What does "form the subcommittees" in the policy mean? Does that mean creating committees or populating the committees?

P. Padmanabhan: I want to repeat what Chris said. I think this is just too fluffy to vote on right now. I think we need more concrete information, a presentation, some content which we can read and come to the meeting and then vote on.

A. Ray: The work of the ICC is tremendously complicated. In addition to the UWC and the GEC, we have to contend with all the colleges curriculum committees. So we're dealing with a tremendous amount of correspondence. The idea of the ICC actually constituting these committees and then populating them is I think the main reason we feel like that Senate should continue to do that.

H. Ghazle: I move to postpone this discussion to the next meeting.

I. Puchades: Seconded.

S. Malachowsky: One thing to keep in mind is the three subcommittees have a fair amount of difference between them, especially in terms of the number of charges they might face. So perhaps we could look at each one differently.

E. Williams: If we're going to hear more from ICC, I'd also like to hear more from the Executive Committee and what their rationale for proposing this change is.

S. Malachowsky: We'll give some thought to how to present that next time.

P. Padmanabhan: Can you clarify whether 'form' means 'populate'?

R. Zanibbi: If we're going to do this, I would ask the Executive Committee to share the slide deck along with all the materials preferably earlier in the week. Because if we receive this the morning of the meeting, I don't think many of us will feel comfortable.

Motion: To bring back discussion of Motion 8.1 at the next meeting on 2/27

Approved: 38:0:0

S. Malachowsky: Motion #9 is to absorb Academic Support & Student Affairs into the Academic Affairs Committee.

S. Aldersley: Senate already approved this motion at the meeting of January 23rd.

S. Malachowsky: Next, with regard to the two FAC motions that Senate approved at the meeting of January 16th, regarding lecturer title changes and clinical faculty, those are now in the hands of the Administration for their review. Depending on the outcome of the lecturer titles decision, we may need to make corresponding changes to the Charter.

S. Aldersley: I thought it was unfortunate that we passed the two motions in a single omnibus vote, because the administration may favor one but not the other.

J. Lanzafame: I'm glad we did it that way, because now it's the administration's problem. But the other thing is we never clarified the voting rights of clinical faculty.

R. Zanibbi: Is there a timeline for a response from the Administration?

L. Williams: I don't know.

T. Brown: As the person who corresponds with the president and provost concerning possible policy changes, I do have an update. When a policy change is approved in Senate, it's the president who gives final approval. The outcome of this particular vote was sent to the president and he did not agree to the changes at this time, saying that further discussion is needed, so we're in limbo. As far as response time is concerned, it's usually within two weeks, but sometimes it is a little bit longer depending on the president's availability.

S. Malachowsky: This is something that the Executive Committee is discussing, but if you're really passionate about it, talk to your dean. Because if there's resistance from the Administration, it's not likely to be one person.

N. Eddingsaas: If the president has articulated that further discussion is needed, why don't we request him

to come and have that further discussion here?

H. Ghazle: The Executive Committee talked with the provost this week about this and it's still going back and forth. One idea is that we might limit the title change to the principal lecturer rank.

S. Aldersley: Tamaira, do you know if the administration has approved the addition of the clinical faculty category?

T. Brown: I was told that none of the changes are being made at this time. Nothing has been approved.

F. Deese: I know that there has been some resistance in the School of Film and Animation. The president or the dean may have heard from our school director who voiced some concern about this.

T. Brown: I'm not sure. According to the note I was given, there needs to be further clarification. I believe there's going to be some research as to how this is addressed at other universities.

D. Olles: Can this be deferred to the new president?

S. Malachowsky: There's that question and there's also the question of the next senate.

D. Olles: Can I rephrase my question? I'm saying if it doesn't get approved, do we have a backup plan? Is there a way it can be deferred? Not that I want it to be.

H. Ghazle: The Senate has made its opinion clear and we, as the Executive Committee, need to get back to the administration and say that our constituents are looking for an answer on this. In terms of policy, this has been sent as one package and the decision has to be made on it as one package.

R. Zanibbi: I want to reiterate Nathan's point. If the complexities are subtle, it might be better to hear that firsthand from the provost and or president.

[Policy B02.0 Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 11: New Business; S. Malachowsky (1:41)

S. Johnson: I've been getting a lot of complaints from my constituents about the DSO not responding to people. I sent an email to them on January 13th trying to get a bunch of questions answered. They responded two weeks later with "Do you still have these questions"? And I responded with, "yes I do, I still need these questions answered" and now another ten days have passed and I haven't heard anything from them other than "we're too busy right now". I need these questions answered because it affects how my classes are run. Plus, I've gotten a lot of new accommodations lately that I don't understand.

M. Ruhling: On January 24th, we got a message from the Administration that RIT was joining the Okanagan charter, an international charter for health-promoting universities and colleges. If you read the charter carefully, there are many points that have to do with curriculum and faculty research. The Faculty Senate was not involved with this decision. This was a decision that to my understanding was made only by the Administration. I would suggest that the Faculty Senate not accept this, that we ask the Administration to pull that statement and that we as a Faculty Senate give it its proper due for consideration, because of statements about curriculum and about research. And I will make a motion for

presentation at the next Senate meeting to that effect.

S. Malachowsky: We will put it on the agenda for the next meeting on 2/27.

E. Williams: I'd like to bring up the executive orders that have put RIT and the rest of Academia into something of a crisis. Staff and students working on grants that are DEI or foreign aid-related cannot be paid. And it could get worse. The future's unclear. When we had the pandemic, the Administration stood up and said nobody will lose their jobs. I'm sure the Administrations' responses are evolving, but I wonder if we can ask them what their commitment is going to be to the people that are going to be affected by this crisis?

S. Malachowsky: The Provost has committed to speak to the Senate on this at the first meeting in March.

E. Williams: March is a month away. I'm already paying a graduate student from discretionary money. I don't know how many people around campus are affected by this, but I would appreciate a speedier response.

H. Ghazle: Can you send the Executive Committee an email with details on what you've just described, so that we can share it with the provost.

D. Olles: Tagging onto the DSO comment, I'd like to ask if we can bring Shelitha and Kelly back to Senate. I know they're making their rounds to the colleges right now doing workshops and making improvements, but we have some academic honesty issues going on in the DSO that should be added to the mix. It's only week four and we've already had six or seven cases just in Calculus.

C. Hull: I agree with Eric that waiting until March to hear about how RIT's plans to react to the executive orders is not feasible in many cases. I do not have a budget to keep people employed until March. Can we get a commitment from the Provost or the President that nobody will lose their job prior to when the grant was going to expire or something along those lines? This week would be nice because people are going to start losing their jobs very soon, if they haven't already.

H. Ghazle: We can ask the provost to come to the meeting on 2/27.

I. Puchades: I don't think we're asking him to come in three weeks. I think we're asking him to tell us now. This is a critical situation for these students. You shouldn't be using your own money and paying out of your discretionary funds.

Agenda Item No. 12: Adjournment; S. Malachowsky (1:50)

Attendance 2/6/2025

| Name | Relationship to Senate | Attended | Name | Relationship to Senate | Attended |
|-----------------------|---|----------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Adrion, Amy | ALT CAD Senator | | Lanzafame, Joseph | COS Senator | X |
| Aldersley, Stephen | Communications Officer/ SOIS Senator | X | Laver, Michael | CLA Senator | X |
| Anselm, Martin | CET Senator | | Lee, James | ALT CET Senator | X |
| Barone, Keri | Treasurer/CLA Senator | Excused | Liu, Manlu | SCB Senator | |
| Boedo, Stephen | ALT KGCoe Senator | | Malachowsky, Samuel | Vice Chair/ GCCIS Senator | X |
| Brady, Kathleen | ALT NTID Senator | X | McCalley, Carmody | ALT COS Senator | |
| Brown, Tamaira | Senate Coordinator | X | McLaren, Amy | CAD Senator | |
| Butler, Janine | NTID Senator | X | Newman, Atia | Chair/CAD Senator | Excused |
| Capps, John | CLA Senator | X | Newman, Christian | GCCIS Senator | X |
| Chiavaroli, Julius | ALT GIS Senator | | Olles, Deana | COS Senator | X |
| Chung, Sorim | SCB Senator | X | Olson, Rob | ALT GCCIS Senator | X |
| Cody, Jeremy | COS Senator | X | O'Neil, Jennifer | ALT CET Senator | |
| Coppenbarger, Matthew | COS Senator | X | Osgood, Robert | ALT CHST Senator | |
| Crawford, Denton | CAD Senator | X | Padmanabhan, Poornima | KGCoe Senator | X |
| Cromer, Michael | ALT COS Senator | | Puchades, Ivan | KGCoe Senator | X |
| Cui, Feng | ALT COS Senator | | Ray, Amit | CLA Senator | X |
| David, Prabu | Provost | Excused | Reinicke, Bryan | ALT SCB Senator | |
| Davis, Stacey | NTID Senator | X | Ross, Annemarie | NTID Senator | X |
| Deese, Franklin | CAD Senator | X | Ruhling, Michael | CLA Senator | X |

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Dell, Betsy | CET Senator | X | Sanders, Cynthia | ALT NTID Senator | |
| DiRisio, Keli | CAD Senator | | Shaaban, Muhammad | ALT KGCOE Senator | |
| Eddingsaas, Nathan | COS Senator | X | Song, Qian | SCB Senator | X |
| Fillip, Carol | ALT CAD Senator | | Staff Council Rep | | |
| Ghazle, Hamad | Operations Officer/CHST Senator | X | Student Government Rep | Joshua Anderson | X |
| Ghoneim, Hany | ALT KGCOE Senator | X | Sweeney, Kevin | ALT SCB Senator | |
| Hardin, Jessica | ALT CLA Senator | | Thomas, Bolaji | CHST Senator | Excused |
| Hartpence, Bruce | ALT GCCIS Senator | | Tobin, Karen | NTID Senator | X |
| Hazelwood, David | NTID Senator | X | Tsouri, Gill | KGCOE Senator | X |
| Hull, Clyde | ALT SCB Senator | X | Van Aardt, Jan | ALT COS Senator | |
| Jadamba, Basca | COS Senator | X | Warp, Melissa | ALT CAD Senator | |
| Johnson, Dan | CET Senator | X | White, Phil | ALT GCCIS Senator | |
| Johnson, Scott | GCCIS Senator | X | Williams, Eric | GIS Senator | X |
| Kray, Christine | CLA Senator | X | Worrell, Tracy | ALT CLA Senator | |
| Krutz, Daniel | ALT GCCIS Senator | | Zanibbi, Richard | GCCIS Senator | X |
| Kuhl, Michael | KGCOE Senator | | Zlochower, Yosef | COS Senator | X |
| Kwasinski, Andres | ALT KGCOE Senator | X | | | |

Interpreters: Nicole Crouse-Dickerson and Jennaca Saeva

Student Assistant: Ben Bui

Presenters: Bruce Herring and Mary Lynn Reed