**Academic Senate Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 24, 2025**

**7:00 P.M.**

**OLD MAIN ROOM, BONE STUDENT CENTER**

***Call to Order***

Chairperson Bonnell called the meeting to order.

***Roll Call***

Secretary Nikolaou called roll and declared quorum.

***Public Comment: All speakers must sign in with the Senate Secretary prior to the start of the meeting.***

None.

***Presentation:***

***Protecting Our Digital Campus, Together***

***Chief Information Security Officer Dan Taube***

Dan Taube: Good evening. I have some prepared remarks to align with the report that I have given. When I conclude I am happy to answer questions either about my remarks or what is in the report itself. If after the fact you have questions, and you would rather not ask in this setting, you can feel free to reach out to me, it can be a sensitive topic.

You each have a copy of the strategic briefing. This is not a technical deep dive but rather a discussion of what our shared stewardship should be or can be about the data that is essential to the university’s core mission. That is, of teaching, learning, and research. Yes, this is a technical topic, but this conversation is about the core mission and how my role factors into that for all your responsibilities. Data can include student records, classroom materials, even your own scholarship and work that you do on a regular basis. My goal today is to present a clear, data-informed picture of the risks we face to that data and propose a partnership to enhance the collective defenses related to keeping us safe.

If we begin with the first major section, a data informed picture, I will set the stage. Higher education is uniquely attractive to threat actors or bad actors as we might call them because we represent a rich environment of sensitive personal data. That is employees, students, and even the guests and the research that we do. It also has cutting edge research that may engage with federal partners, private partners, or our own novel ideas. Combining that with a culture of open collaboration, the adversaries simply know and have become increasingly adept at exploiting the way we are and how we operate to gain that valuable asset that is data and the systems and resources that we have.

The attractiveness translates directly into a significant, measurable consequence when attacks are successful. To quantify this a little bit, I use a few data points from industry reports that do cover education sectors within the reports. It consistently has found that, should a single data breach happen in the education sector, you are looking at an average of $3.5 million in loss. That is per incident and when you unpack that, in terms of the posture of the institution, you might see those multiple times a year. It is not just an annual loss; it is a per incident loss. When you investigate those kinds of numbers, what you find is it is because of the massive amounts of data we have: the personal, sensitive data and the cost of not only recovering and restoring that but also settling potentially privacy lawsuits or consequences of fines that you may face.

These aren’t just abstract threats either. While they can be few and far between, there are public reports that I recommend looking into. Incidents that I list from the British Library who dealt with a serious ransomware case but released a deep and detailed after-action report that effectively represents it is more than just the data. It is the operational commitments, it is the research that is relying on those things, it is legacy systems that might not be recoverable at all, and the compounding factor of when these incidents happen. More recently, Western New Mexico University is attributing an unfortunate timing of an incident with their primary recruitment and admission period, where they saw a 10% drop in their enrollment. They believe it is linked to the cyber incident that happened and took down their network and their application portal right when they really needed it.

While we have thankfully avoided these headlines ourselves, it is not for lack of trying from our adversaries. I do have teams that work diligently to defend against these responses. They detect them, they respond to them, they contain them. Our current success is not a guarantee of future immunity. A sentiment that I will often convey is we must get it right every time. They only have to get it right once. Quite literally, they are trying every single day, and we are trying to get it right every single day. What does this threat landscape look like at ISU? I have provided in the next section a matter of scale and complexity, some snapshots of data that I might call the attack surface.

This is the sum of all things that a threat actor or bad actor might target to get an entry point to our institution, to our data, to our resources- roughly 50,000 accounts that students, faculty, staff, guests, and even external visiting scholars and other relationships. That is 50,000 accounts that can be subject to social engineering, phishing, malware, all as an entry point to a larger network, larger environments. Of the 50,000 devices actively on our network, only about 12,000 are managed university assets. The rest are BYOD. You think you have your phone, your tablet, whatever else device you might have, those all factor into the attach surface that we are trying to manage, monitor, and protect. More interestingly, we have thousands of cloud applications or website services, everything from Google, Facebook, ChatGPT, whether it is authorized, endorsed officially, isn’t the really clean answer; it is whether it is getting used regularly.

I include in here our systems. While they don’t have details of what is being done on these systems, we know out of that approximately 650 are classified as generative AI platforms. You think ISU is making progress now, we are introducing AI tools, but that is 650 tools that some people might be putting data that shouldn’t go in there or exposing our institution to what might be malware that is acting as generative AI. This is the nature of it. It is not just the scale, but the complexity of it. We do have a decentralized environment. Yes, I have a central office, yes, I protect the entire institution, I am responsible for that. However, when it comes to things like the devices, the accounts, the data that actually exists, it is localized in this context to the colleges, schools, and departments.

This becomes a matter of what is our great strength. It helps with innovation, and it makes it incredibly impressive what we can do because we don’t bottleneck it, in theory. However, it makes it extremely difficult to achieve a consistent security posture. For us to be effective, that is conversations with each college, each department, each unit to understand their business, their needs, their data uses to apply the appropriate measures to protect that. That is why we exist. We are there to be that. What has become increasingly difficult is what we call 3rd party risk. This is the software and the services; it is where a 3rd party is handling our data. Sometimes it is connected to systems like Canvas. Sometimes it is a 3rd party like National Student Clearing House where we do data exchanges. The data in the industry reports have found just in the last year it has doubled, but 30% of all data breaches that are happening have a 3rd party involved. It is not just the tools that we buy and install in our own network, it is not just the computers and devices we control, it is these 3rd parties that we do enter into relationships and contract with and share data with.

This can all be managed. This is where we bring the conversation now, and what I would represent as the strategy to defending this complex environment. It is not to get rid of the complex environment, it is a strategy to defend what we are in our nature. For an institution like ours, it starts with recognizing one key thing. The question is not if we will face an incident, but when and how prepared we will be when that occurs. We have faced them, and we have been effective to respond in containing them and stop them before what you would see at other institutions. Volume, capacity, those are all at their limits. That is why I am here, that is also why I am campaigning for engagement, conversation.

A notable thing with people in my profession- sometimes what will be represented is providing FUD: Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt. I don’t have fear, I don’t have uncertainty, and I don’t have doubt. We know our environment, we know how to protect it, and that is what this is about in the rest of my presentation today. It is not an impossible state of perfect security that I am looking for. It is really what we would call reasonable cybersecurity or reasonable information security. This is a balance-informed approach. It is risk-based. It is saying that we won’t not do something just because we can’t, it is we will do the most that we can with the resources we have. We can argue our investments; we can argue our strategies. What is important with this is, it is not a technology problem, it is a human element problem. That is phrasing that will show up in industry reports.

What is represented is, the human element would be the human action, the part that a system, a technology wouldn’t have anything necessarily to control or safeguard, especially in an open environment of higher education. With 60% of all data breaches recognizing human action which amounts to things like the mistake, the oversight, the inaction, the social engineering success. It is really about that human piece; it is not about the technology or the security teams. Importantly, not about the restriction or the friction that otherwise would have to be put in place. Think about, in a corporate setting for example, they block things like Facebook and Instagram and everything else for that matter. We do not. We leave it open. We will respond to credible threats and block certain sites based on that, but generally we do not, we keep it open. That inherently puts it at the human element part that we have to exponentially deal with.

How do we address it? This is precisely why I will emphasize something. I feel like a broken record on the IT side because I think we struggle to connect with this word, but it is governance.

To that end, it is the role I play not just in presenting today but serving with the Planning and Finance Committee to talk about the 9.2 Appropriate Use policy and updating it and modernizing it throughout the semester. That policy was last updated or reviewed in 2011. I did look, if you are familiar with the Internet Archive that can capture websites and archive it longer than the live version, that actually goes back to the 90s. The text in that is 90s technology text. That is woefully not suited to handle the digital days that we have now. The planned updates as they stand now with that committee will serve as the foundations to manage the risks I am referring to. I am not going into the technical details; it is not solved by a technical solution. It starts with an effective policy that sets up what might be referred to as the rules of the road. As we have an effective policy we can convey and train on that policy, have people recognize what are the biggest dos and don’ts of using information and technology and that will inherently improve our own human element’s posture.

This goes to today’s presentation outside of the time that I will come back for information sessions related to that. It is really making the important part that what does the Academic Senate have to do with information security, IT, technology, however you want to view it? I want to emphasize that the academic mission, which is as I understand the Academic’s core responsibility, primary mission to uphold and support. That is the teaching, the research, the scholarship. That academic mission is the very reason we create and rely on the vast majority of the digital ecosystem we have. It isn’t something that IT on its own or an office like my own can fully understand and effectively manage and support without engagement. The inherent risks to information technology we have discussed are not just an administrative concern. They are intrinsically linked to that academic work. As CISO, officially I am responsible for leading the information security program. That would be more of the regulatory side of this conversation and our responsibilities to create different kinds of policies, different kinds of controls implemented outside of what you would see naturally.

When it comes to protecting the academic mission, it is a shared responsibility in this context. That is where I see your leadership as vital. That is not just holistically as Academic Senate, but individually. With that in mind, I do have 3 calls to action. One is related to 9.2 and then associate 1.7, which if you are not familiar is the surveillance equipment or safety camera policy. Both of those are in that same Planning and Finance Committee and both have elements of “you should hear what goes into it.” As it moves forward, trust that we are doing our part, trust the subject matter experts saying what we need in there, but I want to hear from you because the human element is on both sides of the conversation. I need to make sure I don’t impact your mission. I could say I made a joke, President Tarhule asked why doesn’t the wi-fi work in here before we got started. Whether that is true or not, that is not my role or my responsibility, but no internet does mean we are more secure, frankly. Maybe that is why.

The second call to action I would say is, champion data stewardship. There are data stewards who are responsible for certain types of data, but you create and handle data throughout your day-to-day lives. It is about recognizing you have a responsibility with that. In turn, it is also asking for or participating in training related to the type of data you have. If you are doing research for certain federal agencies now, they have specific research. If you are handling certain sensitive information about students, there is training that you should go through or consider in your handling of that. If you are partnering with 3rd parties to expand your instructional content and enrich the experience for the students, work with us to understand “can we give them that data? Can we give them that access? Can we integrate it with our systems?”

Finally, the call to action I would really emphasize is to engage our office directly. The Information Security Office is here for everybody. Whatever information you have, whatever systems you have, we are here to consult and make sure they can be effectively secured. At the very end of it, are resources, links, things I would encourage you to take a look at if you are interested.

Senator Shourek: Are there any common pitfalls that you feel faculty, staff, or students like myself repeatedly fall into that we could be on the lookout for?

Dan Taube: In higher education social engineering, phishing, tends to be the most common for students- notably freshmen. That is often observationally, because they are coming into this environment where they went from a K-12 experience of email that probably did not allow anyone anywhere to send to them. On the front end it is definitely that. As they proceed, I think it is really that relationship with trusting 3rd parties a little bit too much. It is not recognizing that oftentimes the educational offers of some of these products where it is cheap or free come with, they take your data, they consume your data, they use your data. Maybe they don’t protect your data well enough. I would encourage the training that we can offer for students on social engineering, it is an awareness training. Taking that when it comes along, not just dismissing it. We do adapt it as the messages change. You might be familiar with a more recent one that was the grant aid or job offer types. Those are difficult because they look legitimate for all purposes. They get through the technical controls, but it is students learning that this is social engineering; they are not offering you a real job, they are trying to get your data or money.

Senator Chavez: Are these attacks you are referring to similar to the one from over the summer where an email was sent out saying there was a free scholarship or grant, and students replied to it?

Dan Taube: That one is unique in that is what we call phishing or social engineering. On the backside they are trying to get you, if you were to read the message, to email a different address with your personal email account to take it out of our systems. It will range from getting your personal information and saying, “we have got a job” or “we are going to give you some money.” What happened on a technical level with that one, is it made it to a student listserv that allowed all members of the listserv to reply. Every time someone replied to that, it re-sent that message and overwhelmed not just the email system to slow it down, but the responding team to actually clean up that message. That was the worst case of a technical problem, but that message is a good example of phishing and social engineering.

Senator Yazedjian: I have a question about ChatGPT. Some people use the open version of ChatGPT for faculty who might be using it for courses, students who might be putting class information in there as a study guide or study tool or other purposes. What kind of considerations should people take into account when both using the open version, but even the version they might pay $20 for personally?

Dan Taube: The open version versus the commercial offering, performance is the big difference of the paid. Also, the paid offers you the ability to disable some of the training where it consumes your data and uses it in ways that you might not want. In both cases, neither of those are negotiate/agree contracts broadly. There are runoff cases at the institution and so say you have a data set of a student roster, and you want to put it in ChatGPT. From a FERPA information perspective that would be a FERPA breach because they are not a school official. Unless you got consent from all those students, that would be a breach. There are some concerns about those commercial offerings. They don’t necessarily have any ability for us to see and pull back that data, as opposed to the ones we actually negotiate in contract. I would strongly advise you don’t use the app or the website for DeepSeek. That is the Chinese alternative to ChatGPT. Free, often sometimes more powerful. They are known to be consuming that data, keeping that data. If you are familiar with AI, there is a distinction of models versus platforms. The model that is DeepSeek, if you have the technology and the means you can run that, but don’t use their services. The rest of them, Google Gemini, ChatGPT, these other ones, they are relatively ok for personal use.

Senator Hammond: Does your office run phishing simulations to help us better spot things that we shouldn’t be replying to?

Dan Taube: Occasionally. Phishing simulations are where we intentionally send a message that mirrors what we would see in the phishing attacks from actual threat actors. When we do that, the way you would know if we are doing that is if you were to either respond, delete, or report it, because there is a report feature, you would get an affirmative. All the other messages, no. I have been asked. We don’t do it too often, but periodically we do an assessment of our current state. When we have done that, we have come back with results that are generally good for higher education. Just for example, freshman, about 10% are more likely to click on anything of that nature. Faculty and staff are more at 3% or 4%. That is better than market. We are intentionally abusing what we know as weaknesses, we are going to act very much like the threat actors in the message.

Chairperson Bonnell: I have been really lucky to be a part of the Planning and Finance Committee that he and I have worked on 9.2 and it has been really educational for me to work with you to learn more about how outdated 9.2 is. I am really excited about what we have and I am excited when we will be able to share that with you. Thank you for being here and sharing your expertise.

***Approval of the Academic Senate minutes of*** [***9-10-25***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/AcademicSenate/Ec3tFKMP-IJMuNUP2_7l83gBaouTlUwPIKSne6FYzVlZiA?e=XEl7k0)

Motion by Senator Figueroa.

Second by Senator Sweedler.

Unanimous approval.

***Chairperson’s Remarks***

Chairperson Bonnell: Thank you again to Dan Taube for his presentation on privacy and threat landscape in higher ed and ISU. These principles will inform the Senate’s work as we review proposals on 9.2 Appropriate Use and also with policy 1.7 Use of Electronic Equipment for Surveillance Purposes. It could potentially help the policy on recordings in the classroom that we may see.

Please consider attending tomorrow’s State of the University Address at 2PM in the Brown Ballroom. It is sponsored by the Academic Senate, and it would really be nice to see some familiar faces in the room or if you are there attending virtually. Please consider volunteering for the faculty position to serve on either of the two search committees for the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Education and the Associate Vice President for Research. The deadline to volunteer or self-nominate is September 29th.

My last comment is, you have probably noticed that in each of my chair’s remarks I mention “The Academic Senate is the primary governing body that recommends educational policy for the university and advises the president on its implementation.” Our work is outlined in the university’s constitution that was written dating back to 1970 and through the 108-word Memorandum of Understanding that was crafted in 1999. Tonight, we have an information/action item where I will discuss that MOU in a practical application.

As always, thank you for all of your service on Academic Senate, including our newest, Senator Ionescu. He is our new senator, thank you. He is representing the College of Arts and Sciences.

***Student Body President’s Remarks***

Senator Montoya: Happy Academic Senate. I have a very quick update. Student Government met last week, and I am pleased to share the association is hard at work on several different initiatives. Just to tease one, the Civic Engagement Committee chaired by Senator Chavez is organizing the annual College Republicans and College Democrats debate which I am personally looking forward to attending. I am excited to see that the several projects come to fruition, I will be sure to keep everyone updated as they develop.

***Administrators’ Remarks***

* ***President Aondover Tarhule***

Senator Tarhule: Thank you. As Chairperson Bonnell has said, I will be giving the State of the University address tomorrow. I don’t think you guys want to hear the same thing twice, so I invite everyone to come tomorrow, and I will share all of my remarks then.

* ***Provost Ani Yazedjian***

Senator Yazedjian: Good evening, I will keep my remarks brief and just thank Chairperson Bonnell for amplifying the request for senators or other stakeholders to put their names forward for the two search committees that we have, including student representatives for both of those committees. Please consider putting your names forward. Following up on Dan Taube’s presentation about the importance of AI literacy, we have created something called the Adaptive Edge Institute this year that builds on work that started a couple of years ago at the university but is part of that institute’s work. We are going to be providing AI literacy workshops in various forms for students and also faculty and staff. Some of these will be very short, some may be more comprehensive, but I definitely encourage everybody to participate. As Dan said, it is the human element that gets institutions and organizations into trouble. Please take a moment to get yourself informed. Thank you.

* ***Vice President for Student Affairs Levester Johnson***

Senator Johnson: I have short remarks as well. I want to thank everyone who came out and had family members this past weekend. I hope you had a great time and were able to interact with your family members. Got your parents to take you out to dinner, shop for groceries, and whatever else you could have gotten out of them. It was a great day, great engagement on campus, heck of a long game, 6 hours. Got the win, I grew hair, but all in all it is a great weekend. Thanks everyone for coming out and engaging in that. That concludes my remarks.

* ***Vice President for Finance and Planning Glen Nelson***

Senator Nelson: I think last meeting I announced that Mike Gebeke our Associate Vice President for Facilities announced that he was leaving the university to take a job at the University of Georgia. I am happy to announce tonight that we had an offer and acceptance of an interim Associate Vice President of Facilities, Rich McDermott, who will start next week. We are also ready to kick off a search for the permanent replacement for Mike.

***Action Item:***

***From Rick Valentin: Rules Committee***

***Athletics Council Bylaws***

[***Link to current bylaws***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/AcademicSenate/Academic%20Senate%20Sharepoint/SUB%20-%20Executive%20Committee%20of%20the%20Academic%20Senate/2025.09.15%20Exec/Linked%20Documents/10.18.2024.01%20Athletics%20Council%20Bylaws/Athletics%20Council%20Bylaws%20-%20Current.docx?d=w93ecf5246cc7462b988b3199aae2383d&csf=1&web=1&e=n2Gu0Z)

[***Link to markup***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/AcademicSenate/EaZJvHpLISBOv394CXvxecwB8xNpJEFU9oq-_n7jOP4Big?e=pkrQAZ)

Senator Valentin: These are proposed changes to bylaws of the Athletic Council, an external committee of the Senate. There are a few changes to the language from when we saw this as an information item. Under 1D – Alumni, the first sentence after “alumni representatives” the qualifiers “Alumna” and “alumnus” have been removed. Under 2A, Council Chairperson, 3rd paragraph, “the chairperson shall receive annually, committee reports and compose the annual Athletics Council Summary Report for submission to the president and University Policy Committee of the Academic Senate” replacing the chairperson of the Academic Senate. Under 3A, Athletics Council Executive Committee item 1, that item 1 has been restored, “advise the Director of Athletics, when necessary, on the search procedures including the composition of search committees for major coaching positions. There is an additional change not reflected in the current markup. Under 3B, Committee on Governance and Commitment to Rules Compliance, item 6, the version you have before you says, “be familiar with the compliance policies and procedures manual as needed.” That has been updated to read, “be familiar with the Illinois State Athletics Compliance Policies and Procedures Manual as needed.” Also, we have some formatting and grammatical fixes to the text.

Chairperson Bonnell: Some of the formatting questions, were those directed by Senator Nikolaou? You had made some suggestions and were those some of those formatting questions?

Senator Valentin: Yes, and I believe you had a suggestion about moving the abbreviation for the student advisory committee.

Unanimous approval.

***Information/Action Items:***

***From Angela Bonnell: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate***

***Appendix II B: Faculty Affairs Committee***

[***Appendix II B: Faculty Affairs Committee (Approved Action Item from March 26, 2025)***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/AcademicSenate/ETVNwSTkq4hInTxqPlx5-MwBi8pxyqLdD3BS0q0EWTWEaw?e=b3BOfV)

[***Appendix II B: Faculty Affairs Committee (Approved Action Item from December 11, 2024)***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/AcademicSenate/Ee24ZqRSTsNBm5vddcANcAUBWKMI-sqdbowbe2RiHMJLbQ?e=nqMwCa)

Chairperson Bonnell: This is an information/action item coming straight from Executive Committee. Information/Action items appear on the agenda when Executive Committee thinks they are urgent enough or simple enough to place straight from the floor without first going through an internal committee. We suggest that this could be an information/action item and we can take a motion from the floor to move it from information to action if the body so chooses. I am going to thank you in advance for your patience as I describe what will be a motion to rescind an approved item from the Senate dating back to March 26, 2025. It is going to be my goal to be concise but thorough in this description.

There are two unrelated complicating issues. I will describe the easier one first. At the first Academic Senate meeting in the fall of 2024 about a year ago, Chair Horst made a motion to increase the membership of the Senate by one member to provide representation for the new College of Engineering. That motion passed. As a result, the Rules Committee was tasked with proposing which of the Senate’s internal committees would increase by one as well. Rules proposed that the Faculty Affairs Committee would increase from 3 to 4 tenure-line members. That came forward as an information item on November 6, 2024, at that meeting and was approved at the next meeting on December 11, 2024. You have that language as an action item in your materials tonight. There have been several other revisions to Senate Bylaws in Appendix II throughout that year. At the March 5, 2025, Senate, there were further changes to the Senate Bylaws in Appendix II B concerning the name and functions of the Faculty Affairs Committee. At the March 26 meeting those were approved. You also have that language from that action item in your materials tonight. After the approval of that, at the website for the Bylaws, that text was changed to reflect that the Senate approved those changes and that language, so it appeared on the web page at the Senate’s site.

Over the summer Exec met to assign members to internal committees and I drafted the priority memos for each of the internal committees. In double checking my work, when I looked at the Bylaws website listing internal committee membership and functions, I noticed that the Faculty Affairs Committee was listed as having 3 faculty members, not 4. I needed to double-track, see what happened, and I went back to find out what happened. Ultimately, I found that there was a mix up in the versions. On March 26, the language for that motion had reverted back to an earlier file, because so many things had changed in Appendix II. The faculty membership had changed from 4 back to 3. When you think back to what was going on at that March 26th meeting, that was the information item for the Gen Ed review. There was a lot going on, that was a long meeting, and there were an awful lot of questions. The other thing I will note, if you go back and look at the minutes, that was also at the same time there was this worry that the faculty would be going to go on strike. There was a lot going on at that time, so to miss a number from 4 to 3 seems kind of understandable. Nevertheless, that is what we have.

If this were the only issue, from 3 vs 4, we could make the motion to amend a previously approved item. That is the type of motion that you use to fix mistakes or to edit to clarify. That is the easy one to describe. I am going to move on to the other one that is harder, part 2. As I mentioned, at the March 5 and March 26 Senate changes, the changes in the name and functions of the Faculty Affairs Committee were being proposed. As was standard practice, these changes came through the Rules Committee and it followed usual process and input from the senators on the committee and ex-officio members, and the Office of General Counsel also had a chance to comment. They were approved after that. Per normal practice, after approval the website with the bylaws was changed to reflect the approved language. In late July, General Counsel notified the Senate Office that they would not be moving those changes forward that the Senate had approved. They would not route those to the president for his approval. A note field in Kuali, a system we use to move these through, indicated there were concerns about the new Faculty Affairs Committee functions listed in numbers 8, 10, 11, and 12. It wasn’t until August 18 that we learned what the specific issues were. One concern was that the language was too broad. That is, the scope of the Faculty Affairs Committee included all of the University committees. The second concern was that the Faculty Affairs Committee could create situations leading to overload and additional compensation for faculty under the Collective Bargaining Agreement. I will stop there to mention that second concern, following multiple conversations, that concern was removed as a concern given the language in the new University Workload Policy. The Workload Policy had been released around the same time. The first chance I had to read that was on August 19. It came to be understood that that University Workload Policy offered guidance on that, so the second concern was no longer relevant. Nevertheless, this is no small thing when Senate’s recommendations are not authorized by the president. In the past I have mentioned the Memorandum of Understanding. During my August 27 Senate Chair’s Remarks, I stated that much of what we do and how we do it is authorized by Senate Bylaws, the Constitution, and the Memorandum of Understanding or MOU. This MOU is slim at only 108 words. It became effective in 1999 after it was signed by the senate chair, the university president, and the Board of Trustees chair. It created a shared understanding of three bodies working together constructively. This is an addendum to the University Constitution. I am not going to read that MOU to you, but I want to provide a synopsis. It is only 3 paragraphs, and the first paragraph is essentially saying the Academic Senate understands that it makes recommendations to the President and the Board of Trustees. The second paragraph is the idea that the President and the Board of Trustees anticipate that these recommendations will be modified or rejected only in exceptional circumstances. Paragraph 3, the President will communicate with the Academic Senate concerning any rationale for rejection of an Academic Senate recommendation. Again, we are using the term “exceptional circumstance.” It would seem that there has only been one other instance of the MOU being invoked and that was with the College of Engineering back in 2021, and if you want to read that you can visit Senate’s website for that.

“What happened?” you are wondering. The General Counsel was responding to our recommendations using information that didn’t exist in March. The CBA was approved after we approved that language in March. We also had the new University Workload Policy, so they were responding to those things. When you take a look back at past minutes, we knew that this was a possibility, the scenario could happen. We knew this dating back to January and February of 2024. This was a note from the minutes at the February 7 meeting when Chair Horst stated, “The administration has the power to conduct a legal review of any policy passed by the Senate. If the administration has concerns about something we pass, they can invoke the Memorandum of Understanding.” And that is what has happened.

What do we do? Over the course of 3 Exec meetings and multiple hours, again I want to thank the Executive Committee members for this, at all three meetings that we have had this fall we have talked about this. Each one has been about an hour-long conversation. We came up with some options I am now going to share with you. Two options include using Robert’s Rules. One option under Robert’s Rules is to amend something previously adopted. That we can use if the edits are simple, and it is clarifying language. Another Robert’s Rules option is to rescind. That is if significant edits are made. Another option is to, I am having a hard time describing this one, this one is we would ask the President to approve what we have, he would approve it, and then we would have replacement language in the ready and then very quickly that language would be approved that in the information/action item. All would need to be done very quickly. The last option is to invoke the Memorandum of Understanding and that rejects what we did at the March 26 meeting.

We realized we had to learn what the new language might look like before we made a decision. It mattered if we wanted to completely cancel that prior action, which would include rescinding, or simply change part of it to clarify and that would be a motion to amend. We had another hour of meetings, and it was clear that the changes that we made were beyond a motion to amend. If you think about it, taking a long look at those functions of the Faculty Affairs Committee, there were other changes that we knew could be made as well. In addition to the 8, 10, 11, and 12, when you look at the functions there is also function #6 which is “provide oversight and receive reports annually from the university Ombuds Council, see procedure section of policy 3.2.12 for more details.” That policy 3.2.12 was actually deleted in February of 2025, so there is another change.

There is all of that, now I am going to go back and return to item #1. I will remind you that there was that first issue, that mix up. We have got all of these things going on. In Exec when we met last, it was the consensus that we would rescind.

I skipped a paragraph; we have to talk about this. Rescinding is just as uncommon as an MOU, only happening once in the recent past, if you count recent past as March 22, 1995, under Chair Lenny Schmaltz. That was the removal of a standing order on the statement on politicizing the university. I want you to know this is not something I would do lightly. I would honestly hope seriously never to be in this position to do it again. Exec came to a consensus that we rescind back to the December 10 language and in doing so return to that correct and approved number of members. If that passes, the Rules Committee will take a new look and craft language, and they will do that when they are not being rushed, so they can take their time at that. All stakeholders will have a chance to share their perspectives and roles on that. Just as an FYI, rescinding per our bylaws requires a 2/3 vote. Thank you for your patience in having me list all of this out. Do you have any questions?

It seems inconceivable to me that you would have no questions. I have been losing sleep over this, and I go to bed at night and I run through this in my brain.

Senator Stewart: Was this policy run past legal as part of the regular process in Rules?

Senator Valentin: Yes. The objections only came after there had been a first legal review that said it was acceptable.

Senator Tarhule: I think it is important to note that if that were the only issue it would be fairly straightforward. It is the layering of complexities. It is not as simple as Legal missed something they should have caught previously. It is the question of voting on an incorrect document, so basically, we voted on a document that was incorrect and then there is all this expansion of duties to the committee that was problematic. Just to clarify that your question is relevant and appropriate, but it is only one part of a very complex set of circumstances.

Senator Meyer: To clarify, can you tell me which numbers on this policy, the markup from 2025, Legal said was problematic?

Chairperson Bonnell: They are 8, 10, 11, and 12. Number 9 was not problematic based on the scope.

Senator McHale: Is the chair looking for a motion to make this an action item at this point?

Chairperson Bonnell: If there are no other questions or discussion, I would entertain a motion to move this to an action item.

Motion to move to action by Senator Marshack.

Second by Senator McHale.

Unanimous approval.

Chairperson Bonnell: I now make a motion to rescind the approved changes voted on at the March 22, 2025, Academic Senate meeting covering Senate Bylaws Appendix II B, Faculty Affairs Committee. That language would return to that which we approved at the Senate during the December 10, 2024, meeting. Because this is a motion coming from a committee, it does not need a second.

Unanimous approval.

***Information Item:***

***From Dimitrios Nikolaou: Academic Affairs Committee***

***Policy 4.1.18 Credit Earned through Transfer, Examination, and Prior Learning***

[***Link to current policy***](https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-18/)

[***Link to markup***](https://illinoisstateuniversity.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/AcademicSenate/EfqKWyruu7ZBohilClyQ66EBpCteTMOqFYfsB9fDC8VxLQ?e=vAMREW)

Senator Nikolaou: In case you missed policy 4.1.18 Credit Earned through Transfer, Examination, and Prior Learning, we are seeing it again. We saw it back in February of 2024 when we needed to make a small change about the college-level examination program. We saw it again in November of 2024 when we needed to make some adjustments in terms of the number of the semester hours for transfer students who are domestic and international. Also, some small changes about the IAI gen ed, and now we are seeing it again. If you look at page 4, one of the changes is that now we are clarifying, and all of this comes from the STAR legislation, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act. On page 4, you will see one change is that it is being clarified that students will not be required to repeat courses that they have already taken at a community college. These courses have been articulated.

The other clarification is that if we have students who have completed a course which has been articulated which has a prerequisite, we cannot require the students to take that prerequisite when they come here. If they have taken Math 147 that has 146 has a prerequisite, and it has been articulated, then we cannot require them to take Math 146 which is a prerequisite for Math 147. On page 5, you will see that there is a deletion at the bottom of the first paragraph which pretty much is the explanation about what happens with Humanities and Fine Arts courses. This is deleted because it is specific only to a portion of the IAI and this might change based on the IAI, so we don’t need to include the information for that. All the addition that you see there comes directly from the audit we had in the spring of 2024. They said we need to have these 5 items listed in terms of when a student who is transferring is going to be awarded Junior status.

The paragraph after the 1-5 says if a student is transferred and they have been awarded Junior status; we can require them to have a maximum of 60 semester hours beyond lower-level courses like 100 level courses which that major requires. They will need to be taking the upper-level courses, and they cannot be more than 60 credit hours. For this one, Senator Hurd held a couple of training sessions to talk about the STAR legislation so that advisors know what that implies for how they are going to be making the changes. On page 7, there is an addition for the credit for acquired proficiency, the CAP. This CAP credit was already included under the academic policies on the university catalog. It was also included on the website for the Department of Language, Literature, and Cultures. Students across the university could claim CAP but for some reason it was not included in this policy. That is what the addition that you see over there represents, which says that if we have students who complete a language course above the 111 level, they can claim up to 8 hours of CAP credit. If they complete 112, they can claim 4 credit hours, if they go into 115 then they can claim 8 credit hours.

These are the changes and there were some comments that were added on the side. The first one was under item 5, if it should be “met” or “meet.” I thought is should have been “met” but we talked about it in committee today and we think it is meant to be “meet” because there might be cases where a student has applied for the transfer, the admission decision is still going on, so if there is a requirement that is still being evaluated while they have applied, they have not met yet the requirements. If we say “met” we will eliminate cases where they need to review some kind of an admission requirement. We think we should keep it as “meet.” There was a question about if on page 7 the advance placement program should remain or say “credit.” That paragraph, because it talks about programs, that is why it says “program.” In the next one where it says when you can get advance placement credit, that is why the title is “credit.”

There was a question for the AP, Cambridge International, and International Baccalaureate Diploma programs. The International Baccalaureate Diploma and the Advance Placement use the wording “appropriate scores in credit.” Cambridge International talks about “approved scores.” We don’t really know what the difference is between the two. We looked at how it is if we go to CambridgeInternational.org, they use the word “approved courses.” Advance Placement and the International Baccalaureate use “appropriate.” The only thing, when I look at how it is listed, it was that Cambridge International has specific letter grades. The other two said you are going to score a 3, 4, or 5, that was the only difference. I don’t know if it has something to do with that. We can check with Senator Hurd if there is a reason why they are different. If she recommends to change all of them to say “appropriate” or all of them to say “approved” or just to keep it the way that it is, when we see it again, we are going to make a note of that.

Chairperson Bonnell: There is the other one, advisor. We spell advisor with an “o” can we change that?

Senator Nikolaou: Yes; that will change.

Senator McHale: This is a substantive question based on the designation of accepting a transfer student as a Junior and then not requiring any lower-level courses in their major. Is the assumption that every school that offers that same program is going to be consistent with what we expect of our freshman and sophomores? How can we assume that? That the other students of the university’s from which we are accepting these juniors, how can we assume that the requirements for the freshman and sophomore are equivalent to what we require of our freshman and sophomore students?

Senator Nikolaou: For that one I don’t have an answer. That is something that we need to abide by because it comes directly from this act, and we were audited and they said, “you need to include it, otherwise we are in trouble.” When we have these training sessions, the questions came related to what you are asking. I think the example from Chemistry. There were some courses that are required here for Chemistry, but they did not necessarily exist in some of the other community colleges to directly transfer. The idea is for the 60 additional hours. Let’s say you have 148 and you need to complete it. If you do not need to take more than 60 hours, then you will still need to do 168. If 168 brings you to 63 credit hours, you cannot require the student to do this lower-division course. That is where advisors and programs need to look at how many 100 or lower division level classes they require, how they would be articulated, and that was one of the things during these training sessions. Advisors would need to create plans of study for different community colleges from where the students are going to be coming depending on what courses they are offering. There are going to be lots of plans of study they would need to come up with.

Senator McHale: I appreciate the answer. I don’t know if it clarifies so much. There are programs that have more rigor in certain areas than some of the institutions from which we get those students. I guess I will just make the point. We are not at action here are we?

Senator Nikolaou: No.

Senator Blum: Regardless, this is a legally binding agreement set in the state, we don’t really have a choice. It is an articulation agreement, and it is part of state law. It doesn’t really matter whether we think it is right or not, is that accurate?

Senator Nikolaou: Yeah, the idea is what can we do to be compliant with the STAR Act so that we can help transfer students who are coming at ISU.

Senator McHale: If there is no need for discussion, why are we discussing it?

Chairperson Bonnell: This is the time for questions. Does anyone have any other questions?

***Internal Committee Reports:***

***Academic Affairs Committee: Senator Nikolaou***

The Academic Affairs Committee met this evening. We first talked about student representation in the search committees for the AVP for Undergraduate Education and the AVP for Research. The committee wanted to give some flexibility to the Provost, so we said there is going to be one undergraduate student and up to two for the Undergraduate Education, and then one graduate student and up to two students for the Research with the caveat that if there is no graduate student we can find an undergraduate student. For both committees, at least one student and we can go up to two depending on if we have anyone volunteering. We also started our discussion about the new policy on classroom recording.

***Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee: Senator Meyer***

This evening, we had a joint meeting with the Planning Finance Committee to hear budget information from the Vice President for Financial Planning, Senator Nelson. As a result, we didn’t have time to meet as a committee individually or approve the minutes. We will be doing that in the future. We do have our vacant faculty position now filled, so the committee is complete. We have a busy to-do list, and we distribute that through the agenda, dealing with various policies, evaluations, and budgets.

***Faculty Affairs Committee: Senator Blum***

We approved the Educational Leave policy and the minutes, and we met about what we are going to do next time in terms of the Research Integrity policy and so on.

***Planning and Finance Committee: Senator Paolucci***

As Senator Meyers stated, Planning and Finance had a joint session with the AABC for a preview of the university budget presentation by Vice President for Finance and Planning, Glen Nelson. P&F did no specific business tied to our sub-committee.

***Rules Committee: Senator Valentin***

The Rules Committee reviewed changes to the Athletic Council Bylaws that we saw tonight. We reviewed changes to the Academic Senate Bylaws and the ISU Constitution to update references to the AVP for Research and Graduate Studies to AVP for Graduate Education and Internationalization Initiatives which we will forwarding to Exec. We began looking at revisions to the College of Applied Science and Technology Bylaws.

***University Policy Committee: Senator Stewart***

The UPC met tonight. We approved minutes for September 10, we also continued our discussion of policies 1.17 and 1.17A, Code of Ethics.

***Communications***

None

***Adjournment***

Motion by Senator Yount.

Second by Senator McHale.

Unanimous approval.