

George Mason University Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 28, 2026

Location: Zoom

Time: 3:00–4:30 PM

Meeting Agenda

Opening Remarks:

- The meeting was called to order at 3:01 PM by Faculty Senate President Solon Simmons.
 - The December minutes with appendices were approved as submitted.
 - Solon Simmons welcomed Vice Rector of the Board of Visitors, Michael J. Meese.
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1. Vice Rector of the GMU Board of Visitors: Michael J. Meese

Vice Rector Meese provided background and context on the current state of the Board of Visitors (BOV). The Virginia Senate did not approve 10 board members, and two additional members resigned before Governor Spanberger took office. The Governor appointed 12 new Visitors to the GMU BOV and submitted them for approval to the Virginia Senate. Following the resignation of Rector Cully Stimson, the Vice Rector is acting in the role of Rector in accordance with state law.

- The BOV will meet on February 26 to elect a Rector.
- After the election, the Rector will nominate Visitors to committees, which must be confirmed by the Board. This is expected to occur at the start of the February 26 BOV meeting, with committee meetings to follow.
- All six BOV committees are expected to meet on February 26, focusing on essential business.
- The full board meeting will take place in the afternoon, followed by a closed session to discuss sensitive matters, likely including general legal issues, ongoing DOJ litigation, and personnel actions.

Vice Rector Meese thanked faculty for their work and opened the floor for questions.

Discussion and Questions:

- A senator asked whether a board meeting book would be provided. Vice Rector Meese confirmed that it would be.
- A faculty member expressed appreciation for Vice Rector Meese's service and noted that the recent turnover of the Board of Visitors could be interpreted as a rebuke of the prior board. The faculty member observed that the previous board appeared to view their role as a political channel and stated that assurance from the new board that this would not continue would be appreciated. Vice Rector Meese responded that the new Board of Visitors expects to work with GMU priorities in mind.

- A senator asked whether there were any updates regarding the DOJ settlement, including whether GMU's legal representation had been replaced following AG Jones's dismissal of the prior law firm and, if so, which firm had been retained. The senator also asked whether there was interest in revisiting actions taken by the prior board, including its influence on the just societies core curriculum flag. Vice Rector Meese stated that he did not have information regarding a successor law firm and noted that GMU's General Counsel had also been dismissed. He emphasized the importance of having university counsel in place to reengage with the DOJ and the Department of Education to work toward a resolution and noted that it will take time for the new board to become fully oriented.
- A senator asked when board members officially become members of the Board of Visitors. Vice Rector Meese explained that once individuals are sworn in as board members, no more than two may discuss university business together. He noted that an orientation will be held prior to swearing in, during which approximately five members may listen collectively before they become visitors. At the conclusion of the orientation, the clerk from Fairfax administers the oath, after which board members are subject to public meeting requirements when conducting university business.
- A senator asked when orientation would be completed. Vice Rector Meese anticipated completion within the next few days.
- A senator asked how faculty can help orient new BOV members. Vice Rector Meese encouraged BOV members to reach out to their Mason contacts.
- A senator asked who is currently serving as Acting General Council. Vice Rector Meese indicated that David Trumme is likely the senior person in that office.

Vice Rector Meese invited follow-up questions via email at meese.gmu@gmail.com.

2. COACHE Results: Brian Platt ([See COACHE Infographic 2025](#))

Brian Platt provided an overview of COACHE, a Harvard-based research initiative focused on faculty satisfaction. Third round results are now available, administered in collaboration with Kim Eby.

- The survey includes data on a wide range of faculty issues.
- An infographic overview of results was shared with the faculty.
- Faculty were encouraged to engage with the data and use it to improve the campus environment.
- A Gallup survey will be deployed in the near future.

3. Mason Core Committee ([See Mason Core Assessment Findings: Spring 2025](#))

Presenters: Courtney Wooten (Co-Chair), Keith Renshaw, Laura Poms, Chris Lee

- Assessment findings were presented, outlining the framework for assessing general education at Mason. The framework is most effective when it focuses on continuous quality enhancement. The assessment cycle consists of four phases:
 1. identifying outcomes and measures;

2. collecting data, with all core sections submitting student artifacts;
 3. analyzing and interpreting evidence, with student work scored using rubrics for the respective core areas; and
 4. sharing and using results, with findings shared accordingly. A presentation on these findings was shared with the Faculty Senate.
- A baseline target of 70% was established for meeting learning outcomes.
 - All assignments should align with student learning outcomes (SLOs).
 - Professional development opportunities were created to support faculty participation in assessment and teaching of the SLOs.
 - Next steps include revising learning outcomes, ideally during the current semester, with potential implementation in AY 2026–2027.

Discussion:

- A senator asked about the recertification process. Laura Poms explained that significant changes could require a more complex process, and the committee is balancing student needs with progress toward graduation with possible changes.

4. Organization and Operations (O&O): Catherine Sausville

a. Academic Standards Committee ([See O&O Appendix A](#))

Edited language regarding term length.

- **Approved by voice vote**

b. Senate Allocations ([See O&O Appendix B](#))

- With 52 total senators and minimal fluctuation this year, the allocation was not changed and will remain as is.
- **Approved by voice vote**
- A question was raised regarding representation of adjunct and library faculty.

c. Senate Standing Rules ([See O&O Appendix C](#))

Following the adoption of the new bylaws at the previous meeting, language that is now incorporated into the bylaws was removed from the Standing Rules.

- **Approved by voice vote**

d. Zoom Settings and Recording Practices for Senate Standing Rules

Input was sought on Zoom settings, recording, and documentation practices.

- The goal is to provide faculty with time to consider these issues and not always having an authoritative set of document about what was said.

- It was noted that any individual may record meetings and that the March 2025 Faculty Senate meeting was subject to FOIA and posted on YouTube.

Discussion:

- A senator expressed concern that disabling Zoom reactions and chat feels undemocratic.
- A senator noted transcription challenges, particularly for individuals with accents.
- A senator suggested that high-quality video recordings could improve accuracy.

5. Academic Policies: Doug Eyman

a. AP 4.2.1: Concentrations ([See AP Appendix C](#))

Proposed language clarifying that concentrations must consist of at least 12 unique credit hours not applied to another concentration in the same program or major.

- A faculty member asked whether the Graduate Council had been consulted.
- The motion was **tabled** to allow for additional stakeholder input.

b. AP 6.6 and Related Catalog Updates ([See AP Appendix B](#))

Changes to AP 6.6 necessitate corresponding updates to other elements of the university catalog. Clarifying language was proposed for sections 1.5.6 and 1.6.7 specific to graduate student work to prevent policy conflicts following recent changes.

- Changes will appear in next year's catalog cycle.
- AP 6.6 is currently available on the Graduate Council website.
- **Approved by voice vote**

c. University Policy 3006: Course Modality ([See AP Appendix A](#))

- If a course change extends beyond two consecutive weeks, the change must be processed through Banner.
- Short-term changes due to illness or weather allow faculty flexibility to switch modality.

Motions and Discussion:

- A motion was made to strike the compliance language related to potential faculty termination for changing course modality.
- Motion to extend time to 4:30 PM was made and approved.
- A senator expressed support for striking out the language, and other senators agreed that the proposed solution may not appropriately address the identified issue. A recommendation was made to conduct further study to better understand how course modality requirements vary across colleges. It was also noted that fieldwork requirements may necessitate changes in course modality. A senator raised a question regarding course modality, noting that a face-to-face course is defined as one that is 76% to 100% in

person, and asked whether holding three online class sessions during a semester would constitute a change in modality.

- **Compliance language was struck by voice vote.**
- A motion to **table** the policy for further consideration was made and **approved by voice vote.**

6. Budget and Resources: Delton Daigle

- The committee met with the provost and requested actual and projected budget data by school and college to assess the impacts of the new budget model on different units across the university.
- Information is not yet available due to leadership transitions.

7. Faculty Matters: Mohan Venigalla

- Faculty Evaluation of Administrators is now available.
- Efforts are ongoing to develop a mechanism for collecting chair data, though participation thresholds remain a challenge.

8. Nominations: Lee Black

- Faculty Senate elections have been moved in March.
- Committee and university-wide committee elections will also move forward, with the goal of improving the process.

9. Faculty Handbook: Lisa Billingham

- Senators were encouraged to carefully review the next meeting agenda, which will include significant process changes.
- Appreciation was expressed to Kim Eby and Mohan Venigalla for work on faculty roles and rewards.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and approved.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Action Items

- Academic Policies Committee to seek additional stakeholder input, including consultation with the Graduate Council, on **AP 4.2.1 (Concentrations)**.
- **University Policy 3006 (Course Modality)** to remain tabled for further consideration following removal of compliance language.

- Mason Core Committee to continue working on revising learning outcomes, with potential implementation in AY 2026–2027.
- Budget and Resources Committee to follow up with the Provost’s Office on availability of actual and projected budget data by school and college.
- Faculty Senate to continue discussion on Zoom settings, recording, and documentation practices at a future meeting.
- Senators review agenda materials in advance of the next meeting, including proposed Faculty Handbook process changes.

Attendee List

Attendance Summary

Faculty Senator (voting member of Faculty Senate) - 47

Faculty member (not a member of Faculty Senate) - 23

Faculty Senate ex officio (e.g., Deans) - 3

Community member/guest - 12