

George Mason University Faculty Senate Minutes

Meeting Date: September 23, 2026

Location: Zoom

Time: 3:00-4:15 PM

[Meeting Agenda Packet](#)

Call to Order

President of the Senate Solon Simmons called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting of August 26, 2026 were approved as presented without additions or corrections.

Opening Remarks & Announcements

Solon Simmons welcomed senators and reflected on changes in university leadership, including recent administrative restructuring and the arrival of Provost Marion Underwood. He noted that the previous evening's **Faculty Senate reception with President Washington** provided a valuable opportunity for faculty and administration to connect. He also referenced recent shifts in the university's organizational structure and changes in membership on the **Board of Visitors**. Solon remarked that the Faculty Senate's role as an **independent partner with the administration in service to the Board of Visitors**. While faculty do not hold formal legal authority, he noted that faculty retain the power to dissent and play an important governance role, particularly in areas such as the curriculum and catalog. He discussed the need for clearer liaison structures between Senate committees and administration and encouraged senators to use standing committees to bring issues forward.

Committee Reports

Academic Policies Committee

Douglas Eyman reported that Academic Policies had no new business but highlighted ongoing policy updates. He informed senators of minor revisions to policy concerning cross-listed undergraduate and graduate courses. Discussion focused on the 9 sections of Academic Policies. Tim Gibson questioned why graduate policies are not reviewed directly through Academic Policies Committee. Douglas Eyman explained Graduate Council's extensive faculty representation and workload. Solon Simmons agreed that the issue remains important and stated that academic policies should maintain a meaningful relationship with the Senate.

Budget and Resources Committee

Delton Daigle reported upcoming meetings regarding the Phase II budget model redesign and review of prior fiscal-year actual financial data. He also provided a Technology Policy Committee update. ITS returned a revised version of the submitted annual report, after the committee requested greater detail, but that report still lacks personnel and procurement detail. Daigle reported that faculty representation has been added to new domain council structure, though Delton currently serves as non-voting faculty member to two committees. He stated that non-voting status does not align with shared governance principles and noted that concerns were raised with university and ITS leadership. Kevin Dunayer added concerns regarding classroom technology login delays and authentication issues affecting instruction.

Faculty Matters Committee

Mohan Venigalla reported that Faculty Matters has little to report at this time but expects a very busy year. He noted that the Committee on Faculty Roles and Rewards (CFRR) will be heavily engaged in implementing the new Excellence Framework approved in March. He also announced that Provost Underwood has created an implementation group to work with CFRR, co-chaired by Mohan and Melissa Broeckelman-Post.

Melissa provided an update on implementation planning for the Faculty Handbook revisions approved last year. She noted that reports reviewing unit bylaws and promotion and tenure guidelines for alignment with the handbook had been shared with deans and associate deans. An implementation team is being formed to support units through the revision process. The team will develop resources, templates, examples, and workshops to assist faculty and academic units over the two-year implementation timeline. The goal is to begin revisions in the spring, continue through the following fall, and complete the handbook-required provost approval process while maintaining a faculty governance approach.

Mohan emphasized that there are many moving parts and that it is premature to share interim documents. He invited senators to submit questions to CFRR and assured the Senate that updates would be shared as information becomes available.

During discussion, Zachary Schrag raised concerns about guidance for faculty approaching third-year review, noting that junior faculty need timely clarification about how the new standards will apply to their cases. Mohan agreed that the issue is a top priority and committed to placing it on the CFRR agenda. Melissa added that the approved handbook language describing the new expectations is already available and that one of the implementation team's first tasks will be developing updated guidance documents and resources for units.

Mohan clarified that CFRR will develop recommendations and guidance, while the implementation team will work directly with colleges and units to support adoption and implementation of the new framework. Solon Simmons noted that the Faculty Handbook has already been updated and that the primary work ahead involves aligning unit-level bylaws, policies, and procedures with the new handbook requirements.

Nominations Committee

Lee Black presented nominations for three committee vacancies. Jennifer Hathaway was nominated to serve on the Faculty Roles and Rewards Committee, filling a seat vacated by Kathy Ramos. Cheryl Oetjen was nominated to serve on Mason Core, providing representation from the College of Public Health, and Matthew Scherer was nominated to serve on Writing Across the Curriculum, completing the committee's representation across colleges. Following an opportunity for floor nominations, the Senate approved all three appointments by voice vote.

Lee also reported vacancies on the Grievance Committee and the University Survey Review Committee and wanted to draw nominations from the floor. Nirup Menon nominated himself and was elected by voice vote to complete the remainder of a one-year term.

Lee noted that O&O would be bringing forward a proposal to revise the Grievance Committee charge to reduce situations in which multiple members from the same college must recuse themselves from grievance cases.

For the University Survey Review Committee, Lee explained that the Faculty Senate representative would serve on an ad hoc basis when surveys involve faculty-related matters. Following discussion regarding the committee's role, Kevin Dunayer nominated himself and was elected by voice vote to serve as the Faculty Senate representative.

Organization and Operations Committee

As their 1st motion, the committee proposed a revision to the Grievance Committee composition to limit membership to no more than two representatives from the same college or school. The change was intended to address recurring challenges when multiple members from the same college had to recuse themselves from grievance cases, reducing the committee's ability to conduct business efficiently. After brief discussion, the motion passed.

As their 2nd motion, O&O also proposed a new standing rule to permanently ban secondary amendments during Senate deliberations. Dr. Schrag explained that amendments to amendments often create confusion and make it difficult for senators to follow discussions and votes. The proposed rule would simplify parliamentary procedure while still allowing minor adjustments through common consent. Senators generally agreed that the change would make meetings easier to follow, and the motion was approved.

For discussion only, the committee introduced a proposal to create a Teaching and Student Affairs Committee, which would be the first new Faculty Senate standing committee in more than twenty years. The proposed committee would help coordinate communication among teaching- and student-focused university committees, improve accountability, and provide a clearer pathway for bringing issues to the Senate. Senators discussed how the proposed structure could strengthen communication and shared governance while preserving the independence of university committees. Questions were raised about reporting relationships, committee autonomy, and terminology used in the proposed organizational chart. Members generally supported improving coordination but emphasized the importance of ensuring that any future structure remains collaborative rather than supervisory. Zach mentioned that additional feedback will be gathered before a formal proposal is brought forward at a future meeting.

Faculty Handbook Revisions Committee

Lisa Billingham reported that the committee has already met and plans to bring five motions forward in October. She encouraged senators to review the agenda materials carefully once they are distributed.

Lisa highlighted an upcoming discussion regarding section 2.7.3.2 promotion to Full Professor, noting that the handbook does not currently clarify whether review committees should be composed of faculty who are already full professors. She noted that at least one unit allows committee members who are not full professors to participate in reviews for promotion to full professor and indicated that this could become a significant discussion topic next month.

She also noted several smaller proposed revisions, including clarifying language that the Board of Visitors approves tenure, that it's actually not just approving faculty or professor, but approving tenured Faculty.

Announcement for the Good of the Faculty

Bethany Letiecq provided updates from the GMU AAUP. She reported that the Virginia legislature is again considering collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers, including higher education employees, and encouraged interested faculty to learn more and get involved.

Bethany also noted concerns being raised by staff regarding reorganizations occurring in several colleges and invited faculty and staff to share information about those issues with AAUP.

Finally, she reported on a student-led campaign focused on the removal of flock cameras from campus and encouraged anyone interested in these efforts to contact the AAUP at aaupmason@gmail.com for more information or involvement.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned following a motion, second, and unanimous voice vote at 4:15 PM.

Action Items

- ☐ CFRR to address guidance for faculty undergoing third-year review under the new Excellence Framework.
- ☐ Implementation Team to develop resources, templates, and workshops to support implementation of the Faculty Handbook revisions.
- ☐ Faculty Handbook Committee to bring five motions forward for Senate consideration in October.
- ☐ Organizations & Operations Committee to bring forward a proposal for the establishment of a Teaching and Student Affairs Committee.

Attendee List

Name

Anan Shahriar
Alexandra Masterson
Solon Simmons
Don Starr
Preston Williams
James Broderick
Lee Black
Douglas Eyman
Robert Osgood
Fireflies.ai Notetaker Alexand
Anna Pollack
Bethany Letiecq
Kevin Dunayer (he/him)
Victoria M Grady
Zachary Schrag
Kelly M Wentland
Shannon Davis
Daniel Walsch
Catherine Sausville
Mohan Venigalla
Rebecca Sutter
Charlotte Gill (she/her)
Caroline J Sutter
Wayne Adams
Ben Gatling
Delton Daigle
Marcy Glover
Jessica Scarlata
aberry
Burak Tanyu
read.ai meeting notes
Kelly Schrum
Ann L Ardis
Richard T Craig
Tom Wood
Georgia A. Williams
Benoit Van Aken
Thomas Polk
Jamie L Clark
Jessica Pyryt
Aditya Johri
Kerri LaCharite
Gesele Durham

Mohammad Salama

Diego Ortega

Matt Scherer

Samüel's iPhone

Lisa Billingham

Lisa Breglia

Susan Lawrence

Marguerite Rippy

Elan Adounvo

Christine Barthold

Rachel L Spence

Johanna Bockman

Anne Osterman

Xiaomei Cai

Ingrid Guerra Lopez

Lauren Reuscher

Melanie O'Brien

Nirup Menon

Shelby Broberg

Melissa Broeckelman-Post

Carlos F Sanchez

Gwen Vredevoogd

Abbas Zaidi

Jaimie Appleton

Tim Gibson

Shelley Reid

Janette's iPhone

Sue-Ming Yang

Jennifer Salerno

Lisa A Giacumo

Kimberly S Dight

Laura Santacrose

Kristin Johnsen-Neshati • she/her/hers

Frank Strike

Elizabeth Alman

Chris Ackerman

Laura Lautz

Cynthia Fuchs

Alecia Bryan

Marion Underwood

Niki Maria Vlastara