

April 27, 2025

## Faculty Senate President's Annual Report

During the 2024-2025 academic year, the Faculty Senate faced unprecedented and challenging times. I am proud of the work we did to navigate these waters, and to share here a number of our standout achievements:

**Committee Work:** The committees of the Faculty Senate continue to be a place where the day-in, day-out work of shared governance happens. While one committee may have spent the year in abeyance (see "Unionization," below), the others worked hard to follow their charges. FacEx met with the chair of the Standards and Procedures for Promotion and Tenure (SPPT) committee to discuss these charges, answer questions, and clarify certain points, and we are confident that future collaboration between SPPT and UCPT will be strengthened as a result. The Faculty Rights Board (FRB) also has a full docket this spring, and its work is more important than ever as long as negotiated grievance procedures are not yet in place. We hope that these procedures will, in any event, strengthen this committee and underline its importance.

**Guest Speakers:** Between August 2024 and May 2025, the Faculty Senate welcomed a distinguished roster of guest speakers who presented on matters of pressing concern to the faculty. These presentations served varying purposes: some informed decision-making in the Senate, while others fostered collaboration between governance and campus leadership. The following guest speakers presented during the 2024-2025 academic year:

- Concerns of the Asian and Asian-American Faculty-Staff Council — Dr. Huazhen Fang
- Introducing the Office of Sovereign Partnerships and Indigenous Initiatives — Dr. Alex Red Corn
- General Education and Core 34 Concerns — Dr. Rusty Monhollon (KBOR VPAA)
- State of the Campus: Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor — Dr. Barbara A. Bichelmeyer

**HLC Accreditation:** This year, KU underwent its 10-year Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation review. Alongside our partners in administration, members of the Faculty Senate participated in a mock site visit as well as the eventual accreditation visit itself in Spring 2025. During this visit, the accreditation review team questioned faculty as well as student and staff senators about the importance of shared governance at the University. We believe that we contributed to KU's overall strong case for continued accreditation through our resounding commitment to the tradition of shared governance and through our thorough, highly-prepared answers to the review team's questions.

**KBOR:** The Faculty Senate engaged extensively with the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR). Beginning in spring 2024, in response to KBOR-imposed changes in general education requirements statewide, the Senate began collecting impact statements from faculty across KU. In the fall, we worked the responses we received into a report, which we shared with KBOR in the spring. We then invited VP of Academic Affairs for KBOR, Dr. Rusty Monhollon, to visit with the Senate for a conversation on these matters. A productive exchange was held and Dr. Monhollon promised to continue to work with us in the future on our concerns regarding faculty control of the curriculum. Separately, I attended the monthly KBOR meetings, usually in Topeka but once at K-State in Manhattan and once at Pitt State in Pittsburg. There, I met with the Council of Faculty Senate Presidents (CoFSP) and worked on matters of shared concern across all the Regents institutions, e.g. tuition assistance for faculty seeking to train at other institutions than their own.

**Search Committees.** Shared governance appreciates the continued opportunity to engage in the search process for upper administration positions. This year, dean positions opened up at the School of Pharmacy and School of Business, as well as

for university governance administrative staff, and the Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Policy & Recognition. In every case, governance met with candidates and provided feedback to be considered throughout the hiring process.

**Shared Governance and Administration:** Faculty Senate leadership continued its recent practice of regularly conferring with the offices of the Provost and the Chancellor on matters of concern to the university community. Beginning in August 2025 with the Jayhawks Rising Provost Leadership Retreat, and continuing throughout the year at the provost's All Team meetings, as well as at recurring monthly meetings with the Provost and once-per-semester meetings with the Chancellor, shared governance brought issues of faculty concern to the attention of administration and kept abreast of administrative efforts. Many of these meetings resulted in ad-hoc follow-ups with various units on campus, which then fed back into meetings of the senate, ensuring that channels of communication between faculty and administration remained open. One example is my work with the Jayhawks Rising subcommittee on retention. Another was the Senate's consideration of an ad-hoc committee on AI, which was dropped after learning that such a committee already existed at the university level that contained two faculty members. A final example was shared work on communicating to the university community the agreement between administrators, union negotiators, and faculty on not doing the COACHE survey this year.

**Statements:** This year, Faculty Senate made statements in support of our international community at KU, especially our faculty, who are facing unprecedented challenges. We reaffirmed our commitment to them and their belonging at KU. We also affirmed the continuing importance of tenure and academic freedom in the face of legislative encroachment and overreach.

**Unionization:** On April 25, 2024, KU faculty voted 850 to 132 to form the United Academics of the University of Kansas (UAKU), and to empower UAKU to collectively bargain with the university over compensation, benefits, and working conditions for faculty and academic staff. The 2024-2025 academic year was thus the first during which shared governance operated alongside a contract negotiation. We are proud to have begun the process of establishing a permanent division of labor between shared governance and the union, especially after hundreds of union members instructed their negotiators to prioritize shared governance as the intrinsic right to participate in decision-making processes that affect our university. While some reshuffling was perhaps cosmetic, other changes were more substantial, including a major pause in the work of at least one committee of the Senate (the Faculty Compensation Committee), as well as the creation of a new liaison position appointed by FacEx (see "University Code Changes" below). More changes are sure to come in the future, but we are confident that a clear and basic division of tasks between the union and shared governance has been established, and that governance will remain the voice of the faculty in the years after the contract has been signed.

**University Code Changes:** Faculty Senate made several code changes in order to smooth the work of shared governance:

- We amended University Senate Code Article II, Section 4 Election of Officers to create a liaison from Faculty Senate to UAKU.
- We amended University Senate Code Article XIII, Section 2 Membership Faculty Rights Board to eliminate the requirement that FRB be constituted of only tenured faculty.
- We amended University Senate Code Article XIII, Section 2 Membership SPPT to allow an Associate Vice Provost as well as the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs to represent the administration on the committee.

We also began, but did not complete, a process of amending the FSRR/Code to reflect changes to SPPT in light of unionization, as well as to address recommendations from UCPT regarding standardization of promotion criteria across units, e.g. that they should reflect what was in place at time of hire rather than at time of promotion. This would constitute unfinished business for next year depending on what happens with the contract.

Overall, I am optimistic about the future of shared governance at KU. Both on our own at Faculty Senate, and working together with staff and students in University Senate, we have addressed shared concerns and improved communication across the university.

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