

April 27, 2025

Re: University Senate President End of Year Report

During Spring 2024, I was elected as the University Senate President-Elect, but due to a vacancy in the President position, I had the honor of stepping in as the acting President. Over the past 18 months, it has been an incredibly rewarding experience to serve in this capacity. I am deeply proud of the work we've accomplished together, and I've truly enjoyed getting to know so many incredible faculty, staff, and students across campus — many of whom I wouldn't have encountered in my business school role. Engaging with these diverse groups has broadened my perspective and deepened my commitment to the success of our entire KU community.

As the 2024-2025 academic year comes to a close, I reflect on the tremendous initiatives and collaborative efforts we've undertaken to support the University's mission and to advance the goals of our faculty, staff, and students. Looking back on my time as President, I am inspired by what we've achieved, and I am excited to share the highlights of these efforts:

Provost and Chancellor Offices: I actively engaged in critical discussions and events organized by the Provost and Chancellor Offices to strengthen communication and foster collaboration among various units and departments across campus. My involvement included participating in the Jayhawks Rising Provost Leadership Retreat, attending All Team meetings, and holding recurring monthly meetings with the Provost and once-per-semester meetings with the Chancellor. Additionally, I participated in numerous ad hoc meetings to receive updates on key campus initiatives and issues. These engagements allowed me to contribute to shaping actionable plans that support the University's strategic priorities, ensuring that the voices of faculty, staff, and students were represented in important campus decisions.

HLC Accreditation: Members of SenEx played a crucial role in the University's 10-year Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation review. This comprehensive process included participation in the mock site visit, numerous preparation meetings, and the actual accreditation visit in Spring 2025. During this visit, faculty, staff, and student representatives engaged in critical discussions with the accreditation review team about the importance of shared governance at the University. Their active involvement in these key activities was vital in showcasing the University's commitment to academic excellence and institutional integrity, ultimately supporting KU's continued accreditation status.

Search Committees. Along with members of the University, Staff, and Student Senate, I engaged in the search process for several key administrative positions on campus, including the dean positions at the School of Pharmacy and School of Business, university governance administrative staff, and the Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Policy & Recognition. At the conclusion of these searches, governance provided candidate feedback to be considered throughout the hiring process. Participation in these processes was essential for fostering a collaborative and transparent selection process that ultimately benefits our entire campus community.

Academic Program Discontinuances: During the 2024–2025 academic year, the University Senate worked collaboratively with university leadership, faculty, and stakeholders to thoughtfully review and approve approximately 12 academic programs for discontinuance. Each discontinuance followed a thorough process that included consultation with faculty, academic units, and administrative leadership to ensure decisions were transparent, data-driven, and consistent with the University's long-term strategic goals.

Calendar Committee Changes: The University Senate Calendar Committee proposed revisions to the academic calendar for Fall 2025, recommending that the start and end dates of the semester be moved up by one week, with the new start date set for August 18, 2025, and the new end date for December 12, 2025. This change was driven by logistical campus operations, including the need to better align the semester with campus initiatives and resources, as well as feedback from faculty, staff, and students. After careful consideration, the University Senate approved the revised calendar, which is expected to improve overall scheduling flexibility.

Guest Speakers: Between August 2024 and May 2025, the University Senate welcomed a diverse group of guest speakers who enriched our meetings by providing valuable insights into key issues affecting the University of Kansas community. Their presentations supported informed decision-making within the Senate, fostered open dialogue, and strengthened collaboration between governance bodies and campus leadership. The following guest speakers presented during the 2024-2025 academic year:

- HLC Accreditation: Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs — Dr. Jen Roberts
- AI at KU: Professor of English — Dr. Kathryn Conrad and Dr. Doug Ward
- DEIB Legislative Changes: Vice Provost of Community Impact — Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley
- State of the Campus: Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor — Dr. Barbara A. Bichelmeyer
- Campus Facilities Master Plan: Vice Provost for Operations — Callie Long and Director of Facilities Planning and Development — Mark Reiske
 - Josh’s Note: In response to constituent complaints, I have worked closely with Callie Long to ensure that heating and cooling systems in campus buildings remain operational through the late evenings during finals week. The goal is to extend climate control until at least 10 PM, ensuring that students have a comfortable environment for studying and taking exams, particularly in the critical late hours.
- Student Support Services: Director of Student Support and Case Management — Rachel Auten and Director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) — Dr. Chris Corbett
- Gateway District Project and Legislative NIL Changes: Director of Athletics — Travis Goff

New University Senate Committee: Between Fall 2023-2024, the University Senate engaged in extensive discussions regarding the creation of a new Environmental and Sustainability Committee, a proposal rooted in the Student Senate’s Green New Deal initiative. Building on the momentum generated by student leadership, the University Senate worked collaboratively with governance bodies across campus to review, refine, and ultimately approve the formation of the committee. Plans are underway to finalize the committee’s staffing and formal charges during Summer 2025, with the committee set to begin its work in Fall 2025. This new body will play a central role in advancing the University of Kansas’ sustainability goals and integrating environmental priorities into campus planning and operations. The successful creation of the committee underscores the powerful impact of student advocacy and the strength of shared governance at KU.

Letters of Support — Dual Employment Restrictions Undergraduate Student Staff: In response to a Student Senate resolution, SenEx approved a letter of support for the university to reconsider recent changes to policies regarding dual employment restrictions for undergraduate student staff, in which exempt and non-exempt positions were held simultaneously.

Letter of Questions and Concerns – Gateway District Project: The University of Kansas Gateway District project represents a significant investment in the university’s infrastructure and overall campus environment. SenEx serves as the collective voice of faculty, staff, and students in the shared governance of KU. Faculty, staff, and students are not only essential to the academic and operational functions of the university but also form the heart and soul of the KU campus community. In the spirit of shared governance and in recognition of the vital role these groups play in campus life, SenEx gathered questions and concerns from campus constituents, drafted and approved a letter to key campus administrators expressing our concerns about the Gateway District Project.

University Senate Rules and Regulations (USRR) Code Changes: Throughout the academic year, we made revisions to the USRR to specifically identify graduate students, rather than within broader term “students”, as it pertains to membership in University Committees. This serves the purpose of ensuring graduate students have a voice in shared governance. Additionally, minor code changes were approved regarding membership on senate committees.

Unfinished Business – Updates: As the academic year comes to close, we have three primary items still classified as unfinished business.

- **Grade Replacement Policy:** The University Senate received a request from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Advising (CUSA) to review the university’s Grade Replacement Policy (U.S.R.R, Article II, Section 3, 2.3.9). Per U.S.R.R. Article II, Section 3, 2.3.9, the code states “If a student takes a course at KU, receives a C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- or F in the course, enrolls, in and repeats the course at KU, the new grade may be used in place of the original grade, for purpose of GPA calculation, subject to the limitations herein.” The CUSA proposed changes to U.S.R.R. Article II, Section 3, 2.3.9, which would allow any student, no matter their original grade in a course, be able to retake a course as a means of improving their overall GPA. This agenda item was expected to pass during Spring 2025, but due to lack of quorum at two senate meetings, this proposal will be considered for approval during Fall 2025.
- **Grading Policy – Competency Based Education:** To reflect the university’s initiatives in competency-based education, a proposal is outstanding to modify the grading policy to reflect grading options specific to competency-based education courses.
- **Jayhawk Hub:** As part of its ongoing efforts to improve student support and engagement, the Student Body Vice President, Evanna Dominic, proposed the creation of the Jayhawk Hub, a new centralized platform designed to streamline access to academic resources, campus services, and communication. The Jayhawk Hub consolidates essential student resources, including tutoring, advising, academic deadlines, and extracurricular opportunities, all in one convenient location – through a Canvas tile that all students are automatically provided access to. This initiative aims to simplify students' academic and campus experience, reducing the need to search multiple platforms and minimizing missed updates. After considerable research and implementation efforts to ensure the hub meets the needs of the KU community, Evanna proposed and created a survey that was distributed to faculty, staff, and students to gather feedback on the proposed platform. The University Senate looks forward to working with Evanna and the Student Senate, and monitoring the continued development of the Jayhawk Hub, which will support student success and improve communication across campus.
- **Excused Absence Policy:** Over the past few years, the University Senate engaged in significant discussions and debates regarding the university’s excused absence policy, particularly addressing implementation concerns raised by faculty, staff, and students. While no immediate changes are planned to the USRR policy language, I have held several meetings with campus constituents and university administration to emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts in finding solutions to address frustrations surrounding the policy. These ongoing discussions have resulted in several positive outcomes, including the creation of a comprehensive FAQ website, improved communication to campus about policy expectations, and the establishment of a new testing center for make-up exams. The testing center will begin a pilot program in Fall 2025, with hopes of campus wide implementation in Spring 2026, marking a crucial step toward enhancing support for students and faculty navigating excused absence challenges.

Overall, this has been a highly productive and engaging year that truly embodied the principle of shared governance at KU. Through our collective efforts, we have not only strengthened our community but also significantly improved communication and engagement across campus constituencies and with the administration. The progress we’ve made this year has laid a solid foundation for future governance leaders, ensuring that the work we have done will continue to influence and inspire success for years to come.

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