

Faculty Senate Minutes

LXI No. 4

September 16, 2026

Attendance

The Faculty Senate of Southeast Missouri State University met on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, in the UC Redhawks Room. The following Senators were present: Frederick Adjei, Michael Bezushko, Larry Bohannon, Abe Book, Charlotte Cervantes, Corrie Dudley, Sam Duncan, Erin Fluegge, Susan Fulton, Jennifer Gadberry, Pam Gershuny, Chris Haug, Michael Holm, Arusha Ijaz, Barbara Lamont, Hayley Love (Chair-Elect), Joe Murphy (Chair), Josh Newth, Tomoaki Nomi, Anthony Scherer, Matt Sissom, Mike Taylor, and Juefei Yuan. Interim Provost Doug Koch was also present. The following alternate were present: Joshua Shadwick, Alan Talmage, and Joseph Snyder.

Call to Order

Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Joseph Murphy called the meeting to order at 3:02p.m. and welcomed all senators, administrators, and faculty guests. He reminded attendees that Faculty Senate meetings are open meetings and faculty members are always welcome to attend. However, he clarified that Faculty Senate remains a deliberative body of elected senators and that discussion and debate occur through recognized senators. Faculty guests were encouraged to share questions and concerns through their Senate representatives.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from September 2, 2026 (61.03) meeting were reviewed and approved without corrections.

Guests

Hodson, University President

President Hodson thanked the Senate for the invitation and expressed appreciation for the work faculty and Faculty Senate have undertaken in support of university initiatives, including the strategic plan, budget planning, and governance document review. He

acknowledged the significant pace of activity across campus and emphasized the central role faculty play in advancing institutional priorities.

Facilities and Capital Projects

President Hodson reported that construction of Blount Hall remains on schedule and under budget. Although construction progress may appear slow from a campus perspective, the project remains on track for occupancy within approximately two years. Allied Health faculty were specifically recognized as stakeholders in the project.

Additional facilities updates included:

- Status of construction of Talbert Terrace between Kent Library and Academic Hall.
- Numerous campus infrastructure projects currently underway.
- A proposal that the Board of Governors approve a \$10 million withdrawal from university reserves to address deferred maintenance needs.

Projects identified for deferred maintenance funding include:

- Installation of a new elevator in East Towers, where only one elevator is currently operational.
- HVAC repairs and upgrades across campus.
- Repair of a leaking skylight at the Sikeston Regional Campus.
- Additional maintenance needs on both main and regional campuses.

Administrative Searches

President Hodson provided updates regarding several senior-level searches:

Facilities Management Director

- Search process underway.
- Finalists expected to visit campus during October.
- Interim director Bill Hooper was recognized for effective leadership during the transition period.

University Police Chief

- Three finalists scheduled to visit campus during the first week of October.
- Candidate pool described as strong and highly qualified.

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

- Search committee has been formed.
- Faculty Senate elections for committee membership were completed prior to the start of the academic year.
- Dr. Stephen Schultheis was selected to chair the search committee.
- Candidate visits are anticipated during November.
- The goal is to announce the selected candidate at the December Board of Governors meeting, with a target start date no later than February 1, 2027.

Budget Planning and State Funding Formula

President Hodson reported that planning for the Fiscal Year 2028 budget has already begun, with the Budget Review Committee scheduled to meet within the coming week.

Proposed Missouri Higher Education Funding Model

A substantial portion of the discussion focused on proposed changes to Missouri's higher education funding formula.

Key components of the proposed model include:

- Allocation based on **weighted completed credit hours**.
- Greater value assigned to programs in STEM and health-related fields.
- Credit hours count only if successfully completed.
- Funding weights are expected to resemble those used in Nevada's funding model.

President Hodson explained that:

- Missouri legislators have become increasingly impatient with the lack of a statewide funding formula.
- The legislature directed the Missouri Department of Higher Education to propose a new model.
- Current discussions suggest implementation will occur even amid projected state budget shortfalls.

According to preliminary analyses:

- SEMO would lose approximately \$181,000 under the proposed model.
- SEMO is among the institutions experiencing the smallest funding reduction.
- Several institutions, including Missouri State, the University of Missouri, Northwest Missouri State, and Central Missouri, would realize gains under current projections.

President Hodson stated that the new environment would likely increase competition among Missouri's public universities and require greater focus on:

- Student recruitment.
- Student retention.
- Credit hour generation.
- Degree completion.
- Expansion of high-weight academic programs.

Student Emergency Fund

A senator asked whether the student emergency fund remained active.

President Hodson confirmed:

- The fund is still active.
- It is administered through the Foundation rather than the university.
- Foundation leadership continues to raise external support for the fund.
- He expects the fund to remain a Giving Day priority.

Regional Campuses

Discussion focused on the future viability of SEMO's regional campuses.

President Hodson noted:

- Regional campuses were established before widespread online education.
- Their role has become more complex as educational delivery methods have evolved.

- Sikeston remains a valuable facility with opportunities for new programming and partnerships.

Examples discussed included:

- Childcare partnerships.
- Agricultural research projects.
- Possibilities for dental hygiene education through partnerships with other institutions.

Faculty from Sikeston emphasized that students continue to value face-to-face learning and peer interaction, even as online options expand. President Hodson agreed that future planning should be based on actual student preferences rather than assumptions.

University Reserves and Facilities

In response to Senate questions, President Hodson reported:

- University reserves currently total approximately \$103 million.
- Approval of the proposed maintenance expenditure would reduce reserves to roughly \$93 million.
- He characterized the reserve balance as an institutional strength, particularly in advance of uncertain fiscal conditions.

Discussion also addressed unused campus facilities such as Art Building, Cheney Hall, and Myers Hall.

President Hodson stated:

- The university has likely completed most major demolitions.
- Historic buildings such as Art and Cheney are currently viewed from a preservation standpoint.
- Structural concerns, including a recently discovered crack in Cheney Hall, are under assessment.
- Parker Hall may eventually be considered for demolition following relocation of Allied Health programs to Blount Hall.

Summer Enrollment and Academic Innovation

Several senators raised concerns regarding summer enrollment.

President Hodson discussed:

- The need to rethink traditional assumptions about summer enrollment.
- Opportunities to encourage students to complete degrees more quickly through continuous enrollment.
- Possible future expansion of eight-week academic models and reduced-credit-hour degree programs.

He emphasized that many institutions struggle to utilize summer sessions effectively and that SEMO should explore new approaches for maximizing student participation while maintaining quality.

Governance Documents and Faculty Handbook Review

Significant discussion centered on the Board of Governors' request for review of governance documents.

President Hodson explained:

- The Board requested recommendations by December 1.
- The primary focus is the Faculty Handbook.
- Revisions will likely occur in phases rather than all at once.
- The Faculty Senate will retain a significant role in reviewing and recommending changes.

Additional discussion addressed:

- Husch Blackwell's analysis of the Faculty Handbook.
- Relationships between handbook provisions and university policy.
- Faculty concerns regarding the removal or relocation of handbook provisions.
- Commitments from administration to ensure important governance matters remain documented appropriately.

President Hodson expressed support for a collaborative review process and committed to continued engagement with Faculty Senate throughout the effort.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Approval of Updated Legislative Committee Rosters

The Chair reported that Membership Committee representatives had been working to fill vacant committee positions.

Remaining vacancies included:

- One HCAM representative.
- Johnson Faculty Center committee positions.
- Several additional appointments still in progress.

Motion to approve; Senator Snyder, seconded; Senator Bohannon

Action

The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Governance Documents Review Task Force Discussion

The Chair reported that Faculty Senate leadership had received Governance Documents Review Task Force materials earlier in the week and distributed them immediately to senators.

Discussion focused on:

- The timeline for review.
- Scope of recommended Faculty Handbook revisions.
- Preservation of faculty rights and protections.
- Assignment of review responsibilities to legislative committees.
- Concerns about pace and workload associated with the review process.

Senators discussed:

- Faculty hiring and tenure ratios.
- Procedures relating to faculty handbook revisions.
- Potential effects of removing certain provisions from the handbook.
- The need to coordinate handbook revisions with corresponding business policy updates.

The Executive Committee indicated that review responsibilities would be divided among legislative committees before their next scheduled meetings

Reports

Chair's Report – Dr. Joseph Murphy

Chair Murphy reported that recent activities had been dominated by governance document review work, including:

- Executive Committee meetings.
- Administrative Council participation.
- Quarterly meetings with President Hodson.
- Meetings with academic deans.
- Ongoing Governance Documents Review Task Force activities.

Administrative Liaison Report – Dr. Doug Koch

Dr. Doug Koch discussed:

- Summer scheduling strategies.
- Second eight-week courses.
- Enrollment trends.
- Balancing student demand with efficient course scheduling.
- Exploring opportunities for strategically targeted summer and accelerated offerings.

Discussion followed concerning summer sequence courses and concerns about preserving successful instructional models.

Student Government Report – Mo Ewen

A new Student Government Association representative introduced herself and reported:

- SGA held its first Senate meeting of the academic year.
- New members were sworn into office.
- Vacancies remain for two HCAM senators and the SGA Chief of Staff position.
- Student organization approvals were completed during the meeting.

Legislative Committee Reports

Academic Affairs – Corrie Dudley

Committee met, reviewed charges, and discussed priorities for the year.

Documents – Abe Book

Committee reviewed charges and anticipated future handbook review assignments.

Faculty Compensation – Anthony Scherer

Committee reported readiness to begin work on forthcoming issues.

Governance – Erin Fluegge

No substantive report.

Professional Affairs – Susan Fulton

Committee organized membership and prepared for future assignments.

Membership – Michael Bezushko

Reported continued progress filling vacancies across Senate committees and representative positions.

Johnson Faculty Center – Hayley Love

Reported planning efforts for a faculty social event later in the semester. A tree-related issue at the Faculty Center had been resolved.

Announcements

- Student Nurses Association announced a breast cancer awareness walk and pumpkin-painting event.
- Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Martyna Majok was scheduled to participate in a talk-back event at the Rust Flexible Theatre.
- Membership Committee requested a brief meeting immediately following adjournment.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn; Senator Taylor, seconded; Senator Book

- Meeting adjourned at 5:00PM with a reminder of the next meeting on September 30th in the UC Redhawks room