

# University Senate- October 6, 2025



## University Senate Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2025

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Zoom

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Ball, Margaret; Barbosa, Miguel; Boyce, Greg; Brannigan, Kyle; Brooks, Christopher; Broun, Bill; Bulzoni, Donna; Cavauiolo, Domenico; Carver, Marguerite; Chelladurai, Jeyaprekash; Cole-Malott, Donna-Marie; Dailey, Deena; Dillmuth-Miller, Susan; DiPipi-Hoy, Caroline; Dong, Stella; Drummond, Darla; Eliasson, Johan; Fuenta, Rene; Gruniero-Roadcap, Nieves; Ju, Youngwook; Kim, Heon; Knickerbocker, Heather; Langan, Brooke; Long, Kenneth; Nickens, Rabin; Rodriguez, Elaine; Rosen, Melinda; Ross, Jerry; Sachs, Michael; Scott, Elizabeth; Smith, Jennie; Smith, Rob; Snyder, Brandon; Solis, Santiago; Vanic, Keith; Williams, Rosemary ; Williams, Sylvester; Zhang, Shiqi; Zhang, Xuemao

### ABSENT:

Bing, John; Casebolt, Kevin; Cox, Amaya; Ellis, Damaj; Fredette, Mary; Galdieri, James; Geiger, Melissa; Green, Ainslee; Gutierrez, Hazel; Harris, Jamar; Matis, Margaret; Miller, Aianna; Montalvo, Emilie; Mullen, Margaret; Postupack, Mary Francis; Street, Brian; Turay, Ansu; Varcoe, Kelly; Watkins, Shawn; Watson, Bethanie

- 1) Roll Call
- 2) Review of September 2025 Minutes
  - a. Minutes approved by general consent
- 3) University President's Report
  - a. Several updates on some recent discussions and ongoing initiatives.
  - b. Following last month's request about Centre Street and signage, the signage on Centre Street will be updated to more clearly state the "one way" road.
  - c. Guidelines for the selection of the Commencement Grand Marshal will be finalized to incorporate some feedback that was received. The updated guidelines will be shared around Thanksgiving.
  - d. Over the past year, several members have raised concerns about the operations of the University Senate, a review of the Senate is probably worth doing. We will bring in someone externally to review the Senate structure and effectiveness. There have been no major overhauls of Senate since it was updated several years ago. Goal is to improve the senate operations as a whole and see if any changes need to be made.
  - e. Several inquiries about parking in the last month. A drone flyover during peak hours confirmed that lots are typically full during peak hours, however, other lots are under utilized (specifically, lots 40 and 42). Campus is trying to get the information out there about where parking is and is not. A new parking study is

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being completed. This is a difficult process that is much more than just counting how many parking passes are issued. Findings and recommendations made from the parking study will come to the President's Cabinet for consideration. Please voice any parking concerns to the representative from the parking committee that is closest to you.

- f. We are more than three months into the fiscal year without a state budget. This delay creates significant uncertainty, particularly around student aid.
  - Bill Broun: Thank for advocating on behalf of the University with legislators.
- 4) Fix the Agenda
  - a. Several cancellations on the agenda.
    - Under Open Discussion, the Director of Assessment and Accreditation is not able to attend today's meeting and will be attending next month's meeting.
    - Middle States update will be given next month instead of today.
    - President Long will give an update on Middle States under New Business item D.
- 5) Committee reports
  - a. Executive Committee
    - Met last week to set the agenda for the meeting. Discussed the possibility of inviting non-senate committees to share their goals and progress to senate meetings.
  - b. Academic Affairs
    - Met on September 19<sup>th</sup>, discussed the Way of the Warrior and how it integrates into the strategic plan. Question has been raised several times since the Way of the Warrior was established concerning if academics are represented strongly enough. One suggestion was to add the phrase "intellectual curiosity" to "committed to self-growth". So, it would now read, "Committed to Self-Growth and Intellectual Curiosity". This is just as suggestion, but we will be discussing this around campus this year. Please let us know if you have other recommendations.
    - Another thing mentioned, and thanks to Jan Hoffman for raising this, is establishing a monthly recognition of faculty, staff and students who exemplify the Way of the Warrior, so we'd like to start a small committee to come up with some guidelines for how we pick individuals to be recognized.
    - Discussed Course Dog, our new curriculum management system that is gradually being connected to the system. Chris Domanski was going to do a presentation but he is out today, so we will put that off until next month.
  - c. Rules and By-Laws
    - Met last week, though not ready to give a full report. Instead will do a rundown of some of the initiatives.

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- Looking at the language for leaves of absence and how to tell someone you will be gone for a temporary absence. Will need to get approval, so it's not ready to share yet.
  - Had a lengthy discussion about online meetings and wordsmithing two different options in regard to requirements. Should require people to participate and hear each other at the same time, seek recognition to obtain the floor, submit motions in writing, and take and verify votes. Will need to present to the senate about this at a later date.
  - Also looking to clarify some language in the constitution that talks about vice presidents, perhaps changing this language to the President's Cabinet.
  - Will continue with these initiatives and bring it back to senate.
- d. Budget, Finance, and Planning
- First meeting of the academic year on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Senate rules and bylaws as they relate to the committee were reviewed. Also, since the chair has stepped down from the committee, we are in a position to select a new chair and interest is being solicited. This will be discussed at the next meeting.
  - Presented the fiscal year 2025 preliminary audit results and the university's financial sustainability indicators for that same year. Will be giving the full presentation to the senate at the next meeting, but would like to present high-level results.
  - E&G closed with a \$9.3 million deficit as compared to what was anticipated in planed use of reserves of \$7.5 million. The increase in deficit of \$1.8 million and additional use of reserves was due to a number of factors, the larger being bad debt expenses, which is students not paying their bills. Utilities, a healthcare settlement that was not anticipated, as well as institutional aid that came in higher than originally projected. The auxiliaries, which are the residence hall, dining hall, university center, and recreation center closed the year with a \$5.9 million surplus and restricted, which are restricted grants, closed with a surplus of about \$300,000. There was a net investment in plant of \$6.9 million, which includes \$3 million in contributions from SAA for the new University Center, as well as \$1.4 million of insurance proceeds related to the Innovation Center fire. \$4.1 million of payments that brought down of bond principle liability. The total change in net position before unfunded liabilities, which we talk about this frequently when we present this, which is our pensions and post-retirement healthcare liabilities, with an increase of \$3.8 million. After the impact for those unfunded liabilities, you'll see on our financial statements when they're issued, a change in net positive of about \$500,000 positive. Finally, the cash balance was discussed as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. We closed the year with \$85.2 million, which is a decrease of \$93 million from June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. Following that, I presented

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the preliminary fiscal year 2025 financial risk assessment and annual financial sustainability indicators. The fiscal year 25 risk assessment shows the four indicators used to measure financial sustainability continue to exceed system requirements, and East Stroudsburg University's plan assignment, is again, ranked as stable. However, a review of the financial indicator's annual results are showing an unfavorable trend. And like I said, I plan on sharing that presentation with the Council or with Senate at the next meeting and we could go into a lot more detail and answer any questions.

- The Director of Budget and Sponsored Accounting then presented the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget. We talked about major assumptions being, for ENG, a 4.8% increase in annualized FTE enrollment. A .1% increase in state appropriation, which is based on a 0% increase in state appropriation for the system, but then when it's run through the formula. ESU actually favorably, gets a 3.1% increase, a \$139 per semester increase in tuition, and a 6.1% increase in utilities. Salaries are based on CBAs and benefit assumptions are provided by the PASSHE Benefits Office. Given these assumptions, we're projecting a \$2.7 million deficit for the fiscal year. As the President indicated in his remarks, when the state budget is finalized, if PASSHE were to receive greater than a 0% increase in state appropriations, and the \$139 per semester increase in tuition were retracted, it would change the anticipated deficit. And the budget would have to be revised, once those assumptions are finalized. Looking to the future years, for E&G, our projections are indicating deficits of \$5.1 million and \$7.2 million for fiscal years 27 and 28, respectively. There was then discussion around the existence of a structural budget deficit. Where increases in expenditures are outpacing increases in revenue and the need to address the problem. Finally, I notified the committee that the Director of Budget, Ray Bleakley, and I will be presenting the budget at a campus-wide meeting, date, time and location to be determined, and everyone was encouraged to attend. We're looking to find times that are convenient where we can get the most campus constituents, including the faculty. We want to see everyone out so we're trying to find a time that's convenient for everybody. Also like our subgroup, I encourage all of you also to please attend. We're going to go into the budget in a lot of detail, and you'll be able to ask your questions then.
- Comment from President Long: Donna did make one comment about a \$3 million from SAA. Just want to clarify that. That's funding and comes from our contract with the bookstore, and when we did the contract with the bookstore a decade ago, when we thought we were going to build a new building, there was a contribution by Barnes & Noble to pay for their space. In lieu of paying monthly rent, they made a contribution of \$3 million. SAA held

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that until the building was actually completed, since they have the contract with it. So it wasn't taking students fees, it was actually taking the rent payment that SAA provided, well, that Barnes and Noble provided a little over a decade ago.

- e. Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence
  - We finally got the names of the students to participate in this committee a couple weeks ago, so now we're in the process of scheduling our first meeting. However, I've been having conversations with the students to kind of nudge them to identify some kind of goals and issues that want to discuss and address this year. So they do have some recommendations, so as soon as we meet as a committee, they will share with the rest and then we'll share back next time we meet.
- f. Research
  - Will be having a meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup>, in the midst of scheduling it.
- 6) Student Government Association Report
  - a. No Students are present. Santiago Solis will check in to find out why all were absent.
- 7) Old Business
  - a. No old business.
- 8) New Business
  - a. Presentation on the University Senate areas of influence. Please see included powerpoint presentation.
  - b. Committees
    - Rabin Nickens, College of Education added to Budget, Finance and Planning
    - Accidentally removed Kelly Varcoe from Research and she has been added back
    - John Bing has been added to Academic Affairs
    - No objections to the committee changes, approved by general consent.
    - In the constitution it also states that we need to have a member on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which is now the Presidential Commission on Community and Belonging. Caroline DiPippi-Hoy is a our representative from senate.
  - c. Proposal to create an ad hoc committee to create a free speech statement for our university, referred to one of the senators that brought that forward, Chris Brooks.
    - Chris Brooks: There's so much to say about this issue, with a lot of things that are happening, not only in this country, but really the world, and I think that we need to take a serious look at the kind of environment that we're committing to at East Stroudsburg University. And I took a look at the rules and bylaws, and the process would be that the university senate committee, Rules and Bylaws committee would be charged with creating an ad hoc

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committee, so temporary, to review, perhaps, what we do have online, the mission statement and so on. This is just a process that would take place through the work of this committee, and then the findings and perhaps suggested language would then be presented to the senate for its approval. Any questions, comments?

- Susan Dillmuth-Miller: There's been about 200 universities that have adopted a free speech statement. I know that we have a website that discusses free speech. A couple years ago, some students brought it forward that it was not clear and hard to understand.
- President Long: If I can actually share the screen. If you can see, this is what we actually have on our website for freedom of speech. It was updated, Dr. Solis did a comprehensive review and actually led the charge in getting this updated. I'm going to guess this was around 2020. I also led the State System Commission on Free Speech in 2021-2022 so I would definitely encourage everyone to really go through this, because it is pretty comprehensive. It does cover a number of different things. If you just type in "free speech" it will come up. And it talks about what we can and cannot do as a public institution. And that is very important to note in terms of free speech. Free speech protections is for government interference with free speech, so some people get that confused with private organizations. Private organizations actually can suppress your free speech. But as a public institution, we have certain constraints that we have to adhere to. But I would encourage everyone to read that, because it did take a lot of work. It was vetted through legal, both legal state system as well as the Office of the Attorney General. When I participated in the system-wide initiative a few years ago we actually brought in FIRE, which is an advocate for free speech. And I did suggest to President Dillmuth-Miller that maybe that's something we might want to do as well for our ESU community, before we jump in with both feet and looking at that, as well as having maybe an outside visitor come in and talk about free speech to the campus community. I think that would be a very helpful dialogue if we can get someone to come in to talk about that before we go too far in on this because there are experts out there and we don't have to recreate the wheel.
- Bill Broun: I'm one of the people who is joining with Chris Brooks and asking for this ad hoc committee to be created. I think that there are a lot of things to talk about with where, and how things have changed in the last few years. We're seeing really dramatic attacks on free speech in our country in a way that frankly, you know, three years ago would have seemed unthinkable to me. But they're happening all the time now. I think it's worth revisiting where we stand with the committee and the language that we use to create a statement and also the quality of the statement overall, with respect to all the

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work that was done before, which is really great. I mean, I'm thankful for that, I respect the work and also I think that it contains the essence of a lot of the stuff that would need to be continued. Probably, for me, the biggest concern that I have, because I feel like having a committee is also, it's protective of the university, and just addressing this is protective. But my main concern in terms of improving our free speech posture is really programming. What are we actively doing to promote free speech and in, nonviolent civil discourse. How are we actually nurturing it? A statement is great, but the statement itself has to make it clear that it is not passive. We have to be actively pursuing free speech, because when we're not, we slip backwards.

- Donna-Marie Cole: I have a question for Bill and Chris. I'm curious about when you say free speech, are you also talking about academic freedom in relation to free speech as well or is it just tied to what the president noted about, the government in relation to institutions like ESU's impact on free speech?
- Chris Brooks: once the committee is formed, they would decide on the particulars. But my thinking is that it would be the umbrella overall declarative statement, this is what we, the institution, stand for rather than an explanation of the first amendment. For example, the university of Chicago statement, which is kind of the gold standard for free speech in the United States, 203 universities nationally have signed on to that. That's just a for instance. This isn't for me to decide. I would love to see students, particularly the student newspaper, the Stroud Courier, participate in this. This certainly isn't for me to decide, this is for a committee to look at and then suggest to the senate.
- Susan Dillmuth-Miller: I think this is very appropriate for the committee to come out of senate, because we have administration, faculty, staff, students. You have representation for everybody.
- Chris Brooks: This is the only body on campus that represents all constituencies, so this, if not here, I'm not sure where.
- Bill Broun: one thing I've seen is that when free speech is not sort of actively pursued, I do see, not at this institution but at others, where academic freedom in teaching can hit some snags that to me are worrying. One of the things is when people use terminology, like "good behavior" or even "neutrality". Those can be used in a way that is biased. One group's neutrality is not necessarily another group's neutrality. And I think a committee that is something people can look at and take a hard look at and can it impact academic freedom? I just heard about an institution of higher education that is beginning to really put a lot of language towards its teachers about how free speech doesn't mean you can do anything you want, as if the professors would

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not know that. But that kind of thing really worries me, because most professors know that already. I think there's a chill in the air at the national level and people are worried. This committee is also a way to talk through some of those concerns.

- Keith Vanic: Bill, what's the impetus for the proposal? Has there been examples across campus where you feel that free speech has been stifled? Or is there a scenario?
- Chris Brooks: Being the content supervisor for social studies, I've had multiple student teachers terrified of speaking freely. Not only in the classroom and the student teaching. I had to talk them off the ledge and remind them of what their professional responsibility was. They're not going to come to administration about that and quite frankly, if I wasn't in the room they probably would not have come to me about that because they don't want to be bothered and they just want to keep their heads down and get their degree and move on with their lives. So, yes, there have been, but they're going to be quiet and I don't want to have an institution where kids are afraid to speak freely and obviously respectfully. And that's part of our charge, that they learn that respect.
- Bill Broun: One of the things, I have not noticed or I don't have an example of any kind of infringements but I do have examples of the positive things happening that I want to see protected. An example that's really healthy right now is the way that the university respects our student newspaper. They stay out of the editorial room and that is really helpful, that's the way it's supposed to be. SAA is also very hands off with the paper and other forms of student expression too and in think that's a treasure I want to see us protect.
- Deena Daily: What I hear you say Bill is that this is more a proactive measure than a reactive measure, and that you're just trying to make sure that what we have doesn't slip.
- Bill Broun: this is sort of a pluralistic committee, or a group of people who are interested in this. So that's my perspective.
- Chris Brooks: Our institution has been accused of being reactive and not proactive, and I'd like to change that. Here's an opportunity for us to be proactive.
- Donna-Marie Cole: I'm curious if it's about public facing, letting folks know where we stand with free speech, period? Or is there some type of enforcement or protection around people's free speech that's associated? What does that look like through the university structure? If your free speech rights are violated, for example?
- Chris Brooks: The enforcement mechanism comes out of the president's office. What that would look like, we can suggest to the senate and then



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subsequently to the president what they think might work. Currently, abuses of constitutional protections, really that's a federal matter. So, there are protections in the CBA, but there's also protections at the federal level. So those protections would be litigated.

- President Long: I think Dr. Brooks mentioned, and the website shows, that this is free speech and the legislation around free speech is ingrained in our Constitution. I personally think that the guidelines that we have and information we have is very informative on the website and it provides a lot of detail. Every situation where there was a question of free speech violations is handled in a case by case basis. It's not something where you can just say ok X happened and Y is going to be the end result. Typically, it involves bringing in legal counsel and in other cases, it involves the Attorney General's office, because this is law and it's not something ESU gets to determine. The policies and practices that we have in place have been vetted by both the General Council and the Office of the General Council. All the institutions in the state system have also been reviewed by FIRE. I still would advocate that we have a campus wide education of it as an initial step, before we branch into trying to solve a future problem. Because everyone is not starting from the same position as Professor Broun and Professor Brooks, and I think it's important that we level set if this is an institutional wide concern.
- Chris Brooks: Thank you for your comments. And as somebody who teaches constitutional history and law and has been teaching legal subjects for over 20 years not, I'd be happy to participate in that education. Could we move to take a vote?
- Susan Dillmuth-Miller: Yes, are there any further discussions on this proposal? So, Bill what you said about, what are we doing to nurture free speech? You know, what are we doing to cultivate it? Also, I think this committee could look at what we have, as Dr. Brooks mentioned, and make recommendations regarding what we have for a free speech statement. Let me bring it to a vote, seeing no further discussion.
  - **In support of this proposal to form an ad hoc committee: Yes 28, No 8. Rules and Bylaws will be charged with making up that committee.**
- Liz Scott: Is there a time? This is quite a large task, I'm assuming this is going to be a longer, semester long, year long process.
- Susan Dillmuth-Miller: yes, it will take some time.
- Liz Scott: we'll add it to our agenda for our next meeting.

## d. President Long: Middle States Update

- I want to first thank Michael Sachs and the chairs of the standards committee, there is an army of people participating in our middle states submission. I first

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want to thank everyone for doing all of this work. I also want to just kind of remind everyone about the importance of this middle states reaccreditation. This is not a reaccreditation of a particular department this is an accreditation for the entire university and it impacts the entire university and what we do and how we proceed in terms of fulfilling our mission. It's not a reflection of Ken Long, the provost, the administration, this is of ESU as a whole. The repercussions of not getting re-accredited, or anything short of a complete reaccreditation, and Michael, correct me if I'm wrong but is it 8 years now?

- Michael Sachs: it used to be a 10 year cycle, now it's an 8 year cycle.
- President Long: that's what we're shooting for, we naturally expect some recommendations but we are shooting for a full reaccreditation. Schools that don't get reaccredited or even put on different types of warning, or shorter than 8 years, creates problems for institutions. We have a great institution, we have great programs across the board, we have tremendous faculty and staff. I know that if I was on an evaluation committee looking at what we've done in the last 7 years since our last visit, it's been short of outstanding. I think the narrative that some of you put together in the last couple of weeks, that Lee is editing, has shown the accomplishments that we've gone through, and I just want everyone to be proud of what we're doing, where we are and where we're headed as a university. This reaccreditation will outlast many of us, I hope to retire in 8 years, so it's important that we continue this and we continue it very strongly.

## 9) Open Discussion

### a. Parking: Greg Boyce

- Hi, I'm Greg Boyce, I'm on the parking committee. We have our first meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup>, which we will then be meeting monthly until the end of the spring semester. I've heard all the stuff in senate already about parking. I've also experienced it myself as faculty on campus. I'd be happy to hear any concerns, or if you would like to email me or set up a meeting. Will be meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> and then monthly after that.

### b. Intra-university phone calls and emails not acknowledged or returned

- Many reasons why this may be happening. Please be sure to check drafts and junk email to be sure that email send and you are not missing any.

### c. Admissions and Retention (Rob Smith)

- Please see attached presentation for full information.
- Total number of first time applications for this fall was 8,706. The number of those that were offered admissions was 7,535. We have more applications and more offers, but this year our yield was off 2%. High school GPA remains steady.

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- We continue to be comprised of mostly in state students at around 80% and our non-resident students are a bit over 1,000. From fall of 2023 to fall of 2024 the retention rate was 72%. Now we're looking at fall 2024 to fall 2025 with a retention rate of 74.9%.
- Susan Dillmuth-Miller: how does our faculty to student ratio compare to other PASSHE schools? Ours was 19.1
- Rob Smith: we're one of the more efficient schools, meaning, the closer to 20 we get, that's how the efficiency is measured. So others would be less than that 19, which means they have less people in the classroom because obviously they have less enrollment and the same number of faculty.

## 10) Announcements:

- a. Susan Dillmuth-Miller: please refer to the chat, people said to check out Westchester's statement on free speech or Slippery Rock and Santiago Solis said that we also have a time, place, and manner policy.
- b. Donna-Marie Cole: PEDC, an organization I'm affiliated with, will be hosting an event on free speech with a couple lawyers there talking about free speech in relation to education.

## 11) Adjournment @ 4:17 pm

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