

Notes from Faculty Senate Meeting with President Oldham

Date: Oct. 20, 2025

Location: In-person in Lab Science Commons Room 1205 and online via Teams

Present: M. Allen (Board of Trustees Faculty Rep.), M. Atkinson, J. Baier, C. Brown, S. Browning, W. Carroll, R. Chitiyo, S. Christen, M. Comer, K. Craven, M. Creter, A. Donadio, J. Field, J. Gannod, K. Grimes, R. Hall, S. Hasan, A. Hill, C. Hill, M. Hu, J. Jenkins, A. Kalyanapu, K. Kennedy, C. Killman, J. Mabry, T. Majors, A. Manginelli, M. Natrass, B. O'Connor, M. Olsen, H. Park, Y. Peng, S. Seiler, L.A. Shipley, T. Smith (Past President), A. Spears, L. Suters, T. Timmerman, K. Trent, S. Wendt, B. Wilson, K. Winkle (Chair, Academic Council), K. Xu

Absent: B. Carver, R. LeBorne, D. Mann, L. Null, J. Ojo, M. Rajabali, D. Tennant

Guests: President Oldham, Chief of Staff Lee Wray

1. Call to Order: 3:39 p.m.

Brief opening comments from Dr. Oldham

2. Termination of French & German Concentrations in Foreign Languages:

- I would like President Oldham to address these eliminations as it could set a negative precedent for the closure of concentrations dictated by upper administration. Why didn't these eliminations follow university policy? They affected the university-wide curriculum because there are 11 degree programs with foreign language requirements. Thus, shouldn't those eliminations have been approved by the University Curriculum Committee and Academic Council? Instead, they were presented in an "emergency" meeting of the faculty senate during which no minutes were allowed to be taken. Senators were then asked to respond to a Qualtrics survey with a Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they supported the elimination of the 2 programs. Individual results of each survey were sent to then-provost Lori Bruce directly, instead of in aggregate, thus stripping the survey of anonymity. To my knowledge, when the results were compiled all abstentions and all "neutral" votes were counted as a vote to "eliminate" French and German, making it seem like the faculty senate approved the

eliminations when the actual votes produced by a truly anonymous¹ survey may have presented a different picture. Additionally, the degree program in Foreign Languages as a whole was not even on THEC's low-producing programs list. Yes, the Spanish concentration has the majority of majors, but many other majors on campus have similar differences among their concentrations. There are also other concentrations across campus that have similarly "low" numbers of majors. Why didn't they get eliminated along with German and French, if "low enrollment" was the true reason for the eliminations?

- **President Oldham:**

Dr. Oldham explained that some programs (e.g., French and German) have long been nonviable due to low enrollment and credit hour generation.

- **Policy and Process:**

- Dr. Bruce believed she followed policy and consulted Faculty Senate.
 - Teach-out plans and tenured faculty policies differ.
 - Faculty were informed of vacant positions they could apply for.

- **Suggestions for Improvement:**

- Develop clear criteria for program viability.
 - Create a process for early intervention when programs show signs of decline.
 - Consider metrics like number of majors, credit hours, and graduation rates.

- **Concerns Raised:**

- Communication gaps between administration and faculty.
 - Need for transparency and consistency in decision-making.
 - Clarification requested on tenured faculty rights and metrics during closures.

3. Compensation:

- With a number of chairpersons on the Senate, we are aware that there still exist both salary inversions and also salary compression in many departments across campus. Recognizing that salary inversion should have the highest priority, a consensus on a solution in principle to the inversion problem could then lead to a similar solution for the compression problem. In our last discussion on shared governance, you reminded us "The more you talk, the better the communication is and the more likely everyone is satisfied with the outcomes." In the spirit of that, how can the Faculty Senate assist in finding a path to repairing these issues related to faculty compensation. Our hope is to have a better understanding of the challenges in correcting this issue and a clear consistent path to corrections that can be shared with the faculty.

¹ Dr. Rajabali requested an amendment before approving these notes at the Nov. 3, 2025, Business Meeting. He said that the results from the survey were actually anonymous.

- **President Oldham:**
 - Salary inversions have been addressed in past years; about 12 last year.
 - 36 inversions currently identified by the chairperson's learning community.
 - **Clarifications:**
 - Inversion defined as lower-ranked faculty earning more than higher-ranked ones.
 - Performance can justify some salary differences.
 - **Future Actions:**
 - Need for a system to address inversions case-by-case.
 - Salaries typically reviewed in spring; merit-based raises preferred.
 - Funding for adjustments likely came from the Provost's Office.
 - Chairs and deans should communicate with the Provost for resolution.
- Lee Wray asked Dr. Winkle to keep him updated on their progress through the steps.

4. Such Other Matters:

- **Email Retention:** The question was asked about deleting emails related to a potential lawsuit.
 - Lee Wray said he would check into that and confirm, but he thinks they can be deleted.
- **Position Allocation:** the question was asked about the rationale for allocating positions.
 - President Oldham said we're in the middle of the October revised budget, and it's not been submitted yet. There are about 10 positions in progress, pending budget approval.

Adjourned: 4:40 p.m.