

## FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

January 14, 2016

**Call to order:** A regular meeting of the Faculty Senate of the University of North Alabama was held in room 330 of the University Commons on January 14, 2016. The meeting convened at 3:31 p.m. with President Sarah Franklin presiding.

**Proxies:** President Franklin recognized the following proxy: Jason Watson for Shane Banks from Computer Science and Information Systems.

**Members in attendance:** Rae Atencio, Doug Barrett, Will Brewer, David Brommer, Daryl Brown, Amy Butler, Lisa Clayton, Amanda Coffman, Katherine Crisler, Paul Davison, Michele Derouen, Mohamad Elmasry, Sarah Franklin, Bob Garfrerick, Leah Graham, Mark Greer, Clarissa Hall, Dan Hallock, Felecia Harris, Richard Hudiburg, Scott Infanger, Keith Jones, Lisa Kirch, Ian Loeppky, Lamont Maddox, George Makowski, John McGee, Janet McMullen, Michelle Nelson, Johnson Ogun, Alaina Patterson, Lesley Peterson, Jeffrey Ray, Lee Renfroe, Craig Robertson, Daniel Stevens, Jessica Stovall, and Alexander Takeuchi. Vice President Thornell was also in attendance.

**Members not in attendance (without proxy):** Pat Roden, Richard Statom, and Karen Townsend.

**Approval of agenda:** Ian Loeppky moved to amend the agenda to remove remarks by President Kitts. Doug Barrett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The amended agenda was approved by acclamation.

**Approval of minutes:** Lisa Kirch moved approval of the minutes of the December 3, 2015 meeting. Lee Renfroe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion:

**Remarks from Vice-President Thornell:** As President Kitts was at an NCAA meeting and unable to attend, he asked Vice President Thornell to share a few updates with the Senate. There will be an open forum with President Kitts on February 2. This is an opportunity to open a conversation on any topic. Questions must be submitted in advance. Information on how to submit questions will be sent to the campus via email. VP Thornell reported that the budget is based on a shrink rate of 8% from fall to spring. It looks like the university will meet or come under this number which is good news. The application numbers for next fall are good. As compared to this time last year, applications are up. Two administrative searches will be going on this spring – Vice President for Advancement and Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. The makeup as well as projected timeline for the search committees will be communicated via email soon. The revisions to the tenure and promotion document were given to the university attorney for review. There will be one more meeting to try to address issues raised by the attorney. Dr. Thornell hopes to have the revised guidelines ready for a vote by early fall.

### Reports:

**Academic Affairs Committee:** No report.

**Faculty Affairs Committee:** The committee's report, a compilation of comments received relative to the issues of office hours and communications, were sent to the Senate via email in advance of the meeting. (See Attachment A.)

**Faculty Attitude Survey Committee:** Craig Robertson reported that the survey is being finalized. The committee's goal is to begin data collection by late February and have the report completed before the end of the semester.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

**Office Hours/Communication:** President Franklin reminded the Senate that Faculty Affairs was charged with having a workable draft on this issue by the February meeting. Richard Hudiburg moved that whatever draft presented does not increase the number of office hours as stated in *The Faculty Handbook*. Leah Graham seconded the motion. The motion passed. George Makowski moved that we recommend that our committee excise all mention of a prescribed number of hours for responding to communications. Lesley Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**Sick Leave:** Doug Barrett moved that Faculty Affairs provide a proposed draft policy at the March meeting. George Makowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **New Business:**

There was no new business.

**Adjournment:** Richard Hudiburg moved adjournment. Scott Infanger seconded the motion. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Butler  
Secretary  
Faculty Senate

*approved February 11, 2016*

**Attachment A**

<b>No/Minimal Changes</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Enforcement</b>	<b>Hrs Post/Enforce</b>	<b>Hrs Length</b>	<b>Hrs Form</b>	<b>Hrs Language</b>
no change (2x)	should not be in HB (2x)	department (2x)	syll/door (4x)	dep't is responsible (2x)	multiple forms available	"not required" when not on campus as is (3x)
last par problem (multiple)	72 hrs unnecessary 72 business hrs max 3 days during sem.		dep't responsibility	keep 7 hrs but incl off-campus app'ts w/ students	f2f teaching=f2f hrs online=online hrs hybrid=mix f2f, online	change to positive wording (2x)
one insertion: concept of first sentence inserted into Handbk	within 24 hrs		some faculty have no office	min 7 hrs fall/spring min 3.5 hrs/summer reduced load=reduced hrs	by app't: high enrollment/lab courses	
	CLARITY desired for exceptions: vac, hol, when not teaching out-of-office msg req at conference not Fri, bef hols, on weekends illness FERPA problems			2 hrs/course	consider off-campus app'ts w/ students	
	not all msgs worth a response/response is problematic (2x)			1 hr/course minimum hrs # = # courses (3x)	consider research needs	
	syllabus should state instructor's preferred means of communication f2f, email, text, phone not compelled to supply personal phone #					

students to use official email

il (multiple)

<b>Peer Institutions</b>	<b>Office Hours</b>	<b>Communication with Students</b>
Auburn U/Montgomery	no policy	not mentioned
McNeese State (Louisiana)	in syllabus if F2F, not virtual	not mentioned
Midwestern State (Texas)	10 hrs/wk	not mentioned
Nicholls State (Louisiana)	min. 10 hrs/wk semester, 5 hrs/wk summer spread across week	not mentioned
Northwestern State (Louisiana)	not specified; faculty must post and keep "regular"	not mentioned
Pittsburg State (Kansas)	10 hrs/wk	not mentioned
Radford U (Virginia)	3 hrs (min.)/3 hrs' teaching	not mentioned
Univ. of So. Florida (St. Petersburg)	"adequate" no. and length; on teaching days	not mentioned
W. Carolina University (No. Carolina)	"regular" hrs, determined by dep't	not mentioned; focus on student obligation to communicate with faculty

## Office Hours and Student Communication Feedback

### No Changes

The [...] Department is fine with the office hour policy as is.

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I personally think this policy should be left alone. I teach an online and face-to-face course, and how to manage my office hours was clearly discussed with the chair.

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Keep the language of the faculty handbook as is with perhaps one insertion as indicated below.

Rationale:

Students are able to and do communicate with faculty members in addition to posted office hours through electronic means. (This proposed change implies that faculty are not as available to students as they actually are.) Perhaps *the concept* of the first sentence should be inserted in the Handbook.

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## Communication with Students

one of the suggestions we need to make with regard to any policy on communication with students we need to make it clear to the COAD that they need to communicate with their faculty. Whether they do it through their chairs or actually have a faculty meeting is up to them.

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**Suggested rewrite:** Faculty are encouraged to respond to student messages: a) from the learning management system in no more than 72 hours; b) from email in no more than 48 hours; and c) from telephone during the office hour. Regarding any particular given situations, the example can be “Faculty should use the out-of-office message when they are not available (e.g., participating in conference).”

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**Suggested rewrite:** Faculty-student communication outside the classroom is an important part of student learning. This communication can take the form of a face-to-face meeting, emails, text messages and phone calls.

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**Suggested rewrite:** Faculty are required to respond to student’s requests in a timely manner, recommending no more than three business days during semesters. Exceptions to response times will include vacation time and semesters the faculty member is not teaching. In those cases the faculty member will be required to leave an out-of-office message on their phone and email accounts as well as on their office door.

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**Suggested rewrite:** With regard to Communication, I think the language in the draft copy is, for the most part, acceptable. However, I would suggest changing the last sentence to: Faculty are to respond to student messages within 24 hours of the student sending that message. Student messages sent on a Friday may not be returned until the following Monday. Student messages sent the last workday before a holiday may not be returned until after the holiday period.

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We agree that there are many forms of communication with students, not just office hours. Instructors should clearly indicate in their syllabus their feedback timeline and preferred method of communication. If an issue arises with a student, the department chair should use this as a standard for evaluating the complaint.

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regarding email responses:

- the 72-hour response time is arbitrary and unnecessary.
- lack of responsiveness can be measured with discretion by the appropriate supervisors and administrative chain of authority (ideally within the department first).

also, even if we state that there is a time frame, would an auto-reply or form reply meet the intent? is there required content too?

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I would prefer not to see wording in a policy that could be interpreted as a charge to respond to all student e-mails. Some student e-mails are best met with no response. Forcing a response to meet some deadline can be seen as a trap (a good response may be hard to formulate). For example, I am not comfortable responding to [end-of-semester pleas for extra credit to raise grade]. To respond [...] with a "No" is easily seen as uncaring. To expound on the answer "No" is difficult do to in writing without pitfalls.

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The policy should explicitly state that faculty are not expected to respond to students over the weekend.

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I have discussed the Office Hours and Communication with Students policy changes [identifying information removed]. The consensus is that the issue of faculty **response time** to student communications should be **handled at the department level** and that a **statement specifying a time frame** (72 hours) for response **should not be outlined** in the Faculty Handbook. If a statement must be included in the Faculty Handbook we recommend **2-3 business days as opposed to 72 hours**.

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I would like to see some wording about the requirement for student email to professors being appropriately worded and presented as to indicate that the student is competent to communicate in a professional manner. I state in my syllabi that I will not respond to "texting."

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In the last line of the document, make the following change to add the word **business** so that the line reads: typically respond in no more than 72 **business** hours.

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I am satisfied with most of the document except the last paragraph (**Communication**) It will probably become more understandable when the document describes how to communicate with students in a more concrete way. The document can explain how to

respond with different means (i.e., learning management system, email, & telephone) specifically and in any given situations.  
For example, last sentence may be able to change as follows: (see under suggested rewrites above)

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I agree with the previous comments in that faculty should respond to emails within a reasonable timeline. This being said, some of students' questions take longer to answer or faculty may be away at a conference, etc. so it could be hard to put a set timeline on responding. I also thinking requiring students to email from their student email is important. The only question I have is about summer office hours, would this only apply to the summer semester a faculty member is teaching?

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The draft seems fair to me as I check my e-mail regularly throughout the day. However, there are times when I may be away from my computer for over 72 h (illness, conferences out of country) or simply may not want to answer my e-mail (e.g. Thanksgiving break). What happens if I am unable to respond? I also think students should have to e-mail from a UNA communication sources (e.g. Portal or Canvas). I am not sure how to handle on-line office hours. Isn't that just regular e-mail that you are expected to respond to in real-time?

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I also would like to suggest that we may take into consideration in the last sentence about email response time in the draft version of the document because one business day may not enough to answer all questions depend on faculty members' situations/schedules. While we are attending any conference or workshop, we may not respond to students' questions, requests or emails within three days. If we consider these timelines for responding students' requests to be answered via email, I don't have any objection on the drafted document.

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Seems reasonable to me- agree with the comments above. The word "should" in the last sentence, while not as strong as "must", does lean toward too much. Perhaps change from "should respond in 72 hours" to "should respond in a reasonable time frame."

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I'd like to suggest that the last sentence be considered to change because one business day may not be enough to answer all questions depend on faculty members' situations/schedules. While we are attending any conference or workshop, we may not respond to students' questions, requests or emails within three days. If we consider those timelines for responding students' requests to be answered via email, I don't have any objection on the drafted document.

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My concern is for office hours and communication during breaks – i.e. Christmas, Thanksgiving, summer when not teaching during the term. During regular semesters and summer term when teaching, all the guidelines in the policy seem reasonable to me. I would like clarity on the expectations when I am not teaching in the summer or during breaks when

the University is closed. If the University was closed over Christmas from December 17 – January 4, are we still expected to follow the policy? I think if the University is closed, our communication should be worded “should respond in a reasonable timeframe when University is closed.”

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## Office Hours Posting and Enforcement

**Suggested rewrite:** Faculty will post their office hours at the beginning of each semester in their syllabus and on their door.

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**Suggested rewrite:** After approval by the department chair and consultation with the dean ~~at the beginning of each semester~~, faculty members will list their office hours on all syllabi ~~at the beginning of each semester~~ ~~and post these hours on or near their office doors~~. The respective department chair and dean ~~should~~ ~~will~~ also have a copy ~~of faculty members' office hours~~. ~~Office hours shall be posted on or near office doors and made available to students.~~

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Faculty and all teaching instructors should provide their office hour schedule to the department chair prior to the first teaching day of each semester or term. After obtaining approval from the department chair, the office hour schedule should be posted on or near office doors and in all course syllabi. Department chairs should retain a copy of all office hour schedules. There is no need to forward office hour schedules to academic Deans. Enforcing office hours is a departmental responsibility.

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## Length

**Suggested rewrite:** These office hours should be at the discretion of the faculty member with approval by the department chair in consultation with the dean, keeping the needs of the students availability in mind. Faculty who teach online full time can satisfy this requirement by identifying seven hours a week they will be available to communicate with students.

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In general, we do not feel that the office hour requirement (7 hours) needs to be lowered, but off-campus appointments with students and area schools should be taken into consideration

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I am partial to the **1 hour per course with a limit on 4 hours**, but [there may be] problems with the wording “not to exceed.”

Based on what I have seen in other schools’ requirements, we might want to include comments about lab courses, overloads, or high enrollment sections.

This is what one school states:

Faculty should hold **at least one office hour per week for each course taught**, preferably distributed across more than one day a week, and consider increasing that for overload and lab assignments, or courses with higher enrollments.

This doesn’t limit the number of office hours we have, but sets a minimum requirement without the negative language.

That's (one hour/course) equitable and fair and also covers faculty on reduced teaching load. I'd say also not to exceed four (bc of people on overload).

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First, since the typical faculty load is defined relative to four courses each semester, the **current requirement of seven hours is mathematically odd**. This alone is not reason enough to question the policy but it certainly is a head scratcher. Second, for an institution that prioritizes student instruction, faculty and student interaction, student development and faculty accessibility, the current seven hour requirement is too low. To the general public this leaves state employees with 33 weekly work hours. We can subtract 12 for actual teaching but this leaves 21 hours for the general public to continue their own head scratching and contemplation as to whether state employees really need 21 hours to do what “teachers” do when teachers needs to interact with students. It is not prudent for an institution to market itself as “student friendly” when students may expect only a seven hour window of interactive opportunity.

I would recommend the number be increased to eight weekly office hours. Even this number is too low but I arrive at the number for the following reason. Eight hours divided by four (the typical semester course load) results in a whole number that is logical to accept (two office hours for each assigned course). Further, the number of hours can now be easily

apportioned relative to the type of course being taught. **That is, two office hours for each course.** I suggest that if a course is traditional, its two corresponding office hours must also be traditional in the sense that the instructor will be in their campus office during that time period. If the course is hybrid or blended one of the two office hours will be traditional and the remaining hour will be online. Online office hours should be conducted in an open chatroom within the learning management system. If the course is online the two office hours shall be conducted in an open chatroom during the week. Instructors need not have those two online office hours consecutively. During the summer terms or during a mini-semester, two office hours should be required for each course taught by faculty.

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## Form

All please be reminded that under increased expectations to publish, faculty members need blocks of time in which to conduct or write up research projects. Many research projects require time to be “in the field” whether in the sciences, mathematics, arts, education, or business disciplines. Certainly, many need to write in blocks of time where they may focus on their work.

One argument will be that many years ago the teaching load was reduced to 12 hours to provide faculty time for research/creative development. One should ask how many hours are junior and senior faculty involved in service to departments, colleges, and the university through committee meetings and/or planning and attending special events. Additionally, many faculty teach overloads and independent studies to support student enrollment and career development—especially as new programs emerge. Service to the broader community is also a factor; many faculty work evenings, weekends, and during “time off” to produce the fine learning environment at UNA.

I respectfully submit this suggestion, knowing how such a change will impact the research time for faculty in my department. Let us be reminded of the commitment of most faculty to this university.

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When drafting policy changes pertaining to Office Hours, considerations need to be made for faculty with off-campus clinicals/internships. A great deal of communication takes place off campus in [such teaching environments]. The seven hour requirement should make allowances for meetings with students off campus. Internships should be counted as an online course with off campus office hours for that course.

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**office hours by appointment** might be necessary **for larger enrollment** courses or **lab** courses?'

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## Language

**Suggested rewrite:** Faculty members are not required to will maintain have office hours on days when they do not have that they teach classes on campus.

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We definitely do not support removing the language in the existing policy that protects faculty from being asked to come in for office hours on days they do not have class on campus

We agree that the language of the policy should not appear punitive. Therefore, we do not want the number of hours to be specified for returning email/phone communication. We feel that standards should be conveyed and enforced at the department level.

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regarding the “not required to hold office hours”: the negative language can be a protection and works serviceably well

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The statement that says “faculty members are not required to have office hours on days when they do not have classes on campus”, should not be removed from the policy. [Some] faculty teach 6-12 hour clinicals and should not be required to maintain office hours on those days. Clinicals are mentally and physically exhausting.

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I support the idea that **faculty members need not be required to have office hours on days when they do not convene traditional classes.** I would however recommend that we consider revising the current language to the following: Faculty members will schedule a traditional office hour or hours on days when they are teaching traditional classes.

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## Rewritten Versions

Faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom is one of the most important relationships on a college campus. The purpose of clearly defined, publicly posted office hours is to facilitate this interaction through consultation, discussion, and advisement with individual students. In keeping with that goal, faculty members will be available for consulting and advising with students. As a part of their regular assignment, faculty will schedule a minimum of seven hours per week during the regular fall and spring semesters and three and one-half hours per week during the summer term. ~~Faculty members are not required to~~ **will maintain have office hours on days** ~~when they do not have that they teach classes on campus.~~ These hours will be scheduled at times that best accommodate student access. Faculty with reduced teaching loads may schedule a reduced number of office hours. Faculty with online courses may partially satisfy the requirement with online office hours. ~~Faculty members are not required to will maintain have office hours on days when they do not have that they teach classes on campus.~~ After approval by the department chair and consultation with the dean **at the beginning of each semester**, faculty members will list their office hours on all syllabi ~~at the beginning of each semester~~ **and post these hours on or near their office doors.** The respective department chair and dean ~~should will~~ also have a copy **of faculty members' office hours.** ~~Office hours shall be posted on or near office doors and made available to students.~~

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Faculty-student communication outside the classroom is an important part of student learning. This communication can take the form of a face-to-face meeting, emails, text messages and phone calls.

The purpose of clearly defined, publically posted office hours is to facilitate faculty-student communication through consultation, discussion and advisement with individual students. In keeping with this goal, faculty members will be available for a minimum of seven hours per week during the regular fall and spring semesters and three and one-half hours during the summer semester. Faculty with reduced teaching loads may schedule a reduced number of office hours. These office hours should be at the discretion of the faculty member with approval by the department chair in consultation with the dean, keeping the needs of the students availability in mind. Faculty who teach online full time can satisfy this requirement by identifying seven hours a week they will be available to communicate with students.

Faculty will post their office hours at the beginning of each semester in their syllabus and on their door. Faculty are required to respond to student's requests in a timely manner, recommending no more than three business days during semesters. Exceptions to response times will include vacation time and semesters the faculty member is not teaching. In those cases the faculty member will be required to leave an out-of-office message on their phone and email accounts as well as on their office door.

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