

FACULTY SENATE  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
3:30 – 5:15 pm  
Senate Chamber, Old Capitol

MINUTES

Senators Present: L. Adams, R. Alambert, B. Andrews, B. Ayati, A. Bassuk, J. Bermick, M. Dannenberg, A. Farag, J. Geerling, A. Goedken, J. Goetz, B. Gonzalez, D. Greenwood-Sanchez, P. Groves, B. G'Sell, C. Hamann, N. Hamzeh, A. Hasan, C. Hogden, E. Johnson, J. Kline, M. Knight, J. Koch, S. Larson, A. Mangalam, P. McGonagill, H. Metcalf, A. Miers, N. Mohr, B. Nottingham-Spencer, N. Pagedar, A. Panos, R. Peter, J. Radley, A. Ryan, D. Shane, A. Shibli-Rahhal, J. Simmons, J. Staber, W. Story, J. Streeter, J. Sukalski, K. Thiel, E. Thomas, D. Trusty, A. Uc, C. Vogel, K. Vogelgesang, M. Wald, E. Walker, S. Warren, E. Welder, K. Whitaker, J. Wilde, F. Williams, K. Worthington.

Officers Present: R. Curto, N. Greyser, C. Just, C. Sheerin.

Senators Excused: A. Achenbach, J. Bunch, E. Carlisle, M. Ohl, T. Rietz, M. Santillan, M. Schroeder, B. Young.

Senators Absent: M. Abou Alaiwa, S. Abuhammoud, J. Barker, C. Benson, M. Bhatti, C. Chan, E. Destruel, A. Estapa, C. McMillan, M. Swee, D. Tranel.

Guests: A. Byrd (Office of the General Counsel), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office), P. Zebrowski (Emeritus Faculty Council).

- I. Call to Order – President Just called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.
- II. Approvals
  - A. Meeting Agenda – Professor Farag moved and Professor Panos seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
  - B. Faculty Senate Minutes (December 9, 2025) – Professor Walker moved and Professor Staber seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
  - C. Committee Appointments (Roxanna Curto, Chair, Committee on Committees) – Professor Welder moved and Professor Panos seconded that the committee appointments be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

- Matthew Dannenberg (School of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability) to replace James Wo (Sociology & Criminology) on the Faculty Senate, Spring 2026
- Erica Carlisle (Surgery) to fill the unexpired term of Ted Abel (Neuroscience & Pharmacology) on the Faculty Council, 2026-28

### III. New Business

- *UI Social Media Guidelines (Ann Byrd, Deputy Counsel, Office of the General Counsel)*

Deputy Counsel Byrd began her presentation by explaining that the Office of the General Counsel has only one client – the University of Iowa. The Office advises this one client through its administrators, including the president, provost, vice presidents, deans, etc. The Office does not provide personal legal advice to individual faculty members, staff members, or students. Deputy Counsel Byrd went on to give an overview of First Amendment protections. She indicated that the general rule is that *an individual's speech/expression in their individual capacity, or private speech, receives First Amendment protection from state (institutional) adverse action, even if that speech is distasteful, offensive, rude, factually incorrect, etc.* There are five exceptions, however, when private speech is not protected by the First Amendment: *obscenity (distinct from cursing/pornography), destruction of property, true threats of physical violence, incitement to illegal activity, and harassment.*

Students are fully protected from institutional adverse action by the First Amendment, Deputy Counsel Byrd continued. Unless it rises to the level of one of the five exceptions, the content or viewpoint of a student's speech cannot subject the student to disciplinary action by the university. Other policies or laws, however, may apply to a specific situation. Turning to the topic of how free speech relates to the public employee, she first indicated who may be involved in the response to an employee speech incident. For faculty members, these individuals and entities might include the provost or an associate provost, the president, Strategic Communications, deans or associate deans, DEO's, the Office of the General Counsel, [Employee and Labor Relations](#), the impacted parties, and others, such as the Iowa Board of Regents.

Deputy Counsel Byrd then described the [process](#) used to determine whether employee speech is covered by First Amendment protections. The first step involves discerning if the speech was official (work related) or if it was private. If speech is work related, it is not protected by the First Amendment; the Supreme Court has ruled that employers are entitled to the speech that they pay for. Academic freedom may still protect faculty, however. If the speech is private and not work related, the next step is to ask whether it is a matter of public concern. In order to fall into this category, the speech must be more than a personal grievance, must be outside of regular employment duties, and must be of legitimate news interest to the public. If the speech meets these criteria, it may be protected by the First Amendment, but it first must be examined to see if it is disruptive to the workplace. If it is, then it may not be protected by the First Amendment. This is a balancing test, Deputy Counsel Byrd emphasized, between the individual's right to free speech and the university's right to conduct its business in an effective and efficient manner, which it does through its employees. The institution has to reasonably determine that the speech substantially interferes with either the speaker's role at the university or the university's official responsibilities.

Academic freedom is a narrowly construed principle, Deputy Counsel Byrd continued, that may protect faculty against adverse employment action. Academic freedom applies to classroom and lab instruction that is germane to the subject matter, to research and scholarship, and to peer review of faculty for academic rank and title. Academic freedom does not, however, supersede the law or university policy. In response to a request for clarification, she explained that, for example, one cannot destroy property or discriminate against students and colleagues in the name of academic freedom. Deputy Counsel Byrd commented that she is often asked what an individual can or cannot do within the context of the First Amendment and whether there will be consequences at work as the result of an action. She indicated that it depends on the facts and the context, thus leading to different outcomes of seemingly similar situations. As guidance, she emphasized that free speech does not equate to speech without consequences. Some questions to ask oneself before speaking are *Is this the time, place, and manner that I want to communicate this information?*, *Could this comment have an impact on my ability to work effectively in my university role?*, *Have I been authorized to communicate this message on behalf of the university?*, and *Have I accounted for power differentials and ensured the workplace/classroom/lab environment remains a place where all people can make free inquiry and discuss relevant issues?*

Briefly addressing the topic of offices and labs, Deputy Counsel Byrd observed that the university owns all buildings and facilities, including offices, on campus. Employees are assigned spaces to carry out their duties. While we are allowed to personalize our workspaces, she continued, workspaces should not be used to promote any particular personal agenda. Signage and decorations should be university branded and/or viewpoint neutral, especially if students or the public are hosted in your offices or labs.

Turning to social media, Deputy Counsel Byrd noted that there are two types of social media, official university accounts and personal accounts. The university accounts are traditional “open forum” accounts. The university cannot censor comments or engage in “prior restraint” (allowing certain kinds of speech but not others). In order to vary from the open forum model, approval from the Office of Strategic Communication is required, along with consultation with the Office of the General Counsel. The Office of Strategic Communication also has guidelines for handling commercial speech and university brand infringement. Regarding personal social media accounts, Deputy Counsel Byrd noted that speech on these accounts is subject to First Amendment analysis, with possible additional considerations for employees. The Office of the General Counsel considers it a best practice to refrain from intermingling work-related communication and private communication on a personal account. Concluding her remarks, Deputy Counsel Byrd commented that the Office of the General Counsel is not a decision-making, but is rather an advisory, entity. She emphasized that the university supports free speech and academic freedom.

Professor Trusty requested clarification about office decorations. Deputy Counsel Byrd responded that items that are university-branded or related to a university program are acceptable. Professor G'Sell asked about decorations that intersect with disciplinary interests. Deputy Counsel Byrd acknowledged the complexity of this issue. She observed that the university must follow state laws. Academic freedom may come into play in relation to the

classroom. All individuals should feel welcomed in university spaces. Different views in the classroom should be respected. Professor Metcalf commented that the classroom is a very complicated space that varies by discipline. A student should be measured by the standards of that discipline. Free speech and freedom of inquiry look different in the public square than in the classroom. Classroom debate should be based on evidence. Professor Thomas asked what First Amendment protections are available to graduate students, who are often both students and instructors/employees. Deputy Counsel Byrd commented that context would be important. The process she described earlier for determining whether employee speech is covered by First Amendment protections would apply. Professor Williams asked about Office of General Counsel staff availability for consultations with faculty members. Deputy Counsel Byrd responded that it is preferred for a DEO or dean to reach out to the Office with a request for a staff visit.

Senators were then presented with various scenarios relating to the First Amendment in the university context. They discussed these scenarios and the accompanying questions in small groups and then reported back to the larger group their responses, along with any questions and comments they had. President Just noted that the issue of free speech and academic freedom is a long-term concern of the Faculty Senate and is closely tied to the university's mission. Deputy Counsel Byrd reiterated that the university strongly supports free speech and academic freedom.

- *Faculty Senate Election Committee Update (Julie Koch, Chair and Craig Just)*

President Just reminded the group that Senate officer elections are quickly approaching in April. He urged Senators with an interest in running for a Senate office to contact Chair Koch ([julie-koch@uiowa.edu](mailto:julie-koch@uiowa.edu)) as soon as possible.

- *Executive Session*

Professor Bassuk moved and Professor Trusty seconded that the Faculty Senate move into executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

Senators discussed topics related to the upcoming Iowa Board of Regents meeting, including the workforce alignment review process.

Professor G'Sell moved and Professor Ayati seconded that the Faculty Senate move out of executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

- *President's Report (Craig Just)*

President Just had earlier sent individual messages to all Senators with these news items:

- Please nominate Faculty Senate Officer candidates by contacting Julie Koch ([julie-koch@uiowa.edu](mailto:julie-koch@uiowa.edu)) or Craig Just ([craig-just@uiowa.edu](mailto:craig-just@uiowa.edu)).
- Please refer to the email from the Faculty Senate, dated February 2, to apply for committee vacancies. See the Faculty Senate website for a description of the [committee recruitment process](#), as well as descriptions of the [committees](#) and their current membership.

- The Faculty Senate’s administrative review of the Office of the Provost has been completed and is available, along with the office’s self-study, at the following link: <https://faculty-senate.uiowa.edu/about-faculty-senate/administrative-reviews>
- The Board of Regents Office is preparing weekly summaries of Iowa legislative activities relevant to higher education. These summaries can be viewed here:  [BOR 2026 Legislative Summaries](#)
- The Faculty Senate’s administrative review of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life is underway. A self-study and self-assessment are due to the review committee by March 27, 2026. Caroline Sheerin is the committee chair, with Craig Just serving as co-chair. The review is scheduled for completion by mid-December 2026.
- The Rules and Bylaws Committee will soon begin the process of modernizing the Faculty Senate bylaws and constitution.
- The Faculty Senate participation in the review of Chapter III.15 "[Professional Ethics and Academic Responsibility](#)" continues.

IV. From the Floor – Professor Panos announced that an internal search is underway for the next faculty ombudsperson. Please visit the Office of the Ombudsperson [website](#) for more information on how to nominate someone or how to apply for the position yourself.

#### V. Announcements

- **Regents Award for Faculty Excellence**  
President Just announced that the following individuals had been selected to receive the 2026 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence: Mary Charlton (Epidemiology), Polly Ferguson (Pediatrics), Alberto Segre (Computer Science), Carol Severino (Rhetoric), Fred Stern (Mechanical Engineering), and Nick Street (Business Analytics).
- **Michael J. Brody Award for Faculty Excellence in Service**  
President Just announced that the following individuals had been selected to receive the 2026 Michael J. Brody Award for Faculty Excellence in Service to the University and the State of Iowa: Ed Gillan (Chemistry) and Teresa Marshall (Preventive & Community Dentistry).
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, March 10, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.
- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, March 24, 3:30-5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.

VI. Adjournment – Professor Koch moved and Professor Panos seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously. President Just adjourned the meeting at 4:45 pm.