

FACULTY COUNCIL
Tuesday, January 27, 2026
3:30 – 5:15 pm
Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre

MINUTES

Councilors Present: B. Ayati, A. Farag, C. Hogden, E. Johnson, J. Koch, P. McGonagill, N. Mohr, M. Schroeder, D. Shane, E. Thomas, C. Vogel, E. Walker, F. Williams.

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

Councilors Excused: A. Bassuk, E. Welder.

Councilors Absent: M. Abou Alaiwa.

Guests: J. Calvin (*Daily Iowan*), M. Gardinier (Emeritus Faculty Council), A. Hanson (Office of the Provost), L. Hollingworth (Faculty Athletics Representative), L. McLeran (Office of the President), A. Nelson (*Daily Iowan*), G. Pierce (Presidential Committee on Athletics), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office).

I. Call to Order – President Just called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

II. Approvals

- A. Meeting Agenda – Professor Walker moved and Professor Williams seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- B. Faculty Council Minutes (November 18, 2025) – Professor Ayati moved and Professor Vogel seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- C. Draft Faculty Senate Agenda (February 10, 2026) – President Just indicated that changes may be made to the draft agenda prior to the Senate meeting. A final version will be approved at the meeting. Professor Williams moved and Professor Vogel seconded that the draft agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- D. Committee Appointments (Roxanna Curto, Chair, Committee on Committees) – Professor Johnson moved and Professor McGonagill seconded that the committee appointment 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

III. New Business

- *Laura McLeran, Vice President for Administrative Affairs and Senior Advisor to the President*

President Just indicated that Vice President McLeran’s role in the Office of the President had recently been expanded, leading to some adjustments in the university’s organizational chart.

Therefore, the Senate officers had decided that it would be appropriate to invite her to a Council meeting to describe these recent changes. Vice President McLeran explained that she is a long-time employee of the University of Iowa. She began her university career in the Division of Student Life and moved into the Office of the President in 2003. Thus far, she has worked for four university presidents and three interim presidents. Vice President McLeran was appointed a senior advisor to the president in 2015; this role includes functions that a chief of staff would carry out. She indicated that there are two senior advisors to the president; her role is internal to the institution while the other senior advisor, Pete Matthes, has a role that is external to the institution (he also serves as the Vice President for External Relations.) Vice President McLeran's portfolio includes the Office of the President (the office team that directly supports the university president) and University Human Resources, along with two new additions, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Information Technology Services (ITS). The Chief Information Officer previously reported both to the Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations and the Executive Vice President and Provost. Given the multiple responsibilities of those two offices, a single-line reporting structure for ITS to the new Vice President for Administrative Affairs seemed optimal.

Vice President McLeran commented that her daily duties also include issues and tasks that come to the Office of the President from within the university. She also works with Iowa Board of Regents staff, the UI Center for Advancement, and university-wide shared governance bodies. She and Vice President Matthes meet monthly with the shared governance leadership groups. She has also been involved in restructuring and review of charter committees. President Just added that the Senate officers meet monthly with a group of administrators consisting of President Wilson, Provost Kregel, Associate Provost for Faculty and Strategic Operations Thomas, Vice President Matthes, and Vice President McLeran. They have a separate monthly meeting with just Vice President Matthes and Vice President McLeran.

Past President Sheerin gave much credit to Vice President McLeran for the effectiveness of shared governance at UI. She has been a tremendous resource for the Senate officers, Past President Sheerin added, praising the vice president's long view of the university, which has helped put many events and issues over the years into perspective. She then asked how the vice president sees the current moment. Vice President McLeran first commented that working with shared governance is one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of her role. Although this may be considered an unusual time for higher education, she reminded the group that the university has been in existence for 179 years. Institutions like the UI endure, she continued, even though the university has confronted many state and national challenges throughout its history. During challenging times, she keeps two ideas uppermost in her thoughts: *mission* and *stewardship*. Vice President McLeran suggested that we maintain a strong focus on the university's core mission of teaching, research, and service, so that we can continue to move the institution forward. Regarding stewardship, she observed that the university has changed over time and will likely continue to change. Our responsibility towards the institution is to maintain a long-term perspective and therefore not be overly reactive to crises that come and go.

Professor Thomas asked how the Office of the President envisions the UI ten years from now. In what ways will it stand out from its peers? Vice President McLeran responded that the

institution will continue to support and expand upon the areas that have already brought UI international recognition. While we will continue to support many other additional endeavors, our financial situation prohibits the university from being “all things to all people.” We must collectively prioritize and make changes when necessary. She noted that our [current strategic plan](#) is coming to an end. Opportunities will emerge for the campus community to engage in the creation of the next strategic plan, which will set the university’s priorities for another five-year period. President Just thanked Vice President McLeran for her process-driven approach to collaboration with shared governance.

- *Athletics Update: Gary Pierce, Chair, Presidential Committee on Athletics and Liz Hollingworth, Faculty Athletics Representative*

Professor Pierce indicated that the purpose of the [Presidential Committee on Athletics](#) (PCA) is to advise the university president and the athletics director on athletics issues and to recommend policies consistent with those of the Big Ten Conference, the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), the Iowa Board of Regents, and the UI. The committee holds eight meetings per academic year. A UI coach is invited to attend each meeting to provide an update on their team. Also at each meeting, Athletics staff give a presentation on a topic such as budget, facilities, student athlete mental health, etc. The PCA’s three subcommittees each provide a report to the full committee and representatives from the Iowa Student Athlete Advisory Committee (ISAAC) speak to the group about their activities. Finally, Athletic Director Beth Goetz gives her report, including news items from the Big Ten and NCAA.

PCA members serve on search committees for new coaches and athletic trainers, academic support services personnel, and senior administrators with policy-making authority, Professor Pierce continued. They also serve on subcommittees and/or the *Executive Committee*. The PCA Executive Committee is comprised of the PCA chair and vice chair, subcommittee chairs, and the Faculty Athletics Representatives, along with a number of ex-officio members, including the Athletic Director and other administrators. This group makes recommendations to the full committee on a range of issues. The Executive Committee members also review and monitor Athletics budgets and facilities projects.

PCA work is primarily carried out by its three subcommittees, which each meet three times per semester. The *Academic Achievement* subcommittee is responsible for ensuring that the university provides student athletes sufficient academic support so that they can achieve academic success. Some of the issues the subcommittee addresses are graduation rates, the missed class policy, major and minor distribution, and academic awards, such as the PCA medallion, given to student athletes who achieve a 3.0 in both fall and spring semesters. The Academic Achievement subcommittee also participates in reviews of university programs that impact student athletes (admissions, financial aid, academic advising, etc.). The *Policy and Legislative Compliance* subcommittee is charged with reviewing and recommending strategies evidencing the Athletic Department’s commitment to and adherence with state, federal, institutional, Big Ten, and NCAA regulations. The charge includes Title IX, NCAA annual attestations, and other federal and state laws. The *Student Athlete Well-being* subcommittee provides direction and advice on all policies and issues regarding the general well-being of student-athletes. The principal responsibility of this subcommittee is to ensure the well-being

of UI student athletes and to remind all involved that they are first and foremost students. The subcommittee meets annually with ISAAC; reviews information on medical care, training services, and other wellness services and ensures accessibility to these programs; reviews sports marketing and public relations policies and practices; and reviews PCA policies affecting student athlete well-being. The subcommittee also receives updates from staff in the areas of sports medicine, strength and conditioning, nutrition, and mental health.

Professor Hollingworth, from the College of Education, explained that the NCAA requires every higher education institution that sponsors athletic teams to designate a faculty member as the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). UI currently has two, as do many Big Ten institutions. The other UI FAR is Professor Nicole Grosland, from the College of Engineering. The FAR responsibilities focus on making sure that the approximately 530 UI student athletes are being well served by the institution. As part of their duties, the FARs attend weekly senior Athletics Department staff meetings, where they can ask questions about student athlete well-being and foreground relevant policies. The FARs also sit on legislative and policy committees for the Big Ten and NCAA. The [Faculty Athletics Representatives Association](#) (FARA), sponsored by the NCAA, hosts an annual meeting at which professional development is provided. The annual meetings also give participants an opportunity to discuss common issues and share best practices. President Just noted that Professors Hollingworth and Grosland recently received a national award for their work as FARs.

Professor Williams asked how the recent developments surrounding name, image, and likeness ([NIL](#)) have impacted student athletes, who in addition to their academic work and their sport, now often must contend with media attention and self-promotion activity related to NIL. Professor Pierce commented that the Athletics Department provides student athletes with education related to NIL activity. Professor Williams followed up by asking whether mental health support was available, as well, considering the psychological impact that social media exposure can have. Professor Pierce responded that mental health support is also provided to student athletes, but acknowledged that it would be useful to know if demand for that support has increased recently due to student athletes' more visible social media presence related to NIL promotional activity.

Secretary Greyser asked what faculty members should know when interacting with student athletes in their classrooms. Professor Hollingworth emphasized that faculty members must remain in compliance with the various policies that exist to protect student athletes. Professor Farag asked if student athletes are coached on how to represent themselves on social media. Professor Pierce responded that, to his knowledge, student athletes receive training on social media usage, including on any UI policies that cover this topic. Professor Hollingworth added that social media brand training is voluntary; however, there is mandatory training on topics such as gambling and NCAA compliance. Professor Thomas commented that, if additional opportunities for mental health support are needed, her department, Psychological and Brain Sciences, has graduate student training clinics that could accommodate student athletes.

- *Principles of Teaching at UI (Craig Just)*

Prior to initiating discussion, President Just distributed a copy of the annual [academic freedom letter](#) posted to the Faculty Senate website. He observed that this important statement sets the tone for UI's culture of teaching, ties classroom instruction to relevant UI and Regent policies, and emphasizes the responsibilities that come with academic freedom. President Just proposed the creation of an additional document, more welcoming and aspirational in tone, that could be presented to new instructors (faculty members, graduate student teaching assistants) on campus, as well as made available to members of the public. He envisioned a shared governance document modeled somewhat on the Hippocratic Oath, or on ethics statements used in other professions.

Councilors requested clarification of the term *oath*, in relation to this potential document. President Just explained that the term *welcoming letter* more accurately reflected his vision. The letter could be signed by both the Faculty Senate President and the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Government. Input could be sought from the Graduate College. Professor Koch suggested that a conversational tone could be used, along with aspirational language. Professor Thomas commented that a video could be very effective. Professor Vogel questioned the utility of combining a welcoming letter for new instructors with a teaching statement accessible to the public. She added that the initial concept of *oath* could be more readily manifested through a *slogan* or *motto* related to professional identity as an instructor. Professor Williams commented that new faculty members would benefit from additional structure and welcoming gestures when they begin work at the university.

Emeritus Faculty Council Representative Gardinier asked if Faculty Senate sponsored any annual social events for new faculty. President Just indicated that the Office of the Provost holds an annual orientation; Faculty Senate is invited to staff a table at this event. Past President Sheerin added that, in the past, Faculty Senate had hosted some social events, but they were poorly attended, unfortunately. Professor Ayati commented that both Regent and university policy restrict the introduction of material with no pedagogical relevance to a course's subject matter; he wondered how this might impact the brief injection of humorous material to temporarily lighten students' moods as they grapple with demanding course content. Past President Sheerin responded that activity such as this was not the focus of those policies. Secretary Greysier and Professor Thomas advocated for the creation of an aspirational statement that was not directly tied to specific policies. Professor Koch observed that the field of teaching has most likely already produced aspirational statements; she volunteered to look for them.

- *Executive Session*

Professor Mohr moved and Professor McGonagill seconded that the Faculty Council move into executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

President Just announced the recipients of the 2026 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence and the Michael J. Brody Award for Faculty Excellence in Service. Councilors were reminded that the names of the recipients were confidential until after the February 10 Faculty Senate

meeting. Councilors then discussed legislative affairs, student athlete needs, and new centers on campus.

Professor Ayati moved and Professor Farag seconded that the Faculty Council move out of executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

- *President's Report (Craig Just)*

President Just had earlier sent individual messages to Councilors with the following items to report:

- Please join Shared Governance in supporting the Food Pantry at Iowa:
<https://foodpantry.org.uiowa.edu/>
- The Board of Regents Office is preparing weekly summaries of Iowa legislative activity relevant to higher education. These summaries can be viewed here: [BOR 2026 Legislative Summaries](#) (you may need to be on campus or be using a VPN to connect)
- The Faculty Senate participation in the review of Chapter III.15 "[Professional Ethics and Academic Responsibility](#)" continues.
- 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.

IV. From the Floor – Professor Ayati advocated for shared governance support of the [Diamond Open Access](#) model for scholarly publications.

V. Announcements

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, February 10, 3:30 – 5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, March 10, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.

VI. Adjournment – Professor Koch moved and Professor McGonagill seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously. President Just adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.