<u>Faculty Senate Minutes, 28 August 2026</u>

In attendance: V. Mateescu, B Bennett, D. Malamisura, K. Hicks, K. Grogan, J. Yeager, V. Godfrey, S. Rhonemus, J. Sheffler, A. Lambert, D. Arachchi, A. Berkoh, D. Balok, B. Reese, R. Montague, A. Matoushek

N.B. Meeting was not called to order.

Approval of minutes: Motion made at 11:21 am by Kristin Hicks and then seconded by Dharshana Arachchi. Motion approved via acclamation.

An SOP/handbook committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 1st at 3:00 pm. The faculty handbook was identified as the top priority because it needs to go through Senate approval and then general faculty approval in September.

Sarita reported an issue with an e-mail that had not gone out correctly, including notices related to football player absences. Several people checked inboxes, junk, clutter, and deleted mail and confirmed the message had not gone through. Sarita also gave an HR update on hiring since July 1, 2025: Hires included a part-time CFO, HR director, athletic coaches, housing director, accounting director, director of institutional effectiveness and teaching excellence, and director of sports medicine. She also reported 14 adjunct hires and 12 full-time faculty hires.

Darrel asked whether the adjunct/full-time ratio was still too high. Sarita said she had not reviewed the ratio recently but expected full-time faculty numbers to rise.

Bill added that in the College of STEM, the important change was not so much fewer adjuncts as less overload work hours for full-time faculty. Sarita agreed the adjunct total should ideally decrease, though Bill noted the situation varied by area.

Darrel returned the discussion to old business: work on the faculty handbook and SOPs. He said the goal was to have the handbook ready for a Senate vote, then send it to general faculty in September. Darrel also brought up creating a Moodle-based system for faculty yearly evaluations and related P&T materials, including upward evaluations and office hours. Sarita said the evaluation form had been reduced to a more manageable number of questions. Darrel explained that the form would be digitized in Moodle so it could serve as a long-term database, with records retained for up to 10 years.

The safety committee was discussed next. Darrel said he stopped attending because the meetings became repetitive and unproductive, and many were canceled at the last minute. Rodney confirmed that the committee has indeed been canceling many meetings and has not followed up quickly on things like building maps.

Sarita raised a concern about the need for a catastrophic event response plan. Angela said Bluefield State had a general catastrophic policy process during COVID, though she was not sure where it was now. Darrel suggested contacting Ted Lewis to find it and adapt it if needed.

Darrel asked whether the AI committee had met yet; Jeffrey said it would meet soon.

Sarita then asked about University Council scheduling. Darrel explained his schedule was heavily packed on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, making Tuesdays and Thursdays the only realistic options. Sarita said the committee has a lot of policies to review and that the work would be both tedious and serious.

New business shifted to the emergency board of governors meeting and the aftermath of last night's events regarding the immediate end of Darrin Martin's employment as president and the appointment of Cathy Deeb as acting president. Darrel criticized the handling of the situation, saying it created speculation, rumors, and bad public optics. Jack described the response as "ham-handed." Darrel said the issue was worsened by public calendar visibility and poor communication. He also said the contract being signed and later revoked looked bad and would likely be legally contested. Jack said alumni were upset and believed the governor was blocking board appointments. Darrel argued the board members' terms should have self-regulated and that the continued leadership looked like a power grab.

Angela then gave a detailed update on the MEC leaks and renovation issues.

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 are separate projects.

- Phase 1 was finished but still had leaks in classrooms, including water dripping onto student tables.

- Ceiling tiles had been removed and garbage cans placed to catch water.

- Bluefield State had contacted plumbing contractors, and Robbie Faulds was working with them.

- Phase 2 is continuing, including work on stacks and showers on the third and fourth floors so the buildout for radiography and sonography could continue.

Darrel criticized the decision to prioritize a library renovation fundraiser over fixing MEC and housing problems. He argued the MEC and housing issues had immediate financial and operational consequences, including hotel costs for displaced students.

Amanda then asked the faculty for their view on accepting StraighterLine transfer courses. Darrel said the Senate had already rejected StraighterLine for current students, but Angela and Amanda explained the issue had become complicated because of transfer policy language and a specific student case.

Amanda said a nursing student had been told, incorrectly, by Marviene Johnson that a StraighterLine course would count if completed before the semester started. Darrel strongly rejected that idea for current students, saying only ACE-approved transfer courses from other institutions should be accepted under the proper rules. Angela explained that the student's case was tangled with a prerequisite problem, appeals, and the fact that the student was already enrolled in later classes. Darrel emphasized that verbal advice given informally should not be treated as binding policy, and any such guidance should be documented in writing. Amanda said the appeals committee was handling the case, and if denied, the student might appeal further.

The discussion then turned to the board and executive session access. Jack questioned whether he should have been included, and Amanda noted he was still a non-voting board member and should be allowed in. Darrel explained that, historically, executive sessions typically exclude faculty/staff/student reps and include only appointed board members.

The conversation returned to the board of governors and leadership problems. Darrel and others discussed national and local media coverage, including a Medium article about the board meeting. Darrel said the board had a poor public record and that recent events made the university look worse. He also said the president's salary increase and ongoing spending looked indefensible given BSU's financial issues. Jeffrey mentioned the president’s salary had risen by nearly $60,000 between 2024 and 2025. Darrel said the administration’s finances should be reviewed line by line for possible savings, and he wanted the Senate to have representation on the budget committee.

The meeting then shifted to attendance verification and enrollment issues. Darrel warned that attendance verification needed to be enforced because students were still being kept in classes without showing up. Kristin and Amanda said students were still being added after deadlines, often without being contacted. Vincent also said a student was added to one of the courses he taught despite the deadline to add classes having had passed. Amanda explained that an entire list of students had been given instructions to build schedules even though they had not been contacted. Darrel called this “fluffing numbers” and said it distorted enrollment reporting and scheduling. Amanda estimated the university would lose about 70 students when the non-attending students were removed. Darrel said this showed enrollment had not actually grown and criticized the practice as misleading.

Toward the end, Darrel summarized the main next steps:

- meet regularly with the new president/dean leadership,
- finish the faculty handbook/SOP work,
- assign Senate members to standing committees,
- continue pressing for better transparency and budget oversight,
- and making sure the board of governors “stays in their lane”.

Darrel asked everyone to review the standing committees and choose which ones they wanted to serve on, with his immediately choosing the budget committee. Kristin shared a document link with the updated Senate and committee list.

Meeting adjournment: With no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Jack Sheffler at 12:34 pm, and then seconded by Jeffrey Yeager. Motion passed via acclamation.