

Colorado School of Mines – FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
 October 8, 2024, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Guggenheim 3rd Floor Boardroom/[Zoom](#)

Attendees:

Voting Members: 15 total (10 needed for quorum). Quorum was present.

P	Brandon Dugan (Chair)	P	Nicole Becwar (LB)		Jamal Rostami (MN)	P	Cortney Holles (HASS)
P	John Spear (CEE)	P	Chuck Stone (PH)	P	Ventzi Karaivanov (ME)		Piret Plinket-Bjorklund (GGE)
P	Mansur Ermila (PE)	P	Paul Martin (AMS)	P	Jeff Holley (CEE)	P	Ning Wu (CBE)
P	Shubham Vyas (CH)		Cristian Ciobanu (ME)				

Other Regular Attendees and Guests

	Dinesh Mehta (Trustee)	P	Rick Holz (AA)	P	Paul Myskiw (RO)	P	Colin Terry (Student Life)
P	Sam Spiegel (Online)		Carl Frick (OGS)	P	Jen Gagne (GA)	P	Nichole Bigley (AA)
P	Mikhaila Powers (USG)	P	Megan Sanders (Trefny)		Andy Herring (AA)	P	Karla Perez-Velez (CASA)
P	Lauren Guido (GSG)	P	Kathleen Tomon (GSG)	P	Vibhuti Dave (UGS)		Jon Johnson (Online)
P	D. Scott Heath (RO)		Kristeen Serracino (AA)	P	Lori Kester (EMLT)		

Special Guest(s): Christine Homer, Justin Shaffer, Polina Ringler, Becky Swanson, Sam Johnson, David Halat, Brian Trewyn, Vince Kuo, Jeramy Zimmerman, Jim Wong, Annalise Maughan, Scott Houser, Andrea Borrego, Kirstin Volpi, Joe Horan, Aubrey Wigner,

Welcome, Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Brandon Dugan

MOTION: The motion to approve the prior meeting minutes was moved by S. Vyas and seconded by J. Holley. The motion to amend the prior meeting minutes with an addition to what is in the Handbook about teaching loads was moved by S. Vyas and seconded by V. Karaivanov. The motion to approve the prior meeting minutes with the addition was unanimously approved with zero opposition and zero abstentions.

Academic Affairs

Rick Holz

R. Holz and A. Herring have been meeting with some departments to present and answer any questions about the Entrepreneurship and Innovation ecosystem on campus. R. Holz hoped that everyone enjoyed the festivities last week including Blaster’s Bash, the Mines football game, and the inauguration of the bell in front of Guggenheim. There was conversation with K. Volpi about questions that were brought up during the previous meeting. K. Volpi mentioned she will meet with the facilities team to talk about the ability to lock classrooms from the inside and any additional solutions. Regarding the teaching faculty contracts, the wrong contract was uploaded into Workday. AA is working to rectify this by getting updated contracts uploaded into Workday. There is an ongoing effort to try to rewrite and simplify the contract. There are also conversations within Legal about whether official contracts are actually needed except for when new faculty are hired to the University and whether annual letters that include salary increase will suffice. Regarding a searchable salary document available online, K. Volpi is talking with HR and Legal to investigate what other universities are doing so Mines can develop something similar.

- **Question:** P. Martin asked, do faculty get a new contract when they get promoted? If not, how would the date of promotion be tracked?
- **Answer:** R. Holz answered that this is part of the conversation that is happening within Legal as the annual letter also states faculty rank and department and a new contract may not be necessary. Promotion dates can be tracked in the Workday system. If annual letters replace contracts, the Faculty Handbook would have to be updated as well because it currently explicitly states that a contract needs to be sent. For those faculty who were promoted this year and contracts have not yet been sent, it is due to the ongoing conversation.
- **Comment:** V. Karaivanov added that faculty do not receive new contracts, only annual letters. After promotion, no new contracts are sent.
- **Comment:** R. Holz added that there have been some inconsistencies as new contracts should be sent out after promotion. From a business standpoint, things need to get straightened out to prevent further inconsistencies as well as find out what is legally required and be more efficient in our processes.
- **Question:** C. Stone asked if a short summary of the ABET visit that occurred last week could be provided?
- **Answer:** R. Holz answered that the ABET visit went well. Every department except for Electrical Engineering and Geophysics had at least one weakness that was identified so it will be up to those departments to provide some additional documentation, and a letter will need to be sent to ABET by May. This does not affect our accreditation. Another weakness found was mainly centered around PEO statements. There were not issues with the statements themselves but rather if the statements had been updated routinely over the course of the 6-year interval and had received feedback from the appropriate group. Evidence of this can be presented by having meeting minutes available for ABET reviewers, which many departments did not have. The other most common deficiency was in assessing curriculum for continual feedback to improve programs. Most departments are doing this, but some did not have enough appropriate documentation or were not utilizing best practices for the types of assessments. All concerns brought up are correctable. V. Dave and M. Sanders are meeting with the Deans and Department Heads from every department to discuss specific feedback and ways to update and improve accreditation assessment processes.
 - **Question:** J. Spear asked what programs are not a part of ABET?
 - **Answer:** R. Holz answered QBE, Math, EB, Chemistry, and CS are not ABET accredited. Also, some new programs like Ceramics and Construction Engineering are not yet accredited. EDS is currently asking for accreditation for the first time. Some programs are accredited by other agencies such as Chemistry is accredited by the American Chemical Society and Biochemistry is looking to be accredited by ASBMB.

Registrar's Office

Paul Myskiw

Spring 2025 is roomed minus 5 sections which should be sorted by the end of the week. A Statement of Work (SOW) has been signed with CIM to do a Refresh. As part of the refresh, one feature that will be available is online voting for Faculty Senate and Undergraduate/Graduate Council to track curriculum items. More details will be provided in March. Migration to the Cloud for the student information system is scheduled for the end of October. There may be some downtime at the end of the last week in October, but it will be minimal (targeting the following Monday to be back online).

- **Question:** C. Stone asked when will students be able to register for classes?



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- **Answer:** P. Myskiw answered that registration has not changed. For Spring, registration will open on November 11th.

Peer Observation Program

Megan Sanders, Justin Shaffer, Polina Ringler, Becky Swanson

B. Swanson presented an update on how year one of the Peer Observation Program went, what was learned in the process, and implementation for the future of this pilot. The main goal of the program is to continue building the culture of sharing, discussing, and improving teaching across campus. This aligns with Mines@150 of Mines being a leader in STEM education. Last semester, six departments and 87 faculty participated. The faculty included a mix of tenure-track teaching faculty and professors of practice. Training was provided for the departments and then faculty were paired. A CS student helped in writing a pairing algorithm to minimize internal pairings. Pairs were asked to meet to discuss their teaching, observe each other teach, write and share summaries about their observations, and debrief/write a reflection on the process. At the end, feedback was collected from all participating departments and a follow-up focus group met in June with 5 participating faculty. The feedback provided said that most of the faculty felt prepared to do observations and complete the process. Also, most faculty felt the feedback was helpful and there were general mixed feelings about including this information in the annual performance review. Feedback also included that the faculty enjoyed hearing new ideas, observing a different course, and meeting a colleague from outside of their department. Some challenges and suggestions received were to pair faculty with more similar courses, provide more training, and start earlier to provide more reminders and timelines. Changes that will be implemented in future pilots will be earlier communication with DHs to clarify expectations, share training materials and pairs with faculty earlier, provide additional structure and reminders to help faculty stay on track, put more emphasis on the formative nature of peer observation, provide more training on giving feedback, and pair faculty based on specific courses requested by the faculty and courses of approximately the same size. Next, the program will facilitate off-cycle observations in Fall 2024 for faculty who were not teaching or who were teaching a course not well-suited for observation. Also, the revised program will be implemented with six new departments in Spring 2025.

- **Question:** J. Holley asked how many times per semester did the faculty pairs observe one another?
- **Answer:** B. Swanson answered that it was one observation only.
- **Question:** K. Tomon asked if the observed classes were graduate classes, undergraduate classes, or a combination of both?
- **Answer:** P. Ringler answered that it was a combination. The only courses left out were labs and independent study courses since the observation tool is not suited for those. However, it is something to think about for the future.
- **Question:** N. Wu asked what six new departments will be participating next?
- **Answer:** B. Swanson answered EDS, AMS, Petroleum, and possibly Mechanical and Geology.
- **Question:** J. Holley asked in the pairing algorithm, were teaching evaluations considered?
- **Answer:** B. Swanson answered no. The program does not have access to that information. Currently, cross departmental pairings and class size are the only parameters to the algorithm to prevent being too restrictive. P. Ringler added that pairings are shared with the DHs as a first step. In the future, there may be an opportunity for DHs to give input if a faculty member needs more support which can be considered when pairing.
- **Question:** M. Ermila asked is course information such as course objectives or learning outcomes considered?
- **Answer:** P. Ringler answered there is a form to fill out which asks some of those questions about the course. There is a conversation guide provided to both faculty members to utilize before observing.



- **Comment:** C. Stone added that participating in the program was academically enriching and enjoyable. However, some feedback received was that DHs did not know what do with the observations in terms of evaluating their faculty or giving faculty credit for their time and energy.
- **Comment:** B. Swanson added that the goal of the program is not evaluative but rather to get conversations going about teaching on campus. DHs should really use this information to be supportive, work with the program to retrieve any information they are interested in collecting, and not use the information as a metric of success of teaching. A. Wigner added that this information could be used to conduct a faculty meeting to broadly share what best practices were seen and how the department might use this information as a growing/teaching moment.

Undergraduate Council Updates

Ventzi Karaivanov

The previous UGC meeting was held on 9/25 at which the council voted to approve one course change and one new course. There was also an introduction from HASS and EB on the FUTURES course. This will be a curriculum item that the Senate will also vote on since it is part of the core curriculum. S. Houser shared that FUTURES (HASS215) is a Mines@150 effort and Student Signature Experience and is part of the revised core curriculum. The purpose of the course is to get students excited to be at Mines and at the possibilities for their future. There are no prerequisites for the course, so students can take this course in their first semester. The course was originally proposed in December 2022 and A. Kerr was hired to develop the course in June 2023. The first pilot was in Fall 2023 (Carbon Futures) with 75 students and had three more pilots in Spring 2024 (Global Energy Systems, Carbon, and Water Futures). This Fall, the FUTURES course has four sections with 400 students (100 students per section) and will be the final pilot. The course is structured with students rotating through three seminar themes taught by different instructors with a theme instructor that creates integration between each of the three distinct seminar topics. In Week 6, the students have an Encounter which is a field trip or a special activity such as the NSF Ice Core Facility and Argo Gold Mine. The plan is to scale up to 8 sections in Fall 2025 so there is a need for more STEM faculty to help deliver this course. Two teaching faculty hires are in the process to start next Fall.

- **Question:** J. Spear asked how much is climate change playing a role in the FUTURES topics?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered that climate change plays into some themes more than others. The Carbon Futures pilot highlighted it well.
- **Question:** C. Stone asked how is the grant funded? Are all faculty that teach the course full-time faculty?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered that the grant is funded through the SSE awards which is funded by the Foundation. Faculty are all full-time faculty from the three main departments (HASS, EB, EDS) and STEM faculty.
- **Question:** S. Vyas asked how are the classes structured in regard to how the topics/content is delivered to students? Are there lectures? How are students being judged in terms of outcome? Is this course a full-teaching load for faculty?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered the classes are generally not lectures. The course utilizes active learning and a student-centered approach with lots of activities, simulations, and discussion among students. This course draws from the overall core learning outcomes, so they are very broad and high level. Assessments are made via weekly reflections that each of the students do. Students also do group work within the seminars as well as a group project and a portfolio. This is a full course responsibility for the theme instructors, which also consists of consolidated office hours and Future Fridays which are held in the library.
- **Question:** C. Stone asked if new topics are developed for this course, will faculty be given a course release, summer salary support, or winter research support?



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- **Answer:** S. Houser answered other than some support over the summer for the first cohort, it has not been discussed yet. Many of the topics that have offered were suggested by faculty.
- **Question:** K. Tomon asked if this course is to scale up, would HASS200 still be offered or would HASS200 go away?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered that HASS200 in its current form would go away. R. Holz added that HASS200 may change but will still be offered as an elective within CAS.
- **Question:** C. Stone asked, are there more students wanting to take this course than seat availability?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered seat availability has not been an issue. In Spring of last year, this course was not fully subscribed.
- **Question:** M. Powers asked since this course will be offered in the Spring and students will most likely be continuing students rather than new freshmen, is there any differences in student feedback between new students in the fall versus students taking the course in the Spring?
- **Answer:** S. Houser answered there has not been any differences in student feedback based on Fall vs Spring. Students taking the course in the Fall are placed in the course whereas students in the Spring are opting into the course. Students that opt into the course tend to have a more positive response.

Benefits

Kirsten Volpi

There has been discussion for quite some time about Mines getting to the point where it would be difficult to continue to maintain full premium pay for health and dental for its employees. It is rare in the higher education industry as well as in the corporate industry to have full premiums paid for employees, spouses, children, and families. Nationally, the costs for health benefits are becoming untenable. This year, there is a 12% increase and Mines is paying \$25 million on health and dental which is difficult to manage. Undergraduate enrollment is near or at capacity and additional classrooms and housing are currently being built to manage the number of students at Mines. Because tuition is the primary source of revenue, the margin (revenues minus expenses) has gone down from 4% to 1%. Therefore, other opportunities to manage the overall budget to provide flexibility are needed.

- **Question:** C. Stone asked how is Mines paying for health and dental currently? Out of what revenue stream?
- **Answer:** K. Volpi answered is it primarily funded out of tuition revenue.
- **Question:** J. Spear asked how many people are currently covered with full pay for health and dental? What kind of impact can faculty expect?
- **Answer:** K. Volpi answered that this includes all administrative and academic faculty and a portion of classified employees. Mines has approximately 1,400 employees. Of those, 260 are classified employees. Specific details on impact will be made public next month but will not be out of line with what classified employees are currently paying for premiums (employees + families pay \$266 per month for health and \$30 per month for dental).
- **Question:** C. Stone asked are there other revenue streams that can be used to possibly fund healthcare premiums?
- **Answer:** K. Volpi answered that Mines has been pushing to work on the master's non-thesis program as an additional revenue source as well as Continuing Education.
- **Question:** J. Spear asked a question that came up during the previous Senate meeting, what is the total value of the Foundation endowment?



- **Answer:** K. Volpi answered that it is \$443 million as of June 30th. It is restricted and is used to support financial aid.
- **Question:** S. Vyas asked is there a push not to grow the research enterprise therefore hiring less research faculty and more teaching faculty so that the cost is less?
- **Answer:** R. Holz answered there is no push to do that. Mines has overshot on the number of teaching faculty hired over the last couple of years to accommodate the increase in undergraduate students. There is a need to backfill with more tenure-tenure track faculty going forward. Space has been another limitation that has not allowed Mines to hire as many tenure-tenure track faculty.

Research Council Updates

Shubham Vyas

The Research Council had their first meeting at the beginning of October. The Council hosted Dr. Lakshmi Krishna to talk about undergraduate research opportunities at Mines and the various fellowships and funding provided. There was a question of how many undergraduate students are doing research campus but there was not a clear answer because students do research in a variety of ways – voluntarily, paid, or to receive the Undergraduate Research Fellowship. Safety concerns were brought up because students doing voluntary research are not hired through Workday and are not covered by workers’ compensation. Another topic of discussion was the need for more funding for undergraduate research as well as establishing a Research Council subcommittee for the undergraduate research initiative. Additional responsibilities of the Research Council were also discussed including Research Fusion, Excellence in Research Awards, and Research Equipment/Instrumentation (REI). Last year, Research Fusion was poorly attended because it was not publicized well so the Research Council would like to work on making this event better. For REI funding, B. Dugan has proactively communicated with the Deans and RTT to contribute monetarily. S. Vyas has informed the Deans that per the bylaws, they can appoint a representative from each portfolio to attend the Research Council meetings. Meetings have been held with the Deans to discuss the future of REI proposals. For the November Research Council meeting, the Graduate Dean will give a presentation to share accomplishments and challenges of graduate research

- **Question:** K. Tomon asked if a student is doing an independent research study, would the student be covered through Workday?
- **Answer:** S. Vyas answered if a student is taking research for credit, then the student is covered as they are considered a student worker. Voluntary research is not covered.
- **Question:** B. Dugan asked could a general application be created on Workday so students can apply generically?
- **Answer:** The Research Council is discussing this as an action item via discussion boards.
- **Comment:** S. Vyas suggested that the graduate portion of the tech fees that are awarded through the Tech Fee Committee proposals could help fund REI and alleviate the stress of finding funding.
 - **Question:** N. Wu asked could graduate tuition to be used to help?
 - **Comment:** R. Holz added that tech fees typically are used for classroom improvements, upgrading the Wi-Fi across campus, and software so any reallocation of those funds will have a significant impact. Graduate tuition is already allocated to paying faculty salaries. These are all great suggestions and discussions, but it will be important to think about the rippling effect of pulling funds from other places.
 - **Comment:** L. Guido added that the Research Council could be invited to the GSG meeting when tech fee increases are voted on or meet with a tech fee manager.



CFAC Report

Joseph Horan

The Colorado Faculty Advisory Council, which is convened by the Department of Higher Education and involved faculty from all public institutions in Colorado, met to discuss issues that are relevant to faculty. The committee meets twice per semester. Some items that were discussed during the last meeting included the update that the Higher Learning Commission is investigating the possibility of a 90-credit bachelor's degree (changing the minimum requirement from 120 to 90, 3-year degree). So far, this is only speculative but may be something to think about at Mines when thinking of competitiveness in Colorado. Additionally, there was discussion about the Senate Bill 164, Transfer Transparency Bill. The bill states that a student should have a clear sense of all credit that they are able to transfer within 30 days of their acceptance. When the bill passed, there was no specific language on how the enforcement process would work but will need to be approved by April 1st of next year. Lastly, the funding model for state funding was discussed. There are eight funding metrics that are used for all universities including the number of resident, full-time students, 1st generation students, Pell-eligible students, and graduation rates. Since the funding model was introduced, Mines has seen a decrease in the proportion given to all public universities (3.79% to 3.7%). The next CFAC meeting will be held in November. J. Horan encouraged Senators to bring forth any issues that can be relayed to the Council that would allow Mines to see what other schools are doing and possibly make a coordinated action plan with other universities.

- **Comment:** B. Dugan added that the 90-credit bachelor's degree is also being discussed among Faculty Senate members across other schools. This is sparked from an Inside Higher Ed article in 2023 which talked about reducing credit hours.
- **Comment:** J. Spear added that for the graduation rate metrics, Mines may need to rethink how field session fits into the curriculum. If a senior has not taken field session yet and they take it after they graduate, that counts as a 5 or 6-year graduation.
- **Comment:** C. Stone and B. Dugan added that it may be useful to bring up health insurance premiums to CFAC to retrieve data on what other universities are doing as a response to increased healthcare costs.

Adjourn – Regular Meeting

Brandon Dugan

Next meeting: October 22, 2023 in the Guggenheim Boardroom. Please send agenda items faculty_senate@mines.edu 1 week prior.



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