

MINUTES

The Faculty Senate met on Thursday March 12, 2026, in Faculty Senate Conference Room French Admin 344B and via Zoom. Fifty-eight (58) senators were present, two (2) vacancies with thirty-three (33) absent, and twenty-one (21) non-voting participants. The meeting was called to order by Ken Roberts, Senate Chair, at 3:36 pm

- I. Call to Order 3:36 pm
- II. Approval of minutes from February 26, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting ([PDF](#))
Approved by unanimous consent
- III. Additions or changes to the agenda
None
- IV. Updates
 - A. Remarks by Faculty Senate Executive Committee
 1. Faculty Senate Chair –
 - Global Summit – Held today; strong attendance (1,000+ registered). Sessions with Google, Adobe, and Microsoft noted. Speakers emphasized the continuing importance of liberal arts, humanities, and communication skills in the context of AI.
 - University Budget Hearings – Begin the week of March 23rd. Approximately 29–30 half-hour sessions with academic and administrative units. Faculty Senate leadership invited to attend for observation and questions; no decision-making role. Attendance to be split between Speaker and Christine.
 - 90-Credit Bachelor’s Degree Survey – Qualtrics survey data fully received, analysis ongoing. Preliminary review aligns with concerns raised in Senate, particularly regarding equivalency with a traditional bachelor’s degree. Some responses indicate potential limited use cases.
 - Campus Visits – Faculty Senate leadership will visit Vancouver and Everett campuses the week of 3/30/26.
 2. Immediate Past Chair – Not present
 3. Chair Elect – CoC reviewed Committee Applications and will have a memo for Senate review next meeting.
 4. Executive Secretary – Developing the Faculty Senate meeting schedule for the upcoming academic year. The next Faculty Senate meeting will be the 6th of our 7 meetings and will contain many of the procedural items required at the end of the academic year.



B. Guest Presentation: WSU System Design Update – Provost T. Chris Riley, Provost and Executive Vice President

- **System Redesign: Status and Direction** - The system redesign is actively underway but has proceeded concurrently with major operational changes due to time constraints. Governance is moving toward a centralized provost-led model in which the provost oversees all deans, including Spokane. The redesign is now focused on implementation details. Data collection included input from approximately 1,900 stakeholders via surveys and extensive in-person interviews. Feedback reinforced long-standing concerns about organizational silos, budget fragmentation, administrative complexity
- **Budget Context and Financial Pressures** - The university is operating with ~6,000 fewer students than pre-COVID levels, equating to roughly \$60M in annual lost tuition revenue. This shortfall is compounded by approximately \$54M in budget reductions in the same period. Colleges and campuses were asked to model 3%, 5%, and 10% reduction scenarios in response to potential state funding risks. These scenarios were developed before the athletics discussion and are not tied to it. No final decisions on college-level allocations, cuts, or position reductions have been approved.
- **One-Time \$20M Athletics Investment** – The Board of Regents directed a one-time \$20M investment in athletics. Stated goals are to test whether WSU's donor base is willing to support athletics at a level consistent with peer institutions and strengthen visibility, branding, and enrollment momentum during a period of institutional vulnerability. The funds are not coming from academic programs, research, or direct college cuts and this is not an ongoing funding commitment.
- **Enrollment, Branding, and Athletics** – Athletics (particularly football) continues to be a significant driver of public visibility and student interest. Leadership cited clear enrollment and application impacts linked to COVID disruptions and the Pac-12 breakup. Athletics is not viewed as a stand-alone enrollment solution but as one component of a broader recruitment strategy.
- **Faculty Concerns Raised** – Faculty expressed low morale, citing position non-renewals and staffing reductions, limits on travel and professional support. There are perceived disconnects between academic needs and high-profile investments. Concerns focused less on athletics itself and more on transparency, timing, and the cumulative impact of ongoing constraints on academic units.



C. Board of Regents – Not present

D. Legislative Update –

- Newly released House/Senate budget is favorable for WSU and higher education overall. Under the final compromise, WSU will see less than a 1% total reduction, approximately a \$1.5 million across-the-board cut (about 0.3% of the budget) and a larger funding-mechanism driven cut to the Institute for Northwest Energy Futures related to Climate Act funding resulting in an overall cut of about 0.8%.
- These changes apply to the remainder of the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026. While the short and medium-term outlook is positive, the next biennial budget cycle is expected to be very challenging due to deferred fiscal decisions by the Legislature.
- Capital Funding update – The university received \$7 million in funding for Team Health in Spokane. This funding frees approximately \$2.9 million previously allocated. As a result, the institution will renovate existing space in the medical school building to support unified Team Health events.
- \$1 million was allocated for infrastructure upgrades at the Creamery, specifically related to equipment rework. This funding addresses concerns about potential equipment failure and ensures continued production of Cougar Gold cheese.
- Additional funding was received for installation of air conditioning and HVAC in the Pavilion. These funds were characterized as legislative “gift items,” not original university priorities. Legislators allowed the university to provide guidance on areas of highest utility.
- The university received \$63,000 for the Heritage Orchard project.

V. Information Items

Note: *Senators are encouraged to bring questions about discussion items to the Senate meeting. You are also welcome to contact committee chairs if they have specific questions that they would like addressed before the Senate meeting. Additionally, senators are encouraged to ask questions about exhibits before items are advanced to action items.*



VI. Agenda Items

A. Action Items

1. (Item #2026.02.26_603_Steering) Proposed Amendments to the *Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws* (Exhibits [603A](#), [603B](#), *[603C](#), *[603D](#))

**These documents have been updated*

Motion Approved; 51 Approve, 0 Reject

2. (Item #2026.02.26_604_GSC) Amendments to the *Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures Manual* (Exhibits [604A](#), [604B](#))

Motion Approved; 48 Approve, 4 reject

3. (Item #2026.02.26_605_AAC) Undergraduate and Professional Major Change Bulletin No. 8, Requirements (Exhibit [605A](#))

Motion Approved; 51 Approve, 1 Reject

4. (Item #2026.02.26_606_AAC) Proposed updated Catalog Subcommittee function language (Exhibit [606A](#))

Motion Approved; 50 Approve, 3 Reject.

B. Discussion Items

1. (Item #2026.03.12_607_CRP) Undergraduate and Professional Major Change Bulletin No. 7, Courses (Exhibit [607A](#))

No discussion, move to action 4/2/26

2. (Item #2026.03.12_608_CRP) Graduate Major Change Bulletin No. 7, Courses (Exhibit [608A](#))

No discussion, move to action 4/2/26

3. (Item #2026.03.12_609_AAC) Undergraduate and Professional Major Change Bulletin No. 9, Requirements (Exhibit [609A](#))

No discussion, move to action 4/2/26

4. (Item #2026.03.12_610_GSC) Proposal to create MS in Food Manufacturing Technology for WSU Global (Exhibits [610A](#), [610B](#), [610C](#), [610D](#), [610E](#), [610F](#))

Additional context provided by a representative of the program. The program is an engineering program, not a food science program and housed in Biological Systems Engineering (BSE). BSE currently has four faculty members working in food engineering. Industry currently relies on chemical engineers to perform food engineering roles; this program aims to address gaps in specialized training for this industry.



VII. Constituent Concerns

GPSA President – University recruitment and planning efforts focus predominantly on undergraduates, while insufficient attention is given to graduate student recruitment and support. Graduate students are essential to undergraduate instruction as teaching assistants, and several departments are already experiencing TA shortages. Emphasis placed on that increasing undergraduate enrollment without parallel growth in graduate students undermines course delivery and academic quality. Funding structures and enrollment-driven budget models affect graduate education differently across disciplines. In the sciences, graduate support depends largely on external grant funding, whereas in the humanities and some other fields it has historically relied on core university funds that have been significantly reduced. Smaller enrollments lead directly to fewer TA lines, creating a cycle that weakens graduate programs, especially on smaller campuses. Additionally, recent reductions in online storage were raised as a serious concern for graduate researchers, who have substantially greater data needs than undergraduates, prompting calls for stronger advocacy and tailored institutional solutions.

VIII. Adjournment 4:46 pm