

06 March 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Governors,

The Faculty Senate is pleased to provide the following update on our recent and ongoing activities as we prepare for the conclusion of the current academic year and transition toward the next.

End-of-Year Preparation and Ongoing Work

As we approach the end of the academic year, the Senate is focused on completing current projects and submitting all outstanding reports and recommendations. To maintain continuity and momentum, we are also identifying the initiatives that will carry forward into the next academic year. This early planning ensures stable transitions and supports uninterrupted progress on longer-term priorities.

Faculty Handbook Updates

The Senate is in the final stages of reviewing proposed revisions to Chapter 2 of the Faculty Handbook. These updates aim to clarify expectations, modernize language, and align the chapter with current institutional practices. Alongside these revisions, the Senate is also finalizing a set of changes designed to streamline and clarify Faculty Senate operations, strengthening transparency, efficiency, and consistency in governance.

Outstanding Service Award

The Faculty Senate recently completed its work on recommended language for a new Outstanding Service Award. We appreciate the support of Dr. Toms and Dr. Van Galen in launching this recognition initiative.

- Nominations will be accepted through April 15.
- The award recipient will be announced at the Welcome Back Meeting in August.

This new award reflects the Senate's and administration's shared commitment to celebrating exemplary service across the university community.

Faculty Feedback Process for Department Chairs

After soliciting and reviewing input from both department chairs and faculty members, the Senate has finalized a recommendation for a regular process for gathering faculty feedback on department chair performance and departmental operations. This process is intended to support constructive communication, strengthen departmental leadership, and enhance the overall academic environment. The recommendation will be sent to Dr. Toms for further review and consideration by Academic Affairs.

Senate Elections and Leadership Transition

Recruitment of new Senators for the upcoming academic year is currently underway, and the Senate is also seeking nominees for next year's President-Elect. As outlined in Senate procedures, leadership transition will occur at the first meeting in May, ensuring continuity in governance and adequate onboarding time for incoming leadership. Dr. Zack Rice, Associate Professor of Education, will serve as Faculty Senate President for 2026-27.

Conclusion

The Faculty Senate remains committed to effective shared governance, transparent communication, and proactive planning. We appreciate the Board's support as we continue to advance initiatives that strengthen the academic mission and health of the university.

Respectfully submitted,

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