

University Senate Meeting

January 28, 2026 | 2:00 P.M. | CELS 120

- Meeting Minutes: S. Sangregorio

Voting Members in Attendance:

Z. Aidala, J. Alexandre, Y. Bai, C. Baird, S. Bellum, J. Bilek, M. Chaifetz, C. Challenger, L. Carr, W. Colucci, S. Collins, C. Dilkes, B. Garlick, S. Ghoshal, C. Gunhouse, P. Haggerty, K. Handeli, E. Jacobson, R. Kunstadter, P. La Fountain, F. Lauby, L. LeFever, Y. Luo, S. Mamonov, S. McCarthy, R. Misra, S. Nicholas, S. Nowak, N. Panorkou, D. Peterka-Benton, I. Ren, C. Reinisch, C. Rodriguez-Unalt, A. Rzepka, S. Sangregorio, L. Simeon, M. Smith, A. Spadaccini, A. Talamo, A. Toro-Carnevali, D. Trubatch.

Voting Members Missing:

S. Baglieri, H. Benton, D. Chong, D. Falloon-Blake, C. Flores, O. Gharehgozli, T. Gorman, M. Kamenetskiy, B. Krist, N. Kurzynowski, J. Robinson, W. Sullivan.

Previous Meeting Minutes

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gN8hQk4Laqa9jSFWO8WVz-LhnqJCRoHVINw2xWVR24s/edit?usp=drive_link

1. Call to Order

- **Call to Order:** 2:07 PM
- **Shannon Bellum** called the meeting to order.

2. Call for Quorum

- **Shannon Bellum** asked to confirm the quorum.
- **Sarah Sangregorio** confirmed that there was a quorum.

3. Land Acknowledgement Statement

- **Shannon Bellum** read the land acknowledgement statement.

4. Senate President's Updates

- **Shannon Bellum** reminded the group that unauthorized recordings are prohibited except for those requiring accommodation. The minutes of this meeting shall stand as the official record of University Senate proceedings.
 - Because quorum was hard to track at the last meeting, voting senators were reminded to notify **Sarah Sangregorio** if they leave early to help maintain accurate quorum counts.
- **Shannon Bellum** reminded the group to follow orderly discussion procedures:
 - Use the hand-raise function on Zoom or in person.
 - One speaker at a time will be recognized.
 - Senators who have not yet spoken will be prioritized over those who already have.
 - Non-voting attendees will be recognized after voting members.
 - Comments on Senate actions should be held until the Voices of the Community section.

5. Report from the Administration

- **Provost Mili**
 - Provost Mili began by acknowledging that although she has been here for seven months, many people have only seen parts of her work, so she wanted to share her background more fully. She is originally from Tunisia and studied computer science at the University of Paris VI, where she focused on human decision-making, cognitive bias, artificial intelligence, and formal methods. Not ready to return home after graduating, she accepted her first academic position at Oakland University near Detroit—initially planning to stay only two years. She rose through the ranks there, and her research expanded from cognitive overload in automotive contexts to bio-inspired computing and formal methods. As her projects grew, she found herself leading larger research teams and discovered a strong interest in academic leadership. Encouraged by her dean, she moved into administration, serving as associate dean for research and then department chair.
 - She was later recruited by Purdue University to lead the Department of Information Technology during a period of declining enrollment and pressure to strengthen research. Wanting to understand the department deeply, she spent her first two weeks

sitting in classes as if she were a student. That experience, combined with her long-standing awareness of the lack of diversity in computing, shaped her belief that STEM fields needed to rethink how they teach, recruit, and support students. She proposed a major redesign of curriculum, assessment, and student pathways—an initiative that eventually transformed the entire College of Technology.

- After five years, she was ready for a new challenge and sought a younger, more agile institution where she could have broader impact. She became dean of the College of Computing and Informatics at UNC Charlotte, where she continued her focus on diversity and on preparing students to understand the societal impact of technology. Following the 2016 election, she felt a strong responsibility for how computing and social media were reshaping democracy. Under her leadership, the college embedded ethics and human-centered thinking throughout the curriculum, grew enrollment and diversity significantly, and reshaped the culture of the college.
- Through these experiences, she became increasingly convinced that solving society's biggest challenges requires rethinking not only STEM, but also the ways we teach economics, history, and the humanities. She wanted to work in a context where she could help redesign curricula around values and societal impact. She joined Grand Valley State University (GVSU) in 2022 as its first provost, arriving at a moment when faculty were grappling with how profoundly students had changed after the pandemic—academically, emotionally, and in their level of trust in institutions. She spent two years leading efforts to rethink policies, scheduling, and student support systems to meet these new realities.
- A personal situation eventually required her full attention, and she stepped down. That time away gave her space to reflect, and she realized she still felt deeply committed to higher education. She wanted to be in a place with strong values and a clear sense of purpose. When the interim CHSS position opened, she spoke with Provost Gonzalez and felt immediately that this institution aligned with her commitments. The humanities and social sciences have always been close to her heart, and she has found great joy in joining the college. She shared how much she has admired the

faculty and staff she has met—their dedication, their pride, and their commitment to the university’s mission.

- **Ram Misra** commented that it was an excellent introduction. Provost Mili received a warm welcome, and **Ram Misra** added a light personal note, mentioning that their own parents had also immigrated many years ago, affirming the connection without asking any further questions.

6. Approval of Minutes

- The minutes from the December 17th meeting were moved for approval by **Ram Misra**, with a second by **Christina Dilkes**. They were unanimously approved by acclamation.

7. SGA Report

- No report

8. Senate President Announcements

- **Shannon Bellum** reported that the NJ-MADC Senate Coalition, led by acting co-chair Anna Haley, will hold an organizational meeting in the coming weeks, and she expects to provide more information at the next Senate meeting.
- She also announced that the Senate newsletter—first mentioned in December—is about to launch and should be released within the next week.
- **Shannon** noted that she is still seeking members for the university committee task force established in December and invited anyone interested to contact her.
- She also explained that, after extensive discussions with university leadership, the Senate Executive Committee will create a repository of unit bylaws. This repository will be for informational purposes only and will help units view, revise, or develop their own bylaws. She has meetings scheduled next week to begin organizing this effort.
- Finally, **Shannon** announced that President Koppell will attend the February 18 meeting to speak with the Senate and answer questions.
- She then invited questions about her announcements, and none were raised.

9. New Business

- No new business was entered into the record.
- **Shannon Bellum** asked whether there was any new business from the floor. No items had been submitted in advance, and when she invited senators to raise new business, none was offered.

10. Continuing Business

- **Shannon Bellum** moved on to unfinished and continuing business.
- She announced that the director search guidelines are being held temporarily to allow additional input from those who requested it.
- Proposal Two of the constitutional amendments is also being held for revisions due to issues identified in the previous meeting.

Constitutional Amendment - Election Sequence

- **Shannon** then introduced the main business item for the day: a constitutional amendment concerning the election sequence
- **Erik Jacobson**, serving as acting chair of the Constitution Committee while Tim is on leave, presented the proposal.
- **Erik** explained the proposed constitutional amendment in depth, noting that it restructures the schedule of Senate elections. Previously, at-large elections were held before constituency elections, which created logistical problems. The new proposal reverses that order so that constituency and other non–at-large seats are elected first, followed by at-large seats.
- He emphasized that nothing has changed since the first and second readings; this third reading is identical. He then walked through the specific revisions:
 1. Regular elections will take place in the spring term.
 2. Elections for all voting members *except* at-large seats will occur first.
 - Candidates who do not win these seats may then run for any at-large positions for which they qualify.
 - This distinction is necessary because the Senate includes both constituency seats and at-large seats for non-faculty and professional staff.
 3. If a non–at-large seat goes unfilled, it will temporarily convert into an at-large seat.
 - An election for that converted seat will occur in the same spring term alongside other at-large elections.

- After the three-year term ends, the seat will revert to its original constituency category.
 - Under the current system, an unfilled constituency seat would require a special fall election; the new structure eliminates that extra step.
4. All elections must conclude at least two weeks before nominations close for the Executive Board.
- **Erik** explained that the overall rationale is to streamline the election process. By holding constituency, adjunct, and professional staff elections first, the Senate can reduce the number of additional at-large elections needed in the fall when seats go unfilled. The change is intended to simplify the process, reduce administrative burden, and ensure a more orderly election cycle.
 - He then opened the floor for questions or comments. There were none.
 - **Shannon Bellum** asked for a motion to pass the constitutional amendment. **Laureen LeFever** moved to vote, **Erik** seconded, and with no further discussion, Shannon proceeded to hold the vote. She noted that, following this year's procedures, the vote would be conducted as an open vote.

Open Vote

- **Total Votes of Senators in Meeting at Time of Vote: 37**
- **Yes: 37**
- **No: 0**

11. NAAL Report

- **Catherine Baird** shared several announcements on behalf of AFT Local 1904. She first highlighted a Bylaws and Procedures Workshop scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, from 2:00–3:30 p.m. This hands-on session—co-organized by AFT Local 1904 and the Senate's Academic Affairs Council—is open to faculty, staff, and librarians. Its purpose is to share effective practices, discuss what works in unit bylaws, and learn from colleagues across the university.
- She then announced that Adrian Reagan, the professional staff coordinator, will host a professional staff information session on Tuesday, February 10, from 2:30–3:30 p.m. Registration is required and will open a couple of weeks beforehand. This session is for union members only.

- Catherine also reminded everyone that applications are now open for the 2026 union scholarships. These \$500 awards are available to full-time undergraduate students who will also be enrolled in the upcoming fall semester and who have at least a 2.75 GPA. Applications are due Friday, April 10 at 4:30 p.m., and each application must include a recommendation letter from a current AFT Local 1904 member.
- She provided a brief reminder about the FAST Fund, an emergency financial resource for Montclair State University students, supported by contributions from union members, retirees, and community donors. Information is available on the AFT Local 1904 website.
- Finally, she announced that the next union membership meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 2 at 2 p.m. on Zoom.
- Catherine then invited questions, and none were raised.

12. Adjunct Union Report

- **Mary Wallace** shared that adjunct orientations for new hires are continuing in partnership with the university and have been very successful. Incoming adjuncts have expressed appreciation for receiving essential information before arriving on campus.
- She also reported regarding a potential grievance: thanks to cooperation between the Provost's Office and Human Resources, the issue was resolved amicably before it needed to become a formal grievance.
- Her final update was that the Council of New Jersey State College Locals, representing all nine state colleges, will hold its spring meeting at Montclair State University in April. The gathering is expected to bring 90–100 attendees to campus. Mary and Laura Field from Local 1904 have begun planning, and the event will take place on the 7th floor of University Hall. She emphasized that hosting this meeting is an honor for Montclair and a point of pride for the union.
- Mary concluded by noting that more details will follow.

13. Council and Committee Reports

Academic Affairs Council

- **David Trubatch** began by speaking briefly as a union member. He reminded professional staff that if they want to attend the upcoming bylaws and procedures workshop, they must be union members—but emphasized that joining is simple, can be done electronically at any time, and grants immediate access to member-only activities.

- He then shifted to his Academic Affairs Council report. He noted that the Council continues to work with the Academic Policy Committee to improve the policy development and review process. Despite ongoing improvements, policy work must continue, and he expects a new open comment period next week on proposed changes to the add/drop and withdrawal policy. He strongly encouraged all faculty to read the proposal carefully and participate in the comment period, stressing that meaningful engagement helps strengthen the process.
- David highlighted the upcoming Bylaws and Procedures Workshop on February 25 from 2:00–3:30 p.m. The session is intentionally hands-on and focused on peer learning—participants will share effective practices from their own units and learn from colleagues across the university. He encouraged in-person participation for richer discussion but acknowledged the need for broad accessibility, so a hybrid format is likely. He invited suggestions or questions as planning continues.
- He then clarified the broader purpose of bylaws and procedures: they are central to faculty self-governance, which operates at multiple levels, especially within primary academic units such as departments or schools. Some governance responsibilities are explicitly delegated through agreements, while others are traditional or embedded in policy. Because these responsibilities are intertwined, the workshop will address the full range of governance practices rather than splitting topics across separate sessions.

14. Foundation Report

- **David Trubatch** spoke in his role as the Senate’s representative to the Montclair State University Foundation Board, which manages the university’s endowment and distributes donor funds. He expressed a desire to see a Senate-led fundraising initiative for a designated purpose. Although he has not yet received much interest, he invited colleagues to join him in brainstorming ideas, with the goal of selecting a strong concept and launching a fundraising effort beginning within the Senate and expanding outward.
- He concluded both reports by welcoming questions or comments, and none were raised.

15. Council and Committee Reports, Continued

Administrative Affairs Council

- **Lauren Carr** provided the Administrative Affairs Council report. She began by noting that the tuition exchange recommendation is still under review by Human Resources, which has raised concerns about the number of staff hours required. Additional investigation is underway.
- She then reported that the director search procedures recommendation has been forwarded to the Administrative Affairs Council, which will now review it and offer suggestions or comments.
- Lauren invited Delavar Basha, the director of the Workday Student project, to give an update.
 - **Delavar Basha** explained that the project is entering a major milestone: end-to-end testing, where the team tests the full system configuration developed over the past several years.
 - To support communication and engagement, the project has created a change network made up of representatives from across the university.
 - The first meeting, held January 23, drew more than 70 participants who mapped their communication networks and discussed common themes and questions.
 - The next meeting will be on February 20 at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom, where the team will review website content and demo Workday Student navigation and the student profile.
 - He emphasized that it is not too late to join the change network and that the project team is available to meet with units in person or via Zoom.
- Lauren then highlighted a few additional items from the Safety Committee report, noting that the university is purchasing more cameras, implementing Zoom Phone, and that Amber Alaeddin is the new director of EMS.
- She added that the Generative AI Committee has no report for this meeting but will provide one at the next Senate meeting. The Academic Calendar and Schedule Committee has submitted a brief report, which will be moved from the Executive Drive to the Senate shared drive for proper access.
- She concluded by asking whether there were any questions.
- There were no questions.

- **Shannon Bellum** clarified that the tuition exchange recommendation had already been passed at the previous Senate meeting. She noted that Lauren Carr was absent at that time due to a commitment. Shannon explained that, after the Senate approved the recommendation, President Koppell informed them that implementing the program appears complex for Human Resources, particularly in terms of workload. HR is now reviewing the recommendation and working through the operational details. Once their internal review is complete, they will provide the Senate with a full response.

Student Affairs Council

- **Shannon Bellum** noted that Pascale LaFountain, representing Student Affairs, submitted a written report that is available in the Senate shared drive. Pascal had to leave the meeting due to an emergency, so she was not present to answer questions. Shannon added that anyone with questions about the report is welcome to follow up with Pascal outside the meeting.

Elections Committee

- **Christina Dilkes** reported on behalf of the Elections Committee and expressed enthusiasm about the newly approved election-sequence changes. She explained that the two at-large faculty seats left unfilled in the last cycle have now been converted back to constituency seats under the revised system.
- She then outlined the full timeline for the upcoming elections:
 - Constituency Elections
 - Call for nominations: February 13–27
 - Voting period: March 2–16
 - Results available: March 25 Senate meeting
 - At-Large Elections
 - Call for nominations: March 13–27
 - Voting period: March 30–April 13
 - Results available: April 15 Senate meeting
- Christina noted that, assuming everything proceeds as planned, the committee expects to fill all open seats.
- She invited questions, and none were raised.

Constitution Committee

- **Erik Jacobson** explained that the committee had previously explored a proposal to adjust the number of adjunct seats and establish a proportional ratio for professional staff and non-departmental units. However, determining accurate numbers has proven difficult, so that proposal is being temporarily pulled—not abandoned, just paused until better data is available.
- He outlined the committee’s current priorities:
 - General cleanup of the Constitution
 - Outdated terminology (e.g., “instructional specialists”) and old schedules need updating.
 - Two substantive changes coming soon:
 - Ensuring at-large seats explicitly include professional staff, which is not clearly stated in the current Constitution.
 - Fulfilling Article 2C, which requires the Senate to periodically review and evaluate its own effectiveness in university governance.
 - Erik noted that, to his knowledge—and confirmed by long-serving senators—this review has never been done.
 - The committee may need to create bylaws or procedures to carry out this required evaluation.
- He invited questions, and none were raised.

Just and Sustainable Practices Committee

- **Erik Jacobson** reported that he met with the University Community Engagement Council (led by Bryan Murdock) to explore how the Senate and his committee can connect with broader community-engagement efforts.
 - A formal launch event is expected later in February.
 - He has invited the council to present to the Senate once their structure is finalized.
- A new RFP for waste removal is forthcoming. His committee hopes to have representatives participate in drafting the RFP—an important step toward more sustainable practices.
- The committee is developing AI-related recommendations, focusing on:

- Environmental impacts of AI
- Ethical considerations of large language models
- Student concerns about being unable to opt out of AI-based assignments
- Data-mining issues in Canvas and other automated systems
- He will meet with the Generative AI Committee on Friday to coordinate efforts.
- Planning has begun for Earth Month (April):
 - A panel of local community leaders discussing the university's environmental impact
 - An interdisciplinary event on climate anxiety
- Erik encouraged anyone interested to participate—membership on the committee is not required.
- The committee will also follow up on the SGA's divestment recommendation.
- He emphasized that the committee has a full agenda and welcomed additional participants.
- No questions were raised.

16. Caucus Reports

Disability Caucus

- **Stephanie Spitz** provided an update from the Disabilities Caucus. She shared that the caucus is currently determining its spring meeting schedule, and a membership survey is circulating to gather preferred days. The options under consideration are Monday or Friday afternoons, and she encouraged members to vote. She planned to place the survey link in the chat.
- Stephanie also noted that the caucus is working on developing its bylaws this semester.
- In addition, planning will soon begin for the Disability Pride Parade, which is hosted annually by the Township of Montclair.
- She invited anyone with questions to contact her or the caucus's member-at-large, Priya Lalvani, and said she would share both email addresses in the chat.

Latinx Caucus

- **Shannon Bellum** shared a message from Johnny Lorenz, inviting anyone interested in the Latinx Caucus to join their monthly social hour later today.

The gathering will take place at the 1908 Pub at 3:30 p.m., offering an informal opportunity for conversation and community.

Asian American Caucus

- No report

African American Caucus

- **Saundra Collins** delivered the update for the African American Caucus and highlighted the upcoming celebration of Black History Month, beginning February 1. This year's theme is "Art: Heirs and Architects of a Great Legacy." She expressed deep appreciation for the many campus partners who collaborated to create a robust month-long program, including African American Studies, the African American Caucus, the Black Alumni Advisory Council, the Office for Social Justice and Diversity, Student Development and Campus Life, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, Sprague Library, University Police, Bloomfield College, MSU Dining Services, and the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement.
- Saundra noted that the campus will again feature daily highlights of notable Black historical figures via the listserv, as well as a special exhibit in Sprague Library.
- She invited everyone to attend the Black History Month Procession and Flag Raising on February 2, which begins at Cole Hall and proceeds to the Student Center flagpoles, followed by a program inside the Student Center featuring entertainment and presentations of favorite Black historical figures.
- Throughout the month, events will include a film festival, the Black History Luncheon, Coffee with a Cop, a performance by the Camille Brown dancers, and a faculty–staff mixer on February 25. Saundra encouraged broad participation, emphasizing the importance of celebrating Black history—especially at a time when efforts across the country seek to diminish or erase it.
- No questions were raised.

17. Voices of the Community

- **Shannon Bellum** opened the floor for community comments.
- **Emily Isaacs** expressed concern that the Senate had not been receiving updates from the University AI Working Group, despite several senators serving on it. She emphasized that the group has been very active and that important events—such as the All-University AI Faculty and Staff

Showcase on February 24—should be communicated to the Senate and broader campus community. She noted that the Senate had requested representation on the working group, and since those representatives were appointed, she hoped to see more consistent reporting so that faculty and staff remain informed about ongoing AI-related initiatives.

- **Yi Luo** reported that the Generative AI Committee has already taken steps to support the upcoming All-University AI Faculty and Staff Showcase. At the start of the semester, the committee emailed its members encouraging them to submit proposals, and several members—including Yi herself—have already submitted two proposals for consideration.
- **Shannon Bellum** acknowledged Emily’s earlier concern about communication gaps between the University AI Working Group and the Senate. She suggested that she and Emily follow up separately to improve coordination and ensure that updates flow more consistently to the Senate and the broader campus community.

18. Meeting Adjournment

- **Call to Adjourn:** 3:08 PM
 - **Ram Misra**, Motion to Adjourn
 - **Anastasia Spadaccini**, Seconded
 - **Shannon Bellum**: Adjourned by Acclamation