

**FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

September 3rd, 2026
3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
Austin Hall

Senators Present (27): Hosam Abdelhady (COM), Traci Austin (COBA), Jennifer Child (CHSS), Fabrice Conte-Williamson (CAM), Miltonette Craig (CJ), Kevin Crouch (chair), Magdalena Denham (CJ), Bryan Espinosa (CAM), Christopher Greenleaf (COHS), Elizabeth Gross (COE), Debbi Hatton (CAM), Kelly Jordan (CHSS), Owen Kelly (COM), Dianna Kim (NGL), Naomi Krawzik (COSET), Nick Lantz (associate chair), Kimberly LaPrairie (COE), Ali Mchiri (COBA), Hannah Menendez (secretary), Olga Minich (COSET), Ricardo Montelongo (COE), Jill Pagels (COE), Berna Rahi (COHS), Bradley Seaberg (CHSS), Kyle Stutts (COSET), Cihan Varol (COSET), Xiaobo Belle Wang (CHSS)

Senators Not Present (4): Andy Noble (CAM), Erin Owens (NGL), Erica Pasquini (COHS), Darren Williams (COSET):

Special Guests

Dr. Alisa White, President

Dr. Sumanth Yenduri, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Audrey Murfin

Call to Order

3:33 PM

Acknowledgment of outgoing Senators

Outgoing chair made a statement of gratitude for the last year and thanked the new chair and associate chair as well as the President and Provost.

Kevin Crouch began with recognizing outgoing senators and the outgoing senate chair, Audrey Murfin.

Dr. White made a statement about the difficulty of leading last year with all the changes made to Faculty Senate. Dr. White pointed out that communication is important, as well as having an environment where we can have conversations with leadership. She stated it was important to have by-laws preserve what's important to SHSU and preserve the voices of faculty. Dr. White praised Dr. Murfin's leadership over the past year.

Dr. White and Dr. Yenduri presented certificates to last year's senators, starting with the outgoing chair.

Special Guests Comments & QAs

Dr. White made remarks to the senate. She began with thanking us for creating an environment that students enjoy and helps them succeed. She said that the faculty at Sam work closely with students and care about our students, and thanked the senate for having that attitude. SHSU set an enrollment record this year. The record is not just freshman, and we did not lower standards. The share of first-gen students also grew and may need more support.

Dr. White said we also had our best fundraising year this year. Many of those gifts are because of the story of Sam that faculty contribute to and make this university worth giving to. She felt that merit raises are a priority whenever there is growth in funding.

She spoke about the Keep, Start, Stop initiative and used the Elite program as an example of something that already existed and needed to be scaled, rather than starting a new program. If we start doing one thing, we should also stop doing something else. However, Keep, Start, Stop ended up being a burden on many of the faculty and staff because of the emphasis on reporting rather than doing other work. Dr. White said that SHSU is ending the formal Keep, Start, Stop initiative, but will still work on streamlining programming in the future.

Dr. Yenduri spoke next about initiatives in Academic Affairs and the effort to streamline initiatives there. He spoke of a recent AAAC workshop with deans, associate deans, and department chairs that involved five sessions. In the first, he listened to what individual academic units needed. They spoke of how they communicated with each other and what they needed to be equipped to serve faculty members. In the second, an invited speaker spoke about student success, and about using more efficient data assessment to figure out if changes needed to be made to programs. In the third session, they spoke about standardizing and aligning the program analysis process to make them less onerous. In the fourth session, a guest speaker was about faculty something. The sixth session was data analysis and giving department chairs access to the numbers they need.

Kevin Crouch opened the floor for discussion and questions.

A senator asked about the upcoming legislative session and what we need to be prepared for in the coming academic year. Dr. White said she has not yet heard much about upcoming higher education bills. However, the governor is putting together a task force to look at a three-year bachelor's degree. Dr. White doesn't want to lead in this area because she wants to see what the impact on students is first. Governor Abbott has stated that he wants all Texas higher education to have a plan for a three-year degree ready by December. SHSU has not had much guidance on what's expected for the three-year plan.

Dr. White also expects that there will be a decrease in core requirements in order to accommodate transfer students and students with dual credit that will impact SHSU. She said that SHSU has already done a lot of work to better communicate with transfers.

SHSU is asking Texas legislature for more support for the nursing certificate program and the forensic science certificate and for potential disaster support training. Capital assistance for the museum and other buildings were another ask.

Dr. Yenduri mentioned that the 3-yr degree plan is something that is cropping up over the nation. But there may be drawbacks, for example, it is uncertain if many graduate programs will accept 3-year bachelor's degree holders into their programs. He said we need to put a policy together specifying what a 3-year degree would look like in case we choose or are told to adopt that route.

The Senate Chair asked a question about AI guidance and if additional policies for its use are upcoming.

Dr. Yenduri said the stance of the admin is still that the instructor is the one who needs to decide how it's used in the classroom or assignments. He pointed out that AI tends to be more useful to experts. Students are already confused with too many policies and we as faculty and instructors need to be clear about when and how AI should or should not be used.

Dr. White talked about teaching a Media Law class that required a large research paper at the end of the semester and how when she had more students she had to reduce the length of the writing because her grading was too much, which is something AI could potentially help with. She said that it's important to teach students how to use tools and students should not graduate without knowing how to use AI. AI should help with mundane tasks but should not replace critical thinking. Faculty should consider what their students will need to know for the workforce. Dr. Yenduri mentioned that Georgia Tech has recently hired a VP for AI Education and put out a playbook about how faculty are using AI, and he hopes we can customize our own playbook for our context.

Dr. White said that we may not have the test scores of Georgia Tech, but many of our graduates are at the top of their fields and have a good work ethic.

Approval of Minutes

April 30th, 2026 meeting minutes approved with no opposition or abstentions.

Self-Introductions of Senators

Senate Chair had senators introduce themselves.

Discussion of changes to Senate bylaws and structure

Senate Chair mentioned the Teams folders where the agendas, by-laws, and committee documents will be. Kevin Crouch asked new senators to review the by-laws if they have not already, since they were redone last year. He mentioned that the election cycles have changed specifically. More faculty will have an opportunity to be on senate.

Standing Committees

Kevin thanked those senators who sent him committee preferences. The main duties of committees is to review policies sent from leadership. Each committee will review policies in their area first and then will present their comments to the rest of senate, at which point the rest of senate will have a chance to comment on those policies.

Senators were sent to meet briefly with their committee and nominate a chair for each committee. Two senators not present put their name forward volunteering to be chair.

Committee Chair Selections

- Academic Affairs – Kimberly LaPrairie
- Committee on Committees & Surveys – Erin Owens
- Faculty Affairs – Erica Pasquini
- University Affairs - Ricardo Montelongo

New Business

Senate Committee Assignments

University Affairs: APS 950609 - Establishment and Review of Centers and Institutes

Faculty Affairs: APS 800215 - Externally-Funded Faculty Activities and Leaves

Academic Affairs: APS 110511 - Appointment, Workload, and Evaluation of Chairs

We only have five policies coming up, and these are three of them.

A senator asked about the policy on faculty post-tenure review and said that their college's understanding of the new policy contradicted what faculty senate had discussed. College understood as the FES scores being an average score across categories that would trigger post tenure review, not having a three in one FES category. The associate chair read out the policy and pointed out that tenured faculty need to have an average score of three over five years, not across the four categories in FES.

The Chair said the policy had just been sent out yesterday, and that the only suggestion from senate that wasn't accepted by leadership was about the post-tenure advisory committee. Another senator pointed out that probably the policy on post-tenure review is being confused with the new merit policy, which is about the average across FES scores.

Chair said committees should meet before next senate meeting to review their assigned policies.

Senator Minich – Blackboard Product Management Team Meeting

Senator Minich talked about the new Bb gradebook update being a disaster for her, and how she has contacted Bb so many times now that they asked to meet with her. Entering grades has become onerous. Bb has told her that she just needs to learn the new system and has not been helpful. If other faculty have concerns or problems about the Bb updates or changes are invited to email Senator Minich by Friday Sept 11th with a list of the Bb issues that impacted the quality of your user experience so she can present to Bb during their meeting.

The suggested format for sending problems with Bb (be specific):

- What is the problem? How it affected your work? Suggest the adjustment.

Future guests

What guests would you like to see at Senate in 2026-2027?

Kevin Crouch has put out an invitations to a few other guests and is waiting to hear back.

Senator requested that an invite be sent to Dr. Merriweather and Strategic Enrollment. The chair mentioned that Dr. Merriweather has left the university.

Another senator requested that someone from first-year experience talk about the first-year learning communities because there have been issues with how those classes have been structured and rolled out. Some of the learning communities are blended in Blackboard which makes grading difficult.

Senator requested that we discuss why enrollment increased and how we can keep it. Another senator suggested Chad (Hargrave) as a guest for that topic.

Chair said a guest would come to discuss the changes to core requirements.

Senator asked for a guest who could focus on retention.

Senator said there have been some issues with the bookstore not providing materials in their department and would like to speak to a guest who could speak to that. Associate Chair said it could be helpful just to be able to speak to that person.

Chair's Report

Met with Dr. Galliard and brought up some faculty concerns such as the grading system (no + or – grades), which was apparently a Banner thing. Willing to start a conversation about changing the grading system.

Also brought up a dual-career policy and transparency in hiring.

When Chair and Asso. Chair met with Dr. Yenduri and spoke about the core requirements and the 3yr degree.

Senator asked about the faculty handbook/sourcebook proposed last senate session. Chair said the Provost office is going to take care of the policy part of that.

Announcements

- Faculty Senate Reception with Dr. White October 6th 4-5pm. Watch for invitations coming on Tuesday Sept 8th via Paperless Post. Check your promotions folder.

Adjournment: 5:00 PM.