

FACULTY SENATE MEETING

TUESDAY, January 20, 2026
Hampton/Newport News Rooms
3:00-4:35 p.m.

MINUTES

1. **Call to order 3:05PM.**
2. **Attendance: N = 50, in=person = 29, via zoom = 21**

Corrin Allen	X	Lee Land	X
Abdullah Al-Taïar	X	Selena Layden	ZOOM
Paula Alvaro-Sanchez	ZOOM	Tatyana Lobova	X
Shahin Amiri	ZOOM	Denise McKinney	X
Ivan Ash	X	Amy Milligan	ZOOM
Sebastian Bawab	-	Anil Nair	ZOOM
Larisa Bulysheva	X	Marc Ouellette	X
David Burdige	X	Jennifer Poutsma	ZOOM
Michael Carhart	X	Anatoly Radushkin	X
Paul Champagne	ZOOM	Desh Ranjan	X
Anjeza Cipi	ZOOM	Leryn Reynolds	ZOOM
Andy Collins	X	Jesse Richman	X
John Crosby	X	Tinnikka Robertson-Jones	ZOOM
Teresa Duvall	X	Patrick Sachs	X
Kenneth Fitzgerald	X	Yan Sanders	EXCUSED
Eva Forgacs-Lonart	ZOOM	Frank Scaringello	X
Kristin Gansle	ZOOM	Eric Schussler	ZOOM
Mahesh Gopinath	X	Mike Seek	X
Roderick Graham	-	David Selover	X
Dennis Gregory	X	John Sinacori	-
James Michael Hall	X	Masha Sosonkina	X
Joy Hampton	ZOOM	Yonghee Suh	ZOOM
Richard Handel	-	Ling Tuo	ZOOM
Adrienne Hartgerink	ZOOM	Ginger Watson	ZOOM
Kate Hawkins	X	Lucy Wittkower	X
Alireza Hosseini	X	Glenn Yap	ZOOM
Aurora Kerscher	ZOOM	Nazita Yousefieh	-
Teresa Kouri-Kissel	ZOOM	Wie Yusuf	X

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

- **Motion:** go into closed session at 3:45 PM to discuss an important development from AAUP.

i. **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

- Senator Gregory asked that new and returning members be introduced to the Faculty Senate.

i. Senator Carhart (History) and Senator Ash (Psychology) introduced themselves.

- **Motion:** Approve modified agenda

i. **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

4. **Approval of the Minutes.**

- **Motion:** approve minutes as presented

i. **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

5. **Chair's Report.** (Chair Allen)

- Senator Burns promoted to interim Dean of Libraries. We will need a new departmental Senator, a new Chair of Cmte C, and a replacement for EC at-large seat. This will be discussed at the next Senate meeting.
- Reported on the Executive Committee meeting with President & Provost on Jan 13th.
 - Alonzo Brandon is retiring.
 - Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP). Eligibility 60 yrs, 10 yrs service, tenure-track faculty. Not retroactive. Get 105% of base salary over 2 years, plus medical insurance until eligible for Medicare. 115 faculty are eligible.
 - Engagement requirements for classes: President and VP Gonser clarified that these are federal guidelines for faculty engagement. They are examples of engagement strategies and not specific things that faculty must do.
 - BOV passed a resolution that at the end of the handbook integration timeline, we will only have one handbook regardless of the status of integrating the faculty handbooks. It will remain a work in progress, but only one handbook.
 - SCHEV Program Productivity Review is not happening this year. 3 majors (Asian Studies, Women's Studies, African American Studies) are being discontinued as standalone degree programs, but moved into the Interdisciplinary Studies degree. This move was supported by the departments and the college, according to the Provost, and because of that, Faculty Senate approval is not required.

- Senators asked about the timeline for 8-weeks course remodeling and how the executive administration is addressing faculty concerns.
 - No specific timeframe was provided to the FS EC. According to VP Gonser, the info will be provided to Deans and Chairs for respective faculty distribution.
 - Senator expressed concerns with “squishing” the courses into 8-weeks format and the content being impacted and reduced.

6. **Action Items:**

Committee A: (Senator Lobova)

- **AY25-57-A New Minor in Working with Multilingual Populations**
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
- **AY25-87-A Minor in Biomedical Sciences**
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
- **AY25-88-A Minor in Marine and Ecological Sciences**
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

Committee G: (Senator Hawkins)

- **AY25-5-G Appointment and Evaluation of Academic Deans**
 - Issue was raised about the inconsistency of language regarding Vice Presidents as a result of policies review evolution: currently reviewed by IMO policies are using “Appropriate executive VP”.
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented. “Appropriate executive vice-president” wording is considered an “editorial change” that can be made by the Academic Affairs office later and doesn’t require Senate approval.
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
- **AY25-6-G Distribution and Evaluation of Service**
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
- **AY25-31-G Faculty Incentive Options Policy**
 - **Motion:** Approve as presented
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

7. **Motion:** Enter closed session to discuss recent letter from AAUP National at 3:46 PM
Outcome: *Approved unanimously*

- **Motion:** Move out of closed session 4:15 PM
Outcome: *Approved unanimously*
- The Letter from Anita Levy, Senior Program Officer, AAUP National, to ODU President Brian O. Hemphill, dated January 13, 2026 was read to the Senate and included in the minutes below.
 - **Motion:** Distribute the results of the December 2025 faculty survey of FFDTI as aggregate data (71-pages report) to all faculty and post it on the Faculty Senate website
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
 - **Motion:** use a back-up meeting on January 27, 2026 to discuss further how to handle survey responses to open-ended questions
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*
 - **Motion:** Postpone the election for the new Executive Committee member to replace Senator Elizabeth Burns and the chair of Cmte C to the next week's backup meeting
 - **Outcome:** *Approved unanimously*

8. Adjournment 4:35PM

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

January 13, 2026

Dr. Brian O. Hemphill
President
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529

Dear President Hemphill:

Members of the faculty at Old Dominion University have sought the advice and assistance of the American Association of University Professors as a result of an online education proposal the administration has advanced which appears to us to raise important issues relating to the role of the faculty in the governance of the institution. We understand that this proposal entails a reorganization of distance education programs, which makes fundamental changes in long-established academic arrangements. We also understand that you announced this proposal, entitled the "Forward-Focused Digital Transformation Initiative" (FFDTI), in August 2025, which, as the university's website states, is a "comprehensive digital transformation" that will "reposition" the university's "academic core." We understand further that the initiative mandates all distance education programs adopt an eight-week asynchronous format, eliminates synchronous online course delivery, and appears to compel faculty to use specific learning activities, including forms of assessment. Faculty members have called into question the academic and educational soundness of the proposed reorganization and have challenged your claim that the initiative is an "operational" decision, which you have the sole authority to make. Faculty have stated that at no time prior to the announcement of the initiative did you meaningfully consult with the faculty senate or the wider faculty forum.

The Association's interest in these matters stems from our longstanding concern for sound academic governance, the principles of which are enunciated in the enclosed *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, originally formulated in conjunction with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The AAUP adopted the document as policy, and the other two organizations commended it to the attention of their respective constituents. The *Statement on Government*, which embodies standards widely upheld in American higher education, rests on the premise of appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among the governing board, the administration, and the faculty in determining educational policy and in resolving educational problems within the academic institution. It refers to "an inescapable interdependence" in this relationship which requires "adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort." It further asserts that "the interests of all are coordinate and related, and unilateral effort can lead to confusion or conflict." Section V of the *Statement on Government* defines the particular role of the faculty in institutional government, stating in pertinent part:

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board.

The particular authority and primary responsibility of the faculty in the decision-making processes of the academic institution in these areas derive from its special competence in the educational sphere. It follows from this proposition that the faculty should play an active and meaningful role in the development as well as in the revision of institutional policy in those areas in which the faculty has primary responsibility. Also implicit in the foregoing passage is the expectation that the faculty will play a primary role in the establishment as well as in any subsequent revision or modification of the institution's academic structure.

The AAUP's *Statement on Online Education* affirms that

[u]nder the principles of academic government set forth in the AAUP's *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, the faculty has primary responsibility for decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, which include the technological infrastructure for all courses, whether online, in-person, or hybrid. The faculty also has primary responsibility for determining the appropriate ratio of in-person to online and hybrid courses. No course should be offered online or in a hybrid format without the consent of the instructor of record and the faculty in the department or program to which that course belongs.

Faculty members allege that the rapid implementation of the initiative mandates, which is scheduled for fall 2026, violates both principles of faculty governance and academic freedom as set forth in the university's *Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook*. They have complained that the limited data shared by the administration in support of its decision to move all online courses to an eight-week asynchronous format is neither complete nor compelling. They state that you have been unresponsive to their efforts to persuade you to consult meaningfully with the senate or the faculty forum. They report that the faculty senate passed a September 30 "Resolution for Reconsideration and Inclusive Involvement in Forward Focused Digital Transformation (FFDT) Initiative Implementation" by an overwhelming margin. They report further that when the faculty senate and the ODU AAUP chapter held a forum shortly thereafter attended by almost one hundred and fifty teaching and research faculty, it resulted in an extensive list of faculty questions and concerns about the initiative, which was then sent to you. Your response in an October 10 forum, faculty members report, was to reaffirm your

contention that because the planning and implementation of the initiative was an “operational” decision, it did not violate principles of academic freedom or shared governance.

We understand that among the corrective measures faculty members seek is that the administration and the board of visitors agree to delay the initiative’s implementation in order to provide reasonable opportunities for meaningful consultation with the faculty, including allowing them adequate time to identify the online courses that should continue to be offered in a sixteen-week and/or synchronous and/or mixed format.

We appreciate that the information in our possession on the matters addressed in this letter has come to us almost entirely from faculty sources at Old Dominion University, and that you may have additional information that would contribute to our understanding of the events we have recounted and the issues with which we are concerned. We would accordingly welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Levy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anita" being more prominent than the last name "Levy".

Anita Levy, Ph.D.
Senior Program Officer
Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosures via email

cc: Mr. P. Murry Pitts, Rector, Board of Visitors, Old Dominion University
Professor Katherine Hawkins, Interim President, Old Dominion University AAUP
Chapter
Professor Michael Carhart, Incoming President, Old Dominion University
AAUP Chapter