

**RUSO Board Meeting**  
**Southeastern Oklahoma State University Chapter of the AAUP**  
**October 11, 2019**  
**By Carolyn Fridley, AAUP Chapter President**



Southeastern Oklahoma State University Chapter  
of the American Association of University Professors

**The Importance of Shared Governance at SE**

**The Success of Shared Governance at SE**

Thank you, Chair Winchester, and Regents, for providing us with this time on your very crowded Agenda to address the Board concerning a matter that is of the utmost importance at our university – and that is the selection of our new president. We recognize that it is RUSO policy - and indeed its practice - to include faculty in the selection of a university president. I come before you today to respectfully request that you allow faculty to participate *meaningfully* in the presidential search process. And I would like to tell you why.

At Southeastern, meaningful input from faculty into decisions affecting the direction of the university has become a practice under the leadership of President Sean Burrage. The Faculty Senate and the AAUP – together with President Burrage and Vice President Bryon Clark – have built a robust system of shared governance which has had a profound effect on the culture at Southeastern. At a time when adversarial relationships between administration and faculty are commonplace, Southeastern is an exemplar of what shared governance can do, and has done, to contribute to the health of an institution. It is not an exaggeration to say that shared governance has brought about a dramatic turn-around at Southeastern.

The agenda reads: The Importance of Shared Governance at Southeastern, and what I'm here to share is the *Success* of Shared Governance at Southeastern.



Southeastern is a shining example of what can be done with a culture of openness and mutual respect, and it is within that culture, where real shared governance can happen. Given my time this morning, here are but a few examples of what real shared governance has accomplished at our university.

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Significant improvements have been made to our Academic Policies & Procedures Manual – what some call the Faculty Handbook. Clarifications and updates in policy have been made. For example, there is a policy on shared governance, which calls for a meeting of the President and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee twice a semester. Language from the 1966 AAUP Statement on Shared Governance, which was jointly formulated by the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges – is included in our policy.

**Our shared governance policy features two shared governance forums** each semester. Topics are alternately chosen by the Faculty Senate and the administration. We share ideas and propose solutions to problems, without spending \$10,000 to hire an external consultant with a white board. We’ve held over 20 forums and topics have included “Budget Planning: All the Moving Pieces,” “Balancing Teaching, Information Technology, and Distance Education,” and “Improving Pay for Adjunct Faculty.” The first forum was held in spring of 2012. The topic, chosen by the Faculty Senate, was the “Promotion & Tenure Process.” The topic was essential because the situation was dire. There were at least 4 faculty appeals of promotion & tenure decisions that year. That forum gave rise to a change in policy. Since that policy change there have been no appeals of promotion & tenure decisions. The old policy and process was broken, and together, we fixed it.

With a culture of openness and mutual respect comes honest and candid conversation. President Burrage called a **joint meeting of the Executive Committees from the AAUP and the Faculty Senate – and his executive team. It was the first of its kind.** One of the topics – as it often is – was enrollment. The question at hand was, why do students choose Southeastern? A professor said, “Why don’t we just ask them?” The Mathematics professor who proposed this solution teamed up with a colleague and they got to work developing a freshman questionnaire -asking freshmen why they chose Southeastern.

Freshman Survey

4. Why did you choose to attend Southeastern? (you may check as many reasons as you want, and if you have a reason not in the list you can enter it in the followup question).

Check all that apply.

- I live close by.
- It was within my price range.
- I was interested in a specific academic program at Southeastern
- I was interested in a specific athletic program at Southeastern.
- I received an athletic scholarship.
- I received an academic scholarship.
- I received a talent-based scholarship in cheerleading, dance, music, and/or theatre.
- I received need-based financial aid.
- I have friends that went to or are attending Southeastern.
- I have family that went to or are attending Southeastern.
- Southeastern's reputation.
- It is convenient for me to attend Southeastern.
- Southeastern's emphasis on educating Native Americans.

5. If you had a reason for choosing Southeastern that was not in the list above, enter it here (otherwise leave this blank).

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To date, the questionnaire has been completed by 824 freshmen and those two mathematics professors have analyzed the data that has yielded valuable – and useful - results. Again, we didn't spend thousands of dollars on a consultant. We worked together to find the answers we needed.

Shared governance includes active faculty participation in determining faculty salaries. In September of 2018 the Faculty Senate developed a **compensation proposal** and forwarded it to the president. The Senate could have asked for more money – it had been a long time since faculty had received a raise. But what the Senate proposed was reasonable, and in the best interest of the university. It also included a proposed raise for our adjunct faculty.

In June of this year, the campus community received this e-mail from President Burrage, noting a 3.5 percent raise for all full-time faculty, salary increases for adjunct faculty, the annualization of staff salary increases, and a 4.5 percent increase in employee health insurance costs.



**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

I want to provide a brief update on matters regarding the budget, tuition, and enrollment.

The regents recently approved our budget of \$53,788,695 for FY2020. This represents an increase of slightly more than \$3 million over last year's mid-year budget revision. The increase has been funded almost in its entirety by a projected increase in student credit hours.

We are also proud to announce that, for the second consecutive year, we are not increasing tuition or mandatory fees. Furthermore, we are the only institution in the Regional University System of Oklahoma not raising tuition this year.

The budget includes a 3.5 percent salary increase for all full-time faculty members employed as of last year (partially funded by state); inclusion of a STEP increase for faculty; a salary increase for adjunct professors; the annualization of staff salary increases that were effective on April 1, 2019; and a 4.5 percent increase in employee health insurance costs.

Also included in the new budget are several new faculty positions and academic advisors for graduate programs in areas of enrollment growth.

In addition to the increased compensation costs, the budget reflects an increase in scholarship money and expenditures related to the continued growth in our graduate degree programs through our partnership with Academic Partners.

I might note that, since July 1, 2015, our state appropriations have decreased by almost \$4 million. For FY2020, state appropriations represent 27.7 percent of Southeastern's total budget.

Our enrollment numbers continue to trend upward, which obviously increases the revenue stream, which, in turn, provides us with some flexibility in budgeting.

I continue to feel very positive with the direction we are moving and again want to express my appreciation to our faculty and staff for their hard work and dedication

**YOU** are the reason that the University continues to grow!

• Sean Burrage

FACULTY SENATE  
MINUTES  
January 19, 2011  
University Center UC215

4. **Motion**—that each of the following recommendations (considered separately) for amending the APPM be forwarded to the Administration:

**Amendment One**

In compliance with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights' *Colleague Letter* of 26 October 2010, the Faculty Senate recommends the following amendment to Southeastern's *Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy* (section 1.8):

1.8 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy

To indicate institutional compliance with the various laws and regulations that require a Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy, the following statement is intended to reflect that Southeastern Oklahoma State University shall, in all manner and respects, continue to be an Equal Opportunity Employer, and offer programs of Equal Educational Opportunity. This institution, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and other federal laws and regulations does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, transgender identification, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran of the Vietnam era, special disabled veteran, or any status protected under applicable federal, state, or local law or ordinance in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Note: Underlined portions indicate change.

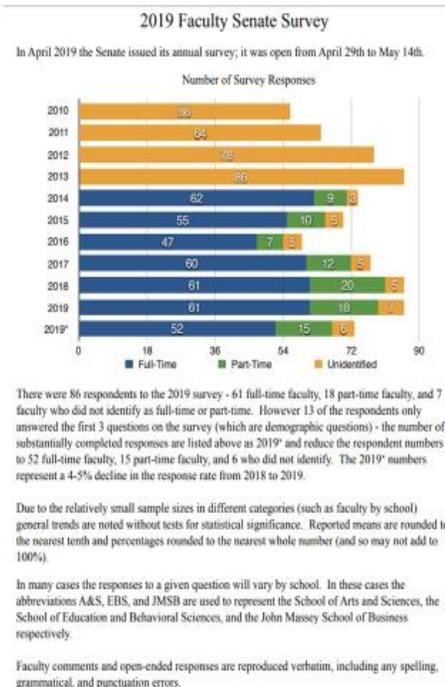
Motion to Approve

**Motion Unanimously Approved**

In January of 2011 the Faculty Senate voted unanimously to **amend the nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action policy** to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, or transgender identification. That recommendation was not included in our policy until President Burrage made it so in 2014, his first year at Southeastern.

Shared governance requires integrity. President Burrage has shown consistently that he is a president with integrity. My favorite expression of the president's is "it is the right thing to do." An exemplar of this integrity in action is that all full-time faculty **and** staff now have a retirement plan. This wasn't always so. For years faculty paid the first \$1750 for their OTRS contribution. The Faculty Senate put forth a recommendation requesting the administration look into spreading our contribution throughout the year rather paying our share in the first few paychecks. The administration looked into it. At a shared governance forum, President Burrage floated the idea of the university paying the OTRS contributions for faculty and extending this to staff too. Some staff couldn't afford to make an OTRS contribution and had no retirement benefits. The faculty thought it was a beautiful idea. Now the OTRS contribution is paid for faculty and for staff. We are a stronger university because of it. This is how shared governance and enlightened administration work best. It's smart, it's effective, and it's the right thing to do. Our next president must be a person of integrity who can genuinely say of their decisions: this is the right thing to do.

How do we know that shared governance works? One way to know is to ask the faculty.



Every year the Faculty Senate surveys the faculty, asking their thoughts on a variety of issues that impact the university: facilities, student services, performance of administrators, morale and shared governance – among other issues. The results of the survey are widely read, by faculty and administrators. Here is a sample of some of the questions, and their results:

Question 9: Shared governance at Southeastern currently fosters mutual respect and trust between faculty and the administration.

Measure	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Quartile 1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	3	3
Median	2	2	2	3	4	3	4	4	4
Quartile 3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mean	2	2.3	2.6	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.9	3.6	3.8
Percentage Agreeing	13%	18%	24%	37%	54%	54%	75%	62%	70%
Percentage Disagreeing	71%	64%	51%	32%	16%	16%	1%	7%	4%

Before President Burrage came to Southeastern, 37% of faculty agreed with that statement. This year, 70% of faculty agree.

Question 4: The morale of the faculty is:

Measure	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Quartile 1	2	2	1	2	3	3
Median	2	2	2	3	3	3
Quartile 3	3	3	2.5	3	3	4
Mean	2.5	2.7	2.0	2.6	3.0	3.4
Percentage Very Low/Low	52%	37%	75%	44%	24%	4%
Percentage High/Very High	9%	10%	5%	11%	24%	43%

Before President Burrage, 9% of faculty believed morale was high or very high. This year, that percentage is 43%.

I leave you with where I began: The president.

Question 26: Effective leadership is provided by the President.

Measure	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Quartile 1	2	2	2	2	4	3	4	4	4
Median	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Quartile 3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Mean	2.8	3	2.9	2.8	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.3
Percentage Agreeing	30%	42%	37%	30%	77%	66%	89%	88%	90%
Percentage Disagreeing	36%	36%	34%	41%	2%	9%	6%	0%	4%

Before President Burrage, 30% of faculty agreed. This year, 90% of faculty believe that the president provides effective leadership.

Many universities claim to have shared governance. What many universities have, however, is “window dressing” - words in a manual that are meaningless because they are lifeless. At Southeastern, shared governance is real because it is alive - and living – in the work of the university.

Shared governance is smart, it’s effective, it’s the right thing to do. We’ve tasted shared governance at Southeastern Oklahoma State University – and it is good.

Whether we continue on the path of excellence – or not – is determined, in large part, by the choice of our new president, and their willingness to continue Southeastern’s practice of

shared governance. We are doing well - we want to continue to do well - we have a good team.

We ask that you help us continue the work we have been doing, so we can continue the success we have experienced. We are convinced that meaningful faculty input in the selection of our president will increase the likelihood that what we have all worked so hard to build will continue. Please - allow us to do that - and provide us with a *meaningful* voice in the selection of our new president.

Thank you.

