

Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting
Nov 19, 2025
Strada Conference Room
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
(Zoom Option included)

Attended in Person (30): Baughn, Christina; Black, Michael; Brock, Casey; Brower, Greg; Carmichael, Bishop; Cole, Tracy; Cutchen, William; Dasgupta, Santanu; Davis, Sara; des Neiges Léonard, Marie; Fesenmeier, Michael; Fox, Dalten; Frye, Doris; Hauff, Caitlyn; Hudson, Geoffrey; Lohar, Bhushan; O'Connor, Tracy; Ochoa, Juan; Pavelescu, Andrei; Pramanik, Paramahansa; Robertson, Justin; Selwyn; Candice; Stenson, Alexandra; Swofford, Jim; ter Horst, Eleanor; Thomas, Rebecca; Vrana, Laura; Wassenaar, Christina; Wilbert, Arik; Williams, Katie

Attended on Zoom (19): Abeynanda, Gayan; Bates, Robin; Bokhari, Amber; Capasso, Tom; Davidson, Clay; Ellzie, Joel; Fregeau, Laureen; Gavrilita, Christina; Huang, Jingshuan; Huang, Ying (Johnson); Macdonald. Rebecca; Mbaka, Maryann; Pancione, Kirsten[Remote]; Rabideau, Brooks; Shaw, Christy; Shea, Allyson; Streeter, Donna; VandeWaa, Elizabeth; Walker, Sean

Excused (3): Davis, Tara; Dzwonkowski, Brian; Getch, Yvette

Absent Unexcused (18): Bunch, Jaclyn; Coronado, Yun; Daniel, Casey; Fleck, Lorie; Godang, Romulus; Holliday, Candice; Holliday, Nicolette; Liebertz, Scott; Marass, Ashley; Marri, Preethi; McDonald, Tyler; Merritt, Brandy; Minton, Bonnie; Parsell, Karen; Pennywell, Gwendolyn; Pettway, Matthew; Salvitti Fermin, Mariarita; Wu, Charles

Preliminary Business

This meeting was called to order ~3:05 p.m. with Faculty Senate President, Christina Wassenaar presiding Quorum (36 senators) was met.

Approval of October 2025 Minutes (14 Yes on Zoom, 30 Yes in the Room, 0 No, 0 Abstentions)

Approval of November 2025 Agenda (14 Yes on Zoom, 30 Yes in the Room, 0 No, 0 Abstentions)

Guest: Dr. Franklin Trimm, Interim Dean COM

Academics: Academically COM is in great shape based on national metrics

- National licensing exam (Part 1 after 2nd year, Part 2 after 3rd year) is at or above the national average across the board-ish (a significant improvement from 10 years ago.).
- National Residency Matching program – our classes have matched very well over the last several years with increasingly noteworthy matches.
- Additional Measure: Doing well meeting national Mission Goals for US medical schools (e.g., serving in underserved areas) – our students rank high (>80%)

Funding: Despite tenuous & uncertain funding & some lost/canceled awards, research funding in COM has remained pretty strong, allowing COM to stay in the position to help contribute to the move to R1.

Facilities/Infrastructure & Class Enlargement:

- Moving into the new medical school building is anticipated for early 2027. The building is on time and on budget. The 5th floor research was not part of original budgeting. Additional fundraising is underway to complete it.
- The new building allows for enlargement of class sizes. The goal is to go from the current 80 students to 100 (building is built for 120). Class expansion requires additional accreditation, a process that can only be started after the move to the new building & will also be contingent on the availability of clinic sites for externships.
- The Biomedical Science PhD Program in the medical school is also growing. The move to R1 goal includes an increase in PhDs awarded through this program, but not finishing the 5th floor of the new building will impact expectations.
- Dr. Timm promised to advocate for the filling-in of potholes in campus parking lots associated with the COM build.

Review/Accreditation: Currently deep into self-study in preparation for the next accreditation process. Visit will be in 2026. Compared to three prior iterations, this self-study has involved the highest level of shared governance; faculty input is a driver in every part of the process.

Dean Search and new Demarcations of Responsibilities:

- The incoming dean for COM will have the medical education side (COM) as his/her primary responsibility; the Health System is in the hands of Dr. Fox. However, significant overlap and need for collaboration will remain. Work is in progress (incl. efforts by interim Dean Timm & Dr. Fox) & focuses on making differentiation in lines of authorities as well as areas of collaboration clearer. In addition, funds-flow models are slated to become more transparent. Overall, transparency is becoming a core goal moving forward.
- Faculty involvement in the process: Dr. Timm pledged to meet monthly with the FS Caucus Leader and the COM Faculty Assembly Leader. He praised FC COM Caucus Leader, Greg Brower for his active engagement & explained the role of the Faculty Assembly (a body required as part of the accreditation process but with a scope limited to COM and its governance).

Q&A for Dr. Trimm:

Teaching Load and Pay Structure: Following a question about teaching load in COM, Dr. Trimm provided an overview of how Medical School is laid out. Instead of traditional lecture settings, students progress through modules taught by 10-12 faculty members. The first two modules (on patient care & biochem etc.) are possibly most similar to classroom lecture. Starting with Module 3, students progress through different body systems. This training is followed in the 3rd year by Clinical Rotations (through the specialties) with faculty serving as clerkship directors to organize the rotation, lectures, team-based learning and reflections. Clerkship faculty is also responsible for assessments in addition to the standardized exams. Clerkships range from 4-12 weeks, depending on speciality, with a concomitant range of faculty-time involvement. Some faculty don't teach much, but are crucial to the process as they provide the patients & revenue that are needed for the system to function. Overall, Health Systems pay the majority of faculty time in medical schools. Faculty pay depends on specialty.

***Big Beautiful Bill* projected effects:**

- Changes to MediCare may affect the ability to serve vulnerable populations & pay residents' (graduates of medical school doing specialty training) salaries. Resident salaries are supported by Medicare. Medicare varies state by state.
- Children's and Women's Hospital is supported by a separate Resident Funding System, the fate of which is currently uncertain. Should it go away, cost of care will increase
- Student loans may shift towards private lenders at higher cost. Medical students are not allowed to work and many already carry student loans from their undergraduate education. Consequences may include fewer students choosing to go into medicine or opting for higher-paying specialties, potentially aggravating shortages in primary care.
- International Students: Since the medical school's charter is such that it accepts almost exclusively Alabama residents, any effects on international student recruitment/retention are unlikely to affect COM.

Faculty Pool:

- Given that 25% (or more) of the faculty pool are international graduates, any regulations that increase the cost or ability of such faculty to obtain work-visas and/or green cards can reduce the availability of medical treatment especially in rural areas.

Incorporating AI in Medical School Teaching:

- Dr. Trimm acknowledged AI's potential in driving medical practice forward and/or making the information more available & accessible to physicians and patients alike.
- However, because of liability concerns, a move to include AI in teaching has to be institutional (not limited to one college). Although AI is moving faster in medicine than many other areas, when it comes to AI in education, guardrails are in place to protect the integrity of the academic process. Changing of policy has to be institutional (purview of ILB).

President's Report:

The full report was made available in writing as an appendix to the agenda the day following the meeting. During the Meeting, Christina Wassenaar updated us on:

Townhall Meetings with President Bonner and Dr. Kent : In the future, faculty will be invited to submit questions prior to townhalls. Those questions will be fielded when there are no questions on the floor. FS also asked that Plenary dates will be avoided for Townhall scheduling. Finally, FS requested that time for Q&A between faculty and President/Vice President will be prioritized over announcements that could be sent in an email or updates from other administrators.

Athletics Report: Transfer students might need to be accommodated in the middle of the semester (portal) – more details are available in the President's Report.

Financial Aid in light of *Big Beautiful Bill* – notes were written up as part of President's Report.

Old Business:

- Most current updates are covered in reports (below)
- Vote on Handbook Committee's proposed changes to process for moving documents between CAD and FS
 - The proposal was unanimously approved (0 abstentions, 0 no votes). (18 Yes on Zoom, 30 Yes in the Room, 0 No, 0 Abstentions)
- Chair-Election for Wellness Committee
 - Caitlyn Hauff, the Chair of the corresponding ad-hoc committee had been nominated. One other nominee had rejected the nomination prior to this meeting. We had no additional nominations from the floor.
 - Caitlyn Hauff was elected with one abstention; all other senators present and on Zoom voted yes. (13 Yes on Zoom, 29 Yes in the Room, 0 No, 1 Abstension)
- Update for Caucuses on what to do with the Suggestions for President & Provost Townhalls collected this month as per last plenary's action item (see above in President's Report)

Reports from Committees (those in writing can be found in the Appendix linked here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WdnF44LMdnIqeN3fc74qqlZB7OtHZDs>)

- Evaluation (Clay Davidson) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- FacDev&Ment (Tracy O'Connor) - *nr*
- FacSal&Ben (Geoffrey Hudson) -

- *Selection of peer institutions has been finalized with Dr. Mills and Dr. Guest and they have begun the process of data acquisition. Comparative salary data is expected to be provided to Academic Affairs in December with the hope that evaluation of salary adjustments will be completed by February 2026. [Peer Institution Docs](#)*
- A handful of institutions on the list selected as “peer institutions” for the purpose of this comparison are R1; FS had lobbied for more. However, in order to make it on the list, an institution had to match South in at least two of three categories (size, socio-economics of the community we serve, research status).
- Since non-tenure salaries are no longer reported in the forum employed (Carnegie), administration is planning to mathematically adjust tenure-track/tenured salaries to what non-tenure salaries are most likely to be.
- More details on the peer-selection and salary comparison process will be presented at the next plenary meeting.
- Res&CreatAct (Rebecca Thomas) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- Sust&EnvirQual (Dalten Fox) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- Teach/Learn&Tech (Michael Black) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- UnivPlan&Dev (Sean Walker) *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- UnivPol&HandBk (Donna Streeter) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above) plus *document for discussion in Appendix* ([To be voted on](#))
- Wellbeing&Ret (Caitlyn Hauff) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- Bylaws Review Committee [ad hoc] (Candice Selwyn)- *in writing* (Appendix linked above)

Reports from Caucus Leaders (those in writing can be found in the Appendix linked

here:<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kSHi4V4pr8-WzdclXc7Zi4VLseeVvmRz>

- A&S (Eleanor ter Horst) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- CAHP (Casey Brock) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- CEPS (Caitlyn Hauff) - *CEPS met with ORED and Allen Parrish for our Discovery 2030 town hall. We had a productive conversation and were able to raise awareness about some major issues our college faces.*
- CIS (Michael Black) - *nr*
- COM (Greg Brower) - *nr*
- CON (Elizabeth Vandewaa) - *nr*
- ENGR (Brooks Rabideau) - *nr*
- LIB (Tracy Cole) - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- MCOB (James Swofford) - *nr*
- SIM (Robin Bates) - *national accreditation interviews kickoff next month*

Reports from University Committees:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Naye8HUucRVLLAoZYIq946PHg5BODJc>

- Bookstore Committee - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)
- Sustainability Committee - *in writing* (Appendix linked above)

New Business

- Better Communication w/ FS members on University Committees
- Reminder: December 17th FS Plenary meeting will be exclusively on Zoom

- Reminder: Huddle Dates (**Appendix:** <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HGOIVyCcpgTINICMEg0hmPFVkiTm4DjB>)
- Surveys: Survey on graduate students struggling to find major professors and PIs' confidence in being able to accept graduate students at this time - dissemination (to graduate students, faculty, both?) is still under discussion
- Pervasive issues with certain Chairs not following the handbook - discussion on how those could be best addressed. FS was requested to take on the task of working on a solution to better address leadership-issues for our leadership. FS President and Vice President action item: reach out to those bringing forth current concerns.

Adjournment

Minutes created by Alexandra C. Stenson. Dr. Trimm also read & edited the portion of the document relating to his presentation so that it accurately reflected what he had conveyed.