BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Faculty Senate Office
PO Box 6000
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
607-777-2104
https://www.binghamton.edu/faculty-senate/

MINUTES OF FACULTY SENATE MEETING
September 22, 2026

The first Faculty Senate meeting of the 2026-2027 academic year was called to order by Associate Professor of Chemistry Julien Panetier, Faculty Senate chair, at 11:30 a.m. in Old Union Hall.

1. *Minutes*
   Minutes from the April 21, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved.

2. *Obituary Notices*
   Chair Panetier informed the body that Professor Laura Palanker Musselman (Biological Sciences), Professor Emeritus Howard H. Pattee (Systems Science and Industrial Engineering), Professor Emeritus Mark Reisinger (Geography), and Professor S. Sriram (SOM) had passed away. Chair Panetier shared remarks in remembrance and then called for a moment of silence to honor their memory.

3. *Election of Officers*
   The Nominating Committee of the Faculty Senate presented the following slate of nominees:

   - **Vice Chair (term 2026–2027):** Melissa Hardesty (CCPA, Social Work)
   - **Secretary (term 2026–2027):** Emily Leppien (SOPPS, Pharmacy Practice)

   With no additional nominations received in accordance with the bylaws, a motion was made and seconded to approve the slate of nominees. The motion passed unanimously.

4. *Reports*
   Chair Panetier noted that the 2025–2026 annual reports had been posted on the Faculty Senate agenda webpage for this meeting. Each committee of the Faculty Senate and each joint committee shall submit an annual report summarizing its activities for the academic year by June 15, 2027. The Faculty Senate shall receive all such reports and place them on the agenda of the first meeting for information or proposed action. Chair Panetier then asked whether the Senate had any questions. There were no questions.

   Chair Panetier noted that the 2026–2027 committee memberships had been posted in the committee section of the Faculty Senate webpage. The FSEC had approved the committee membership.

5. *Curriculum Items (PRC)*

Chair Panetier reported on curricular program revisions, including the introduction of a new certificate and the discontinuation of an existing program.

Sustainability Leadership and Policy Certificate: This new certificate uses existing courses that are regularly offered in the MS in Sustainable Communities and Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs. Students in the MPA program have expressed interest in specializing in sustainability.

Discontinuation of Family Psychiatric Mental Health CNS, DNP: No students remain in or have applied to this program, and it no longer aligns with the current certification structure. Since 2014, one certification has covered all newly certified Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses: The Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Certification (PMHNP-BC).

The Program Review Committee (PRC) and Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) recommended that the Faculty Senate (FS) approve the new program proposal and the discontinuation.

Chair Panetier asked whether the Senate had any comments or questions regarding the new program proposal or discontinuation.

With no comments or questions from the Senate, a motion was made and seconded to approve the curriculum recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

6. *New Business*

The SUNY Policy on the Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation establishes a systemwide framework for recognizing verifiable college-level learning acquired outside registered credit-bearing courses, also known as prior learning assessment (PLA) or credit for prior learning (CPL).

The 2023 policy revision supersedes the original 1976 policy and expands the types of verifiable college-level learning that may be recognized, including military education and training, professional and industry certifications and licenses or other credentials, and work experience. The policy also emphasizes institutions' obligation to communicate clearly about the availability and benefits of such credit.

The proposal is to establish a new Faculty Senate standing committee on Credit for Prior Learning, based on the draft language distributed before the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the new Faculty Senate standing committee on Credit for Prior Learning. The motion was approved with one abstention and no opposition.

7. *Upcoming Faculty Senate Meeting*
   Chair Panetier noted that the next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20, with a report from President Anne D'Alleva.

8. *ADA Title II Compliance Update*
   Chair Panetier asked Prof. Scott Craver to update the group on the ADA compliance mandate.

   Prof. Scott Craver, Computer Engineering and EIT Officer for ADA Title II Compliance, updated the Senate on the University's preparations for upcoming federal accessibility requirements applicable to public institutions.

   Prof. Craver noted that the federal compliance deadline, originally anticipated for April 24, 2026, has been extended by one year. The new compliance deadline is April 26, 2027.

   Over the past year, the accessibility team has provided presentations to academic and administrative departments and remains available to provide refresher presentations at faculty or department meetings. The team has also provided additional training to graduate students, graduate assistants, and teaching assistants. Information sessions for new faculty are planned soon.

   Prof. Craver highlighted four primary points:

   1. Scope and Timing of the Requirements

   The new accessibility requirements apply to the University's web content, documents, and materials provided to students through systems such as Brightspace. Prof. Craver clarified that the requirements generally apply to content that is available to users.

   Current fall courses in Brightspace are generally no longer publicly or broadly accessible once the semester concludes unless access is specifically maintained. Therefore, materials currently used in fall 2026 courses are generally not subject to the April 2027 compliance deadline simply because they were posted this semester. The compliance requirements will become increasingly relevant for courses and materials that remain accessible in the future, particularly toward the end of the spring 2027 semester.

   He encouraged faculty to use the current semester to become familiar with accessibility tools and practices.

2. Accessibility Checking Tools

Prof. Craver discussed the accessibility indicators that appear when documents are uploaded to Brightspace. The University's accessibility software provides these indicators, which are visible to instructors but not students.

He emphasized that the Brightspace accessibility checker, YuJa Panorama, is only one of several available tools. The University's policy recognizes accessibility checking tools available through Microsoft Office, including Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

If a document passes the Microsoft Office accessibility checker, instructors may upload it to Brightspace even if Brightspace's accessibility software later assigns it a different score. He explained that different accessibility checkers use different criteria and may produce different scores. A document does not need to receive a passing score from every available accessibility checker.

3. University Document Remediation Process

Prof. Craver explained that instructors should not spend excessive time trying to remediate complicated documents themselves. When available tools cannot adequately address an accessibility problem, instructors can use the University's document remediation process.

A link to the accessibility resources is available from the University's main website. Instructors can submit complicated materials—including conference papers, journal articles, and other documents—to the University remediation team for assistance.

While a document is undergoing remediation, instructors may continue to use the existing document when necessary. The goal is to provide a university-level process so that individual instructors are not expected to resolve technically difficult accessibility problems on their own.

4. Non-Standard Materials

Prof. Craver noted that the University uses many different types of instructional materials, including materials for which conventional accessibility standards may not apply, such as sheet music, graphic novels, or other specialized content.

Faculty members who have questions about accessibility requirements for non-standard materials were encouraged to contact the accessibility team. The team can work with faculty to determine an appropriate and reasonable approach for the particular medium rather than expecting instructors to solve technically or conceptually difficult accessibility issues independently.

Chair Panetier asked the Senate if they had any questions.

Prof. Monika Mehta, English, asked whether an instructor is responsible for the accessibility of an external website or resource linked from a course. For example, an instructor may provide students with a link to an external website containing film terminology or visual examples.

Prof. Craver explained that the University has sought guidance from legal counsel regarding the legal obligations associated with external content. Counsel has indicated that the legal requirements will depend on how they are interpreted and applied in future circumstances.

Because the University does not have definitive legal guidance on how to treat every external resource, the current approach is to focus on materials the University and its instructor's control.

Instructors are therefore expected to make the materials they upload to university systems accessible. External resources linked to courses may be outside the University's control. The University will continue to evaluate questions about the accessibility obligations associated with those resources as additional guidance becomes available.

Prof. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, English, noted that humanities and social science courses may involve dozens of articles and book chapters. The faculty member asked whether instructors would be expected to submit every inaccessible document individually for remediation.

Prof. Craver responded that remediation is available, but submitting every document individually may not always be necessary. He offered to review respective documents with faculty to determine whether a simpler solution is available.

He noted that some accessibility tools, particularly those available through YuJa Panorama, can address common problems with scanned manuscripts and untagged PDFs. Some documents may be automatically Optical Character Recognition (OCR)-processed and substantially improved without requiring submission to the remediation team.

The goal is to provide enough tools and University-level support to make the process as efficient as possible.

Prof. Jennifer Stoever, English, raised a question about communications and materials intended to support faculty and staff, including materials related to disability disclosure and accommodations.

Prof. Craver clarified that the Title II web accessibility requirements focus on the accessibility of web content and materials under applicable accessibility standards, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

He emphasized that other ADA-related responsibilities—such as providing accommodations to students who request them and providing appropriate accommodations for faculty and staff—are separate matters from the technical accessibility requirements being discussed.

Prof. Stoever also asked about the Libraries' responsibilities regarding accessibility, including materials placed on digital reserve.

Amanda Hutchinson, SUNY University Faculty Senator, Libraries, explained that the Library provides a troubleshooting ticket system through which users can report accessibility problems. The Libraries can work with the University's accessibility staff, the Student Accessibility Services/Accessibility Center, and external vendors to address problems with databases and other resources.

She noted that the Libraries can also work directly with vendors when accessibility problems occur in resources such as ProQuest and other databases.

Prof. Craver explained that the Libraries face a particularly significant challenge because they manage and curate a very large collection of materials. Some accessibility improvements can be made, such as providing OCR text for course materials. Other materials, particularly those containing images, may require additional work, such as creating appropriate alternative text.

He described the Library’s accessibility effort as an evolving process that requires a combination of automation, established procedures, and case-by-case solutions.

Prof. Carl Gelderloos, German and Russian Studies, described concerns about using OCR with older or specialized texts. He noted that remediation of certain materials had resulted in letters or characters being changed or removed. Although the materials were relatively conventional books, OCR errors affected the resulting searchable or copyable text. Prof. Gelderloos asked what faculty should do when OCR produces incorrect results and how to address such situations within the larger accessibility process.

Prof. Craver acknowledged that OCR could produce errors, particularly with certain fonts, print quality, or characters that OCR software struggles to recognize. He encouraged faculty to report problematic materials to the accessibility team so that the University can identify categories of materials that consistently present problems and determine an appropriate approach. If a document returned from the remediation team contains errors, faculty should report those errors so the document can be corrected.

Prof. Craver also discussed OCR tools that can create an invisible text layer over a scanned document. This approach can preserve the original document's appearance while making the text searchable and accessible. However, OCR-generated text is not always perfect, and instructors should not be expected to verify every character in a complex document manually.

The discussion recognized that accessibility processes must account for situations in which automated tools are imperfect. The team will address identified errors as they arise.

Faculty were again encouraged to bring specific examples to the accessibility team or invite the team to department meetings to discuss particular materials and questions.

Prof. Steve Murphy, Chemistry, asked about the University's approach to measuring compliance when accessibility checkers produce substantially different results. He noted that Microsoft Office, Adobe, and other accessibility tools can produce significantly different scores for the same document.

He asked whether an instructor could have a document that passes one accessibility checker but receives a low score in Brightspace/YuJa Panorama, and whether the University would use those scores to evaluate an instructor or course.

Prof. Craver acknowledged that this is a significant challenge. Different accessibility tools evaluate documents differently, and the University also needs standards that accommodate many types of instructional content. He added that the University does not intend to establish a system in which individual instructors are penalized because one automated checker assigns a lower score than another.

Prof. Craver stated that the goal is to make the University's web and Brightspace environment demonstrably accessible and to ensure the University is well prepared to respond appropriately if an accessibility concern or complaint arises.

In the future, the University will determine how best to monitor accessibility across Brightspace and other University web content and how to document continued progress toward compliance.

Prof. Craver emphasized that there is currently no plan to automatically remove faculty materials or courses because of an individual accessibility score. The approach is intended to be collaborative, with the University working with faculty and staff to improve accessibility across the University's web environment.

Closing Remarks

Provost Hall thanked faculty and staff for their work on the accessibility initiative, noting that the effort has been ongoing for approximately two years and has required significant time and effort across the University.

Provost Hall also recognized Scott Craver's role in the process and thanked him for helping develop a collaborative approach to accessibility compliance.

The meeting was then opened for any additional business.

After no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

Present: Monica Adams, Nathanael Andrade, Reethee Antony, Michael Armstrong, Pegor Aynajian, Magdalena Bermudez, Ramaesh Bhagirat, Peter Borgesen, Jayson Boubin, Sandra Casanova-Vizcaino, Elizabeth Casteen, Subimal Chatterjee, Scott Craver, Anne D'Alleva, Elizabeth DiGangi, Casey Doyle, Komla Dzigbede, Elise Ferer, Sasha Frizzell, Carl Gelderloos, Robert Guay, Donald Hall, Melissa Hardesty, Matthew Harrick, Yetrib Hathout, Brendan Hennessey, Tracey Hookway, Amanda Hutchinson, Murali Jagannathan, Barry Jones, Thiam Huat Kam, Ahyeon Koh, Kenneth Kurtz, Meg Leja, Emily Leppien, Colin Lyons, Adam Mathews, Andre Mathis, Richard Mattson, Marcin Mazur, Tom McDonough, Jennifer McGrath, Monika Mehta, Debi Mishra, Pratik Misra, Steven Murphy, Heidi Nicholls, Julien Panetier, Andreas Pape, Erin Pauling, Ramesh Pokharel, Mark Poliks, Xingye Qiao, August Rey, Erin Rushton, Sina Saneiyan, Sujoy Sikdar, Manuel Smeu, John Starks, Kathleen Sterling, Jennifer Stoever, Minfei Su, Jodi Sutherland, Kuang-Ching Wang, Melvin Whitehead, Jeffrey Yates, Bogum Yoon, Sangwon Yoon, Denise Yull

Excused: Indranil Bhattacharya, Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Hippocrates Cheng, Heather Fiumera, Will Hayes, Surya Parekh

Absent: Seden Akcinaroglu, Meaghan Altman, Barima Akwasi Amankwaah, Elizabeth Anderson, Eric Atkinson, Paul Chiarot, Hwan-Sik Choi, Rosemary Collier, Peter Gerhardstein, Sarah Gerk, Douglas Jones, Mohammad Khasawneh, Giovanna Montenegro, Samuel Elikem Kwame Nyamuame, Pedro Ontaneda, Aravind Prakash, Luis Rocha, Kristian Rydqvist, Bahgat Sammakia, Sumantra Sarkar, Scott Schiffres, Sundeep Venkatesan, Timothea Vo