

# Committee on Academics

Senate of the Associated Students 86th Session  
Minutes for Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Joe Crowley Student Union President's Conference Room

## 1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Senator Collins called the Committee on Academics meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. in the President's Conference Room on the 3rd floor of the Joe Crowley Student Union. Presiding Secretary, Frida Urena.

## 2. ROLL CALL

Senators Collins, Ahmed, Amaya, Hughes, and Sewell were present.

Senator Wilcox was tardy excused.

Senator Lemus was absent excused.

A quorum was present

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. Core Board Discussion with President Jackson, Donica Mensing, and Sarah Cummings  
Senator Collins introduced President Hannah Jackson, Danica Mensing, and Sarah Cummins. The group was there to speak about the core board.

Sarah Cummins said that the group is interesting about the committee's feedback about the core curriculum. Both the Provost and a team of journalism students have done research and observations about how well students and external stakeholders understand the core. There was a recommendation to rebrand the Silver Core to make it more meaningful to students. Cummins asked what the committee thinks about the core curriculum at this point and recommendations as to how to make it most useful and valuable to everyone. Journalism students found that even faculty were fuzzy about the core. She asked how well the committee understands the current core curriculum on a scale of one to five.

Senator Hughes asked if Cummins wanted her perspective on the core. A lot of the senators have researched the topic so Senator Hughes asked if they wanted her feedback from before she did the research or after.

Cummins said she would like both perspectives.

Senator Hughes said before she researched it, she was at a 2. After the research, she was at a 3.

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Posted at the ASUN Offices in the Joe Crowley Student Union, Frandsen Humanities Building, the Pennington Student Achievement Center, Mathewson- IGT Knowledge Center, and online at [www.nevadaasun.com](http://www.nevadaasun.com).

If you would like a copy of any of the agenda items listed, please contact Senator Collins at [senatorcollins@asun.unr.edu](mailto:senatorcollins@asun.unr.edu).



Senator Sewell agreed with Senator Hughes. She told the guests that it would be beneficial to know what they think students should know about the core. She said that she does not know why they are implemented or why there are specific classes she has to take and how to pick them.

Director Jickling said that her experiences with some of the core requirements is that it is difficult to understand when you could double dip for some requirements. She said there are some classes that meet a lot of requirements and sometimes you can double dip, but other times you cannot. Director Jickling added that she never found MyNevada to be a helpful interface to use when interacting with some of the core requirements. She said that she could look at some lists from her advisor and some of the courses might meet the requirements. Director Jickling said she would use MyNevada to individually look at the courses when there could be cores and their list of classes.

*Senator Wilcox walked in at 4:09 p.m.*

Cummins said that it did exist in MyNevada.

President Jackson said that one of the points that was brought up was why the core is set up the way it is. She said that it was to make well-rounded students and to learn about things in different disciplines. Students have the opportunity to pick what courses are most interesting to them and the overall goal is to make really successful graduates that have all of these tools when they go out into the real world. She elaborated by asking what does a University of Nevada graduate look like and what are they educated on. She said that she did not get that when they were having discussions and that she started out on one core then had to fulfill the silver core and she did not get the difference between the two, so the big goal is to communicate to students the purpose of the core.

Senator Ahmed said that the purpose is obviously to create an education to create a well-rounded student and that most colleges have something similar. He said speaking as a neuroscience student, he knew a lot of science students that do not understand why they have to take certain classes. He said it was pretty basic to understand why, but students think it is unnecessary. Senator Ahmed said that the scope of the classes were easy and were a nice break from the science classes.

Danica Mensing asked if their perspective had changed in the time that the committee had been at the university. She continued by asking if they had a greater appreciation now versus a few years ago.

Senator Ahmed said yes because some of the classes had been more interesting like CH classes. When students come in it seemed like there were more things that related and you could double dip.

Senator Hughes said that in the College of Engineering they have good feedback on CH classes because they understand the importance of learning history, but the biggest complaint is the fine arts requirement. She said for example, a student might take a ceramics class, but it might not offer transferrable skills. She said that if these classes were to stay mandatory, there should be an addition to it like how it would be transferrable. Some students have said that it would be cool to have more tech-based

arts. Senator Hughes said that she was pretty sure there was a welding class that is under the arts, so there could be more classes under the realm of artistic things.

Senator Wilcox said that students did not find much value in the Silver Core in the College of Engineering. He suggested that classes hone in on their overall purpose. He took a theater class that focused on diversity and one could have taken the skills in theater and applied it to their everyday life, but for other classes like ceramics, you do not get the same bigger picture. He said focusing on the bigger picture could be a method to attack the problem.

Director Jickling said that she agreed with both of their points and a strength she saw in both of their points is like how in some diversity classes, you can see how it directly applies to your major.

Senator Sewell said that the advertising from the counselors when signing up for classes is you can take Music Appreciation or Survey of Jazz, but you could go online and see there are so many other classes you can take. Students don't research on their own if there are classes that are of a better interest, so maybe counselors can tell students about these classes.

Senator Hughes said something that she had heard been talked about during campaigning or when they had the town hall meeting with RHA, was what if there a required class part of the Silver Core about sexual assault, diversity, and abusive relationships since they are prevalent on campus. She said that some people have said that it would be beneficial to the Silver Core.

Senator Amaya said that she would agree with that also. She added that her schedule had been made for her at orientation, so she never got to research her classes and would wonder what she had to take. By learning how to create your own schedule in orientation, you can learn how to look up the core objectives.

Director Jickling said she agreed that at least in her high school, your counselor made your schedule for you and she did not get that experience. She said she thought she had to take Art 100 and that she had no other options when that was not the case. Director Jickling added that there was a public or practical education components missing that is important.

President Jackson said she agreed with how it is set up and that it is meant to let you be creative. She added that how do they take that structure and communicate to people that you can get creative with your plan and take away the skills that you want.

Cummins said as President Jackson was saying, one of the key elements that the journalism students came up with in their idea for rebranding was emphasizing the creative component and allow students the opportunity to build their own curriculum and structure it to their own needs. She asked as a follow up, what other elements would the committee like to see emphasized.

Senator Collins said she didn't know if it was a requirement for professors to put the core in their syllabus. She would see it, but the professors would never bring it up and it is important for professors to take note of the curriculum. They could explain what the

core is and how they are achieving it, then students would be more aware about why they are taking the class.

Senator Ahmed said that for him, in most of his classes, the professors would read the core objectives and they would never hear about it again. He said it would be nicer to see that brought back in a bigger way.

Senator Wilcox said maybe for those core classes in particular, a forced part is a survey if the teacher had met those core outcomes.

Cummins said that the feedback is requested through the student evaluation. Students are asked how well the course achieved that core objective.

Senator Wilcox said that the only thing about student evaluations is that students do them aimlessly. If evaluations were more of an assignment, there would be more focus on them.

Senator Hughes said one thing that was disappointing to her was that she took C120, a sustainable infrastructure course, and the class fulfilled her major and the diversity and equity core. Senator Hughes said something she noticed was that her professor would spend like fifteen minutes on something and said they were only going over it to fulfill the core requirement, then they would move on to the technical stuff. It would be like a checkmark. She said she did not know how to fix that and that maybe the professors do not understand how important it could be. It was a very complex issue and she said she thought if the professors were bringing it up every lecture and dove into the context of the core requirement, it would not be just a checkmark.

Senator Collins said she was from the College of Science and she took a neuro-ethics class. She said the professor would only cover diversity for five to ten minutes then mention at the end that they only spoke about it because they had to. She understood that they were supposed to be science majors and focusing on science, but the fact that the professor had to blatantly state that made her see why students would get upset.

Cummins had a follow up about community engagement since that has been a big topic on campus. She said it was bigger than our core, but wanted to discuss if there was time. She added that one of the things she wants to be thinking about this semester is does the idea of community engagement overlap with the core and can they build it in in meaningful ways. She asked if they had classes that involved community engagement and if they felt it had value.

Senator Collins said they have to take service learning classes in honors and that it was a really big learning experience for her. She said that every student should take a service learning class for one semester.

Senator Wilcox said that he would agree since he took a class where he taught second graders STEM education.

President Jackson said that in her dream world, service learning would be a requirement. She said if you get to work with the community you could see how your education affects the world around you.

Director Jickling said she never took a technical student engagement course, but she had a class where the professor brought in a lot of members from the community that had taken a class similar to hers. The people mentioned how they took the class and talked about what they were doing currently. They were all people who were grounded in work for the state. She said it gave her ideas and showed how their education is implemented somewhere. One of her friends in the Spanish program is taking a Spanish service learning class that works with Spanish speaking communities. She mentioned that those programs can inspire people to stay in the community instead of leave once graduating.

Senator Hughes said she was currently in a class about water resources and her professor was bringing in an engineer that works within the community. She talked to people who had taken the class and they had an opportunity to go to the Truckee Meadows Water Facility. The interaction put their degree into perspective and was really beneficial by getting to see what they were learning about. She said they got to see the opportunities available to them in the community.

Senator Sewell asked how they came up with exactly what goes into the core curriculum.

Cummins said that several years ago, there was a General Committee Task Force assembled from faculty and campus representatives. It grew out of a desire to upgrade or make the current core curriculum. It was done in 1989 and the core stayed the same for thirty years. She said a lot of areas of the core come from various institutions. The American Association of Colleges and Universities chose things they thought were important. She added that they grew out of their rubrics. A lot of the rubrics for assessing Silver Core came from the AACU value rubrics. There was another organization that also thought they are important areas for the core. She said that a number of universities implemented similar structures. There were committees looking at the practices of other institutions and what they were missing from the curriculum. They updated the curriculums by adding engineering and science more into the curriculum, making diversity more prominent, and an application component that would apply more of a connection between your major and what can come after that.

Senator Sewell said the university was preparing students to be academically successful for a job and not just successful in life. She said students do not learn how to be successful financially and if they were taking classes to become a well-rounded student, they could not succeed if they did not know how to do other things. She suggested that they somehow include those in core. There was no option for students that come from families that do not know how to pay that stuff off.

Cummins said she completely agreed with Senator Sewell and financial literacy was a component that was discussed. It was cut for pragmatic reasons. She said that she heard Provost Carmen's partnership with Charles Schwab coming and introducing financial literacy at the university. The provost was aware of the need.

*Sandra Rodriguez walked in at 4:33 p.m.*

Senator Collins thanked the guests and said they were invited anytime.

There was no further comment

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes from October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 were approved.

5. **OLD BUSINESS**

a. **Committee Senator Updates**

Senator Collins that she recently met with President Jackson to discuss textbook affordability. She said that there is a lot that goes into it like libraries and professors. President Jackson wanted to make a strategic plan that would work throughout the years to make textbook prices lower at the Wolf Shop. The plan might be taken to the federal level so that there was some sort of regulation. Senator Collins said that the idea was still new, so there will be updates on it and hopefully they can create a resolution about it. Senator Collins added that she met with President Jackson and Speaker Martinez a couple of weeks ago to discuss the Board of Regents and their decision on a discussion about tuition guarantee proposal. There were two options, A and B. There will be a resolution in support of Option B. As far as free printing, it had been a long process. Senator Collins said that they were not going to go through with that anymore. The company and their model had some things that they needed to improve. Mac users could not fully use it with their computers and then there were mobile device issues. Senator Collins said that library liaison was just Senator Amaya for now and asked if anyone would like to tackle the next project with them. She met with President Jackson and discussed readdressing extended library hours. President Jackson confirmed that the library's first proposal stated that they would be open until one in the morning. The proposal was not feasible because of the amount of money involved. President Jackson wanted the committee to go back and renegotiate and maybe the library could pay half or they could shorten the hours just a little bit. Senator Collins added that the Tiny Betas Science fair was coming up in the next week. She asked if the senators could sign up. She met with the officers of Tri Beta and it was going to be a big event and they did not have many volunteers yet.

Senator Hughes asked why it was determined that ASUN should pay for the extended library hours.

Senator Collins said that when they met last semester, the library was not sure that people would be using it past certain hours. The idea was for around finals time since it was the first week back and not many people would be using the library. They wanted to do a pilot because they are not sure if it will work or not. If the pilot was successful, then the library would continue to fund it.

Senator Hughes asked if the library has kept track of how many people the library has to kick out after ten. She continued by asking if after finals, did the library have an amount of how many students were still there at closing.

Senator Collins said that she did not know the number, but during their initial discussion, there were always times where people had to be kicked out of the library

Senator Amaya said that she met with her dean and they were trying to start a student advisory board. Since Senator Feil was leaving, she would work on it with Senator Dobbs. Senator Amaya said her dean brought up proper signage for Lombardi since it is not properly labeled anywhere. She was going to write a new resolution to advocate for proper signage on that building.

Senator Hughes said that with textbook affordability, she noticed some problems have not been with textbooks in her experience, but with professors making students buy different subscriptions. Each of them are \$30-\$100. She was wondering if it would ever be a possibility for the university to pursue creating their own way to have those homework assignments online. She did not think it would be hard to generate a program to do that. It would save students money. Senator Hughes added if it was possible to make all professors use Turning Point rather than all of the other subscriptions.

Senator Collins said that she agreed and it was something that was vaguely brought up when she met with President Jackson. She thought it was something important to bring up at her next meeting with President Jackson.

Senator Amaya said she had a conversation with her dean about that and the reason for it is that the university does not have a specific contract with any of those programs. They do not want to push the university to choose one and the companies can get mad. A uniform database for homework was not realistic.

Senator Hughes said that she meant it like Turning Point in the sense that you answer questions in class and then Web Assign in the sense that you do homework. There would be two separate things for in class and after. She was wondering if they could informally say the university could only use one.

Senator Sewell said that her issue is not that they are on different platforms, but that she was paying to take the class, the credit for that class, and to turn in the homework so she could get a grade for the class. If she was paying over \$300 for the class, why she paying \$50 more to turn in the homework. As a student, it did not add up.

Senator Ahmed said that he has not bought a book in a year, but that he had to buy access codes for his classes because it was 10% of his grade.

Dr. Beatty said that he was wondering if there was a way the library could buy access to those software programs and allow any student to use like how they buy subscriptions to journals. There might be an extra tech fee, but if it was bundled across 1,800 students, they would get access to all these programs that are costing hundreds of dollars. For engineering students, their differential fees should be going towards that.

Senator Wilcox said that they have remote access to engineering programs, so maybe there was a way to remotely access these programs.

Senator Ahmed said even if it was a subscription platform it would be okay because he keeps on using Pearson. A yearly subscription instead of only paying for three months would greatly reduce the cost.

Senator Hughes said if the university can afford subscriptions to JSTOR and AutoCAD, which are \$10,000 for one person, then it is so much across the university. Homework is 10% of their grade, but they pay one third of the amount of the class for an access code.

Senator Amaya said it was more of the access codes than the textbook because you can get a used textbook, but you cannot reuse an access code.

Senator Collins said that she agrees with the committee. It seemed like since everyone seemed pretty invested in the topic and have great feedback, they could have President Jackson come to the next meeting.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Discussion on CircleIn App**

Senator Collins said that she sent a link that describes what the CircleIn app was. President Jackson reached out to Senator Collins because a student from UNLV reached out to her about how UNLV has the app. It allows students in a similar class to post on the app and ask for help on homework. If they decided to go forward, there would be a lot of questions about cheating through this app. President Jackson asked that question to the student who reached out to her and he said that you cannot cheat through the app. There could be complications with that, but Senator Collins asked if anyone wanted to take up the project since she was a little too busy. They could work with President Jackson and the contact from UNLV, but if they did not want to move forward with the project then it would be cool.

Senator Amaya said that she was not going to take on the project because she did not like the CircleIn app because that is what WebCampus does. Through WebCampus you can see everyone else in your class, so she did not feel like they needed another app.

Senator Ahmed said that he did not like it either because people can just group message their friends and people ask for help on WebCampus too.

Senator Sewell said that at least with WebCampus, even the professor will see the message. If someone asks a question and no one responds or if a lot of people have the same question, sometimes the professor would post and answer. We use WebCampus anyway and get email notifications.

Senator Collins said that she agrees and that President Jackson brought it up and asked for opinions, so she would get back to her.

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Senator Hughes said she should have brought this up in old business, but at the beginning of the session, they brought up making class evaluations available to students.

Senator Collins said nothing had been pursued, but it would be great if someone would want to take that on. She said that they cannot release full comments about what a student says, but they could potentially have a scale.

Senator Sewell said even without the comments, a lot of the evaluation is scale based. She asked if they could still be able to release those since they do not have comments. That way students can understand if the professor is excellent or terrible.

Senator Amaya said she talked to her dean about her specific college and they do not want to lose the value in those class evaluations by allowing a comment box.

Senator Hughes said that the evaluations are currently mixed.

Senator Amaya said it would be time consuming for someone to go through the evaluations and separate them.

Dr. Beatty said that on WebCampus you could just download it.

Senator Hughes said an easy algorithm would average it out.

Senator Collins told Senator Hughes if she wanted to work on it, then she could look into it and see what she finds out.

Senator Ahmed asked if there would there be any difference between that and Rate My Professor other than numbers.

Senator Collins said Rate My Professor is essentially the same, but it is not associated with the university. Some students are very angered and could leave a comment that biases students and not everyone fills out Rate My Professor. With the class evaluations, more students would be filling them out and there would be less bias.

Senator Hughes said professors can get their name taken down from Rate My Professor if they don't like their rating, and they cannot opt out of class evaluations. Students have a right to know how their professors are life prior to paying for the class.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

Senator Collins adjourned the Committee on Academics meeting at 4:52 p.m.