

FACULTY SENATE

Annual Report | August 2025-May 2026

TO: Voting Members of the CWRU University Faculty

FROM: Kathryn L. Mercer, Chair of the Faculty Senate, 2025-2026

RE: Report on Faculty Senate activities, August 2025-May 2026

DRAFT FOR CHAIR REVIEW | Prepared October 2026

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Chapter 2, Article V, Section G of the Faculty Handbook, the Chair of the Faculty Senate makes available to voting members of the University Faculty a report on the Senate's activities. This report covers the 2025-2026 academic year.

The Senate and its standing and ad hoc committees addressed faculty governance and protections, academic programs, research support, compensation, university policies, and the student experience. Particularly significant work involved amendments to the Faculty Handbook and Constitution of the University Faculty, processes for departmental change, the independence of promotion and tenure deliberations, graduate and postdoctoral protections, and revisions to undergraduate academic policies. Faculty participation in these decisions remained central to the university's system of shared governance.

FACULTY GOVERNANCE AND THE FACULTY HANDBOOK

University Faculty amendments to Chapter 2

The Faculty Senate considered four proposed amendments to Chapter 2 of the Faculty Handbook in April and May 2026. After Senate action, the proposals were submitted to the voting University Faculty on May 12. A total of 322 ballots were returned. All four amendments exceeded the applicable 60 percent voting threshold. They were submitted to the President for consideration and potential transmittal to the Board of Trustees. Approval by the University Faculty did not itself constitute Board approval.

Amendment	Subject	University Faculty vote (May 12, 2026)
1	Finance Committee membership	293 for; 14 against; 15 no vote on item (90.99%)
2	Committee on Graduate Studies membership	292 for; 16 against; 14 no vote on item (90.68%)
3	Duty of constituent faculty deans to uphold the Faculty Handbook and ratified bylaws	288 for; 24 against; 10 no vote on item (89.44%)
4	Departmental transformation: Chapter 2 governance provisions	299 for; 19 against; 4 no vote on item (92.86%)

Procedures for transforming departments

Continuing work initiated in 2024-2025, a Faculty Senate Executive Committee subcommittee developed governance procedures for transforming academic departments, including splitting, merging, renaming, discontinuing, or transferring departments. The proposed provisions addressed the roles of constituent faculty, deans, the Provost, the Faculty Senate, the President, and the Board of Trustees. On April 29, 2026, the Senate approved proposed amendments to Chapters 2 and 3, with 37 votes in favor. Chapter 2 provisions subsequently received University Faculty approval on May 12. The proposed amendments were advanced for presidential consideration and later returned to the Senate for further revisions.

Other Handbook and bylaws actions

- On December 17, 2025, the Senate approved revised introductory language for the Faculty Handbook, following consultation between the By-Laws Committee and the Office of General Counsel (32 in favor, 8 opposed).
- On April 29, 2026, the Senate recommended Chapter 3 amendments relating to terms of appointment and tenure (36 in favor, 3 opposed).

- The By-Laws Committee reviewed or responded to proposed revisions from the constituent faculties, including the College of Arts and Sciences, Case School of Engineering, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, Mandel School, and Weatherhead School.
- The Senate and Executive Committee also reviewed standing committee charges and membership requirements, including representation, continuity, and eligibility for membership.

PROMOTION, TENURE, AND FACULTY PROTECTIONS

Independence of promotion and tenure deliberations

The Faculty Personnel and By-Laws Committees continued their multi-year review of participation by deans and faculty holding administrative dean titles in promotion and tenure committee deliberations. The aim was to protect the independence of faculty assessments while understanding legitimate operational differences among schools. At the May 11 Senate meeting, the Senate requested explanations and proposed strategies from constituent faculties with compelling reasons why particular dean-title holders could not be excluded from promotion and tenure deliberations. The motion passed with 34 votes in favor. This continued the work of implementing the previously endorsed principle of independent faculty review.

Disruptions to faculty productivity and professional development

The Committee on Campus Planning, Facilities, and Space Governance reviewed procedures proposed by the Provost's Office for managing substantial disruptions to faculty work, including those arising from facilities relocations. The Senate supported distributing guidance to faculty and permitting affected faculty to provide context about disruptions in promotion and tenure materials. At the March 24 meeting, the Senate approved the committee's recommendations (31 in favor, 1 opposed). By April, the Provost reported an optional special circumstances statement had been added to promotion and tenure guidance.

Faculty complaint processes and conciliation

The Senate received the Faculty Conciliation Counseling Program report and discussed ways to make faculty more aware of confidential conciliation and mediation resources. On April 29, 2026, the Senate supported adding questions to university surveys concerning faculty awareness and use of these processes (36 in favor, 2 opposed). It also approved establishment of an ad hoc Committee on Extrajudicial Complaints (35 in favor, 4 opposed) to examine processes affecting faculty when complaints or employment-related decisions occur outside Faculty Handbook grievance and disciplinary procedures.

Policy reviews affecting faculty

The Executive Committee and standing committees continued examining the university's Freedom of Expression operating rules and the administration's response to Senate recommendations from the previous year. The Senate also reviewed a proposed university Conflict of Interest Policy in March 2026.

CURRICULUM, ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, AND DEGREES

The Faculty Senate reviewed recommendations from its Undergraduate Education and Graduate Studies committees for new credentials and changes to existing academic programs. The following records identify degree and program actions during the reporting year. Approval by the Senate is a recommendation for later institutional action where required.

Month	Program / credential	Action	Senate action
Sept 2025	Engineering MS	Deactivation	Approved unanimously
Sept 2025	Applied Artificial Intelligence minor	New undergraduate minor	39 for; 4 against
Sept 2025	Nutrition for Women and Children minor	New undergraduate minor	34 for; 5 against
Sept 2025	Clinical Ethics	Graduate certificate	40 for; 1 against
Nov 2025	Nutrition and Metabolism minor	New undergraduate minor	35 for; 0 against
Dec 2025	Data Science and Analytics BA	New undergraduate degree	40 for; 0 against
Feb 2026	Food is Medicine minor	New undergraduate minor	42 for; 0 against
Feb 2026	Artificial Intelligence BS	New undergraduate degree	Approved unanimously
Feb 2026	Artificial Intelligence post-baccalaureate certificate	New certificate	Approved unanimously

Month	Program / credential	Action	Senate action
Mar 2026	Nonprofit Management graduate certificate (online)	Program action	32 for; 0 against
Apr 2026	Teacher Education BA; Theater Arts MA	Inactivations	Approved unanimously
Apr 2026	Global Medieval Studies	Graduate certificate	33 for; 3 against
May 2026	Biostatistics and Biomedical Analytics	Graduate certificate	36 for; 0 against
May 2026	Artificial Intelligence BA	New undergraduate degree	36 for; 0 against
May 2026	FinTech minor	Inactivation	Approved unanimously

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC POLICY

Under the leadership of the Faculty Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education (FSCUE), the Senate acted on several policies intended to strengthen consistency in academic practice, transfer pathways, academic standards, and student advising.

Concentrations. On September 29, 2025, the Senate approved an updated policy on undergraduate major concentrations (40 in favor, none opposed). A related motion directed updates to the General Bulletin, procedures, and forms (25 in favor, 12 opposed).

Academic integrity. After an earlier proposed revision was defeated and returned for additional work in December 2025, the Senate approved revised undergraduate academic integrity sanctions language in February 2026. The reconsideration addressed the application of sanctions across different grading and withdrawal situations.

Academic calendar. The Senate approved the five-year academic calendar on its February 2026 consent agenda. On April 29, 2026, it approved calendar changes beginning in 2027-2028, including accompanying construction rules and academic policy date changes (39 in favor). On May 11, it approved clearer construction rules for half-semester sessions (36 in favor). The amended calendar will be presented to the Fall 2026 Faculty Senate.

Transfer credit. In May, the Senate approved a policy that course modality would not be a factor in reviewing transfer credit for students coming from institutions with defined articulation agreements (36 in favor, 1 opposed).

Major declaration and advising. The Senate approved moving the permissible dates for students to declare a major earlier in the academic cycle (36 in favor, 1 opposed). FSCUE also continued its review of the pre-major, professional, and major advising structure, including survey results and possible faculty mentoring roles.

Student work and academic flexibility. On April 29, the Senate approved guidance for collaboratively authored submissions to the Experience Portfolio (37 in favor, 1 opposed), revisions to Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavor capstone materials (37 in favor, 2 opposed), and a change to the First-Year Withdrawal Policy (39 in favor).

GRADUATE EDUCATION AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Graduate Studies continued reviewing graduate academic requirements, student progress, and policies affecting graduate and postdoctoral training. The Senate approved revised policies on dissertation committee composition and roles on April 29, 2026 (37 in favor, 4 opposed) and considered companion documents on committee engagement and dissertation defense procedures.

The Senate also approved an amended posthumous degree policy on April 29 (38 in favor). The amendments clarified the university's recognition options and removed a two-year limitation. Earlier, in March, the Senate approved Postdoctoral Goals and Expectations (31 in favor) and Postdoctoral Scholar and Fellow Grievance Procedures (31 in favor, 1 opposed). The Executive Committee requested further guidance on potential remedies available through the grievance process to be developed by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee and the Office of General Counsel.

In February 2026, the Senate approved the charge and membership for a Graduate Studies subcommittee on time to PhD degree. The committee was tasked to examine time-to-degree issues and potential opportunities to improve graduate student progress.

RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND LIBRARIES

Faculty Research Survey and support for scholarship

The Committee on Research presented follow-up findings and recommendations from its 2025 Faculty Research Survey, comparing selected results with 2021. Areas of improvement included satisfaction with Institutional Review Board processes and technology transfer. Persistent concerns included post-award administration, bridge and pilot funding, administrative assistance on grant proposals, and access to research resources. The committee also documented substantial current or anticipated use of artificial intelligence in faculty research. Its findings informed subsequent discussions of research infrastructure and administrative support.

Artificial intelligence governance and copyright

Artificial intelligence was a recurring subject of Faculty Senate discussion and academic program review. In November 2025, the Senate amended and approved an AI Task Force charge with attention to campus-wide participation, faculty education, and the societal context of AI (35 in favor on the overall charge). In February 2026, the Senate approved the charge and membership of an ad hoc committee to review the university's copyright policy in light of AI developments, following a recommendation from the Faculty Senate Committee on University Libraries. The Committee on Information and Communication Technology also advanced a faculty survey concerning technology needs and challenges.

Libraries and access to scholarship

The Committee on University Libraries reviewed revisions to Faculty Handbook language on libraries and continued examining the placement of the faculty Open Access Policy within the Handbook. The Executive Committee routed revisions for further consistency review. It is anticipated that the OAP will be approved for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook later in 2026.

FACULTY COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND WELL-BEING

The Faculty Compensation Committee continued tracking faculty salary competitiveness against Association of American Universities (AAU) peers and following the administration's response to recommendations made in 2024-2025. In its May 11, 2026 report, the committee described progress in salary adjustments and the separation of promotion raises from unit merit pools, while noting persistent differences by school and rank, especially for senior faculty. The committee urged clear, accessible compensation policies across the schools and continued attention to compensation equity.

The Executive Committee also referred questions about the definition of salary and salary protection language to the By-Laws Committee and relevant standing committees. Review of faculty parental leave and other faculty benefit matters carried forward from the preceding year.

The Committee on Women Faculty reported on campus lactation spaces, fertility treatment benefits, access to institutional data, and plans for programming related to menopause and working women. The Committee on Minority Affairs resumed its work on data access and explored how climate surveys could capture concerns about institutional communication amid policy changes. These activities reflected the Senate's continuing attention to the faculty experience.

CAMPUS PLANNING, UNIVERSITY FINANCES, AND ADMINISTRATION

The Senate received briefings from university leadership on finances and campus development. Chief Financial Officer Brian Burnett presented a fiscal year 2025 operating review and fiscal year 2026 budget overview in December 2025. The Senate received a presentation on the Campus Master Plan in April 2026, following faculty consultation with the campus planning process. Issues of faculty work space, disruptions to research and teaching, and long-term facilities planning remained central to the Committee on Campus Planning, Facilities, and Space Governance.

President Eric Kaler and Provost Joy Ward provided regular updates on university priorities, research conditions, enrollment, federal policy developments, faculty appointments, and major projects. Those updates provided opportunities for faculty representatives to ask questions and share views across constituent faculties.

COMMITTEE WORK AND LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

During the year the Executive Committee and Senate received reports from standing committees and school representatives, including Undergraduate Education, Graduate Studies, Research, Faculty Personnel, Faculty Compensation, University Libraries, Information and Communication Technology, Nominating, Minority Affairs, Women Faculty, and Finance. Annual committee reports and elected representatives' reports informed referrals, subsequent Senate action, and the following year's governance agenda.

Faculty Senate leadership worked with the Nominating Committee to fill vacancies and update committee and hearing panel membership. At the close of the academic year, the Senate approved committee and Executive Committee appointments for 2026-2027. Harold Connamacher was elected Chair-Elect, and Chair Mercer passed the gavel to Jeremy Bendik-Keymer at the May 11, 2026 meeting.

CONTINUING BUSINESS AS OF MAY 2026

The following matters continued beyond the reporting period and are not represented here as completed Board or university policy actions:

- Presidential consideration and any required Board action on the Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 amendments approved in spring 2026, including transforming departments and terms of appointment.
- Review of school-specific implementation issues concerning dean participation in promotion and tenure committees.
- Further review of Handbook provisions and administrative policies involving research misconduct, conflict of interest, copyright and artificial intelligence, open access, and graduate and postdoctoral practice.
- Follow-up to faculty research survey recommendations, compensation comparisons and transparency, undergraduate advising, and continuing issues involving faculty well-being and governance.

The Faculty Senate thanks its elected senators, standing and ad hoc committee members, officers, and university partners for their service during 2025-2026. Their contributions to deliberation, review, and policy development remain essential to shared governance at Case Western Reserve University.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathryn Mercer, Chair of the Faculty Senate

Kelly Rindfleisch Marcus, Secretary of the University Faculty and Faculty Senate