

WTAMU Faculty Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
April 24, 2026

Attended: Dr. Benton Allen, Dr. Emilie Baker, Dr. Brandon Bang, Dr. Ray Barbosa, Dr. Ryan Brooks, Mr. Landon Brown, Dr. Li Chen, Dr. Alea Friemel, Dr. Nicholas Gerlich, Dr. Bridget Guerrero, Dr. Audrey Meador, Dr. Brandli Stitzel, Dr. Yong Yang, Dr. Walter Wendler

Absent: Dr. Betty Coneway

Guests: Dr. Neil Terry

The WTAMU Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) meeting started at 12:19 p.m. in OM 317.

1. Dr. Wendler remarks

- Dr. Wendler encouraged FAC members to meet with their deans to engage them in conversations about the issues the FAC discusses.
- Digital textbooks for campus initiative: so far, the core curriculum has been using digital textbooks. This approach saved costs and enhanced learning. Dr. Wendler would like to start another discussion on moving one step forward: apply the no-cost-to-students textbooks initiative to undergraduate courses and hope there would be no increased textbook fees. In the next FAC meeting, Dr. Wender will seek additional thoughts from FAC on the pros and cons of moving “digital textbooks” to undergraduate courses.

2. Opening remarks (Dr. Bang)

- FAC members approved last meeting’s minutes.
- The deadline for WCAG 2.1 implementations has been extended for one year.
- A&M System AI review of courses
 - Dr. Terry: 11 courses were flagged. Instructors made changes to their syllabi. Dr. Terry had no major concerns about this.
- Spring Faculty Address: May 1st, 10:00 a.m., NSB 101. Dr. Terry and other leaders will talk during the event. Awards will be announced.
- Chancellor’s Advisory Council:
 - Background checks for tenure:
 - Dr. Terry: It’s a new policy, but it does not bring about substantial changes.

- Suicides on A&M system campuses: there's an increase in the number of student suicide cases on other A&M system campuses. Apps and mental health initiatives are available to help.
- Magister Optimus: will not be given to administrators.
- Emeritus: faculty can submit the recommendations to Dr. Bang or Dr. Terry—no requirements on the nominees' academic ranks.
- Ombuds officer: Dr. Bang or Dr. Anderson will email faculty later. Will figure out a more formal selection process in summer. There's a stipend for this position.
- Lapel pins for endowed professors: they are available from Dr. Raspberry.
- Faculty insight portal: received several submissions from faculty members
 - H1b: Dr. Bang reached out to administrators. The issue is on administrators' radar.
 - Graduate School: it used to be unclear whether tenure-track (i.e., untenured) faculty members were eligible to chair theses or dissertations. Dr. Bang raised this concern with graduate school, and the last Dean's Council discussed it. The most recent update from Dr. Pjesky is that tenure-track faculty can chair theses or dissertations, as long as department heads or other supervisors approve them.
 - Canvas and publishing courses: Academic Affairs indicated that course publication dates cannot be changed.
 - IRB: There has been a concern about the increasing number of IRB proposals. Will talk to multiple people on campus about it.
 - Dr. Bang would like to invite faculty members to keep using the faculty insight portal. FAC will inquire about the issues raised by colleagues.

4. Merit committee report and discussions (Dr. Brooks)

- Changed the committee name from “subcommittee” to “committee.”
- Dr. Brooks will circulate a revised merit-based pay increase proposal to integrate comments from various sources on campus.
- The revised proposal will keep the “aspirational” components.
- Dr. Brooks asked Dr. Wendler to share data about faculty pay and other university costs with the committee.
- Dr. Wendler and Dr. Terry shared administrators' insights on merit pay.

5. New business (Dr. Bang)

- University committees
 - FAC members nominated faculty members from their colleges to the university committees that needed to be filled. FAC members will vote via Qualtrics next week to select the committee members to recommend to Academic Affairs.
- FAC lunch with Dr. Wendler: Friday, May 8, noon – 1:30 p.m., Buffalo Room

- FAC reminders for the next year/staggered terms: more discussion will happen in summer.
- Magister Optimus:
 - Received three nominations. FAC members read those recommendation letters. FAC representatives from each college shared their thoughts on the nominees. The six “elected” FAC members stayed after the meeting to vote for Magister Optimus.

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 1:58 p.m. The six “elected” FAC members stayed in the meeting room to vote for Magister Optimus—Dr. Ty Lawrence was nominated, and his name was forwarded to the President’s Office and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Link to the recording of the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQIN7gDCwFk>

Respectfully,
Li Chen, Secretary
4/27/2026