

MINUTES OF THE UNLV FACULTY SENATE

Date: 02/10/2026

Location: Student Union Room 208 B & C and via Zoom

Senators Present: Cheryl Abbate, Rabea Alhosh, Bobbie Barnes, Wolfgang Bein, Satish Bhatnagar, Tirth Bhatta, Sheila Bock, Monica Brown, Dan Bubb, Tim Bungum, Jaime Carbajal, Donovan Conley, Patience Crowder, Honghui Deng, Zhonghai Ding, Nancy Esposito, Jordan Fischette, Jorge Fonseca Cacho, Paul Forster, Kerie Francis, Gina Gamble, Patrick Griffiths, Isabel Herrera Pedro, Jason Hortin, Yvonne Houy, Jill Humphrey, Alethea Inns, Taro Ito, Margarita Jara, Lori Johnson, Tracy Johnson, Barry Kamen, Julian Kilker, Scott Loe, Gilberto Murillo, Susanna Newbury, Michael Nussbaum, Rafael Oganessian, Neil Opfer, Jennifer Pfannes, Daniel Proga, Paysha Rhone, Bill Robinson, An-Pyng Sun, Alex Talonov, Jesse Taylor, Nicole Thomas, Craig Topple, Sue Wainscott, Dana Moran Williams, Monica Williams, Minnie Wood

Senator Proxies: Bobbie Barnes for Amanda Belarmino; Sheila Bock for Kaitlin Clinnin; Rafael Oganessian for Marni Dow; Patrick Griffiths for Samantha Godbey; Dustin Davis for Keoni Kins; Minnie Wood for Necole Leland; Paul Forster for Daniel Proga; Bill Leavitt for Mahzarine Irani Rohani

Senators Absent: Djeto Assane, Neamat Hassan, Tracy Spies, Hassan Ziada

Executive Committee Leadership Present: Michael Kagan, Maria Roberts

Ex-Officio Present: Lorena Giese, Nic Irwin, Kate Korgan, Devin Lopez, Kelechi Odunze

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair Roberts at 12:05 p.m.

II. Public Comment

- Senator Robinson: (1) There was a decision made with no faculty input on who has access to the building. Now, 4,000 people have access to BEH. We did a survey on building access, and the majority were opposed to increasing. Access was changed without any discussion, and it offends me. (2) We will be talking about our required essential functions document. That should have also been done with input from the Faculty Senate and the entire faculty. (3) The numbers show that we were down student numbers, but we hired 400 positions. UNR was also down and hired 100 positions.
- Senator Hortin: Since the recent improvements to Maryland Parkway now ensure that neither faculty nor students can arrive to their classrooms on time, I've found myself with ample time to enjoy Ron Chernow's audiobook on Mark Twain. It's a remarkable listen, though I find it increasingly difficult to tell where Twain's satire ends and our current reality begins.

In that spirit, I would like to congratulate the State of Nevada, the PEBP Board, RTC, NSHE, and UNLV on a monumental feat of inter-disciplinary collaboration. It's truly a rare achievement to work together so seamlessly to make this a more difficult, more expensive, and more frustrating place to live and work.

In Lot B alone, we have watched parking spaces vanish to make room for a 3200 square foot bus stop in the name of progress. This collaborative design between UNLV and the RTC, which I suspect was done by people with large monitors and small windows, fails miserably. It was a comfort to receive an explanation from the University Planning as to why parking that used to be there is suddenly gone, and why we should all feel so much better for its absence, as we move towards centralized structures. In the fine arts, we are trained to appreciate the abstract, though I cannot quite appreciate the art of an improved parking lot that contains less parking.

Not to be outdone however, I must give my heartiest congratulations to the overseers of the Public Employees Benefits Program and their proposed 84% improvement to our healthcare premiums. While \$330 million dollars of charity in the name of tax breaks can be given to a man whose net worth exceeds \$844 billion dollars, Nevada leadership cries insolvency when supporting the workers who help keep the state running. To quote Twain, "All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure." The Board has certainly succeeded ensuring all public employees including staff and faculty can no longer afford the wellness they are being sold.

As I go up for tenure soon, I may have the honorary distinction of becoming the first professor to become an Associate and take home less money than the day I was hired!

My message today is simple, stop making Nevada and UNLV an exasperating place to work. While building UNLV into a world-class stage, the actors are being evicted. You can build all the centralized monuments you want, but they'll be empty if the faculty and staff can no longer afford the luxury of employment here.

I'll leave you with one last quote from Mr. Twain: "Fact is stranger than fiction, but it's because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; fact isn't." The fact that this university can thrive while hindering the very people who make it run is a fiction that shouldn't be supported. Please stop the abstraction and start helping the people who live and work here.

- Senator Opfer: I would like to second those comments. The RTC has made a mess out of Maryland with more yet to come. RTC and the powers to be made the brainiac move to take a lane both North and South for a bus lane. With many of my students traveling to and from campus, no one takes the bus as they don't have time. The central administration signed off on those plans which is upsetting.

III. Minutes of the January 20, 2026 meeting

Motion to Approve: Senator Bubbs; Second: Senator Oganessian

Verbal approval with no changes.

IV. NFA Information Agenda Item regarding Public Employee Benefits Program (PEBP) Increases

Sue Wainscott, UNLV-Nevada Faculty Alliance President and Doug Unger, Professor and faculty representative at PEBP meetings, provided the following information regarding the proposed PEBP increases:

- PEBP is reporting a \$46 million shortfall in mandatory reserves, which, when combined with cost increases, totals over \$80 million. This has led to a reported scenario involving 84% premium increases along with a \$1,000 increase in out-of-pocket maximums for individuals and \$2,000 for families. These changes are slated for the 2027 fiscal year starting in July, with the potential for even higher out-of-pocket maximums to follow. At current rates, reports suggest PEBP could be effectively bankrupt within five years, or as early as 2029. Consequently, faculty voices are needed as PEBP prepares to set rates at their meeting on Wednesday, February 18th.
- In examining historic cost share, both state and member costs have increased. State costs were \$315 million in 2026 compared to \$276 million in 2022 (difference of \$39 million.). Member costs were \$164 million in 2025 compared to \$145 million in 2022 (difference of \$19 million).
- While plan provisions and premiums remained stable, cost increases to the PEBP were leveraged. Over this period, the member share of total costs declined from 33.3% to 31.5%. Consequently, based on actual usage, the PEBP members' cost share compared to the state cost share has eroded by 1.8%.
- Total medical and prescription expenses for active and retired employees, including both state and non-state members, exceeded revenue by \$25.6 million, while the Consumer Driven Health Plan (CDHP) currently subsidizes the other two plans.
- Leading up to FY2024, reserves were actively spent down as the trend increase accelerated simultaneously. While the recent large increase in AEGIS and REGI for FY2026, totaling \$64 million was sufficient to close the current funding gap, a projected decrease in AEGIS for FY2027 is expected to resume the spend-down process. This depletion will likely accelerate unless additional increases or cost reduction measures are implemented. Furthermore, the calculation of assets and reserves follows a historic approach that does not consider Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). An additional \$48 million is required to regain target reserve levels.
- Diminishing healthcare benefits is primarily driven by a gap between state funding and rising medical expenses. Since 2014, state contributions have remained relatively flat, even as healthcare costs have surged by over 40%. This financial disparity has shifted the primary cost burden onto PEBP participants. While the state did increase contributions by \$64 million in FY2026 to address reserve shortfalls, this is considered a temporary fix with projections suggesting funding will flatten or decrease again by 2027.
- The additional \$82 million needed to attain the \$139 million reserve target (including HRA) equates to employee and retiree premiums 84% higher than current with impacts for faculty, staff, and state employee paychecks.
- Call to Action: At the January 27 meeting of the Interim Retirement and Benefits Committee (Legislature), PEBP Executive Officer Theresa Carsten indicated a possible spreading of premium increases over time, but this is by no means sure. It will take faculty, staff and state employee action to ask for this.
- We recommend the Faculty Senate send out a Call-to-Action Message to the UNLV Community requesting the following:
 - Write the PEBP Board on the PEBP Public Comment Upload form before 1:00 p.m. on Monday, February 16th.
 - Phone into the PEBP Board at the number listed on the Agenda for the Wednesday, February 18th meeting at 1:00 p.m.
 - Use the Zoom link for live audio Public Comment at the beginning of the February 18th meeting.
- Messaging should include the following:
 - PEBP should not raise premiums by 84% next year but implement longer-term solutions by spreading out premium increases over several plan years.
 - State contributions to PEBP must increase to restore the traditional cost-sharing balance.
 - No further cuts to benefits. For FY2027, benefits should not be cut more than already approved for

- increased deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums.
- The new higher out-of-pocket increases are an unfair burden on faculty and staff with acute or chronic conditions. We will already be paying \$1,000 more individually and \$2,000 for a family and that is enough.
- Personal stories to help make your points are most effective for Public Comment. I personally got involved because one of the administrative assistants in my unit lived in her car to pay the high deductible needed to cover her medical needs. Another colleague waited three years for a needed back surgery due to financial constraints.
- Action must carry into the 84th Legislative Session in Spring 2027 for long-term solutions as the state cannot backfill funds outside of the session.
- Additional information on NFA and the presentation today can be found at nevadafacultyalliance.org/news.

Questions/Comments:

- Senator Opfer: Thank you Doug for the yeoman's work you have done on this over the years. Across the NSHE institution, all pay the same premiums. Why is there a difference between our breakeven and their deficits?
 - Professor Unger: Healthcare costs more in the North. The Carson Tahoe Health issues with UMR almost caused a loss of in-network access coverage. Elko, Winnemucca, Ely, and Caliente have costs greater than ours. The question has been why don't we break it down into regions like Oregon does? PEBP would like to keep it central.
 - Senator Fonseca Cacho: Should we advocate for that split?
 - Professor Unger: Not at this point. It might be possible when talking about eliminating the HMO.
 - Senator Fonseca Cacho: Is the proposed elimination of HMO a factor in this?
 - Professor Unger: The HMO is at break even with the EPO the loss-leader.
 - Vice Chair Kagan: This amounts to a pay cut. A note of optimism is that there are those in the legislature looking to support. In a year from now when the Legislature meets, would it make sense to ask for a one-year interim before looking at the three-year program?
 - Professor Unger: We want PEBP to stretch it out as much as possible. We have people on the Ways and Means Committee on our side. If we advocate enough, we can keep the premium increase as low as possible.
 - Senator Proga: The proposed increase is a one-time fix. Why don't they look at the quarterly reports and monitor the situation? How do we know they won't come back to us in three years for more increases?
 - Professor Unger: The state has been using the Medicare inflation rate to all health plans for budgets. Our health plans have gone up much higher. State contributions did not make up for the increases and instead went into the reserves.

Motion for a Sense of the Senate opposing the 84% one-step increase. We would like the increase to be phased in over the next few years. Senator Opfer; Second: Senator Oganessian.

Discussion:

- Chair Roberts: I met with other Faculty Chairs. Another item that is in consideration by PEBP is dividing the increase over two to four years.
- Senator Robinson: Because this was not on the agenda, we need to move to suspend the bylaws before a motion can be made.

Motion to suspend the bylaws: Senator Williams; Second: Senator Loe.

Verbal Vote: Motion Approved.

Motion for a Sense of the Senate opposing the 84% one-step increase. We would like the increase phased in over the next few years. Senator Opfer; Second: Senator Oganessian.

Discussion:

- Senator Williams: Amend to include points covered in the PEBP presentation.

Motion Withdrawn.

Motion for Sense of the Senate to include the following (Senator Williams; Second: Senator Opfer):

- PEBP should not raise premiums by 84% next year but implement longer-term solutions by spreading out premium increases over several plan years.
- State contributions to PEBP must increase to restore the traditional cost-sharing balance.
- No further cuts to benefits. For FY2027, benefits should not be cut more than already approved for increased

deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums.

Discussion:

- Senator Oganessian: It is important to disseminate this information.
- Senator Wood: I recommend supporting this motion along with submitting our own individual comments to the PEBP.
- Chair Roberts: (1) I encourage all of you to go back to your colleges and encourage your faculty to voice their concerns. (2) Senator Bubb will be serving as a Faculty Senate representative at future PEBP meetings.

Verbal Vote: Motion Approved.

V. Faculty Senate Elections

Elisa Watts, Faculty Senate Manager, provided the following information on upcoming elections.

- A. Executive Committee Elections: Executive Committee nominations will be accepted through March with elections conducted during the April meeting. All positions are available except for Chair and Past Chair. There is one administrative, two at-large positions, Secretary, and Vice Chair up for election.

Vice Chair will serve for three years as Vice Chair, Chair, and Past Chair with one three-credit course reassigned per semester. Only tenured faculty members are eligible to serve as Vice Chair.

- B. Elections for Graduate Committees: Representatives needed for the following: Graduate Course Review, Graduate Programs, Graduate Program Review, Graduate Appeals and Legal Issues, Graduate Awards, Graduate Academy Advisor Board, Socially Just Graduate Research & Student Success Working Group, and Postdoctoral Affairs Advisory Board.

- C. Election of Senators (Three-Year Term) for the following areas:

- At-Large (2 positions)
- Admin Faculty (Research/Grad)
- Admin Faculty (Bus Affairs)
- Lee Business School (1 position)
- College of Sciences (3 positions)
- College of Fine Arts (1 position)
- School of Dental Medicine (2 positions)
- College of Health and Sciences (3 positions)
- College of Hospitality (2 positions)
- College of Liberal Arts (3 positions)
- University Libraries (1 position)
- College of Engineering (1 position)
- Greenspun of Urban Affairs (2 positions)
- College of Education (2 positions)

- D. Faculty Senate Office Election Support: Please contact the Faculty Senate Office (faculty.senate@unlv.edu or 702-895-3689) if you need help conducting your elections.

- E. Upcoming Deadlines:

- Elections for Faculty Senate Executive Committee roles will be voted on during the April 14 Faculty Senate meeting. If you would like to self-nominate, send a bio and reasons for wanting to serve on the Executive Committee by March 30.
- Elections for your Senators and your unit's committee representation should be completed by March 30th. This provides time to follow up on those elections that have not been completed and to update Academic Resources. This notification is important, so that information for those receiving course releases is disseminated before the end of the spring semester. Roles with course releases include the Vice Chair and Chair of the Faculty Senate and the chairs of the following committees: Academic Standards, Admissions, Campus and Fiscal Affairs (currently under review), Curriculum, General Education, Tenure and Promotion, Program Review, University Bylaws.

VI. Chair's Report

Vice Chair Kagan: It is important that we know how to engage with the University Policy Committee (UPC). The UPC uses a notice and comment process. Current UPC items include use of campus vehicles, two different background check policies for consideration, and required disclosure of felony charges. I will be highlighting UPC issues so that we can have input before policies are finalized.

- Senator Robinson: My slogan is "death to the UPC". They ignore the Faculty Senate on a regular basis. We sent a request for additional representation on the UPC to address academic issues, and it was sent back. President Smatresk created the UPC to sidestep faculty.

Chair Roberts provided the following updates:

- The new Faculty Senate website is live thanks to Senators Robinson and Fonseca Cacho.
- Voting on four bylaws will be e-mailed soon. Please remind faculty to vote.
- Waiting for the final wording on the Workload Policy before sending out.
- During the President and Provost meeting, the following Senior Senator issues were addressed:
 - Safety and security issues at Fine Arts buildings will be discussed with Chief Vasquez.
 - After the presentation on ADA Title II requirements, senators expressed concerns over action items. Provost will work with the Office of Accessibility to provide additional information including step-by-step instructions for improving WebCampus Ally scores.
 - Mid-promotion review was addressed.
- Background checks will be completed for jobs posted April 1 and after.
- Newsletters will be created and sent out bi-annually with updates on culture and environment. It will be based on findings from the "Great College To Work For" survey. Kyle Ethelbah, Associate Vice President of Institutional Engagement and Experience will help with the analysis and will be scheduled to speak at an upcoming Faculty Senate meeting.

Questions/Comments:

- Senator Opfer: The last bylaw vote came out from an e-mail address other than Faculty Senate which some faculty members thought was spam. Can it come out from the standard Faculty Senate e-mail?
 - Senator Robinson: This is a Qualtrics error that sometimes occurs. I recommend that the Faculty Senate Office send an e-mail to faculty to be on the lookout for a vote coming from the Faculty Senate e-mail address or general Qualtrics.
- Senator Williams: Can you provide more details on the issue with mid-promotion reviews?
 - Chair Roberts: Issue with mid-promotion reviews is that the process is not consistently followed. Also, a faculty member brought up the issue to find out why they were required to go through a mid-promotion review if they were not intending to go up for promotion to professor.
- Senator Robinson: I think we should do our own survey versus the "Great Colleges To Work For."
- Senator Fischette: Who is allowed in the closed session?
 - Chair Roberts: Only Senators and ex-officio members.
 - Provost Korgan: Although I am an ex-officio member, I have been told by the Executive Committee previously that they would suspend the bylaws in the constitution if I tried to stay. So, I've been leaving at your request. If I am able to stay, I will stay because I think it's helpful. When I hear about problems and concerns, I can follow-up and try to help. However, I will leave if that's the direction, because I never want to be where I am not welcome.
 - Senator Oganessian: What you just heard right now, this is not an example of shared governance. For the EC to unilaterally say they will suspend the constitution and bylaws without inquiring with each and every one of you about what the Provost can do and cannot do as ex-officio. This is not shared governance for the record.
 - Senator Fonseca Cacho: I don't believe that we specifically discussed a suspension of the bylaws, but we did encourage the Provost to leave during the closed session to support open discussion among senators.
 - Senator Fischette: We often complain that we are not involved in decisions. We should reciprocate making sure to include others in our discussions.
 - Senator Oganessian: I think that the closed session has negative optics.
 - Vice Chair Kagan: There are strong feelings on both sides. We know that the President and Provost are against the closed session. I was hesitant about the closed sessions at first, but my view changed as I have seen that robust discussions only occur in the closed session. We don't want this to be controversial and understand the Provost's position. As an Executive Committee, we need to be better at communicating what will be discussed. For the Faculty Senate to be effective, it has to represent the views of the representative senators, which means there has to be robust discussion and debate.
 - Senator Robinson: I am never afraid to say what I think and that was true when I was not tenured. The culture across NSHE has changed. There is a serious retaliation culture across campuses. We have discovered in the closed meetings that there are a lot of people on the campus who feel this. I appreciate the Provost's willingness to leave even though she has the legal right to be here.
 - Senator Oganessian: The Brown Bag events are an opportunity for senators to voice concerns in a closed session environment. We only had one this academic year.
 - Elisa Watts: Brown bag events are open to all.
 - Provost Korgan: My concern with the closed session is not that I have been asked to leave. I understand the desire to have open discussion. The problem with this is that our faculty all over campus can't hear the conversation going on. I feel like the Faculty

Senate is at a crossroads. So that you can better partner with each other, faculty, and leadership, I think it is important that decisions don't happen in isolation. You are hurting one another by making it 'us versus them'. When you say, "death to the UPC", you are referring to colleagues that have been asked to serve. The tone needs to come down.

- Senator Opfer: I reiterate my previous position that I am a proponent of open meetings. The only thing that ex-officio members cannot do is vote.
- Senator Fischette: Did you ask the Provost not to attend the closed meeting portion?
 - Chair Roberts: Yes, I did to allow for robust conversation.
- Senator Robinson: I attended UPC meetings for six months. Besides the one Faculty Senate representative, there was only one other faculty member. They discussed academic issues like Regular Substantive Interaction and micro-credentials. It's against their charter to even be thinking of those things. I'm not saying anything about the people because they work really hard, but they need to follow their charter. We worked with the Provost Office to come up with an alternative and it was sent back as a "no".
- Senator Bubb: Everyone in my department is questioning the closed meetings. We are not creating a good impression. I understand that everybody has their views and differences, but we need to look at the broader picture. After that presentation that Doug gave us, I'm scared. How are we going to be able to afford health care? We just had a board vote in favor of raising tuition. With all due respect, I feel like we have larger fish to fry and we're squabbling over tiny details.
- Senator Oganessian: The constitution clearly defines ex-officio members and considers the Provost one of them. You've just heard where the chair went over your head, and unilaterally, or maybe with the EC, went above all of your heads and asked a member of this Senate not to show up.
 - Chair Roberts: This is an unfair statement. I explained to the Provost that during open meetings it's always the same people speaking, even today. But, when we have our closed session, there is a lot more talking and discussion and that is really what we want. We want people to really speak up without fear and that's the reason why we did it. If you want to vote on it at the next meeting, we can. Today, we're going to have to stop already because it has gotten out of hand.
 - Senator Oganessian: But this is a problem.
 - Chair Roberts: We can vote on it next time, so that we can continue. I will note what you have said.
 - Senator Oganessian: Somebody in the EC went above your head to tell a member of this body not to come. The last time I checked, this is not Saddam Hussein's parliament, this is a democracy. What are we doing here?
 - Chair Roberts: That is enough. I'm sorry, but I do have to cut you off this time. There's no reason to bring Saddam Hussein into this. That was totally uncalled for.
 - Senator Herrera Pedro: Respectfully, we do have a student here, our CSUN President. The way that we're acting in this meeting is wrong. I have been to CSUN meetings, and the students are more professional than the way we are acting right now. We're supposed to be unified.
 - Senator Rhone: We are living in a time when people are afraid to speak out and not because of necessarily just consequences at work, but consequences in the larger culture. So, I think we can all understand the spirit in which we wanted to be able to have frank, open conversations where we could be ourselves. I think the larger lesson is that we need to be brave enough to say everything that we say in the closed session, in the open session.
 - Senator Proga: Someone said that I am fearless. Being tenured allows that freedom. There are many reasons why people don't speak up. Perhaps we need to have a forum where we can speak freely. It takes courage to voice concerns.

VII. Faculty Essential Functions - Moved to March Meeting

VIII. Public Comment

- Senator Thomas: In 1944, the CIA provided a manual on how to disrupt the progress of an organization. One was the over discussion of communications, processes, and resolutions. It is frustrating and discouraging. We need to institute time limits for people to speak. We should spend time on things that matter like the 84% PEBP

increases.

- Nic Irwin: At the next Board of Regents meeting, they may extend a job offer for permanent president. I think the Faculty Senate should request feedback from faculty, so there is a data point for the Board of Regents and the Chancellor.
- Vice Chair Kagan: The item we didn't get to today is our job description. The Essential Functions of Faculty document was written without input from the Faculty Senate. The closed meeting has serious upsides and downsides. At our last Faculty Senate meeting, the Executive Committee proposed a position to support student fee increases. Based on your feedback, we changed the position. My fear is that without the closed session, we would have not gotten to the same result. I would like feedback on how we can improve closed meetings, perhaps improve communication and narrow the focus. If we decide to discontinue it, ideas for how we can increase engagement and discussion is needed.
- Senator Nussbaum: I am opposed to closed meetings in general. We should look at other ways to have a robust debate. I feel like we should have been asked.
- Senator Fischette: I am sorry this went off the rails. It was not my intent when I made my first comment on who was permitted to attend the closed session. I do feel it was completely inappropriate to ask someone not to attend without discussing it with the Faculty Senate. If we decide to do this, we need to follow bylaws.
 - Senator Fonseca Cacho: You have the right to state your viewpoint. It shows that we are having spirited debate. Elections are coming up for the Executive Committee. Last year the Executive Committee ran unopposed. I encourage senators to consider running for the Executive Committee.

IX. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Bobbie Barnes, Secretary