

# University Council Meeting Minutes

## February 11, 2026

### Leigh Hall 208& Virtual Attendance

Members: Marilia Antunez, Stephanie Davis-Dieringer, Karima Elgarroussi, Tracie Epner, Ed Evans, Blair Everett, Tonia Ferrell, Dan Friesner, Maria Hamdani, Kris Kraft, Nate Meeker, Gwen Price, Madilyn Shaw, Ally Temsey, Sonya Wagner, Aimee Trunko, Patricia Miller, Ryan Kasik

Other Attendees: Matt Akers, Alex Bailey, Michelle Banis, Kelly Bialek, Suzanne Bausch, Katy Brennen, Jennifer Davis, Aimee DeChambeau, Jared Deeds, Kelli Fetter, Laura Fisher, Dana Frase, Dawn Hampton, Becky Handley, Patti Huth, Sarah Kelly, Wendy Lampner, Nidaa Makki, Meredith Merry, Patricia Miller, Jordyn Miklinski, Ross Miltner, Susie Muetzel, R.J. Nemer, Paula Neugebauer, Jesse Redwine, Brett Riebau, Christin Seher, Michelle Smith, Mark Stasitis, Fedearia Nicholson Sweval, Ann Usher, Nick Weber, Kelly Weir, Mia Yaniko,

#### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at **3:01 p.m.** by Nathan Meeker. A quorum was confirmed, including remote participation.

#### **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

The agenda was reviewed, and with no changes proposed, a motion to approve was made. The agenda was approved unanimously.

The minutes from the January meeting were also reviewed. With no edits or questions raised, a motion to approve was made and the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **Executive Committee Report**

The executive committee met in January. Key discussion items included:

- Update from Chief Strategy Officer Dr. Juravich (similar presentation planned for this meeting)
- Increasing University Council (UC) participation
- Survey format previously discussed
- Guest speakers for upcoming meetings

#### **Remarks of the President**

**Audit & Governance:** The audit process with the Auditor of State Committee is ongoing, with the implementation strategy for audit recommendations due next week. Many recommendations are already embedded in the university's broader revitalization plan. Committee members were reminded that the final report and recommendations remain available on the Board of Trustees website.

**Revitalization Efforts:** Leadership has been actively working on a comprehensive revitalization plan for several months, and appreciation was expressed for the University Council's continued support in implementing it.

**Community Engagement & Partnerships:** The University of Akron was reclassified for Community Engagement Learning by the Carnegie Foundation—one of only eight institutions in Ohio to receive this designation in the most recent evaluation period. The recognition is valid through 2032 and reflects strong regional partnerships, including more than 100 community partners such as the Cleveland Browns organization.

**Recognition:** An on-campus celebration marked the Carnegie designation, featuring remarks from Provost Price. Additional visibility is expected through an upcoming feature on *Cleveland Browns Daily*.

**Athletics Highlights:** Updates included mixed results for men's basketball, a strong win by the MAC champion women's lacrosse team, and a notable victory by the rifle team over a ranked MIT team.

**Enrollment & Recruitment:** Spring enrollment is up slightly compared to last year, and the fall admissions cycle is showing increased applications and confirmations.

**Marketing & Branding:** The university's "More Yes" branding continues to gain traction, with marketing messages across social media and a commercial that aired during the Super Bowl.

## **Provost's Remarks**

### **Enrollment Update:**

The university reinstated the drop-for-nonpayment policy this semester, resulting in 287 students being dropped prior to census. Census enrollment was reported at 14,072. In the days following census, 195 of those students re-enrolled, bringing total spring enrollment to 14,267, which was described as a strong outcome for that process. Focus is now shifting away from spring enrollment and toward fall yield season.

### **Fall 2026 Recruitment Progress:**

Compared to the same point last year, fall indicators are trending positively: applications are up 12.8%, admissions up 9%, and confirmations up 5%. Transfer data is still too early to report and will be addressed later in the semester.

### **Admissions & Visit Days:**

Scholars Day was canceled due to weather, but Admissions followed up with impacted students by sending care packages and invitations to return. Many students have already scheduled alternative visits or will attend the Honors Brunch and Open House in March.

### **Facilities & Weather Response:**

Appreciation was expressed for Physical Facilities, Operations, Construction (PFOC), and Safety & Security staff for managing extreme winter conditions, including snow removal, severe cold, and pipe failures, despite limited staffing.

### **Accessibility & Digital Inclusion:**

Accessibility remains a campus priority. The UDX Accessibility Celebration will be held on March 30 at

noon, featuring the first deaf-blind graduate of Harvard Law School. Ongoing thanks were extended to faculty and staff participating in accessibility training and initiatives, with encouragement to continue improving digital accessibility across campus.

#### **Student Success Initiatives:**

- **Finish in Time:** Encourages students to take 15 credits per semester to graduate on time, reduce costs, and enter the workforce sooner.
- **Summer Zips:** Focuses on strengthening summer offerings—particularly online, high-demand courses—to support timely degree completion. Faculty and students were encouraged to engage with both initiatives.

#### **Recognition**

- Tracy Wilson Holden was welcomed as the new Assistant Vice President for Research, Compliance, and Security.
- A large engineering career fair hosted 214 employers, many alumni-led, offering internships, co-ops, and jobs.
- UA Cyber Security Team placed third in the Midwest Regional Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition and qualified for the wild card round.
- Sarah Hedenderfer, a junior composition major, had a work premiered by the Akron Symphony Orchestra, leading to additional commissions.
- Gus Strachan, a graduate student in Intelligence and National Security, was selected for the prestigious International Security and Intelligence Program at Cambridge University, supported by donor funding.

#### **Chief Strategy Officer Report**

The CSO provided a high-level update on the university's revitalization plan, the state financial audit, and how both efforts are being integrated with ongoing and future strategic planning.

- Revitalization Plan
  - The plan launched in March 2024 via a Board directive and managed by university leadership.
  - Purpose: an action-oriented set of projects designed to generate revenue and cost savings.
  - Primary goal: achieve budget neutrality by 2030.
  - The university entered President Nemer's tenure with an estimated \$27M operating deficit, which has been nearly cut in half by the end of AY 2024–25.
  - Work is organized around six revitalization pillars, aligned with existing Board of Trustees committee structures.
  - Each project has:
    - Identified board liaisons and campus leads
    - Quantitative and qualitative metrics
    - SMART goals and milestones
- Key Areas of Focus for projects
  - Academics: SB1 compliance
  - Finance & Administration: Housing P3 completion, net tuition and scholarship optimization

- Facilities: New leadership, campus space assessment, and capital planning
- Strategic Issues:
  - Advancement and development planning
  - Athletics strategic planning and revenue optimization
  - Budget and reporting structure improvements
  - Internal and external brand campaign implementation
  - Recruitment strategies to sustain enrollment momentum
- State Audit
  - A comprehensive state financial audit was initiated over a year ago and delivered in late 2025.
  - The audit covered finance, academics, facilities, operations, and athletics.
  - Many state recommendations overlap directly with revitalization initiatives.
  - The revitalization plan will be included in required annual state progress check-ins as part of a five-year monitoring process.
  - A centralized landing page is being developed to support transparency and state reporting.
  - Integration with Strategic Planning
- The university is in the final year of its current strategic action plan.
- Leadership is exploring ways to better integrate UC committees into revitalization work.
- Proposed model:
  - Align UC committees with specific revitalization projects
  - Engage committee members directly in reviewing project profiles and supporting current and future phases
  - Goal is to reduce duplication, improve coordination, and strengthen shared accountability.

### **Standing Committee and Constituent Reports**

- The Awards Committee is in the process of reviewing nominations for each award.
- Budget and Finance had no report.
- Campus Wellness is working on RooFit. They hosted a kick-off event in January and encouraged everyone to make sure to enter their points.
- Communications Committee no report.
- Institutional Advancement heard from Katie Brennan.
- Physical Environment met and focused on their goals.
- Student Engagement and Success will be meeting at the end of February.

- USG is preparing to host the Ohio Student Government Summit and is planning collaborative events.
- Professional Staff representatives noted a recent social gathering and upcoming meeting.
- The Deans group encouraged nominations for the BCAS Dean search and announced adoption of the Edusights retention tool.
- Information Technology Report
  - Learning Management System (LMS) Selection
    - The university must select a new LMS or renew Brightspace.
    - The process was delayed due to an incomplete selection committee.
    - Administrative and student representatives have now been finalized.
    - The committee includes faculty, administrators, and graduate and undergraduate students.
    - Initial meetings will begin the Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
  - Workday Expense Approval Issues
    - Expense reports were routing to incorrect supervisors, delaying reimbursements.
    - Issue primarily affected employees with multiple departmental appointments.
    - Workflow has been corrected so reports now route to the call center manager controlling the budget.
  - University Mobile App Consolidation
    - Multiple overlapping apps are causing confusion and increased maintenance.
    - Simplification and consolidation are being explored.
    - The Director of Communication and Marketing will present options at the April meeting.
  - Classroom Technology
    - Some classrooms lack sufficient audio and connectivity.
    - A pilot classroom with updated technology is being developed as a model.
    - Members will be notified when ready for review and feedback.
  - Wi-Fi Outage
    - A recent campus-wide outage was caused by hardware failure.
    - Faulty equipment was replaced and network services restored.
- Talent Development and Human Resources (TDHR)
  - Proposed revisions to Board of Trustee rules governing:
    - Conflicts of Interest
    - Conflicts of Commitment
    - Ethical Standards
  - Proposed actions:
    - Rescind Rule 3359-903 (Full-Time Service)
    - Rescind Rule 3359-17.2 (Spousal Hire Policy)
    - Revise and replace Rule 3359-1117
    - Create two new HR policies:

- Conflict of Interest, Conflict of Commitment, and Ethical Conduct
  - Nepotism and Consensual Relationships
- Conflict of Interest / Commitment / Ethical Conduct: 17 approved, 0 opposed
- Nepotism and Consensual Relationships Policy: 17 approved, 0 opposed
- New COI Policy: 17 approved, 0 opposed

## Constituent Reports

- Graduate Student Government (GSG):
  - Ongoing meetings and planning.
  - Focus on student trustee processes, elections, and a potential post–Research Day event.
- Undergraduate Student Government (USG):
  - New member interviews and appointments underway.
  - Student trustee planning in collaboration with GSG and SBA.
  - Elections in progress; results expected before spring break.
  - Successful event with Black Excellence Commission and AK Rowdies.
  - Ohio Student Government Summit canceled due to weather; rescheduling under consideration.
- Professional Staff:
  - Met January 26, 2026 (virtual due to weather).
  - Updates shared and planning underway for a meeting with President Nemer.
- SEAC:
  - January meeting canceled due to weather.
  - Next meeting scheduled for **February 19, 2026**.
- Faculty Senate:
  - Focus on accessibility, transfer credit processing, and curriculum proposals.
  - Bylaws updates required due to Senate Bill One.
  - Committees reviewing faculty research grant proposals and program review processes.
- Chairs:
  - No report.
- Deans' Report:
  - UA School of Law Legal Clinic recognized for leading Ohio Governor's Expedited Pardon Project.
  - College of Business Department of Management selected for the **2026 Citizen Diplomat Award** (Dr. Erin Markarius).
  - Recruiting updates, including Social Work's Behavioral Health Discovery Day (February 4).

## Unfinished Business

- Ad Hoc Committee on University Council revision seeking additional volunteers.
- Members will receive a Microsoft Forms survey to guide committee work.

**Adjournment: 3:50 pm**