

Annual Report to the University Senate

Academic Year 2025-2026

Senate University Planning Committee

Committee Charge: This committee shall review the University planning process and consider their potential outcomes, and specific issues and activities related to institutional advancement.

2025/2026 Senate University Planning Committee Members:

- ***Isaac Barber, Co-Chair, Student Union & Event Services**
- ***Del Siegle, Co-Chair, Neag School of Education**
- *Amvrossios Bagtzoglou, Engineering
- *Oksan Bayulgen, CLAS
- *Christian Brueckner, CLAS
- *Bonnie Burr, Co-Chair, CAHNR
- *Leo Gold, Graduate Student
- *Sandy Grande, CLAS
- *Justin Rogowski, Law Library
- *Penny Vlahos, CLAS (Avery Point)
- *Ashley Helton, CAHNR
- *Jennifer Schaefer, University Libraries
- Nolan Busalacchi, Undergraduate Student
- Olivia Eshoo, Undergraduate Student
- Maria Groza, UPDC
- Dan Schwartz, Office of the Provost (Ex-Officio Member)
- Julie Schwager, OPR

*Senate Member 2025/2026

Summary:

The University Planning Committee engaged in a series of discussions and presentations focused on institutional planning priorities, including information technology strategy, capital projects and facilities planning, travel, and classroom utilization in relation to enrollment trends.

One area of focus was the evolving role of information technology in supporting the University's academic function. The committee reviewed changes to data storage policies driven by external cost increases, particularly those associated with Microsoft services. Information Technology Services (ITS) is promoting a more structured use of cloud-based storage, distinguishing between individual (OneDrive) and unit-level data management (SharePoint). These changes reflect an

institutional effort to control costs while maintaining accessibility and functionality. At the same time, ITS is exploring centralized funding models and working with individuals and units to manage storage quotas.

The committee also reviewed the future of classroom technology, including plans to phase out desktop computers in classrooms in favor of a laptop-based model. This shift is intended to reduce maintenance costs for the classrooms and maintain system security, though faculty usage patterns suggest a continued need for careful assessment of the plan. No date has been set for eliminating desktops in the classroom. In addition, the University is beginning to formalize its approach to artificial intelligence through the creation of an AI governance committee. With existing institutional licenses for tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, the committee engaged in discussion around appropriate use, data security, and broader ethical and environmental considerations. These conversations highlight the importance of policy discussions as new technologies are integrated into the academic environment.

Facilities planning and capital development represented another component of the committee's work. The committee received updates on a range of projects. Major initiatives include the renovation of Gant North and the construction of a new School of Nursing building, both of which will expand instructional and research capacity. Additional projects, such as the renovation of the Jones Hall Annex and the planned expansion of animal care facilities, support anticipated growth in research and outreach.

Infrastructure improvements and campus enhancements were also discussed, including stormwater-related upgrades to Mirror Lake, the relocation of the University commissary, and the development of a donor-supported Peace Garden near the library and Dodd Center. These projects prompted discussion about pedestrian access, transportation, and parking. The committee emphasized the importance of balancing growth with accessibility.

The committee also discussed classroom utilization and its relationship to enrollment trends and scheduling practices. Through collaboration with the Enrollment Committee and presentations from the Classroom Committee and Registrar's Office, the committee examined data on how instructional spaces are currently used. While overall classroom utilization is lower than optimal, demand is concentrated in specific time blocks and in larger lecture spaces, creating inefficiencies in scheduling and space allocation.

In response, the committee explored potential strategies to improve utilization, including adjustments to course scheduling patterns (possibly having Monday – Wednesday classes), experimentation with longer class periods (possibly 2 ½ hour blocks on Friday), and expanded use of nontraditional instructional spaces. These discussions also highlighted the complexities of aligning pedagogical needs with physical infrastructure and scheduling constraints. While some options, such as breaking large courses into smaller sections, may improve utilization, they also carry significant resource implications.

Finally, the committee reviewed the newly revised university travel policies. The discussion also explored ways to streamline the travel reimbursement submission process, including the possibility of eliminating second rounds of approval for previously submitted forms that were returned for

adjustments or contacting submitters with questions, rather than immediately sending them back to users for adjustments.

Throughout these discussions, several key themes emerged. Cost considerations are playing an increasingly significant role in shaping decisions, especially in areas such as data storage, class size, and instructional technology. At the same time, the rapid emergence of new technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, is requiring the development of new governance structures and policies. Finally, ongoing capital investments reflect a need to carefully consider issues such as parking and building maintenance.