

ACADEMIC COUNCIL Minutes March 5, 2026

Present: Leslie Griffin, Joe Childs, Vicki Bingham, Fawn Ussery, Merideth Van Namen, Kristen Land, Tammy Prather, Jeffrey Leffler, Heather Miller, Peter Dean

Absent: None

Guests: Sydney Pittman, Etosha Johnson, and Jennifer Knudsen

Call to order: The Academic Council met in the Janice Wyatt Conference Room KWH on March 5, 2026. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, with Provost Leslie Griffin presiding.

Agenda item	Comments/Discussion	Action taken	Responsible party
Approval of Agenda:	Dr. Griffin began the meeting by asking for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Dr. Vicki Bingham which was seconded by Dr. Merideth Van Namen. All were in favor.	Approved	Leslie Griffin
Approval of Minutes:	The motion to approve minutes for Thursday, February 19 th was made by Dr. Joe Childs and seconded by Fawn Ussery. All in favor.	Approved	Leslie Griffin
Discussion Items			
	<p><u>Office of Admissions, Sydney Pittman and Dr. Etosha Johnson:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sydney praised the College of Education, Arts and Humanities for a well-run recent event and stated that they typically see large numbers at their events on campus. • She recommended that everyone have recruiting events to start with registration in Slate so the Office of Admissions can follow up through campaigns. They can provide a QR code for registration. Dr. Griffin asked everyone to coordinate this through Kevin Entrekin who would work with the Office of Admissions to set up the registration links. • She also mentioned that the AI assistant (Skylar) is usually live when their staff is out of the office. • She also emphasized that we are all recruiters and advocates for Delta State regardless of our typical job duties. 		Leslie Griffin

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	<p><u>General Education Committee, Dr. Jennifer Knudsen:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jennifer Knudsen presented to Academic Council on behalf of the General Education Committee. • She reported that the committee is proposing revisions to the general education curriculum in response to a charge from the provost to streamline general education for transfer students. • She further explained that the committee worked collaboratively to develop a common 30-hour general education core. This core will apply across three pathways: traditional majors, Bachelor of Applied Science programs, and an expedited general education model for self-honors students. • Dr. Griffin noted that the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning is leading an initiative to move toward competency-based general education at the state level, with implementation anticipated in the coming year. • She recommended that the proposal be brought forward as a first reading. <p>A motion was made by Dr. Jeffrey Leffler to approve the proposal as a first reading and was seconded by Dr. Vicki Bingham. All in Favor</p>		
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<p>Provost's Updates</p>	<p><u>Provost, Dr. Leslie Griffin, provided the following updates:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provost Griffin provided updates to Academic Council. • She shared that a recent meeting of the IHL Chief Academic Officers focused on financial literacy initiatives. • She noted that the group also discussed a proposed teacher pay raise that did not pass during the most recent state legislative session. • She reported that work is underway to develop a more comprehensive institutional artificial intelligence policy. • She further indicated that she is working to engage a consultant to collaborate with the AI committee in identifying competencies that should be embedded across the curriculum. • She emphasized that budget planning remains a key priority, noting that program growth should precede requests for additional budget allocations. 		<p>Leslie Griffin</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She encouraged units to keep this expectation in mind when projecting future needs. • She also shared that she has recently spent time reviewing tenure and promotion portfolios. • Top of Form • Bottom of Form 		
Faculty Senate	<p>Faculty Senate President, Peter Dean, provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Dean reported that the Faculty Senate is working on the faculty handbook and that an executive council meeting would be held that day. 		Peter Dean
Action Items: New Business Policies and Forms			
Curriculum/Course Actions	<p><u>Curriculum Action: BA in Digital Media</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler presented an MS IHL appendix document to reorganize the Bachelor of Arts in Digital Media from the School of Management, Marketing, and Business Administration to the School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. <p>A motion was made by Dr. Jeffrey Leffler to approve the action and was seconded by Dr. Vicki Bingham. All in Favor</p>	Passed	Jeffrey Leffler
	<p><u>Course Action: BIO 411</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Vicki Bingham shared a proposed course action to expand the number of credit hours for BIO 411 to provide more time to expand content in the area of plants. • Proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red-lined changes to the course description to increase the credit hours from 3 to 4. • A course fee request was included in the packet. Dr. Griffin asked that the fee be pulled 	Passed	Jeffrey Leffler

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	<p>from the action and be considered when the call for course fee revisions is given.</p> <p>A motion was made by Dr. Vicki Bingham to approve the action and was seconded by Fawn Ussery. All in Favor.</p>		
<p>Policy Actions:</p>	<p><u>Policy Action: Curriculum Development and Revision (First Reading)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler shared a proposed revision to the Curriculum Development and Revision policy. • Proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red-lined changes to the policy to align the language with the current organizational structure and state explicitly that Academic Council is the primary institutional body for the review, coordination, and approval of academic policy and curriculum matters. <p>A motion was made by Dr. Jeffrey Leffler to approve the action and was seconded by Dr. Vicki Bingham. All in Favor.</p>	<p>Passed</p>	<p>Jeffrey Leffler</p>
	<p><u>Policy Action: Prior Learning Assessment Pathways (First Reading)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler shared a proposed guidance to facilitate Prior Learning Assessment pathways. <p>A motion was made by Dr. Jeffrey Leffler to endorse the actions and was seconded by Dr. Merideth Van Namen. All in Favor.</p>	<p>Passed</p>	<p>Jeffrey Leffler</p>
	<p><u>Policy Action: Graduate Admissions (First Reading)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler shared a proposed revision to the Graduate Admissions policy. • Proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red-lined changes to the policy to reflect the current organizational structure and to clean up some language. • Discussion included the need to add waiver language for distance students for Hepatitis B and Tuberculosis. A decision was made to table the matter and refer to the Office of Admissions for further input and guidance. 	<p>Tabled</p>	<p>Jeffrey Leffler</p>

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	Tabled		
	<p><u>Policy Action: Graduate Course Repetition and Grade Replacement (First Reading)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler shared a proposed revision to the Graduate Course Repetition and Grade Replacement policy. • Proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red-lined changes to the policy to reflect the current organizational structure. • Discussion included needing more time to consider. The action will be brought forward again at a future meeting. <p>Tabled</p>	Tabled	Jeffrey Leffler
	<p><u>Policy Action: Notification of Rights Under FERPA (First Reading)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler shared a proposed revision to the Notification of Rights Under FERPA policy. • Proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red-lined changes to the policy at the recommendation of Chief Legal Officer, Katie Lusk, to bring the policy in line with current law. <p>A motion was made by Dr. Jeffrey Leffler to approve the actions and was seconded by Tammy Prather. All in Favor.</p>	Passed	Jeffrey Leffler
	<p>A decision was made to table remaining policy action items on the agenda due to time constraints.</p> <p>Tabled</p>	Tabled	Jeffrey Leffler

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<p>Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Meredith Van Namen presented the new PEP pathway. She explained that the pathway is designed to attract educational professionals currently working in classrooms who are not licensed teachers. The program includes an expedited pathway to degree completion, allowing candidates to combine their classroom experience with prior learning assessment. Students enter the pathway after completing general education requirements. After accumulating three years of classroom experience, candidates may have up to 12 credit hours evaluated and awarded through prior learning assessment. Candidates then begin their internship and are able to remain employed while completing the program. • Drs. Heather Millier and Vicki Bingham reported that Accelerate Mississippi has awarded a nursing grant. The grant includes a summer pathway featuring an eight-week training program, with outcomes that include entry into the BSN program or direct employment. The total award amount is \$280,000. • Dr. Jeffrey Leffler presented updates on the remedial and intermediate proposals. Student Success and Admissions have identified areas of inefficiency within current processes and will bring a revised proposal forward following additional discussion. Provost Griffin indicated that the group should identify components of the current proposal that can be supported moving forward. • Provost Griffin shared that Kevin Entekin has developed a draft proposal for a neurodivergent program. She asked members to review the proposal and consider whether they can support and endorse it. <p>Top of Form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottom of Form 		<p>Leslie Griffin</p>
<p>Announcements:</p>	<p>Easter Holiday April 2, 5 pm – April 5, 2026 Academic Research Showcase April 9, 2026 Final Examinations May 4-7, 2026 Graduate Commencement May 7, 2026 4 pm Undergraduate Commencements May 8, 2026 COBA @ 9am COEAH @ 11 CONHS @ 2 pm</p>		
<p>Adjourned:</p>	<p>11:57 a.m.</p>		
<p>Next Meeting:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Meeting Date: Thursday, April 9, 2026, 8:30 am in the Janice Wyatt Conference Room • Upcoming Meeting Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026, 8:30 am in the Janice Wyatt Conference Room 		

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