

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

AEC APRIL 2026 MINUTES

DATE: 04/21/26

LOCATION: Zoom

CO-CHAIRS: Dr. Sean Bonness and Kristine P. Aslanyan

PRESENT: Sean Bonness, Kristine P. Aslanyan, Angela Williams, Cindy Hall, Janet Ramirez-Han, Maria Gurrola, Trisha Kozlowski,

ABSENT: David Betancourt, Mark Abbruzzese, Debra Johnson, Eric Calderon,

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Minutes and Approval

- a. Janet moved to approve it, and Angela seconded the motion. The committee unanimously voted to approve the March Minutes.

2. Review and feedback on the AEA.

- a. Janet: Inform the faculty if their nominees do not reply or decline
- b. Cindy: Division and awards were not in order of printing, and students called
- c. Scholarship recipients should be seated on one row first, then with their faculty
- d. No food coverage, ushers helping the committee
- e. Sean, more committee members per division, Kristine: volunteers
- f. Garbage cans were necessary
- g. David's feedback
 - a. Book all venues by August (include the photo shoot venue)
 - b. Secure food for the photo shoot by February
 - c. Secure the music performance by January
 - d. Bring water to put in the speaking podium (for speakers)
 - e. Brief speakers who are reading narratives on the time of the title and the narratives
 - f. Include in the script who will introduce the guests on stage
 - g. Have the guests on stage be more involved (maybe they can help hand the plaques)
 - h. Have someone triple-check the order of the names on the script with the order of the names on the seats.

- i. Secure funding for next year asap
- j. Get a beverage from the Culinary Arts
- k. Last-minute faculty name additions
- l. Select 2 readers
- m. Request any changes by a certain date for seating
- n. Narratives can be done by a committee member
- o. We should have 2 photographers
- p. Dignitaries didn't know where should have been seated
- q. 2-3 committee members for the program
- r. 2-3 committee for food order
- s. Request budget expenditure from Eric
- t. Decide Board Members seating
- u. Create suggestion or introduction to keynote speakers

We need to be able to better identify Board Members. Two of them showed up late, and the usher told them to go upstairs for seating, but they were supposed to be on the stage.

- 3. Report to the Faculty Senate
 - a. Sean reported that the presentation was well received.
- 4. Budget
 - a. AEC needs to be done a year earlier
 - b. The Academic Senate has funding
- 5. Updates from the floor
 - a. August 18 or September 15, 2026 meeting

Following is a summary of Sean's feedback:

Overall Event Success

Atmosphere & Seating: The ceremony was highly successful overall. The seating arrangements for recipients and escorts worked well, and the main event concluded efficiently within 1.5 hours (plus 10 minutes for the group photo).

Catering: The food selection was well-received, though a noticeable surplus remained (7 boxes of Porto's pastry leftovers were distributed to recipients).

Photo & Stage Direction: Stage and group photo coordination at the conclusion of the event was efficiently executed.

Areas for Improvement & Action Items

1. Stage Coordination & Ushering

Minimize Delays: Streamline student transitions to the stage during scholarship readings to eliminate pacing lags. Consider seating scholarship winners in the front row to optimize flow.

Script & Role Distribution: Provide full scripts/timelines to all co-chairs and committee representatives.

Expanded Usher Team: Deploy a multi-station usher strategy for future events:

One usher to manage audience rows/dark seating areas (provide small flashlights for visibility).

One representative stationed at the side entrance door.

One representative near the stage to pace student/escort placement.

Dignitary Support: Clearly label on-stage seating for VIPs and dignitaries to prevent confusion, and ensure complementary water bottles are provided at all on-stage seats and reader podiums.

2. Scripting, Reading, & Multi-Media

Expand Reader Pool: Utilize at least two distinct readers for the AE narrative script to prevent vocal strain, ensuring smooth hand-offs and formal introductions at the start.

Script Delegation: Delegate the escort narrative portion of the script to committee representatives for drafting and finalization, allowing co-chairs to focus on the scholarship backgrounds.

Keynote & Slideshow Timelines: Establish the keynote speaker bio by January/February for a final draft in March, allowing faculty readers at least one week of practice time. Complete media slideshow drafts shortly after the photoshoots to permit testing in the PAC by early April.

3. Facilities, Logistics, & Vendor Management

Early Logistics Requests: Submit facilities requests (stage chairs, plaque tables, check-in tables, and reception tables) early in the academic year. Avoid relying on committee members to transport equipment from home.

Plaque Management: Ensure all award plaques are delivered and staged on-stage by 6:00 PM on the night of the event.

Photography Booking: Secure the event photographer (Sarah Pirtle) early in the fall (August/September). Evaluate the necessity of a second photographer to assist with managing large group photo framing.

Waste Management: Coordinate explicitly with facilities for the placement and timely removal of trash and recycling bins at the venue.

Entertainment: Finalize musical performance bookings by late February or early March.

4. Financial & Budget Planning

Early Funding Requests: Submit funding and extra allocation requests (\$500+) to the Faculty Senate and relevant administrators early in the fall semester.

Budget Tracking: Create a comprehensive budget spreadsheet tracking exact expenditures across all categories (plaques, flowers, catering, tables) and monitoring leftover food metrics to optimize future ordering.

Catering Partnerships: Initiate early outreach to the VP of Culinary Arts to explore cost-effective, internal catering packages and beverage services (e.g., bulk water gallons and iced tea) rather than purchasing retail packages.

5. Committee Structure & Representative Engagement

Delegate Tasks: Increase the delegation of preparation tasks to committee representatives between February and April, particularly for multi-tier name and spelling verification processes to prevent program typos.

Committee Size: Evaluate whether the committee is currently understaffed and discuss requesting the addition of a second representative from each division through the Faculty Senate.

Post-Event Direction: Station committee representatives at key exit corridors immediately following the group photo to smoothly guide attendees toward the reception area and avoid hallway congestion.

6. Institutional Communications & Scheduling

Dignitary Outreach: Formalize invitations, attendance confirmations, and operational updates with campus leadership (President, VPs, Board Members) 1–2 weeks prior to the event.

Calendar Auditing: Check holiday schedules (e.g., Easter/Spring breaks) one year in advance when setting the ceremony date to prevent scheduling conflicts with key administrators.

Attendance Policy: Review and establish clear protocols regarding the role, invitation scope, and photo positioning of institutional board members and campus-wide/public relations invitations