



PRESIDENT: TYLER HARVEY

GENERAL FACULTY MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 18, 2026 | Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Memorial Auditorium

CALL TO ORDER

9:01 a.m.

REPORTS

- State of the University Report – Benjamin C. Ayers, President of Clemson University
 - President Ayers' comments are attached.
- State of Academic Affairs Report – Provost J. Cole Smith
 - Provost Smith's comments are attached.
- Faculty Senate President's Report – Dr. Tyler Harvey
 - Faculty Senate President Harvey's comments are attached.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- No unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

- No unfinished business

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- *Leading Clemson Fiercely Forward: A Conversation with President Ayers* follows the General Faculty Meeting, starting at 10 a.m. in Memorial Auditorium.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:39 a.m.

SIGNATURE

Eliza Gallagher, PhD
Associate Professor
Engineering and Science Education
Secretary, Faculty Senate

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eliza Gallagher".

14 May 2026

General Faculty Meeting
Tuesday, August 18, 2026

- Thank you, Provost Smith. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us today as we begin the 2026-2027 academic year.
- And most importantly, I want to say thank you for all that you do.
- Clemson wouldn't be what it is today without you, and I want you to know that I value and appreciate everything you do in the classroom, through research, and through your impact and service to the Clemson community and beyond.
- I also want to thank Provost Smith for his leadership as our Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
- Over the last few weeks, we have had meaningful conversations about the future of our academic enterprise, and I look forward to all that we will continue to accomplish moving forward.
- As I begin my first academic year as Clemson's President, I want to say how grateful I am for the opportunity to work alongside you. I look forward to listening, learning and building strong relationships with faculty across the University.
- I also come to this role with a deep appreciation and respect for the work that you do. It is a path I know well and have also navigated during my more than 30 years in higher education.
- During my career, I've had the privilege of serving as a faculty member, a chaired professor, a department chair, a Dean, a Provost, and now as a President.
- These experiences shaped my perspective on higher education, its value, and the responsibility each of us has to the future, through enriching and bettering the lives of our students and our communities.
- I understand the demands of faculty life – the countless hours preparing for classes, grading what at times seem like literal mountains of coursework, serving on committees, conducting research, publishing manuscripts and journal articles – and somewhere in there you try to have a personal life.
- And I know responsibilities often overlap with one another. But the work you do matters. It impacts people's lives. And it makes a difference.
- You drive Clemson's mission forward through your teaching, research and service.
- You help our students unlock who they can be and what they can accomplish.
- You challenge them to think differently. You introduce new methods and perspectives.
- You mentor them through their education and the successes and challenges in their lives.

- And you prepare them to graduate Clemson, degree in hand, with the knowledge, power, and expertise to make a difference and transform their professions and communities.
- And that is just one component of what you do. It's pretty incredible when you stop and think about it.
- Individually and collectively, we are all in a position to do a lot of good, to positively impact thousands of students each year who will go on to do great things, to solve big challenges that face our state, nation, and world, and to make a tangible difference in communities across the state of South Carolina and beyond.
- Faculty are an important part of what makes Clemson Clemson, and that will never change.
- Our strategic plan, Clemson Elevate, outlines an ambitious and bold framework for our future, centered on our three pillars: delivering the number one student experience, doubling research by 2035, and transforming lives statewide and beyond.
- Faculty contribute to every facet of that strategy.
- When we talk about the student experience, it is about more than extracurricular programs and sporting events. Academic excellence is central to our mission.
- Students remember the professor who pushed them to think outside the box. They remember the mentor who invited them to a prestigious industry conference – or research lab – or offered them the opportunity as a contributing author in a publication.
- These experiences change the trajectory of a student's life. They build confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of value.
- Clemson's ability to expand our research portfolio begins with talented people asking the right questions and exploring solutions with rigor and curiosity.
- It requires an environment where faculty can collaborate across disciplines and pursue ideas that will impact lives.
- Through research, teaching, extension, and partnership, Clemson connects knowledge to service to empower the community and fuel our land-grant mission.
- As your President, one of my responsibilities is to help facilitate what you need so that you can succeed.
- What this requires is open dialogue.
- I want to hear from you about the opportunities in front of Clemson, the challenges ahead, and ideas that will elevate us.
- One opportunity to continue this dialogue is the upcoming Leading Clemson Fiercely *Forward* conversation following this meeting.

- Many of you have submitted questions, and the conversation will allow me to respond candidly about the issues that matter to you and where we are headed as an institution.
- I value this type of exchange and respect our shared governance model.
- Clemson succeeds when we are united together with an unwavering commitment to our teaching, research, and service land-grant mission, to our core values, to each other and the Clemson community. That doesn't mean everyone has to agree on everything – but it does mean we can have thoughtful conversations, we can answer the hard questions with respect and transparency, and we work together to fulfill the institution's promise as a premier public land-grant research university.
- As we begin this academic year, I also want to recognize there is a great deal to be excited about at Clemson.
- I was fortunate enough to help move in some of our new students and they are so energized to be here. Once again, some of the most talented undergraduate and graduate students in the country have chosen Clemson and entrusted us with their education. That is an incredible opportunity – and an incredible responsibility. And you are the people who will shape that experience.
- This fall, we also will welcome the inaugural class of veterinary students to the Harvey S. Peeler, Jr. College of Veterinary Medicine – the first college of veterinary medicine in South Carolina. Think about what that represents. New opportunities for students, new opportunities for research and another powerful way for Clemson to serve our state.
- And our research enterprise continues to build remarkable momentum. Clemson faculty are asking important questions, building partnerships and producing discoveries that are improving lives in South Carolina and beyond. And across this University, I see opportunities for greater collaboration – across disciplines, across colleges and across the state – that can expand Clemson's impact even further.
- So, as we begin this Fall semester, I am proud to be a part of this community. The talent, combined with Clemson's momentum and mission, is why I am so optimistic about our future. Clemson is an extraordinary university. I am excited to begin my first academic year with you, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together.
- Go Tigers!

2026 Provost's Report - General Faculty Meeting

I'm genuinely very excited to start my first Fall semester as Provost here. Not even this heat and humidity dome – which I'm no longer tough enough to handle – is tempering that excitement. As you'll hear now, that excitement is because we're in the middle of a pivotal time for higher education, and because what we do as a faculty really does matter.

Let me get into a miniature state-of-the-union for the academic enterprise at Clemson to show you why I think this is such a pivotal time, and why we need you now.

- The latest US Census estimates indicate South Carolina was the fastest growing state by percentage (up 1.5%) from the July 2024 to July 2025 period. About 5/6 of that increase is net migration — Americans love living in South Carolina.
- Over the most recent fiscal year, 100,600 new businesses have been formed in the state—25,000 of them are so-called “high-propensity” businesses (those projected to hire employees and utilize payroll).
- I mentioned in my convocation remarks that we do not have a weed-out mentality at Clemson. We have a success mentality – we challenge our students but expect them to thrive. That is not just the right thing to do, it's a vital facet for fulfilling our land-grant mission. People in this state need our graduates.
- Now, as a land-grant in a state with positive momentum, we received a record 66,500 first-time undergraduate student applications for fall 26 admission, up 2.7% from last year. Applications from SC residents rose 4.4%.
- Last year, we graduated 5,865 undergraduates and 2,110 graduate students. And if you attended any of these ceremonies, you heard us refer to Clemson now having over 200,000 living alumni! Increasingly, though, these graduates enter a world where structured learning does not end with commencement. Our responsibility is to prepare learners and support lifelong learning for careers that will evolve over decades.
- US Department of Education projects that enrollment of 18-24 year olds will grow 2% over the decade ending in 2030, while enrollment among adults 35 and older will increase by nearly 20%.
- We have to increase our ability to recruit great students. But it's not just by beating out other big universities. Many major technology companies are now in the education business with certificates that aim to provide adult learners with important skills. This is a good thing for the people of this state and country; it's also a “forcing function” that requires us to think differently in the future.

- We're going to need your help to continue to evolve as the model land-grant university, building on some impressive successes we have seen over the last decade.
- How have we addressed research and transforming lives? In the 3rd year of Clemson Elevate, per capita faculty citations have increased over 38% from the Elevate baseline value.
- Regarding research awards, you may recall at the end of last year, we announced that the 2024 expenditures were the highest in our university's history, well ahead of our pace for the Clemson Elevate research expenditure goal. For the first time that we're aware of, our expenditures lead the state of South Carolina (even without a medical school). The next cycle won't be announced out for a while, but I will share with you that we anticipate this number growing by a very impressive 9%.
- There's no sign of us topping out. Clemson faculty fought through challenging financial times and somehow managed to actually grow total proposal submission values, bucking the trends we see elsewhere. We submitted a little over \$950M in FY24, \$1.03B in FY25, and \$1.2B in FY26. That's a 9% increase followed by a 16% increase, and is a testament to faculty persistence and dedication, along with experienced steady leadership by VPR Tanju Karanfil and his team.
- This scholarship and reputational growth, along with the dramatic increase in external research awards, is clear evidence that Clemson faculty continue to engage in research questions and creative activities that matter.
- The University and its faculty and staff continue to invest in the state and fulfill our mission of service and outreach by transforming lives. Let's start with our amazing Public Service and Agriculture team. Clemson Extension directly served over 219,000 stakeholders last year by holding more than 6,000 programs and workshops. We engaged just shy of 39,000 people in one-on-one interactions. Their efforts and those of our volunteers strengthen our economy, develop the state's workforce, protect natural resources, and improve health and quality of life in this state.
- Last fall, a total of 155 of our teacher preparation program graduates were hired into SC school districts. This past year, the University dispersed \$100 Million in need-based aid in the form of grants and scholarships, and its Rural Health program saw nearly 10,200 patient visits.
- Taken together, these accomplishments tell an important story about Clemson. We are strengthening the academic enterprise while expanding its impact — creating

opportunities for students, generating new knowledge and putting Clemson expertise to work on consequential challenges.

- But each number I've mentioned represents something much more meaningful: The work of people.
- They represent faculty pursuing an idea, mentoring a student, building a partnership, developing a new course, securing a grant or finding a new way to put Clemson knowledge to work. And as we begin this academic year, we have an opportunity not only to celebrate that progress, but to think together about what comes next. That is one of the reasons the beginning of a new academic year is so exciting—few organizations get a fresh opportunity each year to rethink, renew, and recommit themselves to their mission.
- Turning ideas into transformational change and growth is not easy, but it's important and rewarding. And it's now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman with lengthy experience in leadership, education, scholarship, and innovation: The 16th President of Clemson University, Dr. Benjamin Ayers.

Good morning, colleagues.

Some of the most important work of the Faculty Senate is also the least visible.

It happens before a resolution reaches the floor. Before a policy changes. Before a problem is solved.

It begins when a faculty member says, “This process isn’t working,” or “I don’t understand how this decision was made,” or “There has to be a better way to do this.”

Over the past year, the standing committee of the Senate prepared reports and resolutions on nearly 40 agenda items brought forth by faculty, with another 20 or so carrying forward to this year. Those numbers reflect an enormous amount of work by faculty from across the University, and I want to begin by thanking everyone who contributed to it.

But I do not want to spend our time today walking through a list of committee accomplishments.

Instead, I want to reflect on what I think we learned from that work, what those lessons tell us about the year ahead, and why this is a particularly important moment for faculty governance.

One lesson from last year was fairly simple: institutions work best when they make it possible for people to do good work—and when they recognize the people doing that work appropriately.

Sometimes that means having better information.

Faculty have raised concerns for years about salary compression and inversion. Those concerns are difficult to address when we cannot see the problem clearly. Last year, the Finance and Infrastructure Committee developed a systematic approach to salary benchmarking and shared high level analyses with your Deans. They also developed a Strategic Compensation Plan to guide how the university can proactively invest in faculty which was shared with the Board of Trustees in April.

Sometimes making it possible for people to do good work means fixing a process that has become harder than it needs to be.

Our work on sabbaticals is a good example. A sabbatical is supposed to create space for scholarship, renewal, and intellectual growth. But faculty were encountering gaps in information and procedural barriers that made the process unnecessarily difficult. The Welfare Committee worked with the Provost’s Office to identify those issues and improve the process, and we continue to work on ways to improve communication, access, and equity in the sabbatical process.

And sometimes it means making sure that the language and structures of the University accurately recognize the contributions faculty are already making.

One accomplishment from last year that I want to call out specifically is the Senate's passage of a resolution to retitle our current Lecturer ranks as a Teaching Professor track: Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, and Teaching Professor.

We are now working with the Provost's Office on a final feasibility study and possible timeline for implementation of that change.

I think this matters for reasons that go well beyond titles.

Our teaching-focused faculty are central to Clemson's academic mission. They educate and mentor large numbers of our students, contribute to curricular innovation, provide leadership in their programs and departments, and bring deep pedagogical expertise to the University.

The titles we use should reflect the professional standing of those colleagues and the value of the work they perform.

That change is also part of a larger evolution in how we think about the faculty itself. Clemson's academic mission is carried out by faculty in different appointment types, with different responsibilities and different combinations of teaching, scholarship, research, service, and engagement. A strong university should recognize those contributions honestly and create meaningful professional pathways for the people making them.

That is why this work fits so naturally with another question the Senate spent considerable time on last year: who has a voice, and when?

We adopted policies clarifying faculty involvement when academic units are reorganized which are currently being stress tested with a merger in the College of Science. I especially want to thank Dean Young for embracing those policies and genuinely engaging faculty in the decision-making process. And each one of you had taken part in revisions to bylaws and TPR documents within your departments and schools to ensure participation from all faculty ranks and designations.

Salary data, sabbaticals, faculty titles, representation, academic-unit restructuring—on the surface, these can look like very different issues.

I increasingly think they are versions of the same question:

Does the institution create conditions in which people can contribute their best work, be appropriately recognized for that work, understand the decisions that affect them, and have a meaningful role in shaping those decisions?

That's the way I think about shared governance.

Not as an end in itself. Not as a collection of committees. And certainly not as a mechanism for making every decision slower.

Shared governance is valuable when it connects the expertise and experience of faculty to the decisions that shape the academic mission of the University.

And I think we need that connection now more than ever.

Higher education is entering a period in which some very old assumptions are being challenged at the same time.

The financial environment is changing. The research funding environment is changing. Public expectations are changing. The composition of the faculty workforce is changing.

And the knowledge economy itself is changing.

Artificial intelligence is perhaps the clearest illustration.

Last year, the Senate worked on AI from both the research and instructional sides. We examined responsible use in research, the need for clearer governance and training, and expectations for AI use in courses and syllabi.

Those were necessary steps.

But I think the more difficult work is just beginning.

If a student can generate a polished essay in seconds, we have to ask why we assigned the essay in the first place.

What intellectual work were we trying to cultivate?

Was the essay the learning itself, or was it evidence of something deeper—sustained reasoning, the ability to evaluate evidence, the discipline of developing an argument, the capacity to distinguish what one knows from what one merely thinks?

If technology can increasingly produce the artifact, then we need to become much more intentional about the underlying capacities we want our students to develop.

That question extends well beyond AI.

For generations, universities occupied a distinctive place in society because we generated knowledge, organized it, validated it, and transmitted it.

We still do all of those things.

But information itself is no longer scarce. Increasingly sophisticated synthesis is available on demand. Students can access explanations, examples, and assistance at a scale that would have been unimaginable even a few years ago.

So the question before us is not whether the university still matters.

It is what becomes most valuable about a university education in that environment.

And faculty need to lead that conversation.

That is why some of the work before the Senate this year reaches beyond individual policy questions. Our Scholastic Policies Committee is engaging issues involving academic integrity, curricular innovation, general education, and the ways our academic structures may need to evolve as teaching and learning change.

We have also established an Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Higher Education, graciously being led by Past-President Sarah White, to step back from the immediate pressures of the academic year and examine the larger forces affecting universities: declining public trust, changing demographics and workforce expectations, technological disruption, and evolving ideas about what students and society expect from institutions like Clemson.

The goal is not to predict precisely what higher education will look like ten years from now but go make sure that we are asking difficult questions before circumstances answer them for us.

Institutions can respond to change after it arrives, or they can develop the capacity to shape their response before the choices narrow.

I would much rather Clemson do the latter.

And that requires us to take shared governance seriously—not just when we disagree with a decision, but when we see opportunities to make the University better.

I also want to be candid about where we still have work to do.

One of the clearest messages we heard from faculty last year was a desire for greater transparency, clearer governance roles, and opportunities to contribute before decisions are effectively finalized.

That criticism is worth hearing.

There are times when faculty involvement comes too late.

There are times when we ask for input and do not adequately explain what happened to it.

And there are times when communication becomes a substitute for consultation.

Being informed that a decision has been made is not the same thing as participating in making it.

That is one reason the Senate is continuing to work on how we communicate with faculty, and how governance processes work across the university.

And it is also why the people who agree to represent the faculty in those governance structures deserve our recognition.

At this point, I want to offer particular thanks to Dr. Brian Powell, who recently stepped down after five years of service as the Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees.

That role provides an important connection between the faculty and the Board charged with stewardship of the University. It requires someone willing to listen carefully to faculty across the institution, understand issues that are often complex and contested, and bring a faculty perspective into conversations taking place at the highest level of University governance.

Five years is a significant commitment of time and service, and I want to thank Brian for making that commitment on behalf of his colleagues and Clemson.

We are now seeking the faculty member who will take on that responsibility next. Nominations for Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees are currently open and will remain open through August 31.

I would encourage you to think seriously about colleagues who would serve the faculty and the University well in that role—and to consider whether you might be one of them.

Because improving shared governance is not something the Faculty Senate can accomplish by itself.

Governance structures matter. Policies matter. Representation matters.

But ultimately those structures only work when faculty are willing to participate in them.

And that brings me back to the larger purpose behind all of this work.

Universities are not abstractions.

The decisions we make eventually reach people.

They reach the student who arrives here uncertain about what they are capable of and encounters a faculty member who opens an intellectual door.

They reach the new colleague trying to establish a career and wondering whether Clemson is a place where that career can flourish.

They reach the researcher trying to sustain a program, the faculty member developing a new way to teach, and the department trying to adapt to change without losing what makes it excellent.

That is why shared governance matters.

And it is also why preserving what is valuable about the University does not necessarily mean preserving every practice or structure we inherited.

In fact, the opposite may be true.

If we care deeply about the purposes of the University, then we have to be willing to rethink the structures through which we pursue them.

Faculty have a particular responsibility in that work because questioning assumptions is what we do.

We ask whether the prevailing explanation remains adequate. We look at evidence. We notice anomalies. We test alternatives. And when the evidence requires it, we revise our conclusions.

We should bring those same habits of mind to the University itself.

Shared governance cannot simply be a mechanism for defending the institution we inherited.

It also has to be a mechanism for imagining the institution we need next.

So my request of you this year is a simple one.

When you see something Clemson needs to do differently, do not assume someone else will raise it -- share it with me or with your Senators.

Higher education is going to change.

The most important question is not whether we can prevent that change.

It is whether faculty will have a meaningful role in shaping it.

I believe we should.

And I believe Clemson will be stronger if we do.

Thank you, best wishes for the upcoming academic year, and Go Tigers.