



University Faculty/Senate Officer-Elect Candidate Statements and Bios vote March 21 - March 26, 2024

[Link for voting.](#)

for Chair-Elect

Dr. Virginia A. Davis

Daniel F. and Josephine Breeden Professor

Department of Chemical Engineering, Samuel Ginn College of Engineering

Candidate Statement

It is an especially exciting time in Auburn University's history. The University Senate will play an important role in fostering cross-campus collaboration between the faculty and administration as Auburn embarks on implementing the long-term vision and goals contained in its forthcoming strategic plan. I would be honored to serve as University Senate Chair-Elect during this dynamic time.

Throughout my initial career in industry and my ongoing academic career, I have thrived on bringing people from different backgrounds and units together to develop and achieve common goals. My cross-campus, formal, and informal collaborations have provided me with perspective on the commonalities and distinctions between different units, appointment structures, and experience levels. My current participation in the SEC Provost's Academic Leadership Program (ALDP) is elevating my understanding of the different functions and approaches of administrative units across campus. In addition, it enables me to interact with current and future faculty leaders from across the SEC. If elected, I will use my background and skills to

- Facilitate communication and collaboration between Auburn University's Senate, faculty, and administration.
- Facilitate engagement of Senators and Senate committee members from all units in efforts to work toward common goals and efficiently address issues as they arise.
- Continue to support efforts to foster a sense of belonging among all members of the Auburn Family.

My interest in serving as Chair-Elect, Chair, and Past-Chair of the Senate is driven by my belief in shared governance and my experience working with people from across both campus and the state of Alabama. Since joining Auburn's faculty in 2005 as an Assistant Professor in Chemical Engineering, I have worked alongside faculty from each of Auburn's Colleges on interdisciplinary research, outreach, and university committees. For example, as the Director of Faculty and Community Engagement for the Alabama Science and Engineering Fair, I garnered resources and support from the Provost's Office and eleven of Auburn's Academic colleges to host a STEM is Everywhere Expo in conjunction with the state science fair. This event was lauded by K-12 students, parents, alumni, and industry representatives for showcasing the breadth and depth of Auburn programs. I also understand the interface between Auburn faculty and external stakeholders. As the first faculty liaison to the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering's 100+ Women Strong organization, I developed strong relationships with Auburn Advancement personnel and individual alumni. As the faculty liaison, I worked collaboratively to develop programs for supporting students and faculty. Many of these programs and principles remain core parts of the organization, which now includes over 260 members and 20 corporate sponsors. Moreover, in 2020, Governor Kay Ivey appointed me to the newly formed Alabama STEM Council. I led a working group with members from the state government, K-12 education, higher education, and industry. These experiences provide me context on the importance of Auburn faculty to state goals and workforce development needs. I am excited about the opportunity to further evolve and apply my understanding and skills as Senate Chair-Elect.

Bio-Davis

Virginia A. Davis joined Auburn's faculty in 2005 and is currently the Daniel F. and Josephine Breeden Professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering's Department of Chemical Engineering. Her research program has two main areas of emphasis: 1) structure-process-property relationships in soft matter systems and 2) enhancing STEM identity formation in students from underrepresented groups. Over the last nineteen years, Davis has served Auburn and her profession in numerous capacities. She has served on the Senate Diversity Committee (2021-2024), the Senate Patent and Invention Disclosure Committee (2018-2019), the

Faculty Outreach and Engagement Committee and Community of Practice (2016 – date), and the Women in Science and Engineering Steering Committee (2007-2015, chair 2010-2012, Past chair 2012-2015). She has also served as a graduate program officer and on many awards and faculty search committees. She was the founding advisor for Auburn's Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers student chapter (2010) and the first faculty liaison for 100+ Women Strong, an organization devoted to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding women in engineering. She currently serves on the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering Inclusion and Diversity Committee and facilitates workshops on enhancing a sense of belonging among all students and faculty. She has served on the Alabama STEM Council since 2020 and chaired the Landscape Mapping and Scale-Up Committee from 2020-2022. Her ongoing work with the Alabama STEM Council focuses on synergistically connecting stakeholders from across the regional STEM ecosystem to meet education and workforce development needs.



for Chair-Elect

Dr. Luke Oeding

Associate Professor

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Candidate Statement

I'm honored and humbled to be nominated to serve as Chair of the University Senate and University Faculty. Here are some reasons why I think I'm a good candidate:

I see this administrative role as a service-oriented position. My main goal is to contribute to Auburn's excellence, while also planning to return to full-time teaching and research. I am committed to making Auburn a place where I want to stay and continue my work.

During my 10 years at Auburn, I've gained valuable experiences that have prepared me for this role. I've served on a variety of committees and taskforces at departmental, college and university levels. I've also been involved in interdisciplinary work with several different colleges. I have also served in a variety of roles for international professional organizations.

Currently, I serve as the president of the Auburn Chapter of AAUP (American Association of University Professors). Through my involvement with AAUP, I am continually collaborating with faculty and administrators across Auburn's main campus. I take particular pride in our ability to address challenges constructively. During our twice-per-semester meetings with the President and Provost, we have been able to effectively advocate for faculty concerns on several important topics, including:

- Background checks
- Childcare infrastructure
- Salaries, including transparency issues
- Academic freedom, including CRT-related issues
- Shared governance

As a mathematician I am fascinated by logical argument, and I also pay close attention to the human element of learning and discovery. I'm interested in applying these skills to serve the university community. I am well-versed in the communication between faculty and administration, and I am well-suited to continue to do this in a greater capacity as Chair.

If elected chair I would endeavor to do the following:

1. Highlight the achievements of the University Faculty, the University Senate, and their many committees.
2. Encourage participation in our shared governance processes by a greater number of people.
3. Stand for academic freedom.

Bio-Oeding

Dr. Luke Oeding is an Associate Professor of Mathematics and Statistics (DMS). He joined Auburn in 2013 after NSF-sponsored postdoctoral positions at UC Berkeley (2011-2013) and Università Degli Studi di Firenze, Italy (2009-2011). He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics from Texas A&M University in 2009. He was an Academic All-American pole vaulter at Franklin & Marshall College, where he double majored in Mathematics and Physics.

Dr. Oeding's research splits the dividing line between the pure and applied, with interests in algebraic geometry and its applications to areas such as signal processing, computer vision, navigation, quantum information and the foundations of machine learning. He has authored 27 publications in top pure and applied journals and has given over 145 invited lectures all over the world. He has consistently received funding for his interdisciplinary work.

At Auburn, Dr. Oeding has served in a wide variety of roles for his department, college, university, and professional societies, including the following:

- Auburn Chapter of the American Association for University Professors (AAUP): President (2023-2025), President-Elect (2021-2022), Executive Committee (2019-2020)
- Secretary of the Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) activity group on Algebraic Geometry (2024-2025).
- Undergraduate Program Officer and Associate Chair (2019-2020) for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. He has chaired and served on several successful faculty searches.
- Main local organizer for the Spring 2019 Southeast Sectional meeting of the American Mathematical Society. This meeting attracted over 550 participants from all over the US and the world, and remains the largest mathematics conference ever hosted by Auburn University.
- COSAM Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Task Force member.
- AU: Teaching Effectiveness Committee member

Dr. Oeding also actively collaborates across colleges. He has worked on research projects with engineers in the MRI Research Center, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. He partnered with the Department of Management to bring an Entrepreneurship Minor to DMS, has served as a judge for the TigerCage Business Idea Competition, and has served as an outside member for a hiring committee in the Harbert College of Business. He worked with the Honors College to develop new Honors Mathematics courses. The large (AMS) conference he organized was made possible by working with the national organization leadership and facilitating collaborations between the COSAM and University Libraries administrative teams. He worked with the Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) to make a massive turnaround in the assessment of undergraduate mathematics programs, both in their perception and use within the department. This effort received an "exemplary" rating in the most recent round of OAA's meta-assessment. He chaired his department's Academic Program Review (APR) team.



for Chair-Elect

Dr . Michael Stern

Associate Professor

Department of Economics, College of Liberal Arts

Candidate Statement

Auburn has the potential to be a great university. Achieving this potential requires an outstanding faculty who share in the governance of the institution. Maintaining an outstanding faculty, sufficient in both stature and number to advance the University's academic mission, requires substantial resources and the broad protection of academic freedom. Unfortunately, over the past two

decades, Auburn University has failed to sufficiently invest in the faculty, instead choosing to spend lavishly on administrators, athletics, and facilities. Worse, the University maintains a culture of retaliation, suppressing the voice of the faculty and making a mockery of the notion of shared governance. My highest priorities as chair of the University Faculty will be the acquisition of a greater share of university resources for the faculty and the broad protection of their academic freedom.

I previously served as the chair of the Economics Department for eight years. During this time, I raised money for three endowed professorships, an endowed teaching award, and an endowed fund for excellence. I obtained three additional faculty positions, and I transformed a department with no reserves and an operating deficit to one with \$600K in reserves and a six-figure annual surplus. Furthermore, I acquired newly renovated and vastly improved academic facilities for the faculty of my department. I have considerable experience and a proven record of providing resources for the faculty that I represent. It is essential that we choose a leader for the University Faculty who can focus the administration of Auburn University on investment in our faculty. Faculty salaries at Auburn University must be sufficient to keep up with the marketplace, maintain reasonable equity, and incentivize effort.

During the past fifteen years, I have been highly active in both the Senate and University Faculty meetings, both as a member of our academic community and as a two-term Senator. Anyone that has regularly attended these meetings may recall my speech on matters such as budgetary reform, academic freedom, senate procedure, raises, and athletic influence over curricula. My commitment to maintaining the first amendment and the academic freedom of all Auburn faculty members has been unwavering. These fundamental rights apply not only to those with tenure but are essential protections for ALL faculty and students. The culture of retaliation must end at Auburn University and there should be no compromise in our defense of these freedoms. As chair of the University Faculty, I will champion enhanced internal protections for academic freedom, including real accountability for those who trespass upon such rights.

The faculty of Auburn University deserve a fearless advocate who puts aggregate faculty welfare first. My unique Auburn experience allows me to communicate in ways that will focus the attention of senior administrators and generate long overdue results. It would be an honor to serve as the Chair of the University Faculty and I hope to earn your support.

Bio-Stern

Dr. Michael Stern is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics. After earning a B.S. in Mathematics from Purdue University and a Ph.D. in Economics from Indiana University, Dr. Stern began his Auburn career in 2004 as an Assistant Professor of Economics in the College of Business. The Department of Economics administratively transferred to the Provost's Office in 2008 and subsequently to the College of Liberal Arts in 2009. Dr. Stern served two terms as the Senator for the Department of Economics starting in 2009 and he was awarded tenure and promotion in 2010.

Dr. Michael Stern was first elected as Chair of the Economics Department in 2010. He continued to deliver distinguished service in that capacity until 2018 and earned unanimous reelection twice as the Department Chair. Over the past couple of years, Dr. Stern has been teaching undergraduate courses in Industrial Organization and both undergraduate and graduate courses in Mathematical Economics. Dr. Stern was the recipient of the 2021 Ault Award for Excellence in Teaching. Dr. Stern currently serves on the Faculty Salaries and Welfare committee and is leading a broad investigation into raises and increases in compensation for administrators and staff versus the faculty at Auburn University.



for Secretary-Elect

Dr. David N. Lucsko

Professor

Department of History, College of Liberal Arts

Candidate Statement

This is an exciting time to be a member of the Auburn faculty. Our campus is bustling with new construction. The upper administration is full of new faces, and new ideas. Most importantly, we are in the process of developing and implementing a new strategic plan that will affect us all. It is a time of great opportunity, but also uncertainty. What will our administration prioritize, and what might be left out? What will Auburn be like five years from now, or ten? Robust faculty input can help shape this process, and the Faculty Senate will be a vital forum in which to make our voices heard. As such, the Senate needs to operate like a well-oiled machine to amplify the perspectives and priorities of the faculty most effectively. This is why I'm running for Senate Secretary.

The position calls for vital behind-the-scenes work for facilitating faculty input in university governance. The Secretary's roles in accurate record-keeping, timely communication, and in recruiting faculty for university committees involve a skillset I have honed over several years and am keen to utilize in service to the faculty.

I bring considerable experience to the table. Most recently, I served as Chair of the Department of History for two terms (2016–2022), during which time I came to understand our institution's operations quite well. In my role as chair I managed department records, staffed and worked with numerous ad-hoc and standing committees, and kept our department running smoothly, including during the pandemic. I also served, immediately prior to my election as chair, both as Faculty Senator for my department and as the Executive Secretary of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT). As SHOT Secretary (2013–2016), I organized annual conferences, ran Executive Council meetings, kept and managed minutes and other organizational records, and also worked each year to fill vacancies in our many committees and oversee their activities. It was a service role I would have gladly continued for another term had I not been elected department chair.

For me it has been a wonderful change of pace to return to full-time faculty status after nearly a decade of administrative responsibilities both within Auburn and in the broader profession. But I am also eager to find ways to serve my colleagues and this institution during this crucial moment. Given my background, the position of Senate Secretary would be an ideal way for me to do so.

Bio-Lucsko

David N. Lucsko, Professor of History, joined the Auburn faculty in 2010. He earned his B.S. from Georgia Tech in 1998 and his Ph.D. from MIT in 2005. Prior to joining the Department of History here at Auburn, he was Managing Editor of *Technology and Culture*, the journal of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT), housed at the time at the Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. He was also a Faculty Instructor at the University of Detroit Mercy and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Michigan–Dearborn.

Dr. Lucsko later served as Executive Secretary of SHOT from 2014–2016. He then served two full terms as Chair of the Department of History from 2016–2022 before being term-limited out and returning to his faculty role. He teaches the core Technology and Civilization sequence as well as upper-division courses in the history of technology, including classes on waste management and recycling, the history of industrial technology, and automotive history.

Dr. Lucsko's research focuses on the history of the automobile. He has presented his work at countless venues across the United States and the globe. In addition to research articles on the history of automotive restoration, motorsports, high-speed transportation, automotive regulation, and the salvage-yard business, he is the author of *The Business of Speed: The Hot Rod Industry in America, 1915–1990* (2008) and *Junkyards, Gearheads, and Rust: Salvaging the Automotive Past* (2016), both from the Johns Hopkins University Press. He is currently working on a monograph about the automobile in the 1970s.



for Secretary-Elect

Dr. J. Rachel Prado

Senior Lecturer

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Candidate Statement

It is both an honor and privilege to be nominated for the position of Secretary-elect of the University Senate. As a Senior Lecturer specializing in large lecture chemistry courses, providing timely, accurate, and clear guidance is critical to the best student experience in the classroom. Managing classes of up to 700 students and helping to oversee the administration of secure final exams simultaneously to over 2,000 students, has honed my administrative, logistical, and leadership skills—essential qualities for the role of Secretary of the Senate.

After taking on leadership roles in my department and college, I have stepped into a broader University leadership role as a Biggio Faculty Fellow. In this position I have seen firsthand the power of engaged, collegial, and collaborative faculty efforts. I have worked with faculty across the University from varying disciplines that span horticulture to aerospace engineering. I have built collaborative relationships with different divisions such as Student Affairs, Office of Information Technology, and Academic Support.

I am deeply committed to principles of equity, accuracy, and transparency. My dedication to representing all ranks and roles at the University, including but not limited to faculty, allows me to advance the mission of Auburn. My aim is to cultivate a culture where everyone feels valued, heard, and respected within our shared governance structure. As Secretary of the Senate, I pledge to unite all members in collaboratively addressing the challenges we face.

As secretary I will:

- keep accurate minutes of our meetings and update everyone promptly;
- chair the Rules Committee with a focus on transparency and inclusivity;
- announce upcoming meetings and events in a prompt manner;
- continue the work toward modernizing and updating Senate website;
- strive to create clear, accessible guidelines for bringing concerns or proposed changes to the senate;
- maintain an open-door policy for all to share their concerns and ideas.

Thank you for considering my candidacy. I am excited about the possibility of serving our university in this capacity, and I am eager to contribute to the positive changes we all wish to see.

Bio-Prado

Dr. J. Rachel Prado is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and a Faculty Fellow for the Biggio Center. She received her B.S. and Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and was awarded the 2017 Cram Teacher-Scholar postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles. She joined the faculty at Auburn in 2019 and specializes in teaching large lecture introductory and organic chemistry courses.

During her five years at Auburn, she has served at various levels. In the College of Sciences and Mathematics, she is a founding member of the NTTF Committee (2021-present), serves on the Biomedical Sciences Advisory Committee (2023-present), Assistant Dean for Biomedical Sciences Search Committee (2023), COS-AM OIED Mentor (2021-present), and co-director of Chemistry Learning Assistant program (2020-present).

At the University level, she is a Biggio Faculty fellow working with faculty across the university to support the teaching mission at Auburn. She introduced and co-led the nationally recognized Mobile Institute on Scien-

tific Teaching, a weeklong workshop focusing on evidence-based teaching practices. She also leads the learning communities on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the Nontenure Track Faculty. Additionally, she serves as the faculty sponsor for the National Society of Leadership and Success and appears often at First Year Experience's Ace That Class Faculty Panels.