

UNIVERSITY SENATE
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2024

The University Senate was called to order at 3:30 p.m., in 111 Harrison Hall on Monday, October 21, 2024. Members absent: Mastano Dzimbiri, Chip Hahn, Thomas Poetter, Andrea Ridilla, Caitlin Spyra, Troy Travis

Two Minutes Speech: From Senator Nathan French (**Attachment A/pg. 14**)

1. **Call to Order and Announcements and Remarks** – Rosemary Pennington, Chair of University Senate Executive Committee
 - a. Just a reminder that open enrollment closes toward the end of next week I believe. Benefits can be viewed in Workday and you will be able to see the impact it will have on your check based on the benefits you select.
2. **Approval of University Senate Minutes**
 - a. University Senate Full Meeting Minutes_10.07.2024 (Results: 53-Yes, 00-No, 02-Abstain)
 - i. Revision on page 3 to read: As all of the regional campuses were created by the Ohio legislature, we **can't** just walk in and shut them down
3. **Consent Calendar:** The following items were received and accepted on the Consent Calendar:
 - a. Curricular Items 10.09.2024
 - b. LEC Meeting Minutes 10.01.2024
 - c. LEC Meeting Minutes 10.08.2024
 - d. Department Planning & Improvement Committee Meetings 02.02.2024
 - e. Department Planning & Improvement Committee Meetings 03.04.2024
 - f. Department Planning & Improvement Committee Meetings 09.06.2024
4. **New Business**
 - a. Policy Revision - Graduate Council, Mike Crowder, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School and Professor - ***Presentation only; Discussion and Anticipated Vote on November 04, 2024***
 - i. Proposed Change to the Policy
 1. The authority to recommend graduate program policy to the University Senate shall reside in the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council shall be composed of twelve (12) elected faculty representatives and three (3) graduate student representatives. Eligibility for faculty service on the Graduate Council shall be limited to faculty members with Level A graduate faculty status, and representation shall be limited to the college and schools offering graduate degree programs. The three (3) graduate student representatives in the Graduate Council shall be chosen in accordance with the procedures established by the Graduate Student Association. The Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate

School shall serve as chair of the Graduate Council, the Administrative Assistant shall serve as its secretary, and ~~the Associate Provost~~^{an Associate Dean of the Graduate School} will serve as acting chair in the absence of the Dean.

- ii. Senator Question and Comments
 - 1. Senator: Thank you for the continued revision of these policies and should we expect more of these revisions in the future? (A) Yes, and unfortunately, we tend to find these when things come up and start reviewing the policies.
- b. Organization of the Graduate School, Mike Crowder, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School and Professor - ***Presentation only; Discussion and Anticipated Vote on November 04, 2024***
 - i. Proposed Change to the Policy
 - 1. The Graduate School is one division in the academic organization of Miami University. Although similar to other academic divisions of the University, the Graduate School has some fundamental differences because of the unique relationship of its members to the other divisions: the Graduate Faculty is composed of members who also serve as faculty members of the other divisions. The following sections describe the organization of the Graduate School, starting with the executive officers.
 - 2. There are ~~two (2)~~^{three (3)} - executive officers of the Graduate School:
 - a. Dean of the Graduate School, who is responsible to the President through the Provost. The Dean of the Graduate School is appointed by the President with the approval of the Board of Trustees.
 - b. The Associate Deans^s of the Graduate School, who is ^{are} responsible to the Dean of the Graduate School.
 - ii. Senator Question and Comments
 - 1. No comments or questions

5. **Special Reports**

- a. Oxford Issue 2 Discussion, Mayor Bill Snively
 - i. Issue 2 Proposed 2.6 Mills Fire/EMS Property Tax Levy
 - ii. Your Oxford Fire Department responds to Oxford-area emergencies, funded by a 0.25% income tax passed in 2011.
 - 1. Highly-Trained Professionals: Firefighters and EMTs/Paramedics
 - 2. Who shows up when there's a fire alarm
 - iii. Why a new levy?
 - 1. The Problem
 - a. The acute need for additional staff
 - b. Growing deficit
 - c. Need to replace capital equipment

- iv. Staff
 - 1. Total of 12 FT firefighters/ Paramedics
 - 2. Per shift:
 - a. 4 FT Firefighters/Paramedics
 - b. 2 PT Firefighters/EMT's
 - c. 1 PT Firefighter/ EMT's during school year
 - 3. Schedule is 24 hours on, 48 hours off
- v. Growing Call Volume - Graph provided in slideshow presentation showing numbers from 2009-2023
 - 1. Subtotal City & MU
 - a. 2009 = 2065
 - b. 2023 = 2579
 - 2. Total
 - a. 2009 = 2347
 - b. 2023 = 3170
- vi. High Number of Calls per Staff - Graph with additional information provided in the slideshow presentation
 - 1. No. of Fire/EMS Calls in 2021 per FT FF/Par.
 - a. Fairfield = 129
 - b. Hamilton = 138
 - c. Middletown = 158
 - d. Monroe = 81
 - e. Fairfield Township = 120
 - f. Liberty Township = 74
 - g. Kent = 141
 - h. Oxford = 253
- vii. Deepening Retention Crisis
 - 1. 6 experienced FT Firefighter/ Paramedics have left city for other departments
- viii. Adding New Staff Is Costly
 - 1. Each FF/Paramedic cost \$172,428 (Salary & Benefits)
 - 2. Adding 3 new staff \$517,284 (1 additional each shift)
 - 3. Adding 6 new staff
 - 4. \$1,034,568 (2 additional each shift)
- ix. A Growing Deficit
 - 1. FY 2021 Actual \$101,062
 - 2. FY 2022 Actual \$765,172 (Includes capital cost of Fire Pumper at \$652,980 plus MU ½ contribution of \$217,660 for a new effect of - \$435,320. Fund deficit of \$329,852 w/o capital cost)
 - 3. FY 2023 Actual \$568,160
 - 4. FY 2024 Estimate \$909,693 (w/ \$400,000 transfer from GF)

- x. Fire & EMS Fund Summary Of Balances: Fund 418 - Graph in slideshow presentation provides additional information
 - 1. Balance Beginning of Year
 - a. 2022 Actual = 2,653,067
 - b. 2024 Projected = 1,319,628
 - c. 2025 Budget = 451,241
 - d. % Over 2024 = -74.6%
 - 2. Encumbered
 - a. 2022 Actual = 323,085
 - b. 2023 Actual = 260,349
 - 3. Balance End of Year
 - a. 2022 Actual = 1,564,810
 - b. 2024 Projected = 451,241
 - c. 2025 Budget = 1,226,584
 - d. % Over 2024 = 41.4%
 - 4. Beginning Fund Balance for FY 2021 \$2,754,128
 - 5. Estimated Ending Fund Balance for FY 2024 \$451,241
- xi. Capital Equipment Needs
 - 1. Replace 2005 Aerial Ladder Truck \$2,250,000
 - 2. Replace Ambulance 2010 Ambulance \$375,000
 - 3. Cardiac Monitor/Defibrillators Replacement (5) \$300,000
 - 4. EMS Cot Replacement (4) \$294,000
- xii. Issue 2: Fire and EMS Levy
 - 1. A Solution
 - a. New 2.6 mills 10 year real property tax levy for Fire/EMS will generate \$1,284,681 each year.
 - b. Under the historic Fire/EMS Agreement, Miami University will contribute \$1,270,000 each year for 10 years (conditioned on passage of Issue 2).
 - c. Total new revenue of \$2.55 million which addresses the estimated 12-year average annual deficit.
 - 2. Why a Property Tax - Oxford's income taxes are already the highest.
 - a. Oxford - 2% plus 1% school district income tax = 3%
 - b. Hamilton - 2%
 - c. Middletown - 2%
 - d. Fairfield - 1.5%
 - e. Monroe - 2% (qualifying homeowners lowered to 1.5%)
 - f. Trenton - 1.5%
 - 3. Our property taxes are the lowest
 - a. Oxford-Talawanda CSD 40.04
 - b. Fairfield-Fairfield CSD 40.62
 - c. Hamilton-Talawanda CSD 42.28

- d. Liberty TWP-Lakota LSD 4309
- e. West Chester TWP-Lakota LSD 45.87
- f. Trenton-Edgewood CSD 47.38
- g. Hamilton-Hamilton CSD 47.59
- h. Monroe-Monroe LSD 51.21
- i. Middletown-Middletown CSD 58.02
- j. Rates rounded to 2 decimals. Adding 2.6 Mills = 42.64

4. Impact on Property Taxes

- a. Home Market Value
 - i. \$100,000
 - ii. \$200,000
 - iii. \$300,000
 - iv. \$400,000
- b. Home Assessed Value
 - i. \$35,000
 - ii. \$70,000
 - iii. \$105,000
 - iv. \$140,000
- c. 2.6 mills
 - i. \$91.00
 - ii. \$182.00
 - iii. \$273.00
 - iv. \$364.00

5. What happens if Issue 2 fails?

- a. Unresolved staffing crisis in Fire/EMS
- b. Drastic reduction in capital improvements
- c. Deep budget cuts across all programs except Police & Fire/EMS

xiii. Senator Question and Comments

- 1. Senator: What do other communities like OU, and Bowling Green do?(A)
A lot of them are in bigger cities so it is easier for them to swallow it.
Miami has risen to its fair share as long as the voters are willing to match it.
- 2. Senator: Is this a case if the vote fails to pass then Miami won't pay?(A)
Yes, that is correct.
- 3. Senator: Is the plan for a 6-person increase? (A) Yes, we're meeting today's needs and looking ahead to avoid having to ask for more in the future.
- 4. Senator: Which programs will be cut if this fails? (A) We are hoping that it passes but we haven't made those decisions yet on which departments will be cut. We would start with things that are not essential, as we can't cut from our essential departments.

5. Senator: What is the percentage of calls that are for Miami versus the rest of the community? (A) Including the apartments in town it is about half.
 6. Senator: What is the total budget that Miami is kicking in? (A) The total budget is 451,241 and will not handle that million-dollar deficit.
- b. Update on the Center for Civics, Culture, and Society, Chris Makaroff, Special Assistant to the Provost
- i. Center for Civics, Culture and Society HB33
 1. It is an independent Academic unit, physically housed in CAS, that is run by an independent director that can consult with the dean, but reports to the President/Provost. Center will house no fewer than 10 tenure/tenure-track faculty, either wholly or as joint positions, plus support staff as needed. Director has the sole and exclusive authority to hire/fire faculty staff, as well as develop and offer curriculum (courses, majors, minors, and graduate degrees).
 2. The Center was initially funded at \$2M/year for two years.
 - ii. Center Mission
 1. Conduct teaching and research on the “historical ideas, traditions, and texts that have shaped the American constitutional order and society” [Sec. 3339.06(A)(1)];
 2. Promote “free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth” [Sec. 3339.06(A)(2)(a)];
 3. Equip students with the “skills, habits, and dispositions of mind they need to reach their own informed conclusions on matters of social and political importance” [Sec. 3339.06(A)(2)(b)];
 4. Affirm the value of intellectual diversity in higher education and promote intellectual diversity within the Miami University community [Sec. 3339.06(A)(2)(c)]; and
 5. Foster the development and maintenance of a university community “dedicated to an ethic of civil and free inquiry, which respects the intellectual freedom of each member, supports individual capacities for growth, and welcomes the differences of opinion that shall naturally exist in a public university setting” [Sec. 3339.06(A)(2)(d)].
 - iii. Academic Council - Appointed by the BOT, but had to be approved by Ohio Senate
 1. Ryan Barilleaux -MU POL Sci
 2. Thomas Cleveland-Exec Director Amer. Pol. Tradition Project, Jack Miller Center
 3. Donald Crain - Miami alum, former BOT member
 4. Gary Gregg - MU MS and Ph.D. POL, Director of McConnell Center University of Louisville
 5. Dennis A. Liberman - Miami alum, former BOT member, Council Vice Chair

6. Jeffrey Sikkenga - Executive Director, Ashbrook Center Ashland University
7. Bradley Smith, JD, Law Professor Capital University, Council Chair
- iv. Council has met virtually several times and once on campus
- v. Director position has been posted - 37 applicants
- vi. Council has identified six people that they would like to interview by Zoom before Thanksgiving.
- vii. My expectation is that they will narrow it to three people who would have on-campus interviews (not sure what this would look like, but I am guessing it is not a typical interview process).
- viii. The President makes the decision on who is selected for the position. There was another university that only sent one candidate to their president. Our goal is to be able to provide our president with options.
- ix. The link to the [statue](#)
- x. Senator Question and Comments
 1. Senator: Without any approval of the Senate , correct?(A) That is correct as it is in the law.
 2. Presenter: There are other universities besides Miami that are having to do this too.
 3. Senator: In the law where it talks about the academic council basically they are referring to a search committee, their job is to hire this director and they get a report every year from the director. So, they do stay on and are provided a report every year.
 4. Senator: Is this going to be an actual physical space on campus?(A) Yes, and we still have to find space for this center to exist.
 5. Senator: Will you be providing this information for us to share with our constituents?(A) I can provide the link.
 6. Senator: Will the President have the ability to also fire that person too?(A) Yes, I believe because the position is described more like a tenure position. So it would be along the same lines of that and a department head.
 7. Senator: What kind of impact will this have on students and their schedule?(A) Our hope is that it will not impact them. Our hope is that this director will help work with our schedules and conditions. So, from that perspective, it shouldn't impact our students. If this is done right it could be very beneficial to us.
 8. Senator: So will they have the ability to fire them? (A) The way that it is written the director has the ability to hire and fire, but with tenure, it would have to go through a normal process. That is my interpretation of the language.
 9. Senator: Thank you for coming to share this information. I am looking at the Tenure information for this director and the salary seems really high.

Does the department get to have a vote on this? (A) Their line is within the center and we haven't figured out a clear decision on how it will all work. It is so vague and we don't have anything like this currently, but we are working on figuring it out.

10. Senator: Is there a chance the center will draw from our own budget if the \$2M from the state is not enough to cover the hires? (A) I honestly don't know but the way it is written it has to have 10 tenure track faculty in it. So we have to find a way to keep 10 people in the center. Whether that be they are solely in the center or they have joint appointments, I don't know. That is another reason why I think it is critical who we hire as the director.
11. Senator: How can we turn this circumstance into something that is not negative for the university? (A) I think by hiring a director and showing the director that we are doing all these great things here and faculty want to be a part and want to contribute to the center. Which in return leaves the director wanting to staff the center with the faculty that we already have here. To me that would be the sweetest positive outcome to this circumstance.
12. Senator: Is the 2 million-dollar budget that the state is providing enough? If it is not enough, do we have to draw from our budget to cover the additional money needed? I am just wondering what would happen if they hired all new people and didn't use any of our current faculty. (A) We did conduct budget modeling, and there is clearly enough money within the budget if we use our current faculty. Using our current faculty would actually help us with some of our budgeting issues. However, if the director hired 10 full professors from outside Miami, then it would depend on what they were hired in and if that would be enough money or not. With that being said, though, we are not obligated to pony up any additional money. The center's budget is their budget.
13. Senator: Would these faculty be covered under the collective budgeting agreement? (A) Yes, from the way I am reading the language they would be, but I am not legal so I can't say for certain. We will talk to our colleagues at Wright State, Toledo, Cleveland State, and Ohio State campuses and collectively try to interpret that law in a way that is consistent in Ohio. It is early to have those conversations, but we are getting close to those conversations.

6. Provost Question and Answer

- a. I want to introduce Elise Radina and have her say a few words:
 - i. Elise Radina:

1. I just wanted to provide you with some background on myself and what I think I bring to the Provost Office. Once I have been in this role for a couple of months, I would love to come back to speak with you more on the ideas that I have.
 - a. This is year 20 for me here at Miami and I am a Tenure Full Professor in the department of Family Science and Social Work. I was department chair for 4 ½ years and I spent 2 years as an Associate Dean in EHS. Then, I spent a couple years in the Grad School and today is my first day in the Provost Office. So, I have been here in different capacities and I hope that the relationships that I have built with the faculty and students will serve me well in this position.
 - b. I am a Miami Alumni as I did my Master here.
 - c. My husband is a TCPL in the Psych department and my daughter is a first year student here at Miami.
 - d. Miami is a big part of who I am and I am excited to be here in this role.

b. Provost Question and Answer Session:

i. Senator Questions and Answer:

1. Senator: I'm curious how we arrived at starting everyone at 5-5? Why was that selected? (A) No one will be teaching 5-5. We are not changing the workload norms, we are just enforcing our current guidelines. It has become very clear to me that there are different cultures surrounding workload all over the campus. One division has an outlier on what chairs teach, and one may have an outlier of how many classes their probationary faculty teach. There are so many differences all over campus and we are not following the policy. This is a policy that has been around for a long time, and it is not a new policy. Other IUC schools have calculations on what makes up a course load and we have had the luxury over the years of being flexible, but we are not there any longer because of the challenges that are facing higher ed. In 2022 an Ohio law was passed, Ohio Revised Code 3345.35 that asked boards of trustees of the IUC schools in Ohio to evaluate and provide reports of low enrolled classes and programs every 3 years. Miami's next report is due in September 2025. That is why we are also thinking about that issue now too. Relative to the workload, we are looking at a subtractive model. For everyone 4-4 is the top because for permanent and continuing faculty we assume 20% service, which is 8 hours of service a week. Then, we get asked why VAP's don't teach a 5-5 when they do no service. This is another equity issue: in some divisions, VAPs engage in service work. The VAP position was a role created to fill a hole when a Tenure Faculty or TCPL leaves as a placeholder while we do a search for

a TT/TCPL faculty. They do not teach 5 or do service, in theory, because they are looking for a permanent faculty position and thus need to be engaged in their discipline. I don't believe that we always utilize VAPs in this way anymore, but that was the idea behind why we started having VAPs. VAPs are also paid less than continuing faculty.

- a. What we are moving to is called workload equivalent:
 - i. 3 credit hour classes would equal one workload equivalent and that is how we are going to try and build more transparency into load assignments. There are a million different variations of these and that is why we are going to have to work on this together. We are really trying to improve this with bringing more equity and transparency around this. We asked chairs last week to help us with this as we know there will be a ton of variations. It will be messy.
- b. Our guidelines say: The University norm for teaching load for tenured and tenure-track faculty--assuming research productivity, teaching and advising, and service that satisfy expectations--is either three and three or three and two (using the three credit hour course as the unit of account), depending on disciplinary standards and benchmarks and labor-intensive pedagogical practices. To the maximum extent possible, each faculty member is expected to teach across a range of courses.
 - i. We are dependent on the net - tuition revenue. Academic Affairs is in a deficit in FY25 because we are overspending on our personnel dollars. The best thing we could do from a financial standpoint would be to have our permanent continuing faculty teach the curriculum. I recognize that is an impossible task, but if the faculty is teaching the load we should not be overspending on VAPs and Adjuncts. Miami is not having conversations about retrenchment, but if you read/watch the news you will see others doing that. If we hold the line and be creative that won't be us.
 - 1. Demographic Cliff - Please see the graphic provided in the slideshow presentation
 - 2. Years of Enrollment Stagnation... Millions of College-Going Students
 - a. 2017-2021 Projections
 - 3. Followed by Dramatic Decline - 2025 Onwards
 - a. New: A Steep Decline
 - i. -10% College-Going Students

- b. Old: A Demographic Cliff
 - i. -15% College-Going Students
 - 4. Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE), Knocking at the College Door, 2016; Grawe, Nathan D., Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education, 2017; EAB analysis.
 - c. Senator Questions and Comments:
 - i. Senator: There is no policy currently in the Policy Library regarding teaching load, however there is a reference to a link that they call faculty workload norms. What is the difference between a policy and a Norm? (A) What we follow is the Norms, and that is what we will be following.
 - ii. Senator: The 4-4 is for Tenure and Tenure Track, what about TCPL? Also, if that changes will we get specifics? (A) It is going to be the same for both. TCPL's according to our norms are teaching a 4-4 or 4-3. That is what the norms say. I shouldn't have said "policy" but norms and/or guidelines instead.
 - iii. Senator: How does this interact with merit pay? How can we award great teaching in the same way we award great publications so that more teaching isn't looked at like a punishment? I am just curious if anyone has thought about linking those things. (A) I think that is an excellent point, that I absolutely agree with and the chairs did bring that up last week too.
 - iv. Senator: I want to say thank you to the Provost for doing this as I so much appreciate it. I heard this was coming from Ohio Law but I can't find it? (A) What we are doing is looking at how other IUC schools are doing and their subtractive models. Miami is trailing in this because we have enjoyed more flexibility over the years, but the challenges facing us necessitate that we enforce our guidelines. So, now we are looking at how other schools have articulated the workload.
- 2. Senator: We all are committed to providing a quality, affordable education. If the 'fifteen minimum' rule is similar to what other Ohio public colleges have, what distinguishes us from them and justifies our higher cost? Why would a parent choose Miami over Bowling Green or Kent, for instance? (A) We had over 800 low-enrolled classes, so it is another way of trying to be more efficient and creating a sustainable

budget for the future. Miami is expensive but we discount between 85-90% of our students in some way. We are working on ways to bring that rate down.

a. Senators Questions and Comments:

- i. Senator: This question is about the demographic cliff. I am not sure if you have followed it but, Nathan Grawe has been critiqued and there is national data that shows an increase and I don't know the private company is working with but I would encourage you to look at this status. (A) I think we have accurate information for Ohio though, but I didn't realize about Grawe so I will take a look at that.
 - ii. Senator: What if some students can't graduate on time if we do this? (A) There are good reasons to run a low enrolled class and needing those students to graduate on time is a good reason. Like teaching piano we only have 12 pianos in a room and we have to run a low enrollment for them. So, there will be some flexibility here, but 800 is a big number with room for improvement.
 - iii. Senator: What makes the institutes equitable is on the chopping block because of competitiveness, especially with what Miami is doing to increase its attractiveness does seem like it is being pivoted to those students who need a discount. (A) We are not cutting anything that helps students, so no one is pumping the brakes on that at all. Some programs are increasing and we are trying to be efficient in how we schedule low-enrolled classes so we can most effectively employ our faculty resources. I know we will still be running small classes, but we want to try new things to cut down on how many low-enrolled classes there are.
 - iv. Senator: Was the workload being looked at coming from the BOT or your request? (A) We can't afford to not enforce our norms as I noted before. I don't ever remember the board asking me to look at this, but all provosts in Ohio are working on this because of the financial challenges we face and the need to provide resources to growing programs. It is an equity issue for me.
3. Senator: What is the state of ongoing discussions of the re-organizing, re-structuring, and re-evaluation of departments on the regional

campuses? Can you allay MUR faculty members' logical concerns and deep apprehension? (A) I want to quote Ande Durojaiye "At the regional campus we are exploring multiple efforts to position us for the future." One of the THRIVE working groups are in the process of working on this, so it is hard to speak about this as we don't have all the full details yet. Part of those efforts are looking at the regions to be more responsive to trends and are having conversations on how to highlight critical areas of need within the state. I would say talk to Ande as the THRIVE committee is working now and going through ideas. Here is the slide he shared when he talked to Senate a few weeks ago:

- a. Regional Headcount 2014-2024 - Please see graphic provided in the slideshow presentation
 - i. Fall 2014
 - 1. Hamilton 3386
 - 2. Middletown 2062
 - ii. Fall 2024 Prediction Day 1
 - 1. Hamilton 2314
 - 2. Middletown 1199
- 4. Senator: Questions regarding campus venue? (A) The reason for the communication about the arena and hotel on Friday, they normally wouldn't have communicated that so early since it is very early in the process but they wanted to cut down on rumors from spreading. So, why a new basketball arena? Reasoning is that Millet has 83 million dollars in deferred maintenance, and a high FCI (Facility Conditions Index). When a building gets a high FCI we have to do something about it. Potential donors are less interested in fixing an aging building. A more central location would energize the Oxford community. It is early and it is being worked on and there is a process to these things and we will be explaining and sharing more when we work all the details out and we have more of a secure plan. For the Hotel I have discovered that we have been looking to get out of the hotel business for a long time. There was an RFT put out in 2020 for someone to build a university-affiliated hotel and we didn't have any takers on that. They have someone more interested in that now with it being located somewhere on campus with dining. There has not been a space designated for either of these yet.

7. Adjournment

Colleagues, I rise today again in memorial.

I remember the tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians killed in Gaza – as well as the hundreds of other Palestinians and Lebanese killed – since the beginning of the war among Israel, Hamas, Hizbullah, and the Islamic Republic of Iran following the attacks on Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and the subsequent invasion of Gaza by Israel.

Among the victims are Ayssel and Asser Arafa, 4 days old, when they were killed in an Israeli airstrike along with their mother, Dr. Joumana Arafa, a physician with PalMed Europe who was on maternity leave with them.

I ask you to observe a brief moment of silence with me.

Tragedy is not a term that does this conflict any justice. Numerous international rights agencies affirm that Hamas, Hizbullah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against civilians throughout Palestine and Israel. Equally, members of the international community, through the International Court of Justice, have recommended the investigation of the state of Israel for violations of international law.

As I noted on October 7, we should all be attentive to our responsibilities to prevent atrocity crimes whenever and wherever they are found.

Muslims of varying faiths, national backgrounds, and political persuasions continue to be deeply affected by what has occurred. Muslim and Arab students and colleagues have faced reprehensible Islamophobia and hostile accusations for simply advocating for some relief to Palestinians from famine, epidemic, and war.

Our students remind us of our obligations to justice and mercy – calling for the return of hostages, calling for a ceasefire, and an end to this war.

All of them, I believe, would agree that we – collectively – have failed and continue to fail in achieving empathy for those suffering and in securing a just future for Palestinians. We must do more.

Nathan S. French
Associate Professor, Comparative Religion
Senator, History, Philosophy, and Religion