

To: Members of the UTK Faculty Senate

From: Martin Griffin

Dated: April 2, 2014

Re: Draft Resolution on Potential Changes to Student Programming Funding Regime

The public debate in recent weeks involving the various reactions to "Sex Week," a series of events organized by UT Knoxville students and funded by student activity programming support, has led to the President of The University of Tennessee undertaking to ask the Board of Trustees to examine the structures and procedures controlling the collection and disbursement of student activity fees at UTK and other campuses in the UT system.

While there may be, in fact, aspects of the programming funding system which could be reformed or improved, many aspects of programming (discussion on often controversial topics, guest speakers, cultural and sporting events, and the like) are not marginal to the broader experience of studying at UTK and can be regarded as part of the educational mission of the university. At issue in any review and alteration of the current process for allocating student activity fees to specific events are both the students' role in determining how their activity fees are spent and their free speech rights. These matters are of concern to faculty because of, among other things, the faculty's primary campus governance role in determining curriculum and educational policy.

I am attaching set of resolutions that I intend to propose for adoption at Monday's meeting regarding this matter. Please review them at your earliest convenience. They are designed to (among other things) promote:

- student and faculty involvement in any changes to student activity fee allocations and expenditures;
- the sustained exercise of free speech rights; and
- the continued efficacious use of student activity fees to support UTK's educational program.

I ask for your support on Monday in getting these resolutions approved. If you have any questions about them, please contact me before Monday, if possible. I can be reached at wmg@utk.edu.

RESOLUTION: April 2 2014

Whereas, the Faculty Senate of The University of Tennessee-Knoxville supports the education of our students in and outside the classroom, including through exposure to guest speakers from outside the campus; and

Whereas, the Faculty Senate takes no position on any particular student-organized program; and

Whereas, under currently applicable rules, student activity fee funding requests typically are made in consultation with student organization members and faculty advisors, and always are made through the designated campus committee process designed to ensure legal compliance in the distribution of student activity fee funding; and

Whereas, in response to recent legislative proposals, the President of The University of Tennessee has undertaken to work with the Board of Trustees of the university and others to reform the student activity fee system on the university's campuses; and

Whereas, student-fee-funded programs and events are not and should not be required to meet the requirement that all funded events be acceptable to all of the student body; and

Whereas, the UTK faculty believes that compliance with applicable campus accreditation standards (which, among other things, require that the Board of Trustees be "free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies" and protect the university from those types of influence) could be endangered by certain types of changes to student activity fee allocations in response to politically motivated legislative requests or pressure.

Therefore, the Faculty Senate resolves:

That under any reforms made to the student activity fee system, students should continue to exercise decision-making authority over the funding of student-organized programs that apply for financial support through university-approved procedures; and

That under any reforms made to the student activity fee system, the existence of controversial content in any supported program should not be a justification for varying any university-approved procedures relating to the expenditure of student activity fee funds for that program or, absent legal constraints, for overriding any decision to support a program with student activity fee funding; and

That the faculty regards attempts to reform the student activity fee system in contravention of these core values—student decision-making authority and freedom of speech—as causing harm to the educational mission of the university; and

That the Faculty Senate calls upon the university's President and the Board of Trustees (1) to defend these core values and the university's educational mission and (2) to ensure that any body established to reform the current student activity fee system includes significant faculty and student representation to ensure that any reforms made to the student activity fee system are consistent with these core values.