

President's Report
Bruce MacLennan
May 2, 2016

As you know, this has been a challenging year for higher education in Tennessee and nationwide.

Although the faculty senate previously passed a resolution against guns on campus, at our last meeting you showed overwhelming support for conducting a poll of faculty attitudes about guns on campus. Therefore, a few of us on the Executive Council put together a quick poll, which was emailed to all faculty April 13 and kept open for one week. 42% of faculty responded, more than 500 within the first 24 hours. I think this high response rate reflects the importance of this issue to faculty.

The results, which are available from the Faculty Senate website, show overwhelming opposition to this specific bill and more generally to guns on campus. 87% of faculty strongly disagreed with the statement that allowing guns on campus would be in the best interest of the campus community. 88% strongly disagreed with the statement that they would be comfortable with guns in their classrooms. Only 6% strongly agreed with these two statements.

The remaining statement, that universities be allowed to set their own policies, received a more mixed assessment, perhaps because the item was confusing. Some faculty said they would agree with this option only if the university made the right choice and prohibited guns! Interestingly, this question was motivated by a potential amendment to the bill, which was narrowly defeated on the grounds that most schools would, in fact, opt out!

The 283 open-ended comments from faculty are illuminating. If you have not done so, I encourage you to skim through them. Of course, the vast majority of them are against having guns on campus. A thematic analysis shows that 22% of respondents volunteered that they would resign or retire, and even if the actual numbers who would do so are much smaller, I think we have to be concerned about the effect of this bill on recruitment and retention of faculty, and of course, of students too.

I provided the poll results to Sen. Lee Harris, senate minority leader, and he placed a copy of the 21-page report on every senator's desk before the vote. Nevertheless, it passed by a large margin. When asked about the faculty's comments, one of the bill's sponsors said that faculty should "get back on their medication." Aside from disrespecting people who might be taking medication for mental health problems, his statement at once implies that a majority of faculty are mentally disturbed and nevertheless should be empowered to carry concealed weapons! Another proponent of the bill welcomed faculty resignations, saying that for every professor who resigned, they should say "Goodbye" and that there would be two or three replacements willing to carry a weapon. You can now find a link to the debate on the senate website so you can witness for yourselves our legislators' respect for faculty judgment and wishes.

By tomorrow, Gov. Haslam will have to decide whether to sign the bill, or it will become law without his signature. As you know, there has been a last-ditch effort using social media to

encourage him to veto the bill, but in any case it is unlikely the veto would be sustained. Therefore, it is all but inevitable that public colleges and universities will have to find ways to implement this law that mitigate its deleterious effects on the safety of faculty, staff, and students.

The legislature also passed a bill defunding the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for one year and transferring \$400K to fund minority engineering scholarships. Implementation details will need to be worked out. Thereafter, the money reverts to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, provided it's not used to promote gender-neutral pronouns, to promote or inhibit celebration of religious holidays, or to support Sex Week. Considering some of the alternatives that were proposed, this is not too bad of an outcome.

The study of the pros and cons of outsourcing facilities management continues. UT continues to be assured that it will be able to opt out if it determines that it is in the university's best interest.

As you know, we have been gathering faculty comments on the draft of the new CPR policy, and we will hear about the College of Law's review later in this meeting. Over the next few days, we will assemble all of the comments and submit them, with a summary, to Katie High, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success. Later in May the CPR committee will meet to review them and to develop revised recommendations. The plan is that from there they will go to President DiPietro, General Counsel, and ultimately to the Board of Trustees. We closed down the web form this morning, but if you have any comments, please email them to me before May 5.

On April 8–10, UTK hosted the spring meeting of the Tennessee University Faculty Senates, known as TUFS. This organization represents all the 4-year public colleges and universities in Tennessee, each of which has two representatives. This year, Martin Griffin and I represented UTK. President DiPietro joined us Friday night for dinner, and discussed the FOCUS Act, which reorganizes the TBR system, and the challenges to higher ed in Tennessee. For our lunch speaker on Saturday, Senator Lynn Sacco led a discussion of Sex Week. Other topics included weakening of shared governance, corporatization of the academy, evaluation of administrators and access to those evaluations, faculty salaries, teaching evaluations, unintended consequences of the funding formula, and the attack on diversity programs.

As you may be aware, the Senate has had two small offices in Greve Hall for many years. This month we will be moving to a double-sized office on the fourth floor of Dunford Hall. This space is large enough to hold small committee meetings, and so you may want to consider it if you have trouble finding meeting space. Schedule it through Sharonne.

Finally, Immediate Past President Joanne Hall is running unopposed for President of the UTK chapter of AAUP. The election closes this Friday May 6, so if you are a member, please vote. If you are not a member, please consider joining.