

Faculty Senate Executive Council  
Convened via Zoom  
March 23, 2020  
MINUTES

Present: Joel Anderson, Misty Anderson, Ernest Bernard, Mark Collins, Sadie Hutson, David Keffer, Michael Kilbey, Laurie Knox, Alexander Lapins, Beauvais Lyons, Bruce MacLennan, Bonnie Ownley, David Patterson, Rebecca Prosser, Amber Roessner, Amadou Sall, Beth Schussler, Gary Skolits, Rob Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, Anthony Welch, James Williams

Guests: Sarah Huff Burnley, Lou Gross, RJ Hinde, Lacey Johnston, Andrea Ludwig, Harrison Meadows, Michelle Violanti, Dixie Thompson, Candace White, Amber Williams, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch, John Zomchick

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

G. Skolits called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. M. Anderson will run the portion of the meeting pertaining to emergency votes and explained procedures about voting in Zoom.

### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the Executive Council meeting of February 17, 2020, were presented for approval. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS**

None.

### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

#### Undergraduate Council (A. Welch)

The minutes of February 25, 2020, were presented, along with a summary report. A. Welch noted that the only action taken was to approve a batch of 46 course proposals and to clarify language to the third learning outcome for the Global Citizenship - US category. The minutes of the Undergraduate Council were approved unanimously.

The minutes of the Evote of March 9, 2020, were presented, along with a summary report. A. Welch noted that these proposals were mainly low-impact. Mid-impact items were three new courses, three courses to be dropped, and one course to be archived, which were mid-impact only because the UG Curriculum Committee has determined that all course adds/drops/archives are mid-impact by definition. These changes only affect the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. Some of the proposals that were submitted by CEHHS on December 1 and approved at the January Curriculum Committee meeting were done with the assumption that the attached proposals would also be presented for approval. For instance, new courses proposed in this document were approved at the January meeting to be incorporated into program requirements; but the courses cannot be added as program requirements until the new course proposals themselves are approved. M. Anderson inquired about whether these need to be added to the emergency vote. A. Welch noted that the understanding was that these would be voted on by the Senate on April 6. We will move this forward with the emergency vote as a fourth item. The March 9 e-vote minutes were approved unanimously.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

Emergency items for COVID-19 Response (A. Welch, RJ Hinde)

Academic Operations Group ([click here](#))

Academic Policy an Undergraduate Council Proposals (AP: [click here](#); UG: [click here](#))

Special E-vote ([click here](#))

A. Welch noted that due to the unusual circumstances created by the spread of COVID-19, these were all actions taken at an emergency meeting. The proposals were to: 1) enact the previously approved policy of allowing a total of six (6) drops/withdrawals beginning with the current term (Spring 2020) rather than waiting until the beginning of the next academic year; 2) change the deadline for late drops for the current term (both full term and second term Spring 2020); 3) suspend academic dismissals for Spring and Summer 2020; and 4) extend the deadline for students to opt to change the grade for a particular class to S/NC. R. Spirko asked whether there could be any problems related to the S/NC grading as it pertains to the Hope Scholarship. RJ Hinde noted that the attorney general only recognized courses graded A through F for the Hope Scholarship. ABCN is the new grading scale. In this model, if a student gets below a C, it may affect the student's Hope GPA but not the UTK GPA. R. Spirko noted that taking the S/NC option neither helps nor hurts the student's GPA, but it allows them to fulfill the requirement for GenEd/VolCore. Any student who earns an S, can use it to fulfill any degree, major, or minor requirements. RJ Hinde stated that there are a handful of institutions that have elected to allow students to receive a letter grade for a semester and within 1-2 weeks can override to substitute with an S/NC. There are concerns with this as that means we are essentially allowing students to change their own GPA by giving them the option to remove unsatisfactory grades from their transcripts. If we allow students to change the grading after it is listed, there could be shadow grades. This could hurt the Hope GPA. M. Anderson asked A. Williams to speak about best practices. A. Williams noted that they are working closely with academic advisors and worked with associate deans and deans this morning to ensure resources were being distributed. Academic coaching and tutoring are being moved virtually. Academic support can be received during this transition period. As it pertains to faculty advising, A. Williams encouraged that faculty have students reach out to their professional or faculty advisors with questions. She also noted that there has been communication with students who are unregistered for Fall. The note that is being sent out includes a section that urges students to talk with their advisors before making any schedule changes. A. Williams reminded attendees that if students experience distress, that faculty and students can continue to use 974-HELP; if you have a scholar who has been disengaged academically, please contact [studentsuccess@utk.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@utk.edu). D. Keffer asked whether it was possible for students to unknowingly jeopardize their full-time status by converting all courses to S/NC. RJ Hinde responded that yes, the student must discuss S/NC grading with their advisor/OneStop. All four proposals passed unanimously by the FSEC. A QuestionPro poll will be launched tomorrow at noon that will allow senators to vote.

Graduate Council (D. Patterson)

D. Patterson noted that the Graduate Council policy proposals are almost identical to the Undergraduate Council proposals including changing the deadline for late drop and extending the deadline for student to opt to change the grade for a particular class to S/NC. He noted that the Graduate Council is conducting simultaneous voting. M. Violanti asked about why we are only considering individual students and not the impact their decisions are going to have on their classmates, especially in classes where there are group projects involved. D. Thompson

responded that in some situations a B is a good grade, and for others an S is a good grade. D. Patterson noted that some members of the group could elect an S and not work as hard as other members of the group; it is not clear how this can be prevented. He encouraged that this needs to be left to the discretion of the instructors. A. Lapins asked whether there is a current limit to the number of withdrawals available to graduate students. D. Thompson responded she would check. The FSEC unanimously approved this emergency proposed policy change from the Graduate Council. RJ Hinde asked about next steps. M. Anderson responded that the senate's vote will begin at noon on Tuesday and will continue until Wednesday at 9:00 a.m.

#### Systems Relations White Paper/Faculty Communications (M. Anderson)

The University System Relations meeting minutes of February 24, 2020, were included with the agenda. G. Skolits noted that the SR committee has been around since about 2007; the purpose of this committee is to have a voice beyond the campus. He asked critical questions to include, what guidance do we give to the committee with regard to the future? Do we redraft bylaws looking at what we think we should be doing? Should we be making suggestions about changes? He noted that he was looking for guidance as our external relationships are very important. C. White noted that at times there can be tensions between the campus and the system; she stated presumably the campus representative to the UFC would be on such a senate committee. She further noted that the legislative committee was eliminated when the systems relations committee was added. One of the most important roles is related to environmental scanning including keeping up with what is happening in the legislature the System Academic Affairs office, Alumni Affairs, etc. D. Plowman has concerns related to potentially being bypassed in the chain of command. C. White encouraged that there is a way to keep chancellors informed and still act; her experience was that in the past, the chancellor was often relieved that faculty would take on issues. G. Skolits noted that it is up to the committee to discuss this and draft something before the end of the academic year.

M. Anderson shared her screen about creating Faculty News as a central source for information. She stated that R. Spriko has done a great job repurposing the senate page as a way to use the home page as a landing page for information. Presently, the first heading is section for questions in teaching, online resources, and expertise. M. Anderson asked how we can model this in a non-emergency setting and gave a shout out to R. Spirko and A. Roessner who are serving on the AOG committee related to communications. M. Anderson asked J. Zomchick about whether we needed to have comments from faculty. J. Zomchick responded that he didn't want to have too many places to send faculty; one centralized place would be the most efficient/least confusing. A. Roessner reinforced that she is sending ideas and questions to the appropriate point person and trying to bring the answers back to this document and to separate UT COVID FAQ pages. She noted that this would not pre-empt or take away from anything the Senate has done, but in case someone doesn't think to go to the Senate website, then they can go to the main COVID site. A. Roessner thought perhaps the categories should be separated into teaching, research, and service and that the COVID page could have separate themes around different roles. She proposed that the Senate website be a place to gather ideas and then confirmed information could live on the UTK COVID page for broader dissemination. C. White and M. Kilbey advocated for an organized archive of all messages from the leadership. D. Thompson noted that the Graduate School has created a page for graduate and professional students and faculty to find answers for questions emerging from the coronavirus pandemic: <https://gradschool.utk.edu/covid-19/>.

G. Skolits asked J. Zomchick as a member of the administration whether there was anything additional that has transpired that the FSEC needed to know about. J. Zomchick noted that the Provost and Chancellor are presently working through the Knox County Safer at Home directive. J. Zomchick shared that in-process faculty searches are going to continue if the departments wish for this to happen. The department may suspend the search if they choose. In addition, he has worked with OED to have a mixed mode of searches (in person vs. virtual). Related to PPR, 75% of the committees have finished their work. Since the majority of the committees have finished the work, it was decided that it was in everyone's best interest to move forward and not postpone these to the next year. J. Zomchick noted that he would send a communication offering an extension on the original deadline. J. Zomchick also reported that P&T is on schedule for this year and that the timeline will be typical; NTT faculty promotions are planned to go forward as well. J. Zomchick stated that there is still some discussion about what to do about TNVoice. There is some feeling on the part of the deans that they would like to have the data that might forward in the narrative comments. B. Lyons noted that he had a meeting with J. Zomchick to discuss TNVoice and whether it may be helpful to include some supplementary questions. A. Roessner encouraged that we should continue TNVoice with the understanding that the results will not be held against faculty. There were a number of members who noted that there is not enough time to validate questions before they are used, but that if open-ended questions are offered, this would not be necessary. J. Williams shared that this change has expanded his teaching, noting that Zoom is very beneficial and engaging. J. Zomchick noted that that there has been a sentiment that these should not be used against faculty for evaluations; in meetings with department heads it has been discussed that TNVoice should never be used as a means to evaluate faculty.

#### Committee Bylaws Update (G. Skolits) ([click here](#))

B. Lyons reviewed the bylaws changes and noted a friendly amendment regarding the Library and Information Technology Committee: page 9 paragraph 1: insert "interests" so the sentence reads "...members representing the interests of faculty in library policies." M. Kilbey noted there is also one additional friendly amendment to Page 11 paragraph 1: change "the Associate or Assistant..." to "an Associate or Assistant..." B. Ownley noted that there is a need to recommend a committee chair to the Senate President elect rather than "convey." This is what has been done. The Chair is elected during the spring before the next academic year. Discussion ensued about whether the language should be to "recommend" or "convey" the selection of the next chairperson. B. Ownley noted that it is important to reflect what the practice is for determining the Chair of the Council. The committees and councils are committees of the Faculty Senate; this information must be clear in all of the bylaws sections. G. Skolits suggested that we move forward with what we have and then some of this can be reconciled in the first and second readings of the Senate. M. Anderson moved approval; B. Lyons seconded. The bylaws changes passed unanimously.

#### UT System Presidential Search Resolution (C. White) ([click here](#))

This item is going to be postponed given the pressing situation before us. This will be revisited in the future.

#### Student Success (Vice Provost A. Williams)

Noted as above.

Senate Elections Update (S. Spurgeon)  
Deferred.

Other

A. Roessner noted that she saw some messaging about delaying the strategic visioning process and asked whether the same be done for VolCore. A. Welch responded that there have been some requests about revisiting the timeline, but there have not been any decisions. A. Roessner stated that as the Chair of the VolCore Committee in Journalism, they do not want to entertain any proposals presently. A. Welch noted that he will talk to the UG Council and AOG on messaging about this. B. Lyons asked whether we were on track with where we are supposed to be for VolCore. A. Welch responded that at present, there are more proposals than were expected; there should be about 300 courses cued up for senate approval. A. Welch noted that he was more concerned about some sub-categories than others.

B. Ownley had an announcement related to UT Extension that all agents are now working from home. All programming will be done via Zoom.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

G. Skolits adjourned the meeting at 5:17 p.m.