Observations on the TN Voice Revisions for Spring 2020
Commentary from Beauvais Lyons, Chair of the Faculty Senate Faculty Affairs Committee

The need to modify TN Voice, our course evaluation system for the Spring 2020 semester has been identified as an issue of concern on the UTK-UTIA Faculty Senate COVID-19 FAQ, specifically the importance of holding instructors harmless in the transition to on-line instruction. This is an issue of concern for both tenured and tenure track faculty as well as non-tenure-track faculty. It is also important to recognize the burden placed on graduate teaching associates who are instructors of record, but for whom course evaluations may be part of their dossier for future academic placement.

In communications with Vice-Provost Zomchick, Chair of the AOG2 team (see the Academic Organization Group (AOG) 2 for Faculty Affairs spreadsheet) we agreed on the need to work fast to complete any proposed changes. Bonnie Ownley, who represents the Faculty Senate on the AOG2 team was directly involved in these communications. The goal was to have this proposed revision to TNVoice for our April 6th Faculty Senate meeting.

To this end, on March 26th we worked with John Zomchick to launch a task force to consider revisions to TN Voice for this semester. Members of the task force included Chad Autry, Supply Chain; Jennifer Gramling, TLI; Jennifer Morrow, EPC; Kristin Rearden, TPTE (and co-chair of the Faculty Senate Teaching Council); and Beth Schussler, EEB. The document enclosed with our agenda reflects their work. They have recommended adding instructions to the TNVoice survey to direct students in how they consider their evaluation of their courses, and recommend including a link to an additional survey to collect students' feedback to their general (as opposed to course-specific) experiences in the transition to an online/remote learning environment.

It is important to note that these proposed changes to TNVoice would be implemented in a context in which the university recognizes that while those teaching have taken significant steps to transition to online instruction, they should be held harmless in this process. Recognizing this, Provost Manderscheid emailed the faculty on March 27th writing:

> *Because of the disruption to normal activities, I have asked deans to adjust performance expectations for tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, including expectations with respect to delivering online instruction. Faculty may choose whether to include TNVoice end-of-course student survey results in their evaluations. Deans and department heads will be cautioned against using TNVoice results if faculty choose to exclude them, and my office will closely monitor this.*

In this context, we understand that, while TNVoice can provide useful assessment of the in-person portion of the semester, and thus should be available to department heads, faculty members will have the right whether or not to include the assessment of the on-line portion of the evaluation in next year's review. If an individual under review believes their department

head has used a negative student response to the on-line portion of the course against them, they will have support from their dean and the Provost Manderscheid as part of the administrative appeal process.

Finally, it is also understood that the Faculty Senate will develop an assessment instrument to get feedback from faculty, instructors and graduate teaching associates about their experience with the transition to on-line instruction. Based on suggestions from Elizabeth Pemberton from the UTK Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, these might be as follows:

Five-point scale (of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree):
    a) Communication from the university about the transition to remote or online learning was sufficient.
    b) I had the resources I needed (internet access, computer, etc.) to make the sudden transition to remote or online learning effectively.
    c) There were adequate opportunities to interact online with the class and to meet the instructional needs of each student.
    d) I was able to get technology support for this course from the university when needed.

The survey of faculty would also include one or two open-ended questions to get additional feedback.   The results of the survey could be posted on the Faculty Senate website and reported at our September 2020 meeting.

I greatly appreciate the bi-lateral trust and collaboration between Faculty Senate leadership and campus administration that has been demonstrated in this process, responding to concerns expressed by those teaching in this new educational landscape while also seeking to learn from this transition. I am also grateful to the members of the task force who completed their work on short order.