

Faculty Senate Executive Council  
Convened via Zoom  
October 5, 2020  
MINUTES

Present: Joel Anderson, Ernest Bernard, Amy Broemmel, Rachel Caldwell, Tamah Fridman, Millie Gimmel, Martin Griffin, Julia Jaekel, Cheryl Kojima, Brian Krumm, Anne Langendorfer, Beauvais Lyons, Stephanie Madison, Bonnie Ownley, David Patterson, Gary Skolits, Rob Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, James Williams, John Zomchick

Guests: Monica Black, Tim Cross, Diane Kelly, Donde Plowman, M. Stanley, Dixie Thompson

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

S. Spurgeon called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

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

Minutes of the Executive Council meeting of September 14, 2020, were presented for approval by B. Lyons and seconded by R. Spirko. Minutes were approved unanimously.

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

#### President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

The president spoke to the importance of self-care and encouraged everyone to pay attention to their own needs and be compassionate to each other.

If members have issues they would like to discuss between meetings, please reach out to Drs. Spurgeon, Krumm, and Skolits.

#### UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor was pleased with the sharply dropping numbers of Covid cases. The surveillance testing is showing low numbers and the Covid protocols are becoming habit and helping keep numbers down. On Wednesday the dorm dining halls will open with socially distanced tables. The pooled saliva cases are working well and she is grateful to the faculty working on this. We will be living with this for a while but can possibly start focusing on things other than Covid. She is grateful for faculty efforts.

The Chancellor then turned to racial justice. The academic retreat focused on this issue and it was a productive retreat for identifying systemic racism on campus. She reported that she has contacted every black faculty member who has left in the last 3 years. She spoke to each for an hour or more. Two left because they felt mistreated in their department, targeted for race. Most were poached by other universities and no real effort was made to retain them or show interest in keeping them. The group split on what it was like to live in Knoxville. Half did not like it, mostly single females, and the other half, mostly families, was happy here. Many of these issues are fixable when other schools are aggressively seeking out diverse faculty. She is talking to department heads about what retention offers should look like. We should be proactive about making people want to stay here. The issues are mostly in the home departments.

The Chancellor is pleased with the work on the visioning process; 700 people have participated. The home game on Saturday went well. The athletic department has worked hard to keep staff, athletes and the public safe. D. Patterson asked about the protocols in the sky boxes on

Saturday. Masks were required, 3-4 people were permitted in the elevator at a time. The administration did not police the number of people in boxes but lower numbers were encouraged. There 46/146 spots filled in the box where the Chancellor was. No one was supposed to move between boxes.

B. Lyons thanked her for trying to change the election site to Thompson Boling. Are there ways to help students get to other early voting sites? She replied that Student Life and Student Government are working on this. The Chancellor started asking about this several weeks ago but there were many delays.

A. Langendorfer also thanked the Chancellor for trying to help students access voting. She asked if the retention of black faculty is connected to the small numbers of black students on campus. The Chancellor stated there are many factors at play in attracting black students and black faculty is a part of this. There is a group, Choose 901, that pays for students to go to school and then return to the Memphis area to work. We get a small percentage of these students. She is looking into building with this program and being intentional about recruiting black students and staff.

#### Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost said we are making progress on the Strategic Visioning Plan and it will be open for comment in meetings October 12-14 and November 11-13. There will be sessions participants can register for.

There was a survey of first year students run by Dr. Williams. The survey was sent to about 50% of the first-year students. They've had a response rate of about 18%. Most of the respondents feel like they are a part of the UT community, most feel they will excel academically. Their stress level is high. Most have connected with the Vol Success Team. Most prefer in-person class, the least favorite was asynchronous on-line. They are anxious about Covid safety, they dislike on-line instruction and requested pass/fail options. The other 50% of the class will be surveyed shortly.

The Provost will be sending out an appeal to have faculty consider seriously if they can teach face to face. There have been no infections traced to instructional spaces. Faculty have the final choice in their modality and that choice will be honored.

The SGA will be sending a resolution to temporarily change grading modes to S/C/NR in any or all of their classes. The Senate will have to be involved in this. In the spring this was done with the state and federal government agreeing to count these classes for financial aid. It is unclear if that will be the case going forward.

M. Griffin asked for clarification since faculty have been strongly told that they cannot switch modality mid-semester. The Provost says you can change until the timetable goes live. After that it creates a lot of confusion for students.

S. Madison asked why the 50-student limit on classroom capacity is in effect since it will inhibit many faculty from wanting to teach face to face. The Provost said there will be exceptions to this limit and if faculty teaching large classes want to teach face to face, they will be allowed to do so.

A. Langendorfer asked about the student surveys that reinforce the Student Success office above other services when students are unable to quickly get mental health care. There are no questions about having one on one contact with faculty. Many faculty are spending lots of time having one on one contact with students. Future surveys should include other ways that students are supported. G. Skolits says it would be helpful if faculty saw the surveys before they go out. Faculty seem to be having different feedback from students, including graduate students. He asks if graduate students are also asking to modify grades as well. T. Fridman suggests asking students if stress is higher than expected. R. Spirko asked when the timetable will be final and how long we have to decide on modalities. The Provost said this will be around the third week of October. Faculty should make a final decision within the next two weeks. E. Bernard stated that October 13<sup>th</sup> will be the deadline.

#### UTIA Report (T. Cross)

T. Cross shared last Friday they received a call from Jeff Simmons of Elanco to make a Monday prospective student visit for his son. They live in NY and felt that UT was one of their top two choices. The visit seems to have been very positive. Cross's UT Promise mentee felt that he was doing well all around and appreciated classes on-line and face to face.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on the Ag campus is still a priority. They are looking for a director of the DEI program. Janelle Coleman is a member of the search committee. There is a top African American professor that they are trying to recruit. UTIA has signed a MOU with Tennessee State with the College of Veterinary Medicine for a pipeline for students. This should help diversify the student body in the College.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report

This is an information item and S. Spurgeon wants to engage the office more in the future. B. Lyons reflected on the removal of R. Hall and the efforts that have been made since then. This report shows the importance of this position. He sees a problem in only having two native American faculty and that 41% of all faculty is non-tenure track (an increase).

The Provost said that they continue to monitor these issues. We need to look at where the growth in NTTF has happened. This has not been planned. Our numbers of TTF have been steady. We need to do better on all levels of diversity.

##### UFC 9-Month Sick Leave Resolution (D. Patterson)

D. Patterson informed the faculty of the UFC discussion on sick leave for 9-month employees who currently have no sick leave. This was a surprise for S. Spurgeon and D. Patterson who requested time for input from Faculty Senate. The UFC points out the inequity in granting leave for these employees. This is not a new issue. As it stands now these issues are worked out in the departments and there is no need for a policy. R. Spirko commented that the discussions in his department have not always had good outcomes for faculty. The Chancellor asked if there is an issue of family or sick leave. She said that these are different issues and that they have been working on a family leave policy that has been sidetracked for several months and they will be returning to this in January. B Ownley stated that every other university in the state other than the 4 UT campuses have much greater problems with this. The Provost said that this change would require faculty to submit time sheets and this could be complicated. The Chancellor suggests that she take up this issue with the Provost.

Lyons asks if this was to be brought before all Faculty Senates and what the procedure should be to move forward. We can endorse bringing this forward to the Senate but really this should be considered by the Provost, Chancellor and President. This has not been approved at all by the UFC. B. Lyons suggest that the movement from the President, Chancellor and Provost should be conveyed to the UFC.

M. Stanley commented that policies often impact NTTF differently and more dramatically.

#### UTK-UTIA Resolution on University of Tennessee Presidential Searches (D. Patterson)

This is a resolution that asks the Senate to think about these issues. The University Systems Relations Committee found the presidential search to be constrained and without a large enough pool of candidates. B. Lyons approves this and suggests getting FSEC to approve and present at the next Senate meeting and then take to the Board of Trustees. G. Skolits asks if this is a result of the UT FOCUS Act? It is. He wonders if the resolution will mean anything if the legislature has to act. Lyons says we can vote on this today, amend as necessary, and send on to the Senate. The vote was called: 15 in favor, 1 against, no abstentions. This will be an agenda item for the Senate meeting on October 19.

#### Proposed Changes to UTK-UTI Faculty Handbook (B. Lyons)

B. Lyons went over suggested changes to the *Faculty Handbook*. These are to bring the *Handbook* into compliance with board policy. They have been vetted and approved by the Faculty Affairs Committee. They propose that the FS president would consult the Executive Council in matters of dismissal. The EC votes were 16 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions. There will be a full reading at the September Faculty Senate meeting and this will be an action item in October.

### **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### Graduate Council

The Graduate Council meeting minutes of September 3, 2020, were presented for approval. Motion to approve was made by B. Krumm, second by B. Lyons. The vote was 14 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention.

### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

S. Spurgeon appreciates the FSEC's work for the university, faculty and students. Please send agenda items by October 12 for the October 19 Senate meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.