

FACULTY SENATE  
MINUTES

October 19, 2020, Zoom Meeting

Absent: Douglas Aaron, Samereh Abdoli\*, Brad Areheart, Chris Cimino, Frank Cuevas, Neal Eash, Yuri Efremenko, Lt. Col. Tony Estep, Matt Harris, Qiang He, William Jennings, Karen Jones, Xueping Li, Luiz Lima, Scott Mackenzie, Madhu Madhukar, Mark Moon\*, Solange Munoz, Stephen Paddison, Chris Parigger, Rachelle Scott, Kai Sun, Adam Taylor, Liz Teston, Forbes Walker, James Williams, Courtney Wright, Edward Yu, Zhili Zhang

\*Alternates: Tracy Brewer for Samereh Abdoli, Mark Collins for Mark Moon

**I. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM** (E. Bernard)

E. Bernard established a quorum.

**II. CALL TO ORDER** (S. Spurgeon)

S. Spurgeon called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

**III. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

The president welcomed everyone. Dr. Cross cannot attend so there will be no UTIA report. Be on the lookout for communications from the Presidential Leadership Council and the Faculty Senate Executive Council. The Senate meeting in November is the last of the semester. There is an optional Senate meeting in January and it is likely that meeting will be convened.

UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor reported that on Oct. 27 at 3pm she will be giving a State of the Flagship address. The address will be taped and then broadcast. She thanked the Senate and faculty for all the work they have done and expressed her pleasure at our ability to still be open during the pandemic. Participation rates are going up on pooled saliva tests (75% cooperation now) and the positivity rate is about 2%. For now, the numbers are staying down but she is cautious about winter. She says faculty has done a great job so far. So far UT has not had an external agency make decisions about course delivery, but there is a real demand for face to face classes. We need more face to face classes. She has taught a small, one-hour class and has been successful. Smaller classes are the best for face to face. She knows that student attendance has been spotty so far. In the spring she says we can take attendance and hold students accountable. She would like the university community to handle this, not to have outside forces make this decision on how we deliver classes. She thinks that faculty with legitimate health risk should stay on-line. She asks that others be in the classroom. She's asking, not telling, as many faculty as possible to teach face to face. We have been lucky not to have budget cuts like other universities. Someone asked what defines a "small" class. The Chancellor says there is not real definition, it is discipline dependent. She is committed to finding appropriate spaces for any size class. M. McAlpin asked what "outside forces" might require us to teach face to face. The Chancellor says that other public schools are being pressured by boards and legislatures telling them what to do but we do not have those pressures at this time.

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

The Provost reflected on the summer preparations and how much was unknown then. We have had a decrease in infections since an initial spike in September and we have learned that our work and instructional spaces have remained free of COVID 19 transmissions. He appealed to faculty to talk to those who are teaching face to face and remember our commitment to instructional excellence. Students want to be in the classroom and our goal is for everyone to be together. The Provost feels that classrooms are safe places. We don't know what will happen in winter. When we have had spikes this semester, the university responded by resetting and closing on-campus dining services, TRECS and other areas and successfully contained the virus. We will do that again as needed. He asked what do faculty need to get back in the classroom? Faculty can have an attendance policy for face to face classes. He feels we must get back to being a residential campus and address the pandemic of racial injustice.

The SGA has passed a bill 6-20 asking for Credit/No Credit options for this semester. The Provost feels that this not a good idea this semester but we know that many students are suffering this semester and we will be looking into grading options for this fall (extended drop dates, flexibility with incompletes, etc.). C. Kojima says that the SGA feels that the Provost was supportive of their bill. The Chancellor said that she does support this, not the Provost. The Provost will clarify this with the SGA.

M. Stanley asked about attendance policies and asked if the Provost's office could issue a general attendance policy. The Provost replied that everyone needs to be clear about attendance expectations. Students are told that they need to "show up and show out." The Provost office will support attendance policies.

### **IV. MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE**

The Faculty Senate meeting minutes of September 21, 2020, were presented for approval. V. Meloy moved approval of the minutes; E. Cowell seconded. The minutes passed unanimously.

### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

#### TUFS Update and Representatives (B. Ownley)

There was a TUFS meeting September 18-20; B. Ownley and S. Spurgeon attended. TUFS is a consortium of 10 public universities in TN. They meet 10 times a year and participate in a national organization of faculty senates. There was a lot of discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on many aspects of university operations. There are a number of surveys coming out from AAUP and other organizations. Be looking for those. TUFS will be pushing for expanded broadband access in rural and underserved areas.

#### Proposed Changes to UTK-UTIA *Faculty Handbook* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading (B. Lyons)

B. Lyons presented the changes around the probationary period and the two-year maximum extension on tenure clocks. The Provost said that any additional extension would have to be appealed to the Board. B. Lyons welcomed other inquiries. Since there were none, he requested we move the issue. There was no need for a motion or second since this comes from the Faculty Affairs Committee. The motions passed: 73 in favor, 0 against, 7 abstaining. B. Lyons will make sure these changes are reflected on the on-line version of the *Faculty Handbook*.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

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

D. Patterson presented the resolution that was created last Spring as a response to the lack of inclusiveness in the Presidential Searches. The resolution urges the Board of Trustees to revise their by-laws to be more inclusive. B. Lyons added that this is in relation to the UT FOCUS Act that allowed the BOT to bring forward 1-3 candidates, instead of 3 candidates. Even in the context of the FOCUS Act there could be a broad field of candidates. He feels it is important that the Senate emphasize the importance of looking widely for presidential candidates. This is not a critique of the sitting president but a statement on future searches. C. White said we don't want having a single candidate be a precedent. The next step will be to take this to the University Faculty Council. B. Krumm asked if we should put the resolution in the context of the legal parameters. B. Lyons says the resolution is hyperlinked to the BOT bylaws and president elect Krumm's idea might best be considered by the University Faculty Council. The vote was called. Since the resolution came from a committee there was no need for a motion and second. The resolution passed: 71 in favor, 1 against, 8 abstaining.

### UTK-UTIA Bylaws Audit (B. Lyons)

Everyone should look at the audit to make sure the by-laws in their departments and colleges are in order. T. Fridman asked if we could establish a senate award for outstanding service to the university, in particular for VP Cimino? Perhaps the FSEC can address this. B. Krumm asked how we make these changes to the by-laws. B. Lyons charged every member of the Senate to address these issues with departments and deans. The audit slide will be included with the agenda materials online. The audit is an action by the Faculty Affairs Committee as an aid for the Provost. It is important that all by-laws are in compliance with the *Handbook*. VP Kelly is happy to look at additional items/add items to the audit.

## **VII. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

### Graduate Council Minutes

The Graduate Council minutes of September 3, 2020, were presented as a point of information. R. Spirko clarified that we vote on minutes as a way of showing Senate consent for the actions within them. Minutes are vetted first by the FSEC.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

S. Spurgeon reiterated his respect and appreciation for the faculty. The meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Millie Gimmel, Faculty Senate Secretary