

## FACULTY SENATE

### MINUTES

September 21, 2020, Zoom Meeting

Absent: Douglas Aaron, Brad Areheart, Ann Berry\*, James Chyz, Chris Cimino, Frank Cuevas, Yuri Efremenko, Michael Gilchrist, Matt Harris, Qiang He, Julia Jaekel, Luiz Lima, Scott Mackenzie, Madhu Madhukar, Darryl Millis, Audris Mockus, Mark Moon\*, Stephen Paddison, Lisi Schoenbach, Kai Sun, Courtney Wright, Zhili Zhang

\*Alternates: Lisa Washburn for Ann Berry, 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 3:32 p.m.

#### **III. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

S. Spurgeon began with an appreciation of the work of the senators and welcoming everyone. The faculty has been highly resilient and the president, as a mental health professional, highlighted the importance of self-care. It is important to step away from work sometimes. He reminded everyone of the zoom protocols of muting sound and video unless speaking. He requested the addition of two resolutions to the meeting honoring Dr. Sadie Hutson and Dr. Gary Skolits. The senate voted 80 to approve the additions and 3 abstentions. These will happen at the end of the meeting. The president made the following announcements:

- Oct 26-29, 8am-8pm is early voting on Campus.
- The executive council voted on Sept. 14 to make Dr. Bonnie Ownley the TUFFS representative for UTK.
- Please remember to submit agenda items and attachments the week before senate meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month)

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

D. Plowman thanked everyone for all their work getting ready for the fall and working during the semester. She hopes that everyone will take some time during the extended winter break to recharge. This year we have a 4% increase in enrollment. The retention rate is up a bit.

We've had several large gifts recently from the Haslam and the Zeanah families.

In regard to the COVID-19 pandemic the Chancellor informed the senate that numbers have gone down as students are no longer ill and are in the recovery stage. The emergency operations center will now be Massey Hall. This was the least densely populated residence hall and it was relatively easy to move students. This dorm has communal baths which makes sense for a dorm with all COVID-19 positive residents. The positivity rate on the students moving out of Massey was 9.5% (all were tested before they moved). There will be waste water testing on all dorms and Greek houses to help understand where the virus is on campus. This will help guide pooled saliva testing. Many faculty are involved in this testing.

There was a meeting with Dr. Birx from the White House COVID-19 Task Force. She had many suggestions, one being a research project around the total time a close contact has to be in quarantine. UT will work with UK to study students in quarantine to see how long it takes before students test positive for the virus.

We are preparing for next semester assuming the virus will be with us still. The Chancellor is currently teaching a face-to-face class and finds it safe and rewarding.

In response to questions, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee has highlighted inequities across society and asks the chancellor to meet with them to discuss these issues. The Chancellor reminded the senate that the leadership retreat on Wednesday is focused on equity and diversity and would love to attend the committee meeting.

The NTTF Issues Committee chair asks that if the Chancellor is encouraging, discouraging or neutral about how the rest of the faculty choose to teach. Plowman says we need all three modalities and that this is really up to colleges and departments. The senator stated that this might be a different issue for NTTF who might not have the same options. She feels that all faculty should teach in the way they choose and there be no pressure to deliver instruction in any particular modality. The Chancellor commented that we do not have space for large face-to-face classes.

A senator asked about football and if games will be cancelled based on the high likelihood of transmission. The first game is this weekend (Sept 26) in SC and next weekend at Neyland; 25% of the stadium will be used which means 25K seats, 2.5K seats reserved for students. The band will be smaller and separated and will not march at half time. To get in you must wear a mask and there will be scheduled entry times. Food is packaged to go. There is no official tailgating. This is still a huge loss of revenue for the athletic dept (40 million lost in revenue).

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

J. Zomchick began by thanking everyone for being here and enabling everyone to keep doing good work. The enrollment numbers are a reflection on the excellence of the faculty. He discussed the new calendar (late start, no spring break, ending April 20 with exams ending April 29). The academic leadership retreat is Wednesday and will focus exclusively on systemic racism at UTK. During evaluations Deans and Dept. Heads should keep in mind the obstacles and limitations created by the current situation while they do annual evaluations.

The Provost asks that everyone consider offering in-person instruction to students. He does not mean for this to be pressure but the students deserve the best education possible. Dr. Williams (VP for Student Success) has run a poll and students are feeling isolated, and that having all on-line classes is much more difficult for students. He asks that faculty look at the incidence of infection and discuss opportunities for more in-person classes. No one will be forced to be in-person. But everyone who has looked at our instructional spaces has approved of how they have been set up. Disease transmission is less in work/classroom space and mostly from social spaces. He appeals to faculty to think of students and find ways to provide more in-person instruction. He feels classrooms are safe but honors faculty choices. W. Jennings stated that students really want in person but the work load is greater for faculty during the pandemic. He suggests making a financial incentive for teaching in person or offering additional life insurance.

The classroom is fine but it is impossible to control all the variables outside the classroom. B. Lyons asked about considering the optional use of TN Voice this semester. VP Hinde will be looking into this for full 15-week courses that will address the challenges of this semester and he will share this with the senate before it becomes final. M. Violanti commented that students who are in in-person classes do not want to be there and prefer to be on Zoom. Provost Zomchick commented that some students who have only one in-person class find it burdensome to come to campus for so little. Faculty have the right to expect students to attend face-to-face classes and there is more work to be done on this. J. Williams echoed that initially there were a lot of students face-to-face and then fewer and fewer have attended. There needs to be a way to encourage students to come to face-to-face classes. C. White mentioned that students use COVID-19 as an excuse to not come to class or do assigned work and this is not sustainable.

#### UTIA Report (T. Cross)

The off-campus experience has been about the same as the on-campus for UTIA. There have been small numbers of positive cases and it seems like the procedures are working. There have been some events outdoors with more than 50 attenders but with mask use and other protocols. There is a search for a new dean for the extension and a new dean for Diversity Equity and Inclusion that will work closely with Dr. Small and his office. They are working on a land transfer in West TN from the Army to UT to continue using the land that has been used for the last 40 years to study no-till agriculture. This would be a 900-acre transfer from Milan Arsenal. Donnie and Terri Smith are visiting this week. He appreciates the leadership from Dr. Plowman in combating COVID-19 and meeting educational needs on and off campus.

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

The Faculty Senate meeting minutes of May 4, 2020, were presented for approval. B. Krumm moved approval of the minutes; C. Parigger seconded. The minutes passed with 76 in favor and 6 abstentions.

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

##### Faculty Fellows for Online Teaching Update (R. Hinde)

This program was a collaboration between the Senate and the upper administration to help develop on-line and hybrid classes for the summer and fall. There were over 100 fellows across the university. Fellows will be hosting brown bag lunch events, they have created teaching guides, videos showing how to use technology and more for faculty. The term for current fellows is set to end in October but there are some funds from the CARES Act that can extend the program to January. Mark Collins has done much of the work organizing and running this program. Mark Collins stated that they are still trying to get the word out about the program, especially as we approach all on-line final exams. The names of fellow are listed on the TLI page.

#### **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

##### Proposed Changes to UTK-UTIA Faculty Handbook – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading (B. Lyons)

This is presented for a first reading. These are mostly administrative/clerical changes to bring the *Handbook* in line with board policy. Senators should read this closely before the next meeting. This is particularly important around the issue of extension (not suspension) of the tenure clock. How far in advance these extensions need to be granted is not clear. VP Kelly stated that the COVID-19 extensions should be requested by the end of this year. If someone

requests a two-year extension, this needs to be submitted with a special memo. In other situations, there is not a particular time-line from requesting extensions. The *Handbook* clarifies the involvement of the president in consultation with senate exec council in the dismissal of faculty.

#### Humanities Caucus Resolution on Teaching Modalities (H. Meadows)

The Humanities Caucus appreciated the work of the Chancellor and Provost and their willingness to respect faculty choice in teaching modalities. Nonetheless it seems important to have a resolution on record that gives faculty control over their teaching modality and that scheduling be returned to departments as it was previous to the pandemic. Scheduling was chaotic during the summer and the resolution hopes to avoid that going forward. There was a motion to approve by A. Langendorfer and it was seconded by D. Horton. Dean Lee asked if the modalities chosen now will be fixed for the semester. She appreciates that faculty should be able to choose how they teach but last-minute changes are problematic for assigning rooms, etc. As long as choices made in October are not changed later, this should not be a problem. H. Meadows replied that part of giving control back to departments will avoid some of this confusion.

C. White asked about the purpose of the resolution after the Chancellor and Provost have stated that modalities are left to faculty. Departments have control so why does control need to be returned? H. Meadows replied that the resolution addresses the situation this summer when control was taken from departments, and the resolution is an affirmation of what the Chancellor and Provost have already said. Provost Zomchick is unsure of the necessity of the resolution, if it is just to affirm the support of the upper administration. The current resolution gives faculty a right that they do not usually have in the *Handbook*. He thinks the resolution would be better if it is amended to just Spring 2020. M. McAlpin stated that the resolution already says it is specific to the pandemic. She does not feel there will be so many requests to change at the last minute and it is not fair to make faculty hold to choices of modality when their situation can change very quickly. Dean Lee asks that perhaps we limit changes after the end of the semester be limited to those with health issues. M. McAlpin suggested that a clear directive from the Provost's office soon would help avoid last minute changes. T. Fridman asked what happens if a face-to-face class evolves into a most students participating on-line. Can the class then be converted to virtual after the beginning of the semester? R. Spirko recognized the logistical issues of scheduling and last-minute changes but the possibility of a spike in November makes it difficult to plan now.

S. Spurgeon called a vote via QuestionPro. Senate members voted 42 in favor, 12 against, and 20 abstentions. A majority voted yes and the motion passes.

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

This was tabled until the October meeting. Senators are encouraged to read the report that was included with the agenda.

#### Resolutions (S. Spurgeon)

S. Spurgeon read the resolution of appreciation of Dr. Sadie Hutson for her work as secretary of the Faculty Senate. The Senate voted to approve, 85 in favor and 2 abstentions.

S. Spurgeon then read a resolution of appreciation of Dr. Gary Skolits and his work as president of the Faculty Senate last year. The Senate voted to approve, 82 in favor, 3 abstentions.

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

### Undergraduate Council Minutes

The UG Council minutes of September 8, 2020, were presented for approval. E. Cowell moved to approve with a second by R. Toledo. The Senate voted to approve, 75 in favor, 1 no, and 8 abstentions.

### Committee Annual Goals

The goals were included with the agenda and is also listed on the Senate website. Senators are encouraged to review these.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

S. Spurgeon adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Millie Gimmel, Faculty Senate Secretary