

Faculty Senate Executive Council
Convened via Zoom
November 2, 2020
MINUTES

Present: 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, Robert Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, Michelle Violanti, James Williams, John Zomchick

Guests: Monica Black, Tim Cross, Diane Kelly, Donde Plowman, Tyvi Small, Mark Stanley, Dixie Thompson, Amber Williams, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. E. Bernard indicated there was a quorum.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of October 5, 2020, were presented for approval. A. Langendorfer moved to accept, T. Fridman seconded the motion. There were 16 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstentions; minutes passed.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

The president attended the Board of Trustees meeting and expressed his disappointment in their decision on the PPPR process. He thanked the senators involved and the administrators at UTK as well. All of the universities in the system expressed their concern with the process but the Board was firm. He will continue to advocate for student and faculty representation on the Board. The early voting agenda was a huge success and he thanks all involved for their support in this endeavor. The president encourages us to check in on students and each other in the aftermath of the election. There are plans for campus safety and we should be mindful of not only the election but its long-term aftermath. Our final Faculty Senate meeting for the year is November 16. Please send agenda items by November 9.

UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor commented briefly on the PPPR process and then discussed the status of Covid-19 on campus. The pooled saliva testing is at about 75% in university housing. The positivity rate is low but is starting to creep up. This week the participation rate dropped in 3 of the 4 dorms. They will be testing every week in the Spring. She thanks the students for the great job they have done adjusting their behaviors. She knows there are still weekend parties happening but she has no control over that. Students are receiving clear instructions about what to do before they go home for the holidays. Students who need to stay on campus have a place to stay. Everyone has adapted and we don't know what the future will bring. Our plans for Spring are the same but the administration is monitoring possible changes in the future.

Regarding Spring 2021, the Chancellor is disappointed in the number of classes that have some face to face contact; it's just 42%. This is difficult to justify to parents. She will push hard that all on-line classes foster connections between students and with instructors. This situation is going to be long-term and it will likely be more difficult in the winter.

For the election tomorrow the UTPD will be more visible than normal. The KPD will also be on high alert around campus. There was anti-Semitic messaging on the Rock and students quickly painted over it. A police officer will be at the Rock for the next 2-3 days. Everyone should keep their eyes open.

The Provost will be presenting issues around student grades. The Chancellor feels that there needs to be some flexibility and students should have a choice. She knows that there are problems with C/NC. The Provost will present some options. Faculty have choices about teaching modalities and students should also have some sort of flexibility. She is aware of OSU, UVA and others that have done something to help students. She asks the FSEC be open to possibilities.

M. Black asked about the eruption again of anti-Semitic hate speech on the rock. The cameras don't seem to deter these actions and they were quickly painted over to keep them from recording anything. The Chancellor says the cameras were never intended to catch or deter individuals, just to record activities. The UTPD feels that these actions are the acts of a single individual. The student body is committed to keeping the rock available. They are sure that a student is not responsible for these actions.

A. Langendorfer asked how often surveillance for Covid-19 is happening. This semester it has only been a few times per dorm. In the spring it will be every week. Langendorfer shared that many faculty are suspicious of the Covid data and that is one of the reasons faculty do not want to be on campus. She said that if faculty knew that there was weekly testing, they might be more willing. Langendorfer asked why testing before leaving campus has not been mandated since it is recommended by the federal government. The Chancellor says they are telling every student to get tested but they can't make them do it. In the spring UT will also be testing off-campus students. Anyone who comes to campus for any reason will have to participate in testing.

There was additional discussion of PPPR.

B. Lyons said that the university system is in negotiation with Texas A&M to collaborate on the management of Y-12. Texas A&M participates in the management of Pantex. This seems to be a liability for the university and not the best use of our resources. D. Patterson asked about the Y-12 issue and supported B. Lyons's concerns. There are many ancillary damages and problems with this (nuclear waste) and this is a dubious enterprise for UT.

Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost spoke to the flexible grading policy. He thanks the Chancellor for her support of students and J. Williams and Amber Williams who have advocated for students. Students are dealing with all kinds of challenges this semester. Many students who have had a 100% on-line schedule have found it to be too much of a challenge. Ideally students will have a more balanced schedule for the Spring. Grading is a prerogative of the faculty and the Provost comes to the FSEC to look for a way to maintain the rigor of courses and support students. The SGA passed a bill that recommended repeating the Spring grading plan but this was not passed by the Undergraduate Council. Parents and students are still asking for relief from grade pressure. A committee led by Leonard Clemmons suggested: 1) lengthen the withdrawal deadline to the

last day of class F20 and S21. 2) There exists a retroactive withdrawal appeal after grades have been received based on extenuating circumstances, one time with grade of F. They suggest that this be made available to students receiving a C- or below and not be limited to the one time. 3) The federal government has established hardship conditions that let students appeal loss of financial aid and change grades from letter to S/C/NC, after grades are final. We would use this same mechanism to help students experiencing the worst hardships.

M. Violanti recognizes that students are struggling. But changing the grading changes student commitment to classes and the senate will not be able to vote on this until a week before class is over. It would be good to have this set up earlier in the semester for the Spring. The Provost agrees with this. C. Kojima asked about the grade mode change after grades are posted. Can students not ask for a change before grades are posted? Amber Williams said that last year 10K chose to change before the end of the semester and the 4K changed back. Waiting until after grades are posted would avoid this. The criteria for these changes are all Covid-related and this is not designed for all students. The withdrawal option would be available for everyone but the change requests is only for Covid-related cases. C. Kojima noted that students will be off campus before they know their grades and this might have a serious impact on graduating seniors. A. Williams said that seniors will be prioritized. C. Kojima says the UG Council isn't meeting again until January and would need an emergency meeting to make this happen. Is this what is being requested? The Provost says he will work with the Council and other groups as much as possible. She also asked about how this would impact the HOPE scholarship. The withdrawal policy will not impact the scholarship but the change in grades might have a negative impact since the "real" grades count for HOPE, regardless of the S/C/NC designation. Students will need to know that this might harm their scholarship eligibility. Withdrawal might impact their satisfactory academic progress and students should consult with their advisor and financial aid. Many advisors may not be around in December so who will be helping students? The professional advisors will be around. Students need to be fully aware of the consequences of their choices.

T. Fridman suggests that we make sure students know their grades before the decision is made and then grades can be changed. She asked the Provost about the efforts to increase the graduation rates and suggested we invite the organizations (student success, career center, etc.) involved in this to Senate meetings. Amber Williams spoke to the importance of the first six weeks of the semester. Her office will be in contact with students over the break and has 6-week welcome activities planned. They are targeting students who might need more support. They are planning lots of ways to create meaningful connections among students.

The Provost said that everyone teaching virtually will have resources on creating learning communities.

B. Lyons commented on Dean Thompson's comment in the chat that grad students will request grading changes as well if we offer them to undergrad students. Many grad courses do not have a P/F option but the withdrawal might be used.

UTIA Report (T. Cross)

Dr. Cross will hold his report to the Faculty Senate meeting since there is nothing that needs to be discussed now. He appreciates the focus on supporting students and addressing unintended consequences.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Diversity and Engagement Update (T. Small)

Vice Chancellor Small said his office is working to build foundations for his office by looking at systemic policies, practices and procedures that might keep us from achieving the campus we want. They are focusing on impact. They are working to build infrastructure. Each college has a diversity action plan that was submitted on September 15 and they are being evaluated and have been sent back. The colleges are sending their final plans soon. These plans will be evolving over time. There is a trained committee that will serve as a best practices resource to help continue improving these plans.

They are also doing a climate survey that will be contracted through Anthology and are working with an advisory board to create a robust survey.

His office is paying for diversity officers in each college that will work across the university to improve diversity access and inclusion.

They are using funds to work on recruitment and supporting faculty with challenge grants.

There is a building names committee that has created a report to make sure that all names reflect our values.

There is a new committee on how to move forward with diversity scholarships, even though these are prohibited right now. They are looking for options and creative solutions.

His office has advocated for having a diversity question on all evaluations. There is no longer a question on previous salary on employment applications which should help address pay inequities.

In regards to the diversity action plans, the Provost will hold deans accountable on this.

Senators can help by being engaged with DEI in their departments, committees and classrooms. Having a faculty advisory board has been critical.

The land acknowledgement plan is underway to recognize earlier stewards of this land. Everyone should be respected, valued and recognized.

Senator Lyons commented that the senate advocated strongly for a reinstatement of the office of Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Inclusion. He asked what can we do to improve the numbers of Native American faculty. The Chancellor said that targeted recruitment would make a big difference. Retention will also be important (culture and climate).

V. NEW BUSINESS

Update on Faculty and Student Current Issues (L. Yamagata-Lynch)

Dr. Yamagata Lynch has provided links to the [annual report](#) and [recorded presentation](#). She spoke to the trends of 2020. From July to October she has had 117 visitors which is up from last year. Numbers are up for every month. Many questions have been around NTT appointment clarification, tenure, teaching modality, dealing with challenging evaluative

relationships and others. One of the biggest suggestions is having evaluators learn more about how to have challenging conversations.

Grad students have asked about advisors/mentors/what's normal/ title IX, etc.

She was open to questions. R. Spirko asked if there is anything the senate should be focusing on? She did not have an immediate response and would like to talk to Faculty Affairs in the spring before meeting with the full senate.

Athletics Follow Up on COVID-19 Response and Salaries (B. Ownley; J. Williams)
This will be presented at the senate meeting on the 16th.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Undergraduate Council

Movement to accept the minutes of October 20, 2020, was made by B. Ownley and seconded by B. Lyons.

Discussion: M. Violanti asked how the changes will play out. Do courses need a number change (OC changes to AOC). C. Kojima said that all courses approved for gen ed have to stay that way for 6 years. Current OC courses will extend for the next year. Course changes to AOC will need a new course number since courses will be shared over catalogs. Ideally courses will be listed as both but it's not clear if this can happen. It will be discussed at the next implementation meeting.

The FSEC voted 8 in favor, 0 Against, 4 Abstentions; minutes approved.

Committee Summary Report

This appeared as an information item for the Executive Council.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.