

## FACULTY SENATE

### MINUTES

November 16, 2020, Zoom Meeting

Absent: David Ader, Jennifer Akerman\*, Brad Areheart, Stefanie Benjamin, Monica Black, Rachel Caldwell, Chris Cimino, Frank Cuevas, Yuri Efremenko, Lt. Col. Tony Estep, Cheryl Greenacre, Kyung Han, Qiang He, Luiz Lima, Brian Long, Scott Mackenzie, Madhu Madhukar, Audris Mockus, Mark Moon\*, Stephen Paddison, Chris Parigger, Lisi Schoenbach, Rachelle Scott, Mark Stanley, Adam Taylor, Liz Teston, Sylvia Trendafilova

\*Alternates: George Dodds for Jennifer Akerman, 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 3:33 p.m.

#### **III. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The president welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the semester. Faculty senators should be aware of upcoming nominations for the 2021-2022 president elect. We should also be planning to nominate new senators. There will be emails regarding these elections. Senators should also be prepared to receive information on the Chancellor's Awards.

We are all aware of the changes brought by the pandemic and the president applauds the engagement and commitment of the senators to shared governance. He appreciates the support and feedback from senators and looks forward to more in the Spring. It is likely we will have a senate meeting in January. It is currently optional but most likely will be convened.

The president removed the 2021-2022 senate calendar for the agenda since we cannot set that agenda until the academic calendar is published and it is not available yet. We will take this up as soon as the academic calendar has been made public.

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

The Chancellor thanks everyone for the everyday courage and flexibility they are showing. We all need some rest and everyone should make that a priority. There will be 10 commencement services this fall. These will be brief, socially distant services. She appreciates everything faculty are doing. We need to think about how we will get through the spring with the majority of courses on-line. Students need to find a way to connect and get to know each other.

She is excited about the strategic visioning process that will be headed to the executive committee soon. There is one more round and the campus will be able to look at it in December.

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

The Provost is grateful to the Volunteer community for all that has been done this semester. He feels we are a stronger community for having vigorous debates this semester. He is grateful for

that feedback and all that has been done and is being planned to help everyone connect to the institution. He has been impressed by the response to appeals to teach in person in the Spring. He knows that all choices have been deeply considered and is grateful we have the freedom to choose to do what is best for everyone.

The strategic visioning process will be open to more feedback soon. We will also be considering flexible grading policies and he is impressed by how this has been a model of shared governance. The plan is a compassionate solution for students who have been severely impacted by the pandemic.

#### UTIA Report (T. Cross)

Dr. Cross has seen a lot of hard work across campus and across the state and UTIA has been successful meeting the needs of its community. UTIA is interviewing their fourth candidate for Extension dean and will interview the fifth tomorrow. He feels good about the search process. Dr. Kim Jenson is working with Drs. Cross and Plowman to submit the working group report and how to make the most of reunification. There were five working groups who made recommendations and they are working through those and will continue to implement recommendations. We will be hearing more about this in the future. The reports are posted on the UT website.

Like everyone, UTIA has to continue to figure out how to do their jobs in the face of the pandemic and they are watching data and are hopeful for the spring.

They will be posting updated bylaws for the college and extension and these should be available to the senate soon. A few departments have updated their bylaws and Dr. Cross recognizes the importance of the senate work on that.

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

The Faculty Senate meeting minutes of October 19, 2020, were presented for approval. J. Hay moved approval of the minutes; V. Maroulas seconded. The minutes passed (85 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstained).

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

None.

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

##### Athletics Committee Update (B. Ownley, J. Williams)

J. Williams took this position on Faculty Senate to help build trust between faculty, staff and athletics and is speaking today to clarify the budget shortfall in the Athletics department. There have been questions about the rainy-day fund and Coach Pruitt's pay raise. The rainy-day fund was established several years ago. There is about \$10 million in the reserve and they expect to lose \$40 million. Faculty did not take a cut. Other employees making \$50K or more took a 5% pay cut. Those making \$150K or more took a 10% cut. Coach Pruitt did not take a raise this year, it will not go into effect until next year. His salary is still very low compared to other coaches in the SEC. Testing for Covid is costing about \$2.5 million. Eligibility will be extended as well and will cost more money. The Athletic department will have no money to give to academics this year.

B. Ownley added that Athletics is trying to save money, reducing travel, not flying anywhere. Basketball games will be at 18% capacity in Thompson-Bowling and will be a huge challenge to work out. All of the departments in Athletics took a 25% reduction in budget. They are hoping this will be a one-year problem.

B. Krumm asked about the \$40 million shortfall. Is this based on comparing to past years or is this an actual deficit? J. Williams said that this will be a deficit, based on football alone.

D. Patterson asked what the plan is to make up this \$30 million deficit. Will this come from campus funds? Williams said it will not come from campus funds. There is a hiring freeze and they have been transparent in all their financial dealings. Patterson said that in the past the university has bailed out athletics. Williams said he does not think this will happen. Ownley said they may be able to borrow from the conference but they are trying to make up the deficit with cost savings.

The Chancellor stated that they anticipated the \$40 million shortfall and the university is helping with \$12 million, some coming from postponed planned renovations. There is still a \$16 million shortfall. All SEC members will be helped with advanced TV payments. The campus does not plan to be the bank for athletics. Will athletes be affected? They will be the top priority for funding. Can we cancel the football season? We would lose more money if we did that.

The Chancellor said we are one of the few universities in the country that does not subsidize athletics and she has no plans to change this. G. Dodds asked for clarification that the money given to athletics will come from infrastructure rather than academics. She said that this is the case.

#### Temporary Grade Change and Withdrawal Policy (C. Kojima)

C. Kojima explained that the academic policy committee of the UG Council met with the Provost's committee to find ways to relieve stress for students. The recommendations from the committee were approved by the Council. Three items were approved:

1. Through an appeal process students can change their grade options to S/CR/NC. The appeal will be based on extenuating circumstances of being directly impacted by Covid. A committee will be set up to review this.
2. The university will extend the period for a single course withdrawal to the last day of classes. These withdrawals would not count toward the maximum number of withdrawals allowed to students.
3. The university will allow a retroactive withdrawal appeal for courses in which a student receives a C or lower. These courses can be appealed up until the first day of spring semester (January 20). These W's would not count against the lifetime maximum of 6 withdrawals allowed to each student.

These policies were approved by the committee and by the Undergraduate Council. Are these appeals going to the course instructor? Leonard Clemons clarified that the appeals must happen by January 20. Appeals will not go to the instructor but to a committee. Students will be made aware of the implications of their choices to their academic progress and their financial aid. Enrollment management, advising and the Undergraduate Council were all involved in formulating these policies.

T. Fridman asked about how time consuming this appeals will be for students. Should instructors be involved in this to streamline the process? The timeline of the appeals/requests will be available after grades are posted. The only students eligible are those directly impacted by Covid-19 and it would be too much to ask faculty to make those decisions as well. This is better for a committee.

Amber Williams clarified that the HOPE scholarship requires grades, regardless of Covid exemptions. We can no longer offer this to all students so we need to be sure that we are consistent in how we offer and implement this. Students need to understand the impact of their decisions. M. Violanti thanked everyone for the options being afforded to students but spoke against the withdrawal possibility. We do not have enough time to let students know about this and have them make a good decision. She suggests combining the two withdrawal options. She asked that we vote down this option.

Leonard Clemons said that any withdrawal after grades are posted is retroactive and there is already a policy for this. This gives students more time after the original withdrawal date. Violanti confirmed that this is only for students with a C- or below. Students with a C or better would only have a few days to make the decision to withdraw. C. White asked if we are only considering hardship/Covid students. A. Williams clarified that the first option is only for students impacted by Covid, the other two are open to all.

C. Wright cautioned that only helping students "impacted most by Covid" is a difficult judgement since everyone is impacted by the pandemic. She asks why are we planning in the moment just for this semester instead of for the entire year? It would be good to not be doing this again in the spring, right before the semester is over? Many students will not hear this message clearly over the next week. L. Clemons indicated that this proposal is for the entire year. Since this is not just for late grade change but also retroactive withdrawal, students have several options after they see their grades. The committee will be compassionate and hope that the proposal shows the options students have and that they are trying to lessen the work on faculty and staff.

The Provost reiterated that students have until January 20 and have more time to make the decision. L. Trujillo-Mejia stated that these options don't cover all of the student body. Everyone should have the withdrawal options. It's unfair to limit to a small group. A. Langendorfer asked about students who are from families who are not good at navigating bureaucracy? Will we reach out to students or will they be expected to figure it out on their own? Should we always, even in non-pandemic situations, make the grade option available to students in a way that does not involve instructors?

R. Spirko liked that the procedure is offloaded from faculty. These policies are coming from the SGA request that everyone be able to have the grade change option. He hopes the committee has a good communication strategy for students and we have to make this decision today. Amber Williams agreed that this process may be challenging for some students. They have learned lessons from last semester and learned from other universities. They are ready to send out communications to students tomorrow to help students make informed decisions. They will communicate with students who withdrew last week to see about changing their decisions.

They have a winter engagement strategy to be in touch with students who are home for two months and to keep them engaged with the university.

C. Kojima was surprised that advisors will be reaching out since she did not know this and she is an advisor. A. Williams said that this is a coordinated effort that will not fall on one person. C. Kojima's department has two advisors and this kind of policy is problematic. A. Williams said she is working with advising directors to make this happen. C. Kojima's main question was about how departments handle grade mode change since there are limitations in the catalog on what classes can have alternative grading and apply to the major/minor. Departments will have say-so in if the S/C grades will count. The professional advisors will head this up. Departments will need to decide in the next week but L. Clemons said they are ready to mobilize.

Why can't we extend the single W to January 20? That is still a retroactive withdrawal. C. Wright asked about students with a C- or below compared with other students. The students that we don't see. L. Clemons said that the existing policy is only for students with an F. The current policy is to help more students and not include A or B students who probably don't need a W.

A motion to approve the new policy was not necessary since this comes from Undergraduate Council. Normally this would be put off to the next meeting but there is no time to delay.

C. Kojima said that these are three separate proposals that were all passed by the UGC. The senate voted on each of the changes:

1. The option to change the grade mode (64 in favor, 6 opposed, 18 abstaining)
2. Extension of withdrawal deadline (58 in favor, 11 opposed, 17 abstaining)
3. Retroactive withdrawal appeal (51 in favor, 9 opposed, 24 abstaining)

All three motions passed.

Faculty Senate 2021-2022 Calendar (S. Spurgeon)  
Tabled until the academic calendar is set.

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

### Graduate Council Minutes

The Graduate Council minutes of September 3, 2020, were presented for approval. The minutes were approved (69 in favor, 0 against, 10 abstaining).

### Undergraduate Council Minutes

The discussion of the grade change option, the extended withdrawal period and the retroactive withdrawal were the essence of the UG minutes and were addressed above.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT 17:10**

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Millie Gimmel, Faculty Senate Secretary