

Faculty Senate Executive Council  
Convened via Zoom  
January 25, 2021  
MINUTES

Present: Joel Anderson, Ernest Bernard, Amy Broemmel, Rachel Caldwell, Chris Cimino, 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: Suzie Allard, Monica Black, Tim Cross, Diane Kelly, Steve Mangum, Mary McAlpin, Donde Plowman, Mark Stanley, Dixie Thompson, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m.

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

The minutes of November 2, 2020, were presented for approval. B. Lyons moved to accept, S. Madison seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

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

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

S. Spurgeon thanked everyone for their work and diligence facing the challenges of this year. He appreciates feedback from senators.

For this semester, the main priorities are board representation, maintaining a collaborative spirit, communicating effectively, and budget clarity.

The leadership team proposes that the Undergraduate and Graduate Council representatives and the University Faculty Council representatives be allowed to speak at Senate meetings. The upper administration supports this change as do the parties involved. This will make for more robust communication.

There is a proposal to record Senate Zoom meetings to make them more accessible. This has been done in the past and was discontinued because of concern of malicious intent by viewers outside the senate. This idea will be revisited by the leadership council.

Senators are encouraged to contribute to the Senate enrichment fund.

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

The Chancellor wished everyone a Happy New Year. We have a more sophisticated Coronavirus response plan in place this semester. We have a greater capacity to put students in isolation. Students have lots of support should they test positive, and a plan will be developed to distribute vaccines through the Student Health Center. Our testing capacity has improved greatly since last semester. Students living on campus must participate once a week in the pooled saliva tests. She commented that students told her that they miss the opportunity for informal interaction and asked faculty to facilitate those interactions whenever possible.

There is a new Athletic Director, Danny White, and he has a Doctorate in Education. She is pleased with this hire and he is already looking for a new football coach and is excited to get to work. His top priority is student athletes.

B. Lyons asked if the change in federal government will impact our operations (i.e., diversity training and research on racial justice) and asked how vaccines will be administered. Will front-line employees be prioritized? The Chancellor shared that President Boyd, along with other Presidents in the state UT system, asked that faculty and front-line employees be put in the first category (same as K-12 teachers).

The Chancellor is watching the presidential executive orders and will keep faculty informed. She is optimistic that there will be little impact on our initiatives.

D. Patterson asked about 9-month faculty sick leave. Plowman and the other upper administrators are ready to move forward on faculty sick leave but at the UFC many faculty did not like the idea of doing this, i.e. keeping time sheets. She is not clear about what the problem is for faculty. She would like to move forward on parental leave for the staff. Patterson indicated that the UFC is developing a survey designed to assess faculty understanding around these issues.

S. Madison asked about employee pooled saliva testing. Chancellor Plowman said that there are wellness testing kits at the health center for any staff member who is asymptomatic. Since so many faculty work from home, pooled saliva testing for faculty/staff would not give us a lot of information.

J. Anderson asked why the University has not issued a general statement on the insurrection at the capitol. The Chancellor said that she does not see her position as one that comments on all political issues. In her welcome to students, she emphasized the importance of peaceful transfer of power and explained increased police presence on campus. She feels she only needs to comment on issues that directly impact students at UT.

T. Fridman expressed concern that we did not know how the first day of classes would go since it was inauguration day. Faculty were not well prepared for possible problems and crises in the classroom.

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

The Provost shared that enrollments are up, in large part because of faculty and staff efforts. We are up about 5% from Spring 2020. The freshman retention rate has improved by 0.5%; 642 students requested a late grade mode change last semester; of those requests, 193 were approved, 125 declined, and 305 are still under-review. About 60% have been approved. There were 129 retroactive withdrawals. These are under review as well.

The timetable committee recommends a better distribution of classes (no more than 70% during prime-time slots) and asks that the university consider moving classes at 8am and after 6 on-line when appropriate or possible. They also recommend another committee to consider changes to the calendar (equal fall, summer and spring terms); expanding the use of half-semester courses in fall and spring; and creating a winter mini-term. Two committees will work

on this project: an Academic Issues Committee (chaired by R. J. Hinde) and a Scheduling Issues Committee (chaired by K. Alldredge). They hope to pilot a winter mini-term next December.

#### UTIA Report (T. Cross)

Dr. Cross announced the UTIA has interviewed three great candidates for the Director of Diversity who will lead the Diversity Council. They are hopeful for a strong hire. They have hired other new administrators and are optimistic about these hires as well. They have opened a new building – Third Creek Building is the temporary name. They would like to name this after an outstanding African American or Native American who has made an outstanding contribution to the study of agriculture. They have almost finalized their by-laws. There will be a college-wide vote in the next few weeks that will include all parts of the UTIA except the College of Veterinary Medicine.

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

#### Budget Allocation Model Steering Committee Update (C. Cimino and S. Mangum)

C. Cimino presented the Budget Allocation Model. This project began summer 2019. To get back to this project we need to figure out what the governance structures should look like, develop key policies, and create a timeline and training for the budgeting process. New software is being developed. There are three subcommittees: Charter, Policy, and Reporting and Training. They will call on experts around campus as necessary. The transition period will be during the last half of FY 21 and all of FY 22 and the new model will go live FY23.

B. Lyons asked about the transition from the old software to the new. It is from a different company but was chosen because it should transition well in the future. T. Fridman asked about strategic investments and what those are. They might be visioning investments, diversity hires, on-line initiatives, etc. It varies but strategic investments will be managed by the Chancellor and Provost. The Chancellor mentioned programs to make sure there is a volunteer experience available to all, different kinds of faculty hires, how to utilize the Extension platform to extend education across the state, etc.

#### UTK Strategic Visioning Process Update (S. Allard and J. Zomchick)

The Strategic Visioning Process began in December 2019. After a SOAR analysis, an executive committee (28 members) and a visioning committee (52 members) were formed and there were multiple outreach sessions for stakeholders. They are going through a lengthy process to revise and refine the vision and there has been good participation from stakeholders.

The draft of the statement was unveiled in December 2020. The subcommittees have looked at how to implement goals. This is a draft until it is approved by the Board of Trustees. Chancellor Plowman will take this to the Campus Advisory Board in February for review. Stakeholders will identify top priorities; implementation teams will be created and then it will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

#### UTK-UTIA Faculty Handbook Revision (B. Lyons)

B. Lyons presented these unique changes that are primarily house-keeping/curatorial changes, primarily in the seven appendices. These changes reflect updates to current policies. Many things have already been moved to Faculty Central. Some items will be deleted as they are now

hosted on Faculty Central and all links will be checked to make sure they are current. Other sections need to be reviewed by the appropriate councils and committees.

B. Lyons asks the FSEC to endorse bringing this to the Faculty Senate for review. S. Spurgeon will send this to the full senate immediately so that everyone has time to review it before the next meeting. It was unanimous to send this to the full Faculty Senate.

TUFS Report (M. Anderson)

M. Anderson will do this for the entire Faculty Senate next week.

## **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Graduate Council

Movement to accept the minutes of November 5, 2020, was made. The FSEC voted in favor, 13 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention; minutes approved.

Undergraduate Council

Movement to accept the minutes of November 10, 2020, was made. The FSEC voted in favor, 13 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention; minutes approved.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.