

FACULTY SENATE

MINUTES

February 1, 2021, Zoom Meeting

Absent: Douglas Aaron, Samereh Abdoli*, Cristina Barroso, Jason Brown, Chris Cimino, Frank Cuevas, Neal Eash, Lt. Col. Tony Estep, Karen Franck, Michael Gilchrist, Matt Harris, Qiang He, Freida Herron, David Icove, William Jennings, Brian Krumm, Xueping Li, Luiz Lima, Eric Lukosi, Scott Mackenzie, Madhu Madhukar, Audris Mockus, Mark Moon*, Stephen Paddison, Soren Sorensen, Kai Sun, Rossy Toledo*, Courtney Wright, Zhili Zhang

*Alternates: Lisa Merritt for Samereh Abdoli, Mark Collins for Mark Moon, Robert Sauveur for Rossy Toledo

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM (E. Bernard)

E. Bernard established a quorum.

II. CALL TO ORDER

S. Spurgeon called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

III. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

S. Spurgeon made an announcement: Moving forward there will be a brief presentation by the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils before moving to approve minutes. We will also add a UFC report to every meeting.

Undergraduate Council Minutes (C. Kojima)

The Undergraduate Council minutes of November 10, 2020, were presented. C. Kojima noted that the minutes here have already been voted on and approved. She had no other comments.

Graduate Council Minutes (A. Broemmel)

The Graduate Council minutes of November 5, 2020, were presented. A. Broemmel summarized the minutes. B. Lyons moved to approve, seconded by M. Collins. The minutes were approved (76 to approve, 0 against, 2 abstentions).

Consent Agenda

Committee reports were included with the agenda.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

S. Spurgeon announced that Brian Krumm resigned as president-elect of the Faculty Senate. We will need to simultaneously elect the president and president elect for next year. He reiterated his appreciation of everyone's commitment to the senate and shared governance.

UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor commented on the new Athletic Director and Football coach. She thanked the Athletics Committee for their participation in filling these positions.

The Covid-19 numbers have started to rise but the curve is not as steep as it was last fall. Students must be continually reminded to wear masks and follow protocols. She will be

incentivizing mask usage on campus in the coming days. There is a lot of confusion about the vaccines and each state has a different policy. Tennessee is prioritizing people over the age of 75. The university president has argued that faculty should be in the same pool as K-12 teachers for receiving the vaccine but thus far the state has refused to include them in the priority group. The main issue is that there is not enough of the vaccine. The UT Health Center is ready to help when vaccines are available.

Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

1. NTTF issues: He is working on compensation and workload issues. Vice Provost Kelly is also working on these issues. The Provost's office is committed to raising salaries.
2. Dean Thompson is working on reducing grad student fees.
3. Enrollments are up about 5%, faculty are largely responsible for these good numbers.
4. The late grade mod change requests were as follows: 642 total, about two thirds were approved. He expressed his appreciation for Leonard Clemons and his work on this.
5. The timetable committee has recommended a better distribution of classes across the day and that classes that meet at 8am or after 6pm meet on-line. They also recommend changing to allow for a winter mini-term (possibly starting next December), a better use of the entire year and more flexible scheduling during traditional semesters.
6. Budget Allocation Model: The implementation will begin at the end of FY21 and during FY22 and will be live FY23.
7. Strategic Vision Update: This is being presented to the Campus Advisory Board and after their review the chancellor will review once more and pass it on to the executive steering committee who will identify key strategies and present it to the Board of Trustees.

A. Langendorfer stated that NTTF request that the option to not use TN Voice evaluations be extended to spring 2021. The Provost is fine with this and would be glad to put the issue before the deans. A. Langendorfer said that some NTTF are being asked to include TN Voice from fall 2020 in their annual review. There is a Council of Deans meeting Thursday and the Provost will put this on the agenda for that meeting.

UTIA Report (T. Cross)

They are in the final steps of identifying a diversity director who will work with Vice Chancellor Tyvi Small to help implement the diversity action plans in the departments. They are about to finalize updated bylaws and will present those to the faculty soon. They opened a new building (the Third Creek Building) that they would like to name after a person of color or Native American who has had a noted impact on the college or who is a notable graduate. They are still searching for the best name. They are working with the Department of Health on vaccines and how to educate the public using the extension offices as partners whenever possible.

UFC Report (D. Patterson)

The University Faculty Council has instituted the paid parental leave policy that will be implemented in July. This is available for faculty and staff. There was discussion of accruing sick leave. All other university employees in the state accrue sick leave but at UTK faculty negotiate sick leave with their department heads. It was pointed out that this can be fraught and is not always applied equally. The UFC is distributing a survey to get a sense of how faculty feel about moving to this system.

There is a move to amend the bylaws to a more open search for the system President that was passed by UTK and Chattanooga and is moving through the other campuses.

The Martin Methodist campus has been acquired and the system hopes to grow the enrollment. There has been a lot of support for this acquisition and President Boyd is optimistic about this.

The UT on-line system has been developed at the system level without senate involvement and has been a surprise for many. The Chancellor clarified that this is not about developing new courses but is for students at one campus to be able to take an unavailable course at another campus on-line asynchronously. These are only courses that have already been approved as equivalent transfers.

B. Lyons encouraged faculty to consider ways the Martin Methodist acquisition might impact the other campuses. One is representation on the UFC, especially since this is a very small campus (smaller than some area high schools). Faculty should also look for colleagues at MM to make sure that courses are similar and that shared governance is the same. They don't have a *Faculty Handbook* at this point.

M. Black asked for clarification about how the on-line courses would be different from transfers that we already have. Dr. Hinde explained that students will enroll in courses on other campuses while they are fully enrolled on a specific campus simultaneously. Only classes that have already been identified as equivalent will be eligible for this.

V. MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The Faculty Senate meeting minutes of November 16, 2020, were presented for approval. A. Berry moved for approval, seconded by M. Black. The minutes were approved (85 in favor, 0 against, 4 abstaining).

VI. OLD BUSINESS

UTK-UTIA *Faculty Handbook* Revisions – Second Reading (B. Lyons)

B. Lyons summarized the revisions. Many of these changes are updates or moving documents out of the bylaws to Faculty Central. Links have been updated. Most of the changes are housekeeping corrections. There were no questions. The revisions were approved (81 in favor, 0 against, 7 abstaining).

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Update on Addressing Chinese Faculty Concerns (L. Zhao)

Dr. Zhao shared a letter from faculty with Chinese heritage asking the senate for advice on how to express their disappointment and disapproval of Senator Marsha Blackburn's xenophobic and racist statements about Chinese history and culture. She shared that many ethnic minorities have experienced increased discrimination in recent years and the senator's comments serve only to exacerbate these problems. There are about 30 faculty of Chinese heritage. They have sent a similar letter to the Chancellor and have the support of many non-Chinese faculty and staff; 2000 people signed a published letter across the state. They have met with upper administration and are working on a proposal for an educational series to improve the understanding on campus and across the state of Chinese culture. They ask for support and help from faculty in organizing this educational series. S. Spurgeon asks the senate to help with these initiatives and to support our Chinese faculty.

M. Black said that there are probably many more faculty who are willing to support the letter and sign on. L. Zhao will send the Google link and ask for faculty to share expertise on how to best educate our community.

TUFS Report (M. Anderson)

M. Anderson, president of TUFS, (TUFS includes universities not part of the UT system) is working on reporting on the Faculty Workload Survey and the impact of the pandemic. The full report will be available on Feb. 7 at <http://tnfacultysenates.org/>. It is clear that everyone was working many more hours, especially NTTF. If anyone has anecdotes about pandemic teaching, please share this information with Dr. Anderson with the subject "TUFS report."

There is concern about a new gun bill. SB0318 does not appear to have any exceptions for higher education for concealed carry without a permit. They are also concerned about the U of Kansas move to suspend tenure.

UTK Graduate Student Fees Statement (M. McAlpin)

M. McAlpin shared the text of a joint resolution with the Graduate Student Senate. There has been a move to reduce graduate student fees, which are currently around \$2000, (UT charges some of the highest fees for grad students) and which are taken out of graduate stipends. Often students are not aware that these fees will be taken out of their stipends. Dean Thompson said that fees are not taken from stipends. They are taken out of fellowships. Fees are assessed early so students must pay fees at the beginning of the semester. If students do not pay all of the fees at once they have to pay an additional \$40. The resolution requests a fee waiver for all graduate students starting next year.

Dean Thompson asks for clarification about if the request is for fees assessed to all grad students or just those with assistantships. She said the breakdown of how fees are used is available on the graduate school website. The fees provide real benefits for the students.

Provost Zomchick said that many are already on central fee waivers. If we waive this for grad students, undergraduates would also argue for a reduction of fees and the fees are important to maintain many services.

C. White asked about the financial impact on campus services if fees are not collected and if UT is really that far above the national norm in charging fees. C. Parigger stated that we need to know where the fee money goes and how it is used. M. McAlpin clarified that it would be better to roll the fees into the tuition waiver.

A. Roessner suggested an addition to note the ways that the pandemic created an additional workload for grad students, particularly for those who teach. S. Spurgeon recommended that M. McAlpin continue discussions with the Graduate Student Senate and bring the resolution back to a future Faculty Senate meeting. He expressed his appreciation of the work already done on this issue. M. McAlpin withdrew the resolution and will present it again at a future senate meeting.

UTK Strategic Visioning PowerPoint

The UTK Strategic Visioning PowerPoint was included in the agenda as an information item.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Millie Gimmel, Faculty Senate Secretary