

Faculty Senate Executive Council
Convened via Zoom
February 15, 2021
MINUTES

Present: Joel Anderson, Ernest Bernard, Amy Broemmel, Rachel Caldwell, Tamah Fridman, Millie Gimmel, Julia Jaekel, Cheryl Kojima, Anne Langendorfer, Beauvais Lyons, Stephanie Madison, Bonnie Ownley, David Patterson, Robert Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, John Zomchick

Guests: Diane Kelly, 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 January 25, 2021, were presented for approval. T. Fridman moved to accept, D. Patterson seconded. The minutes were approved.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

S. Spurgeon reminded the council that the UFC will be emailing all faculty a survey on sick leave and we should encourage as many people to participate as possible. We will be looking for a president-elect for next year. He will be reaching out to caucus chairs on efficient ways to recruit new senators. E. Bernard will be stepping down from his role as parliamentarian this year. He has provided an FAQ list to help interested parties understand the position. S. Spurgeon feels that the university is somewhere between the embracing and infusing phases of prioritizing diversity at the university. The senate leadership is committed to working toward this campus being an infused campus, even if there is some push back.

UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor was unable to attend today.

Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost announced that Gov. Lee's budget is good news for the university. The new nursing building was approved. We will receive \$8 million in deferred maintenance and a 4% salary increase, although how that increase will be implemented is still under discussion. The hiring freeze for faculty and staff has been lifted, effective immediately. He is working on an independent plan to increase salaries for NTTF.

There will be an announcement soon of the Executive Director of the Oak Ridge Institute at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Joan Bienvenue, who will start March 1.

The Chancellor is moving forward on the Strategic Visioning Project.

The calendar committees are moving forward. We are looking toward a typical in-person semester in the Fall, having learned some things from the pandemic and understanding that some faculty may wish to include some virtual offerings. He stated that even with those plans, we know that we may need to adapt as the pandemic changes.

His office is collaborating with Vice Chancellor Small on issues affecting black students on campus, especially with reference to the Africana Studies course where an epithet was written on the white board. The university is working to support Africana Studies and working toward the infusion referenced by S. Spurgeon. Black students and staff are angry and this happens all too often, especially during Black History month. The Provost will be meeting with Deans this week to lay out ways to promote accountability.

B. Lyons thanked the Provost for making this the topic of last week's Coffee and Conversation. He appreciates the response from the university and from Africana Studies on this recent issue. Faculty members want to cultivate honest conversations and should enjoy academic freedom to engage in difficult conversations in the classroom. Faculty must be responsible for what happens in their classroom but we need to be careful not to silence faculty and keep them from having the necessary conversations that must take place. B. Lyons suggested the book *Academic Power and Academic Freedom*.

M. Stanley asked about the adjustment to NTTF salaries and asked when the Provost would be providing the update. The Provost will try to make this report at the next Faculty Senate meeting. A. Langendorfer commented that the connection between NTTF pay and academic freedom is an important one. NTTF teach large numbers of students. The NTTF have been advocating for a substantial pay raise for a long time and a minimum salary of \$60,000 which would show respect for the work they do and the priority of the general education curriculum.

S. Madison asked about where students can eat safely inside. The Provost recognizes that this is a problem in cold/bad weather. More seating is opening in the Student Union and some of the dining facilities are providing seating.

T. Fridman shared that many good NTTF will leave because of low salaries.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Faculty Senate 2021-2022 President Update (S. Spurgeon)

B. Krumm has resigned and the past Senate presidents have been working to develop a plan to deal with this unforeseen situation. The person who is president-elect this year will be president in 2022-23. The plan for president for next year is still under development since this is an unprecedented event.

B. Lyons shared that a few years ago there was an effort to support presidents-elect financially (instructional replacement) and that Senate presidents have this support. This may help recruit future presidents.

Faculty Affairs, UTK-UTIA Faculty Handbook Revisions (D. Kelly)

Vice Provost Kelly presented the changes to the *Faculty Handbook* as information. The changes in green and red are to be included in the updated *Handbook*. These changes pertain to probationary tenure-track faculty and the Covid-19 pandemic and other issues that might require an extension in the probationary period. Covid-19 extensions will be in addition to other possible extensions.

Another change is on the enhanced performance review for probationary faculty and gives department heads and mentors some flexibility.

B. Lyons says that the BOT was responsive in looking at their policies and the possible need for extensions of the probationary period because of Covid-19.

D. Patterson commented that the inclusion of the mentor is a new and important change and this was also well received by the BOT.

A. Langendorfer asked for clarification about the role of the president and vice president.

These changes bring the *Handbook* into compliance with Board Policy and will be presented to the Senate as information items at the March 1 meeting.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Undergraduate Council Minutes of February 2, 2021

C. Kojima stated the Curriculum Committee met and the changes they made are minor. All changes were approved by the UG Council.

The Academic Policy Committee has adapted the catalog to account for the new grading that was created during the pandemic.

VolCore has had several courses approved. There is a new site that gives the current status of courses in VolCore (<https://advising.utk.edu/guides/vol-core/>).

A. Langendorfer asked about the R prefix. Will we use this outside of the pandemic? We don't know if this will be used in the Fall. For now, it will be used for Spring 2020, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021.

Since the minutes were approved in the UGC, the Executive Council only had vote to accept them or not. The minutes were accepted.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.