

Faculty Senate Executive Council
Convened via Zoom
April 19, 2021
MINUTES

Present: Joel Anderson, Ernest Bernard, Amy Broemmel, Rachel Caldwell, Tamah Fridman, Millie Gimmel, Martin Griffin, Cheryl Kojima, Anne Langendorfer, Beauvais Lyons, Stephanie Madison, Audris Mockus, Bonnie Ownley, David Patterson, Gary Skolits, Robert Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, Mark Stanley, John Zomchick

Guests: Tim Cross, RJ Hinde, Donde Plowman, Dixie Thompson, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of March 22, 2021, were presented for approval. B. Lyons moved to accept, M. Griffin seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

President's Report (S. Spurgeon)

S. Spurgeon expressed his appreciation to the Executive Council for their perseverance and their willingness to do the hard work. The Senate ballots should go out this week to vote for the election of senators. Anyone interested in being Senate President or President-elect should contact S. Spurgeon. The vote will be at the Senate meeting on May 3. There is currently one person who is willing to stand for president-elect and two others who have expressed interest in being current president. Their bios should be sent out to the Senate with the agenda for the next meeting. They will be invited to speak at the full senate meeting. Senators expressed their appreciation for S. Spurgeon and his work this year.

UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor also expressed her appreciation for S. Spurgeon's work this year. It's been a tough year all around but it's almost done. She was grateful for the honest conversations around making the Senate more robust and supporting the Senate president.

Tomorrow is a called meeting of the BOT Executive Committee to approve the new student code of conduct. This has been ongoing for many years but now has the support of SGA and all other parties involved. She feels this should be approved without issue. She thanked the SGA president and the ombudsperson for their work in difficult times. Because there is great need for support in the ombudsperson's office, a second full time person will be hired for the office. The Chancellor expressed her deep appreciation for the ombudsperson and the important work she does.

The new dean of Ag extension is excellent and is involved in the implementation of the Strategic Vision. The Strategic Vision working groups are about to turn in their identified priorities, possible metrics and budget suggestions.

The Chancellor encourages everyone to get the vaccine and to encourage those around them to get vaccinated. There's no reason to not get the vaccine and one on one conversations make the difference for many who are hesitant. The vaccine will not be mandated. A senator asked about rural students who may be vaccine hesitant. Is there any way to incentivize vaccination? There will be opportunities for vaccination during Welcome Week and there will be other incentives.

Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost updated the FSEC on the Office of Faculty Affairs, the NTTF issues and the concerns of marginalized scholars. Dean Lee is meeting with NTTF to discuss the problems of salary compression and a representative from the Provost's office will be there. Dean Thompson has submitted a report on graduate student fees and has continued her work to support them. Assistant Provost Williams has been working tirelessly on issues of equity and diversity. He is optimistic we will have a strong first year class in the Fall, likely a higher number than last year's class. May 3 is the confirmation deadline for incoming students. In programs abroad, they are looking at virtual study abroad and increasing the number of international students. Vice Provost Hinde and others are looking closely at on-line courses and how to best use them and broaden access to the university. RJ Hinde shared the two degree pathways available to students who cannot attend classes on campus that have been approved (concentrations in applied studies in A/S and agricultural leadership) by all necessary committees on campus. According to THEC they can be implemented when the system office approves them and notifies THEC. This time THEC says these are not concentrations but new degrees and therefore should be considered differently. Hinde and the system pushed back and THEC has finally approved these but is requiring some changes for approval. There will need to be some expedited review of courses to get these changes to the full senate by the May meeting.

There was a question about contact tracing and quarantining in the fall. There will be contact tracing and isolation facilities for campus residents. Anyone who is fully vaccinated will not have to quarantine if they are a close contact.

UTIA Report (T. Cross)

Dr. Cross was optimistic about how well the year has gone. He is very happy with the new hire for Dean of Extension and she would not have come if she had not felt UT was on a positive trajectory. The UT extension is partnering with the Department of Health to educate Tennesseans about vaccines. The college is hosting a P and T workshop on May 10. There is another workshop for supervisors across the state to work through the process of returning to the workplace by June 1. Most employees are interested in coming back.

Dr. Cross and Dr. Plowman are working toward reunification of UTIA with the main campus. Faculty are involved in this process. UTIA now has conflict of interest and misconduct cases managed by organizations on the main campus with input from UTIA faculty. UTIA has increased funding for Extension from the State. This will be their first operating increase for extension in a decade.

A. Langendorfer asked about how reports from UTIA will fit in with other campus organizations. Will they need separate reports? This still needs to be worked out. Since UTIA is four academic colleges, not just one, it still has a different structure from other colleges.

D. Patterson asked if the passage of the open carry legislation is valid on campus. The Chancellor stated that there is a provision for higher education campuses to forbid it and so, it will not be allowed.

Someone asked when we will be able to stop wearing masks. It seems that we should be able to stop by Fall and the university can still mandate indoor mask usage if necessary, just as it can switch to all virtual classes if the situation warrants it. Much is still unknown.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

2021-2022 Faculty Senate Leadership and Committee Chairs (S. Spurgeon)

Committee chairs who wish to continue in their positions next year should let S. Spurgeon know today of their wishes. This helps to plan for next year. B. Lyons reminded committees that doing an end of the year report is very helpful for planning for next year.

Resolution on Non-Tenure Track Faculty Diversity Issues (J. Anderson)

J. Anderson presented the resolution. Provost Zomchick suggested that the resolution draw on the ability of the Provost's office, the Senate and departments to look into this together. J. Anderson clarified that he agrees with collaboration but still finds the resolution to be very important especially for faculty who feel marginalized. Provost Zomchick would like the resolution to be seen as more of a collaborative effort. The Chancellor agrees with making the resolution more collaborative and B. Lyons pointed out that there are many groups involved in hiring practices and this could be indicated in the resolution. M. Stanley stated that there is a formalized process for hiring TT faculty but NTTF do not have these same avenues or considerations. A. Langendorfer said that this resolution is a way to work toward collaboration since NTTF don't have access to the other decision-making groups. The Chancellor asked if this was a campus level issue or just germane to one college. Senators J. Anderson, M. Stanley and A. Langendorfer clarified that this is a campus wide issue. J. Anderson made a few friendly amendments. The Executive Council voted 15 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain. The amended resolution passes the Executive Council and will sent to the full senate.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Graduate Council Minutes of March 25, 2021

A. Broemmel shared that there was one voting item on the code of conduct and shifting the appeals in the Graduate School. This and the chair-elect were approved. The Executive Council voted 16 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining to approve the minutes. They will be sent to the full senate.

Undergraduate Council Minutes of April 13, 2021

C. Kojima highlighted the many activities in the Undergraduate Council. She reviewed all of the items. Of particular interest was the five-year pilot program to waive the requirement of standardized tests for admission. The Executive Council voted 14 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining to approve the minutes and they will be sent to the full senate.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m. S. Spurgeon thanked the Chancellor and others for the letter in support of the Austin-East community. This kind of public statement is important. He also recognized that the Senate and the EC have done a lot of work this year and he is very grateful for it.