

**UTK Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting
Minutes**

October 4, 2021

3:30 via Zoom

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/97440121658>

ATTENDING: Ernest Bernard, Michelle Brannen, Phillip Davis, Joanne Devlin, Tamah Fridman, Millie Gimmel, Louis Gross, Bernard Issa, Anne Langendorfer, Beauvais Lyons, Stephanie Madison, Mary McAlpin, Stefanie Ohnesorg, Bonnie Ownley, David Patterson, Beth Schussler, Robert Spirko, Shawn Spurgeon, Michelle Violanti

Guests: Diane Kelly, Linda Martin

CALL TO ORDER at 15:33

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

FSEC Zoom Meeting – September 13, 2021

There were no modifications or corrections.

Schussler moved to approve. Second by Ohnesorg.

Minutes were approved 12 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

President's Report (L. Gross)

The president reminded co-chairs of committees that only one of them should vote. The president thanks the committees for their work in shared governance.

Since the last senate meeting the following appointments have been made: Ohnesorg to the Executive Calendar Committee, Eric Lukosi to the BAM allocation review committee, Kelly Fecteau to the BAM space allocation committee.

Gross welcomed Brian Long as the newly elected chair of the research council. The currently elected chair needed to take a year of leave from the position.

There are still representatives needed for the Student Media Board and the Campus Planning Design Committee. The Classroom Upgrade Committee needs a non-senator member since the Upgrade Committee meets at the same time as the full senate. Please let Gross know if you have any suggestions for these positions. In the future, we will endeavor to ask specific senate committees to take responsibility for recommending individuals to fill vacancies on campus committees that require senate representatives.

There should be a formal hire letter going out for the new senate Administrative Assistant. Loretta Link, the new hire, should be starting in two weeks. She has served as the senate assistant at Appalachian State. She will be available to assist committees once she is settled in.

Gross has had many meetings around different issues with upper administration, especially around the case against Dr. Hu. He was interviewed by a number of media outlets about the case. The APA justice group has invited Gross to speak with them tomorrow (5 October). The UTK Center for Global Education (CGE) has organized a session being advertised by the justice group on this issue. The general counsel has a variety of protections in place for faculty acting within the responsibilities of their employment. Gross will share the appropriate website.

Gross has been in touch with the provost about timetable issues which will be discussed later. There is also discussion about when 9-month faculty must be available for service since the calendar changes have reduced the three-month break over summer.

There is also discussion about the status of senate meetings. They are viewed as closed meetings since attendance by non-senators is by invitation. In the past, the senate has always held open meetings. This needs to be clarified. Gross plans to continue, as has been done in the past, with posting the senate agenda and allowing anyone who wants to attend to do so.

He is in touch with the provost's office and the undergraduate and graduate councils and the budget committee about how courses and curricular approvals by these councils will impact the new budget allocation model.

The Global Tech initiative: there is an update on the president's website. The CGE has been encouraged to work with academic departments. The Podium arrangement in which non-UTK faculty deliver instruction has been terminated.

The senate needs to decide if Spring meetings will be in person or via zoom. This must be voted on at the November meeting.

Discussion

Patterson indicated that at the University Faculty Council it was brought to light that the campus is paying the system for use of Andy Holt Tower and asked if Gross has discussed this with the Chancellor. At this point Gross has no details. Patterson remembered that in 2007 the BOT took Cherokee Farms and did not reimburse the campus. Why are we then paying for Andy Holt? Gross stated that Cherokee Farm is now under the control of UTK but he does not know the details.

Lyons commented that the system sold Volunteer Hall and UTK had to pick up the maintenance costs. Gross suggests that the Budget and Planning committee discuss this with VC Cimino at their next meeting.

Daves asked that the president list the above issues for him in an email so that he can be fully aware of all the pertinent issues at the next Budget and Planning meeting.

Gross welcomed L. Martin to the executive council meeting. Martin is here in her capacity as Interim VC /VP for UTIA.

UTIA Report (L. Martin)

Martin offered to be helpful in any way possible on the UTIA/UTK reunification. She welcomes input and ideas from faculty.

The TN legislature has funded 32 new extension agents to be based in various counties. This is a restoration of funds and the extension offices are great places to promote UTK.

Gov. Lee signed bill 0203 to allow students to have excused absences for 4-H activities and this is a very proactive stance. 4-H has its largest presence among all states in TN. The extension service is working on its strategic plan. Ag Research has been working on a strategic plan and is looking to modernize the infrastructure and work with the One Health initiative. Vet Med will have a site visit in March for a self-study. The Herbert College has a number of recognized faculty in teaching and advising. The creamery will be opening soon.

Gross asked about the extension agents and if they are faculty. Martin clarified that some faculty are agents but most extension educators are staff, although around the country most are faculty. This is a matter worth exploring.

Lyons asked about enrollment growth at UTIA. Enrollment is about even from last year. Lyons asked about the relationship of the Herbert College with Chinese universities. Are the Hu case and the China initiative having a negative impact? Martin did not know and will follow up.

Langendorfer commented that discussion around extension agents becoming faculty should include NTTF.

NEW BUSINESS

Action Items from Undergraduate Council Minutes [September 14, 2021](#) (J. Devlin)

Devlin summarized the UGC meeting in Sept. There is a summary at the beginning of the minutes on action items. There are changes in catalog language, corrections to the catalog and

69 courses approved by the general education committee for VolCore. 3 AOC and over 30 EI courses were approved. The committee will be meeting again soon, two weeks from tomorrow.

Violanti asked about AOC and EI. There are complaints that there aren't enough courses approved but is it that there are not enough being submitted rather than that they are not being approved? This is indeed the issue and since these are new categories, there is some confusion. The UGC is working to clarify procedures. Senators should be encouraging their departments to submit in all categories.

Langendorfer requested that this information be sent out to senators or have deans send this information out to all involved parties to get these courses submitted. The next deadline for the Fall 22 catalog is later in the semester. These are rolling evaluations so they can be submitted any time. Devlin will share the details with the senate graduate assistant so she can disseminate to the senate.

Gross wondered about the closure/change in Herbert College of an entire major (Construction science and agricultural systems) caused by the loss of faculty. This is a good example of how loss of faculty can impact our curricular offerings. Martin shared that these changes are happening across the country. Ag Mech is moving to Construction Science and these classes are taught by NTTF who have experience in the construction world. This is on page 28 of the UGC minutes.

Lyons asked about the transition to VolCore since students can choose catalogs that were viable when they started at UT. We have a few years to get VolCore completely filled. It would help to have college administrators looking over this as well and not leave this just to faculty, especially for EI and AOC. It takes time to develop these courses and the proposals.

The EC voted 13 in favor with one abstention to send these minutes on the senate for further discussion and approval.

Report from Faculty Affairs (B. Lyons) (bylaws audit pdf attachment)

Lyons presented the updated audit of the departmental bylaws. He asks that this be presented to the full senate. There are a number of important issues in the audit that are laid out in the report. It is important that deans support this process in bringing bylaws up to date. These are important guides for TT and NTTF and help keep the university consistent and transparent. It is important to get this done this semester if possible.

Violanti asks if there is an entity on campus that assures the bylaws are being followed? This is primarily through appeals and litigation. This is an administrative obligation and one of the ombudsperson's responsibilities.

Discussion about Timetable Changes (L. Gross)

Gross summarized that the chancellor and provost started a few months ago with their effort to more fully utilize campus space and class times. The registrar has sent out a set of rules on use of space and this was sent out at the last minute. The provost feels this was an administrative decision and not an issue of shared governance. Gross has heard many complaints because this was done at the last minute. Violanti stated that this could be an issue that hinders the recruiting of new faculty (new classes/sections can only be offered in non-prime time). Gross asked Vice Provost Kelly to share this discussion with the Provost and she agreed to do so. Langendorfer shared her concern that in English this is a huge impact on NTTF who now work later hours in this model. Daves asked about the appropriateness of providing alternatives to this allocation model. Gross shared that he heard a suggestion to decrease the amount of time between classes.

Spirko indicated that NTTF will be the ones teaching mostly outside of prime time. Later classes impact the ability of faculty to participate in community and family activities. Devlin clarified that the prime time issue does not apply to rooms managed by departments. Some departments have lots of space, others have none. This is important in the BAM because use of space will incur charges for the departments. Fridman asked if we even have enough space to handle all face-to-face classes. Alumni were very generous during the pandemic. Can we ask to suggest to donors that there is a need for additional classroom space? Gross stated that there is a task force studying the university's capacity.

Actions related to Bullying Policy (L. Gross)

Gross shared the Bullying policy that was approved by the senate in 2019 and asked the Chancellor and Provost about its status. A task force (chaired by Mary Lucal and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch) was supposed to meet but Covid got in the way. They have been meeting recently. The provost asked if the senate prefers the policy be sent to the general counsel now or wait for the task force report. Lyons said this is on the FAC goals list. He understands that some progress has been made and suggests the senate to continue to follow up on the task force. There are already cases that fit under bullying but there is no policy. Lyons suggests we ask the task force to finish by the November senate meeting and this could give us a framework. A lot of peer institutions have done this work already and their work was taken in consideration when the policy was drafted. Gross hopes we will move forward as expeditiously as possible.

The sense of the FSEC is that the president confer with the provost and encourage the completion of the report before the end of the semester and get the policy to the office of the general counsel as soon as possible.

Discussion about Mask Requirement (E. Schussler)

Schussler began a preemptive discussion on the extension of the mask requirements. What are the criteria for lifting the mask requirement? How does the FSEC feel about defining criteria or continuing the mandate for the rest of the semester?

McAlpin commented that UT has no criteria at this point and advocates for continuing the mandate until the end of the semester; Langendorfer said that from the beginning the faculty have advocated for following CDC guidance until there is low transmission in the community. The Knox County data is the best we have since UT has very limited data. Lyons said that the chancellor has previously said she would honor CDC guidelines and we should encourage her to hold to this. Fridman asked if the health center can let us know who is vaccinated. This is not possible. Issa agreed with Langendorfer and since we do not have and cannot request information about vaccine status, we must maintain the mask mandate. Brannen agrees with maintaining the mandate and agreed that conjecture about vaccine rates is not real data.

Schussler moves that:

The UTK Faculty Senate Executive Council urges the Chancellor and Provost to follow the CDC guidelines for masking and other Covid-19 safety protocols using the data from Knox County.

Second by McAlpin.

There was no further discussion.

No one was opposed or abstained so the motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Graduate Council Minutes [September 2, 2021](#)

Committee Summary Reports

ADJOURNMENT at 17:12

Respectfully submitted by Millie Gimmel