



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

**FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021
3:30 PM VIA ZOOM**

Louis Gross, President
Beth Schussler, President-Elect
Shawn Spurgeon, Past-President

Millie Gimmel, Secretary
Ernest Bernard, Parliamentarian
Robert Spirko, Communications Officer

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM (E. Bernard)

Senators not in attendance: C. Barroso, S. Collins-Elliot, K. Frank, A. Griffith, S. Groenke, M. Harris, S. Huff Burnley, J. Hathaway, D. Icove, M. Hinten, J. Jaekel, J. Jia, L. Knox, B. Krumm, X. Li, S. Mackenzie, M. Madhukar, K. Martin, S. Martin-West, K. Morgan, S. Muñoz, T. Mueller, C. Parigger, M. Pittman, A. Roessner, S. Smith, A. Taylor, R. Toledo, M. Violanti, and Z. Zhang

Alternates: T. Brewer for S. Abdoli; and G. Chen for S. Trendafilova

II. CALL TO ORDER

The president called the meeting to order at 15:31

Attendees should be muted until recognized. All should use the raise hand feature to ask a question. All contributions to the chat should be germane to the discussion but this is not necessarily read aloud or included in the formal discussion.

III. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Approval of Faculty Senate Minutes – September 20, 2021 ([link](#))

Beth Schussler moved to approve, second by N. Hristov.

Discussion: C. Greenacre noted that the time of adjournment is incorrect and should read 17:17. This will be corrected.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

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

Devlin summarized the action items that are listed at the beginning of the minutes.

Discussion and questions: Fridman about the number of Vol Core approvals. There have been 34 and 35 courses approved at different times.

The minutes were approved: 60 in favor, 0 against, 6 abstaining

Change in Faculty Senate Bylaws: 2nd Reading (S. Ohnesorg) ([link](#))

Ohnesorg of the graduate council reviewed the changes for the second reading. There was no discussion.

The change was approved: 63 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstaining

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's Report (L. Gross)

The president thanked everyone for their work in shared governance and welcomes L. Martin in her role as interim VC of UTIA. The chancellor is travelling and will not attend.

Loretta Link is the new senate administrative assistant. Please include her in any correspondence to the senate leadership. Once she is acclimated, she will be assisting committees that do not have any administrative support.

Ohnesorg will serve on the executive academic calendar committee. Lukosi will serve on the BAM allocation review committee. Fecteau will be the representative on the BAM space allocation committee. He welcomes Long as the chair of the Research Council.

We still need a representative for the Student Media Board, Campus Planning Design Committee, Classroom Upgrade Committee and Intercollegiate Athletics. Please let the president know if you are interested in serving in any of these positions.

The executive council passed the following motion: **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.** This was communicated to the provost and chancellor. The provost will address this and the resolution on course modality in his report today. The senate leadership has been discussing the expectations around the availability of 9-month faculty during the new calendar. We need to make sure that there is no expectation of service responsibilities throughout the year. Senate leadership has been following up on the policy around notification of employees when information is requested about them from outside the university. The office of the general counsel has liability protections for employees acting in the capacity of their employment. This information is available on the office of the general counsel's website. AAUP is hosting an event related to faculty issues with three speakers on November 4. The Faculty Affairs Committee met with the provost and the general counsel about the situation around former Professor Hu. The president is hopeful this will be resolved soon. He has posted on his website the remarks he made to the APA Justice Organization about the Hu case. The response to his questions about faculty involvement in scheduling was that this is an administrative matter and not within the purview of the faculty. There was discussion with administration about an issue surrounding academic freedom and a departmental website and there was an effective solution for all parties. There was also a discussion around the senate and the fact that senate meetings are not subject to State Open Meetings requirements. Gross intends to continue to make meetings open to anyone with interest in the proceedings.

Gross has conferred with the provost's staff and chairs of the undergraduate and graduate council regarding processes to consider proposals for courses/curricula that have budgetary impacts.

His correspondence around global tech program in the center for global education is posted on his website. The CGE is encouraged to discuss opportunities for electronic engagement with other countries with academic departments.

We need to decide in November if we will continue via zoom or return to in-person meetings. The president requested a straw poll for input on this now for informational purposes.

Discussion: White prefers in person meetings but feels we should wait until the Covid surge ends. The president said that the decision needs to be made in November and at that meeting the senate can choose to defer a final decision until later. For the moment, according to the straw poll, there is a preference for zoom only. Spirko expressed his concern about class times in that these later times impinge on pedagogy and working conditions and should fall within the purview of the senate. The president hopes that in the future the provost will include input from the senate on class time decisions. Nowicki asked about the password protection for the senate zoom meetings and the openness of meetings. Gross said that both are published on the senate website.

Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

Zomchick was grateful for the participation of senators in shared governance and expressed his willingness to meet with senators at any time.

He updated the status of Dr. Hu. Dr. Hu was offered reinstatement with maximum legally allowable back pay, a restart package for his research and fees for an immigration attorney if needed. They have not heard back from Dr. Hu.

In regards to course modality resolution, the deans decided that the assignment of course modality should remain with the deans. Faculty can be in discussion with department heads about modality and the heads can look at the entire department offerings and then submit requests to college offices for the deans to make the final decision based on distribution for the entire college.

CDC guidelines: They continue to monitor the state of Covid on campus and in the county and will follow CDC guidelines to the extent they can. 77% of faculty are vaccinated. 73% of staff and they estimate 64% of in-state students are vaccinated but this number is unreliable since many students (about 25%) are from out of state and we don't know their status. The plan to comply with the federal order that all employees be vaccinated is still being considered. President Boyd will give guidelines on this.

They are taking steps to respond to the behavior at the end of the Mississippi State game and will repeat expectations for students and work with the UTPD.

For classroom assignments and scheduling, they are following guidelines that have been in place for some time. They wanted to make sure that all classes had rooms assigned at the start of registration. The administration will continue to work with units and the registrar to resolve scheduling issues.

Jennings asked about the impact on space availability on large lecture courses. He wished faculty had been consulted because many sections do not have rooms or are at problematic times for grad students. Faculty needed to contribute to these decisions and the challenges

were and are huge for departments. The provost says they will be more communicative with faculty in the future.

Black asked for clarification on the primary impetus for the changes to classroom allocation being having students know their classrooms when they register. The provost replied that this was part of the decision-making process but the other reason was that there were classes this fall that did not have rooms and they wanted to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to have a classroom. If a classroom is under the control of a college or department, the use of this room did not change.

Schussler asked about the course modality decision. What were the reasons that the deans chose to keep control of this rather than send this decision to departments? Department heads can only see their department, not the totality of their college. The deans are better equipped for this oversight but they will work with department heads.

Fridman asked about the post tenure review and the lack of “full blown tenure” and how we are affected in hiring because of this. The provost has indicated that they have spoken to the board of trustees in favor of the elimination of the periodic post tenure performance review. He believes that tenure stream faculty at UT have access to full tenure.

Interim Vice Chancellor of UTIA Report (L. Martin)

VC Martin shared that the search for VC/VP of UTIA is underway and it should begin in the next week. Ag research is working on the strategic action plan and also working on issues surrounding climate change. Extension positions that were previously cut have been restored throughout the state. These positions are for educators in rural distressed counties. There is a landmark legislation to allow students excused absences for educational 4H programs. Vet med is working on their self-study for accreditation and there is ongoing construction in the college of veterinary medicine. Ag Day was held to celebrate agriculture in the state. The meritorious service awards were given out. The creamery will be opening in the next months. VC Martin is looking for ways to strengthen the connection between UTIA and UTK and eliminate the barriers that exist from before reunification.

Gross asked if the offices of research might be combined in some way. Ag research is separate because the money comes from different places, but the two offices work collaboratively not competitively.

UFC Report (D. Patterson)

Patterson reported that there has been only one brief meeting since his last report. After it was made public that the President Boyd was sponsoring an event for representative Pody, Patterson, Gross and Lyons met with Boyd and had a productive meeting with the president. Boyd reported back to the UFC retracting his support of Pody. Gross reiterated that the senate leadership reacted quickly to the news report and President Boyd responded quickly as well.

McAlpin expressed her appreciation for the leadership’s quick reaction to Boyd’s relationship with Pody but the president’s initial choice to support his friend is damaging to the LGBTQIA community.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Report from Faculty Affairs (B. Lyons) ([link](#))

The FAC has been working on handbook revisions, equity, retention votes and in making assessments fair across units and put more emphasis on qualitative assessment in retention votes. They reviewed changes to the Ombud's office. Handbook revisions have been sent to the general counsel for review. Since P&T documents are no longer on paper, some changes need to be made to the handbook and there are some changes that need to be made around stopping the tenure clock.

The committee met on October 13 with the provost around the reinstatement of Dr. Hu. This case impacts our policies and procedures (outside interest and disclosures). The administration says there is a commitment to requiring subpoenas for personnel files in the future. The handbook needs clear language about what "consulting the senate" means and the committee is working on language to improve this in the handbook. There was general agreement in the committee that the provost should consult with the Current Senate President, the Immediate-Past President and the President Elect.

There has been an audit of department by-laws ongoing for 5 years. In many areas bylaws did not comply with the handbook and many have been brought into compliance, but the audit rubric has been evolving and two areas have been added: Do the bylaws have criteria for rank for NTTF? Do they reference the now eliminated manual for faculty evaluation? Please look at your departmental bylaws and let the FAC know if you have brought your bylaws into compliance. Bylaws should be hosted on departmental or college websites, not the senate website. This is important work that impacts all faculty. Please engage in continuing conversations about what the unit's standards are for faculty performance at all ranks. Bylaws should encourage engaged research, teaching and scholarship that are consistent with our mission as a land grant institution. Contact Lyons if anything in the audit needs correction or revision.

Stanley asked about the kinds of appointments and ranks that NTTF have. This is less clear than for tenure line faculty. NTTF have different appointments across units. There is ongoing work about the clarification of titles across the university.

White asked how binding are bylaws? Do administrators have to follow them? She has seen examples of administration and units ignoring unit bylaws. Lyons stated that bylaws should protect the individual and the institutions. The appeals process focuses on procedural issues rather than merit so bylaws are vital in these cases. Kelly responded that her office does not check all unit bylaws but they do follow the handbook. Kelly welcomes having inconsistencies pointed out. Unit and college bylaws should be publicly accessible for reference for all units.

Fridman expressed a concern about the inability to give to feedback to administration about staff. Personnel evaluations can be difficult, no matter what is stated in the bylaws.

Gross pointed out that the bullying policy has not been discussed. The policy is still being drafted. Yamagata-Lynch provided an update that the policy is under review by a number of

offices, including the general counsel and once that is done, it will be presented to the senate. Several senators are on the task force for this policy.

Gross stated that the increase by over 60% of NTTF over the past decade has made the role of the NTTF committee even more important. The NTTF committee has been asked to host listening sessions to help the university move into the future in regard to NTTF and how to appropriately value their contributions.

VI. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

UNAPPROVED Faculty Senate Executive Council October 4, 2021 ([link](#))

Committee Summary Reports ([link](#))

Vol Core Update from Undergraduate Council ([link](#))

ADJOURNMENT at 16:57

Respectfully submitted by Millie Gimmel