



## FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 1, 2021

### I. Call to Order

The zoom meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m.

Attendance: Ernest Bernard; Michelle Brannen; Phillip Daves; Joanne Devlin; Tamah Fridman; Millie Gimmel; Martin Griffin; Bernard Issa; Anne Langendorfer; Brian Long; Beauvais Lyons; Stephanie Madison; Mary McAlpin; Stefanie Ohnesorg; Bonnie Ownley; David Patterson; Beth Schussler; Robert Spirko; Shawn Spurgeon; and Michelle Violanti.

### II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Approval of Faculty Senate Executive Council Minutes October 4, 2021 ([link](#))  
There were no changes or corrections. B. Lyons moved to approve, second by B. Schussler. The minutes were approved with one abstention.

### III. Announcements and Reports

- a. President's Report (L. Gross)

L. Gross welcomed Loretta Link as the new administrative assistant. Committees in need of support should contact L. Gross with their requests. Please copy Loretta Link on any correspondence to the Senate Leadership Council.

Appointments since the last meeting are: Professor Jon Hathaway (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering) will be serving this year as the Faculty Senate representative on the Campus Planning and Design Committee. Professor Randy Small (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology) has agreed to be the faculty representative on the Classroom Upgrade Committee and will serve until summer 2023.

The Senate leadership has been in touch with the Chancellor Plowman and Provost Zomchick about expectations on faculty availability with the new academic calendar. L. Gross has been in dialogue with the Office of Research about how faculty can charge effort to external grants to meet compliance standards since the summer break has been shortened.

When an external entity asks for information on faculty, there is no clarity on how that information will be released and if the faculty member will be informed. L. Gross is continuing to investigate this.

The AAUP is hosting an event "Faculty: Does UT have your back?" on Zoom on Thursday, November 4, 2021 from 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm.

The Senate leadership has discussed course buy-outs for the Senate President. The details are still being worked out.

There is discussion about fees for graduate students and the payment of fees using external funding. L. Gross has made a request of the Dean of the Graduate School to determine if there is any constraint in the new budget model on how graduate student fees can be covered by external funding or if deans have the freedom in the new budget model to cover some of these fees.

L. Gross is calculating the costs of hiring a NTTF versus a graduate student because in the new model, deans must cover all costs for a student. He has been attending the ERP trainings with potential vendors. The system is not replacing CAYUSE for grant proposals but is replacing the system for Human Resources and Finance within the year.

In regards to Dr. Hu, L. Gross has avoided making public comments since he last made comments. His prior comments are available in publications including the Chronicle of Higher Education.

At the UFC meeting he brought up the treatment of NTTF across the system. L. Gross shared the data on gender representation across the system in governor's chairs and chairs of excellence. Of the 58 chairs, 93% are held by men.

L. Gross attended the TUFSS meeting on October 23, 2021.

Discussion: There was no discussion.

b. UTK Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor has been showcasing the innovative things happening at UTK.

The strategic vision and the voluntary retirement program were approved by the Board. In regard to the vaccine mandate: President Biden has an executive order mandating vaccines for all federal contractors of which UT is one. The special session of the Tennessee legislature passed a bill that there can be no mandates for masks or vaccines except for certain higher education institutions with research programs affected by the federal mandates. Higher education administrators can request an exception from the comptroller. Once the Governor signs the bill, this will be put in motion. At that point the Chancellor will notify everyone about the vaccine mandate and that all employees should assume they are under this mandate unless they are exempted by the Chancellor. Faculty and staff can upload their vaccine status on IRIS and can do so now rather than waiting for the official word. All faculty, graduate students, post doctorate, and staff, (full time and part-time) will have to be vaccinated. Students are not mandated to do so yet. At this point 78% of faculty and 73% of staff are already vaccinated. There are two possible exemptions: medical and religious. These are already available in IRIS. The December 8 deadline of the Executive Order might be softer than originally planned.

Questions and Discussion: L. Gross asked about the mask part of the state guidelines. Is this part of the exemption request? The vaccine mandate comes with a mask mandate. Students are still under a mask mandate. The Chancellor would like to lift this in residence halls and dining halls but academic buildings are under the executive order.

B. Lyons asked about the contract with the federal government. We are under the mandate via research but are we not also contractors via Pell grants and federal work study? The Chancellor was not sure but thinks this does not impact grant/aid recipients. B. Lyons then asked if the application to the State Comptroller is something that can be done together with other campuses. Is the Chancellor involved in conversations with other SEC schools? The President of the system is making the request for all campuses. Every UT campus has different needs. She has been in conversation with other leaders of SEC schools and everyone is waiting to see what their legislature does.

D. Patterson asked about the system finance report that raised an issue about the campus paying \$10M to buy Andy Holt Tower. Is this indeed the case? She replied that with the departure of the system offices, UTK agreed to help with the transition to the amount of \$10M. Is the building reverting to campus control? The Chancellor felt that Andy Holt Tower was always been part of UTK, even if it housed system offices. She will look into this.

c. Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost shared that the Board has approved the creation of the department of Africana Studies which will be housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. He also mentioned the early retirement program in which faculty with 20 years or more are eligible for early retirement. This is totally voluntary.

He then spoke about the obligations of 9-month faculty under the new calendar. With the inauguration of the mini-term, the spring semester ends May 18, two weeks later than last year. Deans should allow

faculty to use the winter break as they see fit and they should not be required to do institutional service during that time. For faculty on grants, the Provost has a meeting scheduled to explore the issues involved in this and will come back at a later date with this information. He hopes that faculty will be able to use their time more flexibly.

There are five finalists for the Dean of the College of Law. Interview sessions will begin next week. F. Cuevas, T. Small, and Provost Zomchick met with PEN America to see about bringing them back to campus to work with administration, faculty, and some students.

In regard to the case of Dr. Anming Hu, they continue to work with Dr. Hu and his attorneys. On Thursday he is hosting a listening session with AAPI faculty hosted by Lisa Yamagata-Lynch.

November 4, 2021 is Mic Night at Relix. The doors open at 5:30 p.m., and the presentations begin at 6:30 pm. Pizza and cookies are available and a cash bar.

L. Gross asked about academic realignment and the strategic vision. Provost Zomchick replied that there was a report from the taskforce and they are working with the committee on an engagement plan for the campus. He hopes to release the report in the next week and give faculty many opportunities to engage in discussions about this.

M. Griffin asked for clarification on the issue of winter mini-term and when this became certain. It was presented as a possible test model. It now seems that it is an established feature of the calendar. What are the benefits of winter mini-term? Provost Zomchick stated that they will continue to look at the calendar and the use of the semesters. The mini term needs to exist for a while in order to be able to evaluate its efficacy. The mini term gives greater flexibility around the academic calendars. The traditional semester calendars are a vestige of an agrarian society that no longer exists. He would like to see greater use of the 7-week sessions within the semester, the summer sessions, and the two mini-terms. This offers faculty greater flexibility and gives students greater opportunities to maximize their time at the university. This is all about greater flexibility. Faculty could negotiate with their department heads how they fulfill their teaching requirements. L. Gross reminded everyone that S. Ohnesorg is the Faculty Senate representative on the Executive Calendar Committee and senators should take their concerns to her.

T. Fridman asked about changing the time of final exams in Math to the afternoon, rather than the mornings. She asked if there is a rigid date on getting fully vaccinated. The Chancellor said that we will have to be flexible.

M. Violanti asked about how faculty and graduate students' concerns were taken into consideration in creating the winter mini term. She also asked about the 7-week options and that scheduling classes is much more difficult for 7-week classes. Provost Zomchick is hesitant to talk about the benefits for faculty and graduate students in the winter term. Colleges of Architecture and Design and Nursing were happy to have this time for study abroad. Faculty who want to teach in the mini-term can negotiate this with their department heads. He acknowledges the amount of change and hopes to work with all faculty and administrators to adapt to these changes. The use of second 7-week courses can benefit students who drop a class and can add another class to remain full time. This is all a response to record high enrollments. They are in the process of hiring a new registrar.

Schussler commented that this could be very difficult for graduate students who might not be able to take all the classes they need and to fulfill their GTA requirements. The Graduate School needs to be included in these discussions. Provost Zomchick stated they will work with the graduate school.

- d. UTIA Report (L. Martin)  
N/A

#### **IV. New Business**

- a. Undergraduate Council Minutes from October 19, 2021 ([link](#)) (J. Devlin)

J. Devlin reviewed the minutes. The first page and a half are a good summary. The General Education Committee has approved 72 VolCore courses. The General Education Committee is now the VolCore Committee. They are considering having EI courses listed as E courses or non-EI courses so that not all faculty have to commit to the EI material. This has not been voted on yet and will be discussed.

B. Lyons asked about the lack of AOC courses. Are there enough proposals? J. Devlin said that there are very few proposals and that this is a concern. There should be a gradual build into VolCore courses as students move into the new catalog. She is hopeful that there will be a push for these courses over time. M. Violanti shared that there are 24 new AOC courses approved.

The FS Executive Council voted unanimously in favor of sending the minutes on to the full Senate.

b. Graduate Council Minutes from October 7, 2021 ([link](#)) (S. Ohnesorg)

S. Ohnesorg clarified that there is only one voting item in the minutes. There are course changes caused by program changes in Business Analytics and Statistics, and in the Business Administration full-time MBA. Marketing is adding a new major/degree with distance education as an option and this is pending THEC approval. They are adding an on-line MBA also. These changes have been approved unanimously by all relevant committees.

T. Fridman asked about the viability of an on-line MBA. S. Ohnesorg replied they have relied on the Haslam College of Business faculty and their expertise in this area.

The FS Executive Council voted unanimously, with one abstention (14/1) in favor of sending the minutes to the full Senate.

c. Request from African American Policy Forum (AAPF) for Faculty Senates (Dr. Jennifer Ruth, Portland State University) to adapt a resolution pertaining to “Defending Academic Freedom to Teach Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory.” Dr. Ruth provided four documents. (L. Gross)

- Faculty Resolution Cover Letter from African American Policy Forum ([link](#))
- Academic Senate Resolution Template ([link](#))
- DePaul University Example of Faculty Resolution ([link](#))
- Portland State Example of Faculty Resolution ([link](#))

L. Gross asked if this should be sent to a committee or directly to the full Senate? M. Violanti asked what passing this resolution would accomplish. The Senate has passed this sort of resolution before and this particular resolution is germane in our state and for many faculty members. M. McAlpin asked why we would not send this to the full Senate. L. Gross said the committee on Diversity and Inclusion might be able to poll departments and units. A. Langendorfer supports sending this to the committee and clarified that this is a proactive stance since we don’t have any concrete restrictions in this state yet. This is a great way to support faculty of color who are often critiqued for talking about race. B. Lyons likes sending this to the committee and it should come back to the full Senate in February which would be before the legislative season begins. Provost Zomchick suggested involving the Commission for Blacks in discussions and the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement. L. Gross will send this on to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Senate and to encourage them to seek input from other key players on campus. M. Violanti asked if we are willing to expand the discussion to include ethnicity (not just Black faculty and Critical Race Theory. The Executive Council was happy to expand the scope of the discussions.

d. Report from Benefits and Professional Development Committee (S. Madison)

- System-wide HR 0380 Sick Leave Policy for Faculty ([link](#))
- UTK Faculty and Family Care Policy ([link](#))

S. Madison discussed the draft policy on sick leave. The creation of this policy predates the paid parental leave policy. The UFC is looking for comments before their December meeting. The Benefits Committee has asked for clarification on terminology, eligibility, and the requirement of a doctor’s statement. Will 9-month faculty be part of the sick leave bank? If this passes what will happen to faculty on modified duty assignments? Twelve-month faculty accrue sick leave and regular leave. How will this work for 9-month faculty? Twelve-month faculty have shared that sick leave is useful for long-term absences but for absences from classes, this doesn’t really work since the faculty member has to work anyway.

D. Patterson asked about whether the on-ramp for this policy would be with everyone starting at zero. If someone has been in a position for some time, do they get any credit for the time they have been employed?

L. Gross will send these comments on to the University Faculty Council.

The discussion turned to the Faculty and Family Care policy. The current policy is from 2008 and has been rewritten by Diane Kelly to include the Family Care policy and the availability of this to NTTF and probationary faculty. D. Kelly met with the committee and incorporated their suggestions in the draft of the policy. The committee also shared with her that NTTF might fear losing their job if they take advantage of the policy and thus not take advantage of the policy. This has not been resolved at this point.

These issues will be brought to the full Senate as part of any Faculty Handbook changes.

- e. Nomination of Senator J. Williams for Coalition for Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) committee (L. Gross)

B. Ownley spoke in favor of his nominations. The FS Executive Council voted unanimously to approve the nomination.

- f. Report from Research Council (B. Long)

There was not an official report but a request to fill the three graduate student spots on the committee and L. Gross has seen to this. There is an issue of attendance at committee meetings by committee members. L. Gross asked to be notified if members are not attending. It is more difficult if members of the committee are not participating, which seems to be the case.

- g. Modality for Faculty Senate Executive Council meetings in Spring 2022 (L. Gross)

The next FSEC meeting is in January. L. Gross asked if we should wait to decide to meet in person or on Zoom or should we decide now? If we meet in person L. Gross has reserved a room in HBB that will hold everyone. B. Lyons spoke in favor of a meeting in person if the Executive Council is willing. R. Spirko said if we conduct a January zoom meeting, that would allow time for a possible post-holiday Covid surge to have passed. M. Griffin suggested we plan for zoom in January and February, and plan for March and April in person. M. McAlpin asked why Executive Council are better in person? Zoom is always an option even if we have in-person meetings. T. Fridman spoke in favor of the efficiency of zoom. There is no consensus. L. Gross will move ahead with a January zoom meeting and we will reassess later.

- h. January Faculty Senate meeting (L. Gross)

The Senate does have a possible meeting date scheduled in January during the winter mini-term when faculty are not expected to be present. L. Gross suggests we do not need the January meeting for the Senate and there was no dissension with this.

## **V. Information Items and Committee Reports**

- a. Faculty Senate Committee Summary Reports ([link](#))

## **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:11p.m.

Moved by B. Ownley, second by S. Ohnesorg.

Respectfully submitted by Millie Gimmel