



FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES Monday, November 15, 2021

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 who were not in attendance:

D. Alderman; C. Barroso; S. Benjamin; T. Berg; S. Collins-Elliot; E. Nash; Lt. Col. T. Estep; A. Griffith; S. Groenke; M. Harris; A. Hart; L. Knox; B. Krumm; V. Maroulas; K. Martin; S. Martin-West; M. McAlpin; K. McCormick; D. Millis; S. Mobley; G. Neisler; G. Skolits; K. Sun; A. Taylor; F. Walker; and C. Noble.

II. Call to Order

The zoom meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm.

III. Items for Approval

- a. Approval of Faculty Senate Minutes from October 18, 2021 ([link](#))
Discussion: C. White moved to approve, second by E. Cowell.
The minutes were approved. (67 in favor with 3 abstentions.)
- b. Approval of Undergraduate Council Minutes from October 19, 2021 (J. Devlin) ([link](#))
Discussion: J. Devlin highlighted the important aspects of the minutes that are linked to this document. There are two General Education committee minutes included with a large number of VolCore courses including many approved AOC and EI courses. There were no questions.

The senate voted to approve the minutes. (70 in favor, 0 against, 7 abstentions.)
- c. Approval of Graduate Council Minutes from October 7, 2021 (S. Ohnesorg) ([link](#))
S. Ohnesorg reviewed the minutes. The only curricular changes came from the Haslam College of Business regarding program changes which are detailed in the minutes. They have been approved by the Graduate Council. L. Gross encouraged everyone to read the minutes if they have interest in the Space Institute. There was a question about the online degree program and if it is included in faculty benefits but no one in attendance knew the answer.

There were no other questions or discussion. The senate voted to approve the minutes. (78 in favor, 0 against, 6 abstentions.)

IV. Announcements

a. President Gross' Report

L. Gross introduced 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.

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 Chancellor Plowman and Provost Zomchick about expectations on availability for 9-month faculty given with the new academic calendar. Nine-month faculty should not be expected to carry out service work during the mini-term in January per his discussion with the Provost. The Senate will need to revise the Senate By-Laws to accommodate the scheduled January meeting. There will be no January meeting in 2022. 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. It is not clear how grant funding can be charged. Summer funding must be May, June, and July and the amount that is allowed in May may be limited. If you have a question about this contact L. Gross or the Office of Research.

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 Senate leadership team met with the Budget Allocation Model Committee to discuss many issues related to BAM. There is a summary draft of this meeting on the President's website. L. Gross is happy to answer questions. The BAM requires colleges to cover in-state and out-of-state tuition for GTA's. Interdisciplinary units will not receive tuition money back on courses they offer. It's not clear how these units will be funded. L. Gross has calculated the cost of a graduate teaching assistant vs. NTTF and a GTA is 35% more costly than a NTTF. The Senate needs to be aware of what is going on in the BAM.

There is discussion about fees for graduate students and the payment of fees using external funding. Colleges cannot cover fees other than tuition and insurance. He has asked the Graduate Student Senate to lobby to increase stipends since fees cannot be covered.

L. Gross is working with the NTTF to highlight their service and compensation. A new compensation scheme should be worked out. He has been attending the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning system) trainings with potential vendors since IRIS will no longer be used. The system is not replacing CAYUSE for grant proposals and the travel system may not be replaced, but they are replacing the system for HR and Finance within the next two years. These changes will impact everyone; and impacts of the new ERP on current IT systems may begin next summer.

In regards to Dr. Hu, there is a formal litigation hold in place. L. Gross has avoided making public comments since the litigation hold was put in place. His prior comments are available in various publications including the Chronicle of Higher Education.

The Senate leadership is asking for nominations for the UT Advisory Board and for the Senate President-Elect. Please speak with L. Gross if you have any interest in the Senate Presidency.

Discussion: B. Lyons asked about the academic calendar shift. The calendar has been presented as a trial run and we should postpone changing Senate By-Laws until the change is permanent. We need to monitor the calendar to see how many students actually take classes and how these changes impact graduate students and others. L. Gross indicated there are other possible changes to increase the flexibility of offering courses.

M. Stanley asked if the calculation of the cost of GTA vs NTTF is on the President's web-page. L. Gross clarified that under the new BAM, all tuition (in and out-of-state) must be covered for graduate student assistants. This is different since currently tuition is waived. Colleges will be charged 15% of their tuition revenue that will remove from the college some of the money generated by graduate students taking classes in that college.

R. Spirko called attention to the discussion in the chat about faculty on 9-, 10- and 12-month appointments. There are concerns about this. It is impossible to respond to the chat and the questions in the meetings. Someone asked about 9-month appointments who charge three months to external grants and they will not be able to get to 12 months of funding in the new calendar. There are a variety of issues associated with federal compliance in the new calendar and answers are being sought to address the questions.

b. Provost Zomchick's Report

Provost Zomchick addressed the concerns around the calendar. The calendar is a pilot model and is not necessarily permanent. There is a meeting scheduled with the Office of Research, Innovation and Economic Development and the Office of Finance and Administration to discuss summer funding. More will follow on this. There is an equal swap of free time with the new calendar. He will continue to work with the Senate to find an equitable solution to problems created by the new calendar.

The Academic Structure Working Group report has been shared with interested parties. The report will be on the Provost's website. There are a number of options spelled out, including an overlay plan, the creation of a new college, a reorganization of colleges and a plan to make all colleges the same size. The next step is to engage the campus. Right now, there is a consensus that making colleges about the same size is not a viable option. During the spring semester the other three options will be considered. There will be town halls, small group discussions, and surveys.

Pen America, an organization that advocates for freedom of expression, was here a few years ago and they have been invited back for training for faculty and administrators on academic free speech and freedom of expression.

The Governor signed legislation that prohibits state funded institutions from requiring vaccines unless they can show they will lose federal funding. President Biden has signed a law requiring vaccines for all federal contractors and UT is a federal contractor. UT has filed for an exemption to be able to require vaccines but there is a lawsuit against the federal mandate. Meanwhile, faculty should update their vaccine status or request a medical or religious exemption.

The Provost was meeting students, first generation students, and others on campus. He thanked faculty for their work. Students are grateful to faculty and are glad to be back in the classroom.

Discussion: L. Gross commented that right now the Office of Research is not signing contracts with Oak Ridge for any new money (grants). This impacts people who are paid on these contracts.

In regard to the Academic Structuring Committee, any restructuring will be very complicated to implement in the BAM. Is the plan to be limited by the BAM? The Provost stated that the BAM will not be a hindrance to change.

T. Mueller asked about the vaccines and shared that the mandate might make senior individuals working in extension offices retire and we will then lose a lot of institutional knowledge. It would be a good idea to have the administration make the decisions, not safety officers.

M. Black asked about the rationale for restructuring. Provost Zomchick said we are just exploring restructuring since this is a good time in conjunction with the new strategic vision. The campus will be polled about all these issues. The question is do we need to restructure, what are the benefits, not that we need to do so.

M. Hristov asked for documentation about who exactly needs to be vaccinated and who will receive the new minimum wage. Will student workers receive a raise? Provost Zomchick didn't know about the student worker pay but in regard to vaccines, full and part-time employees must be vaccinated, including student employees. But he is still waiting to see how the various lawsuits play out.

Rossner noted a dwindling of classroom attendance lately and an increase in student mental health issues. Provost Zomchick has not heard of this before. He will check on this. Students report that it is very difficult to get into the Counseling Center. It seems across the country there is not enough counseling staff to meet student needs.

S. Ohnesorg asked if it is possible to have a pass/fail option or to extend the drop deadline? Provost Zomchick will discuss this with deans and encourages the Senate to discuss this. L. Gross suggests that the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils take this up if there is energy to move this forward. It needs to happen quickly.

c. [TUFs Report](#) (B. Ownley)

B. Ownley summarized the TUFs Report. L. Gross pointed out that there is a budget surplus and has asked President Boyd through the University Faculty Council about how this might impact UT. There were no questions or discussion. We will need to elect a new TUFs representative later this academic year.

V. **New Business**

a. Meeting Modality for Spring Semester 2022 (February zoom and then reassess)

The Executive Council decided to do a zoom meeting in late January and then decide how to meet for the rest of the semester and suggested that this would be appropriate for the Senate. In this case the Senate would meet via zoom in February and then reassess.

J. Hay asked if there is a benefit to meeting in person. In the past there was always a zoom option. R. Spirko shared that it is easier to just be on zoom rather than have hybrid

meetings. A. Langendorfer mentioned that for faculty who are not on campus it is an advantage to be online. Questions and comments move more quickly since there is no need for a microphone. B. Lyons suggested we look at ways to meet in person but in general the convenience and effectiveness of zoom trumps the casual connections we can make in person. C. Parigger spoke in favor of the human element of in person meetings and the ability to connect with others.

The Senate decided to meet via zoom for the time being (78 in favor, 0 against, 3 abstentions)

b. 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 is seeking feedback on the Sick Leave and Family Care policies. She summarized the issues around participation in the sick leave bank and how this impacts 9- and 12-month faculty. The language is very HR jargony and there is no “on-ramp” for faculty who are just beginning to participate. This kind of sick leave is not useful for short term absences for faculty. She invited contributions in the chat. This is a system level policy. J. Hay asked if this was an attempt to try to control faculty time or if tenure line faculty are in situations/departments that do not accommodate illness. This policy began before the Parental Leave policy was approved. It came from a number of places around the system, many from other campuses. B. Lyons suggested sending out a survey to gather information from a diverse group of faculty. Most units are supportive of emergencies, but it would be good to know if there are units in which such support is not available. D. Patterson asked about NTTF who might not be accommodated in terms of illness/emergency. B. Ownley pointed out that NTTF have sick leave at other institutions. L. Yamagata-Lynch said that NTTF can hit barriers by not having access to the kindness and flexibility that is often afforded to TT faculty. M. Hristov also feels a survey might gather better information. It is important that policies not be too prescriptive. M. Stanley feels this should be for all faculty regardless of how long they have been employed.

The UTK Faculty and Family Care policy has a new draft that aligns with the systems Parental Leave policy. This includes policies TT and NTTF on nine-month appointments. S. Madison asked for additional comments. There is still a concern about how it impacts NTTF and if taking leave could jeopardize their contract. It might keep NTTF from using these benefits. A. Langendorfer spoke in support of benefits beginning with employment. R. Kite asked about the links in the policies for 12- and 9-month faculty. These links currently go to the outdated documents. This will be clarified soon. Please share other comments with S. Madison.

VI. Information Items

- a. Committee Summary Reports ([link](#))
- b. Election Procedures for UTK Advisory Board Representative and TUFSS representative ([link](#))
- c. L. Gross encouraged that any Senate activities scheduled in January during the mini-term be moved until after the start of the semester.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Millie Gimmel