



Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2022
3:30 pm via Zoom

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/97636663540>

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)

Not attending: C. Barroso, M. Black, P. Daves, N. Eash, Lt. Col. T. Estep, K. Fecteau, S. Groenke, K. Han, M. Harris, Q. He, J. Jaekel, J. Kelly, B. Krumm, X. Li, B. Long, K. Martin, S. Martin-West, K. McCormick, D. Millis, S. Mobley, A. Rodrigues, E. Shpak, A. Taylor, E. Teston, R. Toledo, J. Weisent, J. Wu, Z. Zhang, S. Mangum, and J. Scoggins.

Alternates: T. Brewer alternate for V. Meloy, J. Arft alternate for S. Collins-Elliott, L. Lay alternate for M. Gelantalis, R. Wood alternate for E. Lukosi, and K. Stephenson alternate for V. Maroulas.

II. Call to Order

L. Gross called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

III. Items for Approval

- a. Approval of Faculty Senate Minutes from November 15, 2021 ([link](#))

B. Schussler moved to approve; Seconded by M. Collins.

There was no discussion.

The minutes were approved. 70 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstaining

- b. Approval of Proposed Faculty Senate 2022-2023 Dates ([link](#))

The date for the Senate Fall retreat is still being discussed. B. Lyons clarified that the FS Executive Council meets two weeks before the full Senate. There is a date in January that falls during the mini-term when faculty should not be engaging in service. The meeting in January has not been held recently and the Senate Bylaws might best be changed to eliminate it. For the time being, it is still on the calendar.

A. Langendorfer asked if we could add an August meeting instead of the January meeting. B. Schussler is considering this.

The schedule was approved. 67 in favor, 1 against, 4 abstaining.

- c. Approval of Graduate Council Minutes from [November 18, 2021](#) (S. Ohnesorg)

S. Ohnesorg reviewed the minutes. L. Gross encouraged faculty to express concerns if they have them about the size of Masters committees to the Graduate Council as per their discussion on this for non-thesis degrees. He reminded the Senate that approval of the minutes means the curricular changes are moved forward and placed in the UTK Graduate Catalog. There was no further discussion. The minutes were approved. 74 in favor, 0 against, 5 abstaining

IV. Announcements

- a. President Gross' Report

L. Gross thanked the Senators for their efforts on behalf of shared governance and wished everyone a good semester.

The Senate Leadership has been very active on several issues since the last meeting. They participated in several discussions with campus administrators regarding covid issues, requested that the campus initially hold classes online this semester, requested that the campus institute a more robust testing program similar to those at other institutions and expressed the concerns heard from many faculty about frustration with lack of mask and vaccine mandates. Their suggestions regarding testing were considered infeasible given the lack of capability on campus. Despite the large number of infections throughout the State, the Governor has not declared a state of emergency so we are not, therefore, allowed to have any mask mandate. The campus administration is well aware of faculty concerns and have instituted a variety of procedures to allow instructors temporary flexibility regarding course modality.

There are many instructors concerned about the lack of consistent wearing of personal protective devices in classes, and these concerns have been expressed to campus leadership but there is little they can legally do to ameliorate the situation.

The Senate Leadership has discussed the process of academic restructuring, and provided the administration examples of three of the types of potential restructuring models suggested by the Working Group, and provided a suggested time line for consideration of the process of restructuring. This draft timeline encourages a thoughtful deliberative process to elicit and consider suggestions from the campus community.

The Senate Leadership discussed the academic budget planning process for this year, suggesting a template as a possible way for the Budget and Planning

Committee to compare and contrast budgets over time. As a result of this discussion, the Senate Leadership has been invited to attend College budget presentations to the Provost. Following this, we have asked the Provost to discuss academic budget plans with the Budget and Planning Committee prior to their deadline to provide input to the BAM process.

One concern is the expected reduction in Tenure Track faculty arising from the retirement incentive program and the Provost may discuss today his plans to provide oversight of the College's plans for hiring.

They met with the Non Tenure Track Issues Committee leadership and have discussed with the Provost and Chancellor the suggestions from the Task Force on Non Tenure Track issues that the Provost established last year. At this point the intention is to move forward with considering some additional titles (Assistant/Associate/Full Professors of Teaching), to encourage Unit Leaders to more readily utilize the flexibility already available to allow NTT faculty to be compensated for their efforts in areas other than instruction, including mentoring students in scholarly activities and taking on diverse service roles. Along with this is the continuing need to enhance compensation for NTT faculty who take on responsibilities beyond formal instruction.

In addition, the Senate Leadership has met with the General Counsel to discuss issues of research security and asked for the Research Council to have input in the decisions regarding changes to policies on Outside Interest Disclosures and on research security. These are matters being considered at the System level and the expectation is that there will be new requirements for all employees arising from Federal rules.

He thanked the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Research for clarifying the capability for faculty to charge effort during May, June, and July to external funding. Guidance regarding this matter is located at <https://research.utk.edu/research-administration/contracts-awards/effort-certification/>.

The University Faculty Council submitted to the System Human Resource staff members who are developing the Faculty Sick leave policy the concerns expressed by the UTK Senate and other Senates particularly regarding the lack of a ramp-on process for long-standing faculty.

President Boyd noted to the UFC, and, from our discussion with the Chancellor and Provost, that the System and campus administration have been devoting significant effort to the potential for legislative actions related to diversity and teaching on matters of social and racial justice.

There is a new policy from the System regarding lobbying and use of university resources. L. Gross has sent the Vice President for Government Affairs several questions on this matter and will post the response to his website.

The new ERP (enterprise resource planning) system has been chosen and, as seen in the proposed budget from the Governor, the costs for this system will be covered by the state assuming the budget passes. This is a tremendous savings to the System with likely no increase in the taxes paid by the campuses for the new ERP. However, there will be expenses at the campuses associated with the changeover due to staffing needs.

L. Gross has responded to several requests from media reporters on issues arising from the case of Professor Hu which has continued to be featured in the national press. Dr. Hu has been reinstated.

D. Patterson added that at the UFC, the UFC chair will be working with Human Resources to create a matrix around years of service in implementing the sick leave policy.

B. Schussler reported on the nominations and appointments committee meeting. There will be openings for 30 faculty senators next year. Nominations will open around February 10 with the goal of 60 nominations by March 10. Senators should encourage nominees and talk to colleagues about possible interest in committees. She will send a survey regarding the potential dates for the Senate retreat. She is working with Brooke Killion on a document on accomplishments of the Senate to help faculty recognize how much happens in the Senate.

Discussion: There was no discussion.

b. Chancellor Plowman's Report

The Chancellor's office is now located on the 8th floor of Andy Holt. On campus there is an 80% rate of vaccinations (at least one shot). 77% of faculty have had a booster. More than 71% of all the campus have had one shot and 66% of all students are fully vaccinated. The decision to not do random testing was impacted by the availability of other testing on campus. Last year the pooled saliva testing was very difficult to implement and enforce. The participation rate was never higher than 66%. The isolation time now is just 5 days and by the time testing results came back, students would be out of isolation. There are 133 active cases on campus. The high has been 196. The trend seems to be moving down.

The Governor's proposal for support of higher education is an historically large commitment of financial resources. One of the main benefits is the almost fully funded 4% pay raise (95% of what it will cost the campus). This is a greater raise than in the past. The additional amount of formula funding is significant. This is funding that comes from the State and is based on a formula tied to enrollments, graduations, outside funding, and more. Twenty million more dollars has been

given to UTK based on this formula and this is much more than last year. This will be used for hiring faculty. It is a rare opportunity to make strategic tenure track hires above what was already planned. There is also money for UTORII (\$72 million). These dollars will be for non-tenure track research faculty and to create strategies for making these positions tenure-track. There will be a new building for Haslam College and financial resources for maintenance. This is fantastic news all around.

The Governor's plan for \$4 million of recurring funds for the American Civics Institute was a surprise. There has been no legislation about what this is but the Chancellor sees this as an opportunity to create dialogue and respectful conversation. The budget is merely proposed so none of this is guaranteed.

Discussion: Senator Hay wonders about the costs or strings attached to the money from the State? Programs are being required to remove diversity plans from websites. Are these raises at the cost of our values? The Governor's reference to enemies from within in reference to faculty creates a lot of concern. The Chancellor says the only strings are attached to the \$20 million in formula funding and involve not raising tuition. She warns the faculty to caution against choosing a narrative that might not be accurate. No unit has been asked to scrub diversity from their websites or programs. She and the President have been educating about diversity and are standing behind that as an important value for UT. The goal is for the student body to represent the state population and have students graduate. They stand behind academic freedom. So far no one is coming after faculty or what they teach. There is a group targeting public universities and attacking diversity initiatives. This group has a copy of every diversity action plan. The administrators are making sure what is on websites is what units plan to do, not just ideas or possibilities. Diversity action plans are being updated, not scrubbed. Many items on websites are used for internal work, not for the public and the actions plans should be aimed at the public. She does not feel we have compromised any values.

T. Fridman asked about the interest on capital investments. The Chancellor is not informed enough to answer that and will discuss with Vice Chancellor Cimino.

N. Hristov asked about the 4% merit pool. Inflation is rising. Will there be guidelines around the distribution of this money? There have been market adjustments but J. Zomchick added it is too early to make decisions. Generally, the pools go to the deans and the deans are informed of relative salaries. The colleges determine how raises are allocated.

A. Langendorfer mentioned that rising inflation reminds us that we have not had a cost of living adjustment in recent memory. People on the lower end of the scale suffer the most. Flat dollar raises really help those on the bottom of the scale and are more fair. The Senate has advocated for this in the past and with the current Chancellor. The Provost said there hasn't been time to talk about allocations but Senate input is appreciated.

c. Provost Zomchick's Report

The Provost indicated there are record breaking results in recruitment with huge increases in applications and acceptance. They are targeting between 6,100 and 6,500 first time students in August 2022. Overall persistence has increased; 96.1% of students continue from fall to spring. Last year this was 95.3%. Under-represented groups are also being retained at greater numbers and this may be a result of programs in Student Success. Less than 80% are on academic probation and this is the lowest rate on record.

There is a Town Hall Thursday, February 10 from 8:30 am - 10:30 am on academic restructuring. There will be smaller group discussions in the future. He encourages everyone to get involved. This will be recorded as a webinar.

On hiring, the BAM gives more autonomy to deans but with oversight from the Provost's office. Senators should work with their college administrators on the ratio of Tenure Track to Non Tenure Track Faculty. Lonnie Brown is the new Dean of College of Law as of July 1, 2022. He thanks the interim dean and the search committee.

He is happy to welcome Dr. Hu back to the faculty February 1, 2022 after all the steps to complete his immigration status were completed.

R. Spirko asked about the bill circulating to require test scores for admission. Faculty can reach out as citizens to advocate against this. Many institutions are moving to test optional admissions. Reinstating tests may make UT less competitive. The administrators are working through the government relations office to convince the legislature that we are the best at deciding what works best. We are partially through a pilot study on test optional admissions and it would be good to complete this.

B. Lyons asked about the causes behind improved retention and persistence. A large number of students are participating in student success service programs (SSI, coaches, tutoring, etc.) and the Provost is working with units to provide resources to students.

W. Jennings encouraged the Provost to consider issues around compression for Non Tenure Track Faculty. He feels Covid statistics may be worse than what is being reported and asked if there is anything we can do to increase mask usage. The state law will likely not be repealed. The administration is trying hard to encourage students but the best advocates for mask usage are the instructors. Can we offer extra credit for mask wearers? This is not legal and cannot be done. Graduate students teaching lower-division classes are very concerned about the lack of mask usage by students in these classes.

M. McAlpin suggested that if the upper administrators used masks on their social media posts, then students would be more inclined to do so as well.

d. Interim Senior Vice Chancellor of UTIA Martin's Report

Vice Chancellor Martin was not in attendance.

V. New Business

- a. Meeting Modality for Spring Semester - Recommendation from Senate Leadership is to hold online meetings for Spring 2022 semester with an in-person meeting on May 2 with an associated reception following.

B. Lyons moved to accept this plan of modality, and it was seconded by C. White. Discussion: J. Hay asked if the reception can be outdoors. It can be.

The motion was accepted. 73 In favor, 3 against, 5 abstaining.

- b. Faculty Handbook Section 5.2 Ombudsperson ([link](#)) and Other Policy Documents and Appendix I. (First Reading) ([link](#))

B. Lyons reviewed the documents and the changes. The Ombudsperson had no additional comments. Most changes are to bring the office up to the industry standard. Many items in the handbook are better located outside the handbook and these changes reflect this as well as changes we endorsed a year ago. L. Gross clarified that changes to the Handbook are discussed by the Senate. When items are moved outside the handbook, we are giving up oversight of them. B. Lyons stated that many of these items are about board policy or other program policies and should not be in the handbook anyway. They are mostly informational items. Please bring concerns to Senator B. Lyons and L. Gross. Please copy Loretta Link as well.

We will be voting on these changes in March.

VI. Information Items

- a. UTK Advisory Board Representative and TUFs representative ([link](#))
b. Periodic Post-Tenure Performance Review Open Forum on Wednesday, February 9, 2022, Student Union Room 262A, 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm. ([link](#))
c. Academic Structure Town Hall on Thursday, February 10, 2022, Student Union Auditorium Room 180, 8:30 am - 10:30 am. ([link](#))
d. Committee Summary Reports ([link](#))

VII. Adjournment at 4:57 pm