

Immediate Past President, UTK Faculty Senate

Bonnie H. Ownley – Candidate Statement

I am a Professor, Director of Graduate Studies, and Assistant Department Head in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, and I would like to be considered for the position of Immediate Past President of the UTK Faculty Senate. I believe that I have the leadership experience, familiarity with Senate governance documents, and institutional knowledge that will enable me to provide effective support to President-Elect Schussler as she provides leadership to the Senate for 2022-23.

In the past 10 years, I have served many roles involving shared governance at UT. I served as Faculty Senate President (2016-17), other officer positions (secretary, president-elect, past president), and two terms as Senator. I am currently in my third term as Senator. As an officer, I have served on all faculty senate committees. I have served as a member-at-large on the Faculty Senate (FS) Executive Council, Chair of the FS University System Relations Committee, Co-Chair of the FS Athletics Committee, and as a member of the UT Faculty Council (Faculty Senate Presidents and campus representatives of UT System Schools). Following enactment of the UT Focus Act, I was selected to serve as the non-voting faculty representative on the Research, Education, and Service Committee of the UT Board of Trustees (2018-2019). Diversity and inclusion are a priority for me, and I have served on the Faculty Advisory Board to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement, and as Co-Chair of the Equity Committee of the Commission for Women. I am currently the Co-Chair of S.T.R.I.D.E.

I served as President of the Tennessee University Faculty Senates (TUFS), an independent coalition of senate presidents and campus representatives from the 11 public universities in Tennessee, which is focused on reviewing and responding to proposed legislation that affects our institutions, and in sharing information to identify and recommend university policies that improve the institutional environment for faculty, staff, and students. I am currently serving as the UTK campus representative for TUFS.

I served as Chair of the Steering Committee for the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), a consortium of more than 60 Faculty Senates (primarily NCAA Division I members), focused on health and well-being of student-athletes. In the past few years, myriad issues have challenged the oversight authority role of NCAA. In the next year, we expect that a combination of federal legislation and transfer of oversight authority and responsibility to the conference and institution levels will bring significant changes to college sports.

At UTK, we are currently facing several issues of significant concern, including internal and external attempts to undermine the role of the faculty in their responsibility for curriculum, and what is taught in the classroom; challenges to our efforts to create an institutional environment that is welcoming to all members of our university community; and outcomes of UTIA/UTK reunification. We continue to lack a voting faculty trustee on the UT Board and legislation to expand guns on campus to students and visitors is proposed annually. We will be operating under a new budget model for the university that will significantly impact our departments, but the specifics are still unclear. The implications of efforts to reorganize academic units is also of concern. If elected, I will provide strong support for the Senate President and work for the best outcomes for our faculty, staff, and students.