



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 4, 2022

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)

Absent: S. Abdoli; C. Barroso; S. Benjamin; M. Black; S. Collins-Elliot; N. Eash, T. Estep; S. Groenke; K. Han; M. Harris; J. Hathaway; Q. He; D. Icove; W. Jennings; L. Knox; S. Li; M. Madhukar; V. Maroulas; S. Martin-West; K. McCormick; D. Millis; S. Mobley; K. Morgan; M. Nowicki; K. Sun; E. Teston; R. Toledo; N. Vines; F. Walker; J. Westerhold; L. Whitnah; J. Williams; and Z. Zhang.

Alternates: Linda Lay for M. Gelantalas; and Claudia Kirk for K. Fecteau.

II. CALL TO ORDER (L. Gross) at 3:30 pm.

L. Gross welcomed several Journalism students who were attending the meeting.

III. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

A. Approval of Faculty Senate Minutes [March 7, 2022](#)

B. Long moved to approve, seconded by M. Collins.

There were no discussions.

The minutes were approved: 64 in favor, 0 against, 3 abstaining

B. Undergraduate Council Minutes [February 22, 2022](#) (J. Devlin)

L. Gross thanked the Undergraduate Council for color-coding the curricular changes in the minutes. J. Devlin reviewed the minutes which had 16 voting items. The vote to approve the minutes authorizes these changes to be included in the Undergraduate Catalog.

The minutes were approved: 59 in favor, 0 against, 11 abstaining

C. Graduate Council Minutes [February 17, 2022](#) (S. Ohnesorg)

S. Ohnesorg reviewed the changes that were approved by the Graduate Council. One of the biggest changes arises due to the addition of a new department, Africana Studies. The courses listed for graduate credit under Africana Studies are now listed under the new Africana Studies Department in the catalog and there were a variety of changes in course offerings. .

The minutes were approved: 60 in favor, 2 against, 11 abstaining

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. President's Report (L. Gross)

Prior to the University Faculty Council meeting held on March 16, L. Gross had transmitted to President Boyd three emails. He summarized each of these and the President's responses:

(a) He expressed concerns about the bill before the legislature on the new Civics Institute. The Senate leadership team had discussions with the Chancellor about this and he also had a conversation with Professor Wanamaker in her role as Baker Center Director. He expressed to President Boyd issues regarding accreditation given potential interference of the legislature in curricular issues and degree programs. President Boyd assured L. Gross that the Institute would be subject to UTK's existing policies and procedures. At the UFC meeting L. Gross expressed the excitement that Baker Center faculty have about the potential for the new Institute but also their concern about the process for choosing a Director. At the UFC meeting, President Boyd noted that he expected the Chair of the Board of Fellows to be a UT faculty member. He noted that procedures for tenure for a Director would follow standard procedures if tenure is appropriate.

(b) L. Gross transmitted the Senate's Resolution on the Divisive Concepts bills. At the UFC meeting he pointed out to President Boyd that the wording of the bill notes academic freedom rights of faculty, but not all instructors such as graduate students. He suggested that it use the term "instructors" rather than "faculty".

(c) He transmitted the Senate's resolution on establishment of a UT System Code of Conduct policy and requested that President Boyd move expeditiously to incorporate a policy on bullying in System policies. President Boyd noted that he would work with System staff to move forward on this.

At the UFC meeting it was noted that UTK did not receive approval from the Board of Trustees for the pilot program that removed the ACT/SAT requirement for admissions and that the Board is reviewing all this at its June meeting. Also, the Research Visitors policy is being considered for changes and L. Gross encourages anyone with concerns over constraints this System policy has created to send notes to Research Council Chair Brian Long so that he can compile them.

Regarding academic restructuring L. Gross also encourages Senators to submit feedback through the forms online and particularly to submit process changes that will help Senators and their colleagues meet their responsibilities more effectively. He also hopes that Senators encourage colleagues to attend the meetings with the Provost that have been set up.

The Provost recently sent L. Gross a request to nominate a faculty member to serve a one-year term on the Board of Trustees' Education, Research, and Service Committee (ERC). By Board policy the Senate and Deans each nominate one faculty member and the Chancellor and Provost choose one to be recommended to the Board. There are constraints on who can serve (Full Professor for at least 5 years, exceeds or far exceed expectations for 3 years). The process used was to request nominations from the Executive Council and today the nominee for this has been brought to the Senate. L. Gross will need to transmit this nomination to the Provost this week. The Executive Council encouraged that the nominee be someone very knowledgeable about the University Faculty Council, academic affairs and the Senate. Individuals serving in this role in the past have all been past presidents of their respective campus Senates. Beauvais Lyons is the sole nominee and he has a superb record appropriate to serve in this role.

L. Gross requested input from the Senate regarding concrete actions that UTK might take to assist at least a few Ukrainian refugees. We have been collecting responses and encourage others be sent to Loretta Link so she can compile them prior to transmission to the Chancellor and Provost.

L. Gross has been in correspondence with the leadership of UTORII with concerns about the lack of transparency of UTORII plans and a request that the Chairs of the Research Council and Graduate Council be placed on the new UTORII internal advisory board. This request was denied. He also requested transparency of the budget plans for the enormous amount of University funding being managed by UTORII and their plans for faculty hiring. There are some new calls out for proposals for cluster hires and L. Gross was informed by the Director of UTORII that the State funding will largely be used to support hires of research faculty, including startup funding, and student fellowships, with the first research faculty hiring initiating in calendar year 2022. The Provost office is currently reviewing their plans for faculty hiring which are initially in conjunction with A&S and Tickle College of Engineering.

L. Gross has been in correspondence with the Provost's office regarding their request for proposals from faculty to offer 7-week courses during the final weeks of the Fall and Spring semesters to offer more flexibility for students, including those who have withdrawn from some classes and would be disadvantaged in their degree pursuit without the option to add such short courses. He expressed concerns for faculty who might be planning to teach these courses but not have a guarantee that they would have sufficient enrollment to run. He was assured by the Provost's office that the Deans involved have all agreed that faculty teaching such short courses would not be penalized in this situation.

The Senate leadership has clarified with the Provost the support that will be provided to the President and Immediate Past-President, which includes the officer informing the Provost as to the one course each term they expect to be relieved from teaching, from which the Provost will negotiate with the appropriate Dean to ensure release time funding is appropriate. Additionally, if desired, the Senate President can request support for a GRA to assist the scholarly activity of the President during their year of service. These are in addition to the support for the full-time Senate administrative assistant and support for necessary travel and supplies for the operation of the Senate office.

L. Gross reminded the Senate that our May 2 Senate meeting will be held in person in Strong Hall 101, with a reception to follow to acknowledge all those who devoted effort for the Senate over the past year. Please plan to attend in person.

There was no further discussion.

B. Chancellor's Report (D. Plowman)

The Chancellor shared that we are in the process of updating the campus master plan. This happens every 10 years and deals with the physicality of the campus (buildings, building usage, etc.). There is some discussion of building a pedestrian bridge to the south side of the river. The University is interested in capitalizing on the riverfront and there are surveys forthcoming. She is interested in hearing faculty opinions on expanding UT's reach both across the river and downtown. They should know by Fall what funding will be available to finance the bridge. It's not clear how the other side of the river will be used. They are discussing beautification projects on campus, particularly as regards to entrances to campus.

She thanked the Senate for all they did this year and expressed her excitement about the new Senior Vice Chancellor for UTIA.

Discussion: Faculty mentioned the need for more classrooms. L. Gross reminded the Senate of the Campus Planning Committee and the Senate representative for this committee is J. Hathaway. M. Violanti asked about the accessibility policy and wondered when all aspects of campus will be required to be accessible. What happens when accessibility comes in conflict with other initiatives? The Provost helped clarify the issues on accessibility. He doesn't know what happens when policies are in conflict. He will follow up on that. R. Spirko clarified that the campus accessibility plan that was drafted in 2015 has not been approved or implemented but the Chancellor's Commission for Disability will be presenting this to the Chancellor soon.

M. Violanti encouraged everyone to think about accessibility in terms other than disability (such as not being able to use cash on campus).

C. Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

The Provost expressed gratitude for the Senate's work. The legislation on divisive concepts is awaiting the Governor's signature. The Administration has created a page to guide faculty through this. The site available through provost.utk.edu and is designed to support faculty and has a quick response time. In a discussion about whether non-tenured faculty enjoy academic freedom or not, the Provost had deferred to the General Counsel who remarked that anyone who works in an instructional capacity (TT and NTT faculty, graduate students) is protected. The PEN America (the Freedom to Write) workshops last week were useful. PEN America will host virtual sessions from noon - 2:00 pm on April 11, 13, 21 and 22. Faculty are encouraged to attend. The Provost would like to see these conversations continue on April 12 at Coffee and Conversation. He will be holding office hours on academic restructuring. The external facilitators on academic restructuring will be holding other meetings and will synthesize all the information to present to the Chancellor. The office hour scheduled on April 15 will be rescheduled as it occurs during Spring recess.

Jack Dongarra won the Turing Prize. This is a very prestigious award and the Administration is proud of Professor Dongarra's achievement. Professor Alison Buchan, Associate Head of Microbiology, has been given the SEC award for UTK Professor of the Year. This is another remarkable achievement for UT faculty.

The administration is monitoring how many students have confirmed their attendance for Fall 2022. As it stands now, we have between 6,300 - 6,400 new freshmen which is about a 6 - 8% increase. We may have more than 26,000 students in the fall.

This is graduate student appreciation week. Please do what you can to show graduate students how appreciated they are.

Discussion: B. Lyons asked about work flow options for making changes to the *Faculty Handbook*. J. Zomchick has been meeting with relevant staff to get a process tracker in place.

We do not have a dedicated General Counsel. Diane Kelly stated that creating a work flow management system will be on their next agenda.

B. Lyons asked about the Civics Institute and what college would host the faculty. The Chancellor would like to change the Baker Center to the Baker School of Public Policy and the Civics Institute would be a unit within the School. They are exploring how to make this happen. The Baker Center has not really had an academic program mission but this is changing and creating a school would be the next step but they have to determine what academic programs would be associated with the School. No decisions have been made.

T. Fridman shared that in the last five years course material has been watered down for math students. This may be related to the increase in student enrollment and their lack of preparation and the pressure to pass them. L. Gross and J. Zomchick clarified that the average incoming GPA is above 4.0 and 75% of applicants presented ACT scores with an average of about 28. Admission to UT is very selective with an extensive waitlist of students with GPAs of 3.7 and above. Students should be well prepared for college instruction. L. Gross notes that the perception of students declining in skill is perennial. Dean Lee suggested that faculty need to respond to differences in students learning and adapt teaching methods to better serve students.

- D. UTIA Report (L. Martin)
There was no report.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Election for Faculty Senate President-Elect for 2022 – 2023. ([Statement from Amber Roessner](#))

Roessner shared her interest in this position with the Senate.

The formal vote will happen via a secret ballot sent by email this week.

- B. Approval of Recording Secretary, Millie Gimmel, and Communication Officer, Robert Spirko, for one-year terms (2022 – 2023).

M. Gimmel and R. Spirko noted their willingness to continue in these positions.

There were no further discussions.

Millie Gimmel was approved as Faculty Senate Recording Secretary.

Robert Spirko was approved as Faculty Senate Communication Officer.

- C. Nominee for Board of Trustees Committee on Education, Research, and Service ([Statement from Beauvais Lyons](#))

B. Lyons commented on his nomination and his willingness to serve. L. Gross mentioned that B. Lyons has already been elected to serve on the UFC replacing D. Patterson due to his upcoming retirement. Should B Lyons be approved to serve on the ERC, the Senate will need to find another representative for the UFC.

B. Lyons was nominated by the Senate and his name will be submitted to the Chancellor and Provost for their consideration.

- D. Revisions to the Faculty Senate Bylaws: [Overview Summary](#) and [Edits to the Bylaws](#)
E. Schussler reviewed the changes to the Senate Bylaws. She requested that the Senate review the Bylaws and send their revisions to Loretta Link by April 28.
B. Ownley asked about the two references to Chief Academic Officer. E. Schussler will review these references.

L. Gross encouraged everyone to read the document carefully and we will vote on the changes at the May 2 meeting

E. Schussler mentioned that ballots for voting for new Senators to serve on the Senate effective Fall 2022 will be going out soon. She added that the last week in April is faculty appreciation week.

VI. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. [Committee Summary Reports](#)
The dates in these reports will be corrected.
- B. [Academic Restructuring](#) website and [Feedback Form](#)
Dr. Gross recommended that the Senators participate in this process.
- C. Draft (unapproved) [Minutes of the Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting March 21, 2022.](#)

VII. ADJOURNMENT 4:48 pm.