

UTK Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting

Monday, September 11, 2023

440 Haslam Business Building, West Wing

3:05pm-5:00pm

Minutes

Call to order at 3:05, Roessner presiding.

Attending: D. Alderman, B. Behn, S. Benjamin, A. Bolton, M. Brannen, J. Coble, J. Chyz, M. Collins, B. Cooper, B. Crumm, B. DuBois, N. Fomin, M. Griffin, J. Haramule, M. Hinten, C. James, D. Kelly, R. Kite, B. Krumm, A. Langendorfer, J. Laughter, M. Lucal, E. Lukosi, C. Noble, A. Roessner, A. Schoenbach, B. Schussler, S. Madison, J. Scheb, R. Spirko, D. Thompson, P. Thompson, M. Violanti, R. Zakrajsek, J. Zomchick, M. Wanamker, A. Williams

I. Approval of Faculty Senate [Executive Council Minutes](#) from April 17, 2023

- Motion to approve, Seconded. No discussion. Motion passes with 13 votes.

II. Announcements and Reports

- President's Update (A. Roessner)

Roessner noted the importance of “addressing the immediate challenges that we face head on so that we can ensure that ALL Vols rise together.”

She reported recent successes with our partners in shared governance, “most significantly 1) amid advocacy from GSS, Faculty Senate, and other partners like UCW, a Chancellor and Provost-mandated and Dean-sponsored increase in graduate stipends; and 2) spearheaded by Faculty Affairs, including Senator Jud Laughter and Anne Langendorfer, and past committee chair Mark Stanley, among others, and in partnership with the Provost's Office, especially Diane Kelly, significant changes to Chapter Four in the Faculty Handbook, which will improve conditions for NTT faculty.”

She noted that “we still have important ground to cover, including, in the near-term, 1) advocating for enhanced child care resources on campus through our Finance and Benefits and Shared Governance committees in a potential RFI, under the direction of University of Tennessee Associate Vice Chancellor for Facility Services Mike Brady and Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Mary Lucal, and 2) advocating for additional changes in the Faculty Handbook, including to the Non-Tenure Track Title Series, among others.

Moreover, we have important issues to consider and address, including our role in curricular oversight as we engage with the new Curriculog system, consider shifts to instructional modality and move closer to seeing the potential new partnership with ASU come to fruition and our role to assist in enhancing access and engagement amid a complicated legislative landscape.

And then there's parking ...”

With that in mind, she invited several special guests to today's meeting to engage in dialogue with us around many of the issues and concerns that I have just outlined, including Associate Vice Chancellor Mary Lucal; Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs Diane Kelly; Online Initiative specialist Bruce Behn; Curriculum whiz Jacob Haramule; and Interim Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration Allen Bolton.

III. New Business

- **Baker School Program Modifications (M. Wanamaker and J. Scheb)**

M. Wanamaker explained to the Senate that the letter (linked above) is a request for an electronic vote on two degree modification proposals. These must be approved by the Undergraduate and Graduate curriculum committees, Faculty Senate, Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), and the Board of Trustees (BOT). Email sent in July about potential for a logistical accommodation in the form of an electronic Senate vote before BOT meeting in October. Baker School will request an electronic vote if all the other approvals go through.

The reason they want to do this at the October meeting instead of meeting in the spring is to avoid communication confusion in situations such as recruiting students. For example, they are moving a degree from Haslam to the Baker Center so asking students who they are recruiting to apply at Haslam with the understanding they will be at Baker by the time they start. Their undergraduate major will only admit freshmen or sophomore internal transfers once they start. At the graduate level, the modification is to split the current degree into 2 separate degrees. Updating this now will allow them to better explain as they recruit students to these new programs.

A question was raised about the Masters degree going online and being reduced by 3 credit hours. J. Scheb responded that previously, the degree was a hybrid Masters Degree in Public Policy and Administration and was 39 hours. Splitting into 2 degrees – Masters of Public Policy and Masters of Public Administration will make this more in line with other similar degree programs nationally. Similarly, 36 hours is more in line with other Masters degrees and is possible with the split.

This is not a voting issue at this time. Both guests will join at the full senate meeting on the 18th to answer questions. The degree modification programs will go through Undergraduate and Graduate Councils. If they move through these successfully, then we will call for an e-vote during the first week of October, which has been established as precedent in the past.

- **Follow-up on Faculty Handbook 4, including potential revisions to NTTF title series, and Exit Interview Protocols; Raising awareness about Faculty Handbook 3.5; Proposed Voting Item on Faculty Handbook 5.6 (J. Laughter and A. Langendorfer)**

Faculty Handbook Chapter 4 revisions have been through all approvals and we are waiting for the actual text published on the web. There has been one more proposal out of the committee to strike line about termination of non-tenure track faculty. There were questions about exit interviews and data currently being collected. A Senator on the Faculty Affairs Committee is assigned to gather information from HR about the process and report back.

There was a question about joint appointments that involve equal time and if it was up to the Deans or Department Heads to determine the home department. There was a request to read Faculty Handbook Chapter 3.5 about Joint and Intercampus Departments:

“Joint Faculty appointments typically involve participation in two or more departments or research units within the University or under the terms of a Joint Faculty Agreement between the University and another entity, such as Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). Joint appointments with the Herbert College of Agriculture, UT Extension, and UT AgResearch are common in the Institute of Agriculture. The primary department with which the faculty member is affiliated, through which all matters of promotion, salary raise, and tenure are processed, is the “home” department. On all matters, the home department should consult with the department head and faculty of the other unit. Where joint appointments involve equal time in two or more units or service primarily within an interdisciplinary program, it is the shared responsibility of the heads, deans, or other administrative officers to make appropriate recommendations; and in such cases, one of the two units should be designated as the home department. The original appointment letter must specify the faculty member’s home department, administrative reporting relationships, and the peer group(s) to be consulted in tenure and promotion recommendations. The university recognizes that as the shape of knowledge changes, new disciplinary and interdisciplinary needs may emerge which do not precisely correspond to existing administrative or departmental lines.”

Discussion following this reading was that the home department requirements for Promotion and Tenure are what would be applied and the home department and division of duties to both departments would be defined in the appointment letter.

A question was raised about the rationale for the proposed stricken language. It was explained that there has been discussion over many years but with no information about why the termination language is in the handbook. The committee would like to get information in writing for rationale to maintain that language. If there is opposition from General Council office then we would like the rationale for the language documented. It was brought up that it would be easier to vote to have it stricken if we knew why it was in there in the first place. While we have no information on why the language is there, we know we have had significant growth in NTT faculty which make this a needed issue to address. The appropriate path to get a written response from general council is to propose a change to the handbook.

VP Kelly was asked about a timeline on when the written text of Chapter Four and the Faculty Handbook would be updated officially on the website and ready for distribution. Due to technicalities with presenting changes as line-item edits to BOT, the work is ongoing to complete the edits to the text. Our campus approved language is ready but there is another level of

approval by the Vice President and President of the UT System. There was a point of clarification: as this process is ongoing, changes have been communicated to Deans and Department Heads so that we may begin following new protocols on campus. Departments are able to institute changes now including longer appointment lengths for NTT faculty and renewal processes.

Motion to approve moving discussion of Handbook chapter 5.6 to full Senate. Seconded. No discussion. Motion passes with 15 votes to approve moving this discussion to Senate.

IV. Proposal from the Provost's Office for an expedited process to create online modalities for existing degree programs (J. Zomchick)

J. Zomchick noted that the purpose for this proposal is to expedite a formal rather than substantive curricular action that involves moving current degree programs to an online modality. At heart the proposal is this: we have hundreds of undergraduate degree programs that we offer face to face. We are launching an initiative to put some of these online to reach a new population of adult learners, targeting people with some college credits but no degree. A faculty member who teaches class face to face can opt to teach online without going through any approval process. If a major has enough of these then it stands to reason that, since a faculty member can be able to move a single class online, then a whole program shifting online shouldn't have to go through the full curricular process that you would do for a new degree program. The idea is that the overall program has already gone through review with curriculum committees and the changes proposed are more about modality of the course than the content. Rather than going to committee, they propose that full discussion and vote within a department is the first and necessary step to move a fully face to face program online. In this proposal, faculty engagement is at the disciplinary level (i.e. faculty in kinesiology decide about creating online kinesiology program – then to department Head and Dean for approval and then to Provost office for approval).

It was stated that as a faculty, we have a great opportunity to do something well. This senator expressed hesitancy about adopting this proposal while understanding the value of online degrees. They would be supportive of the proposal if online modalities were the same as face to face but they are not but suggested we put in some safeguards around quality control. We want to avoid sliding into becoming an online degree mill. We have committed to give identical degrees at UT and state that the value of degree is equal regardless if earned online or face to face.

It was also brought up that with AI there are higher risks for cheating in online classes than in-person classes as we might want to take into account academic dishonesty. It was asked what the commitment is to academic integrity for online degrees. J. Zomchick responded that we have over 2,000 students in fully online programs now. There are safeguards for working in this space but he doesn't know what they are. The senator clarified that they were trying to state that there is a difference between taking a few courses and an entire degree online.

The conversation returned to the ideas that faculty senate is charged with some quality control of the education we provide. It was pointed out that you can't simply translate an on-campus

program to online without some intention and thought. She doesn't want to circumvent a safeguard for quality control. J. Zomchick responded that he would trust the faculty within the department to put into place the safeguards to ensure the integrity of what they teach. This is about trying to put the responsibility within the discipline of faculty who know the subject best.

An example was given about issues around a quick change in modality for courses without proper attention to course design. In Psychology, there are some courses that were quickly moved during covid that are going through redesign because they didn't meet quality standards with such a quick change. Would like to see a caveat that courses would go through some of the process with OLAP.

A senator asked if their department said we had a need for an online testing lab to develop an online program would this be possible? J. Zomchick responded that it would be possible.

Item E in the proposal was brought up regarding additional resources required to develop online programs. It was asked if we would have additional student success and similar infrastructure to support an increase in online student populations. J. Zomchick responded that administration sees this as part of our access and land-grant mission and would support initiatives with resources needed. He reminded us that we are reaching out to people who might see a degree from UT as a pathway to a better life. Some of those people have multiple constraints on time and finances. Creating degree programs that place obstacles for these people might counteract this effort – but, ultimately, it is up to the faculty in the department to develop these courses as they see best. The online arena is not aimed at traditional aged college students.

A concern was raised about what mechanisms would be in place to prevent units from creating these online programs and then having department require on campus students to take these courses? Another concern was raised about the differences in courses and how not all courses are content-based courses but are in other more active learning formats and the differences in what can happen in face-to-face vs online courses. For example, we have Vol Core requirements that do not look like requirements seen in other online programs.

A concern was raised about financial aid. There are some strict requirements around financial aid for online courses. The program may be well versed about moving content online but if you don't have experts who understand the online modality it will be like covid scrambling to put things online. There needs to be some standards to ensure the quality of online courses and that the courses meet standards.

J. Zomchick responded that he would have no objection to having OLAP as part of approval process and reminded us that right now a faculty member can move a course online with no approval process. He added that people outside the discipline often don't have the content knowledge to evaluate the learning outcomes of the course so the proposal was to do some of this quality control within the department.

In response to the question regarding meeting the minimum standards required for access to financial aid, the Title IV obligation is to track course attendance which they have in place. He

added that the university is about to embark on a new customer relations management platform, and it will be used in part to track student engagement.

Another concern was brought up that currently, some departments are deciding to put courses only online and not have any face-to-face options. They mention that we are selling students a residential experience but then expecting them to take asynchronous courses online because it's the only way they are offered. Parent complaints about this were brought up. Haslam College of Business was brought up as an example. They had explosive growth in undergrad enrollment. Part of how they handled it is to put some classes online. This was not to force students into a learning modality where they don't thrive and it is not all of the classes the students take.

Another senator brought up the fact that some programs need THEC approval while others are approved by Department, Dean, and Provost. Do we need a Step 5 in the plan for when the state has to approve? There is some confusion about if you just have to inform about the modality change or go through approval. It was brought up that there may be a recent change with this at THEC. J. Zomchick will follow up.

A senator pointed out that the last sentence of the rationale says, "the content of each modality is identical" but the content is not identical as outlined in discussion today. This line should be edited. Content cannot be identical if offered face-to-face vs zoom vs asynchronous.

One senator pointed out that faculty involvement in this process is important. Thinking about it in general in the absence of a specific program or proposal is hard. There needs to be some faculty body in charge of how this is developing so development is even or not lopsided across programs. Not sure who the correct body is but that oversight across programs is important.

Staffing issues were raised. A senator asked if a program shifts to online courses with potentially many more students, who will teach them? If faculty shift to teach online, who will teach the in-person sections? J. Zomchick responded that the department has to decide who is going to do the teaching. Only the department knows if they have the resources needed to do the teaching they are proposing. We don't want to mount a program where we can't schedule the courses or where they are so infrequent it is hard for students to go through the degree program. Departments would need to plan for this when developing programs and trying to make as streamlined as possible rests with the experts in the discipline.

There was a point of clarification that it would help to know which proposals have been submitted. In a given semester it would be good to know which programs are moving forward with an online program so faculty are kept abreast of this project on campus particularly as students may have required courses offered in other departments. For undergraduate programs there is not a degree we offer through a single department. What happens if you create an online degree but then a specific course needed is only offered in person. What type of coordination between academic units will be needed to ensure that the courses needed are offered online.

There was a question about who is justifying the VolCore requirements and if they are equivalent online and in-person. J. Zomchick responded that we have almost a full complement of vol-core courses offered asynchronously. Vols Online has had good discussions with College of Arts and

Sciences and are continuing to build out Vol Core courses. The list of Vol Core courses is linked below as informational item. No department would be forced to create an online degree if they do not want to. It was brought up that we have several case studies on campus from departments that have developed online programs to learn about the impact on the unit.

Motion to move to Senate and Undergraduate Council for discussion and table any vote until additional input is had through discussion and answers to some of the questions raised can be sought. Seconded. No discussion. Motion carries with 13 votes.

V. M. Lucal - Update on RFI for child care.

There is not RFI yet but we are engaged with someone helping us move in this direction. Because we are open to various types of funding we have to work with the capital projects team. They are working on a proposal and then campus would move to RFI. Commission for Women discussed launching a survey to gather data about this initiative.

VI. A. Bolton – Parking Updates.

Three things went wrong with parking rollout: the contactor on the deck under Andy Holt tower was delayed; we have expanded by 550 spaces commuter student parking but the plan to incentivize these netted only 100 students so now spaces will be assigned; and new social media presence meant to help determine where peak times are in lots. We need to do more social media messaging to encourage students to use the bus system that has been improved. A senator asked if there is any move to get residential student cars off main campus and out to perimeter lot. A. Bolton responded that they are working with enrollment management on this idea. It was pointed out that we often hear the first couple of weeks of the semester are a problem and it shakes out but we know it's because students stop coming to class.

Financial update about how not to become WVU. From financial standpoint, we are in better shape and WVU past financials should have raised alarm bells. The new budget model is more visible to people at all levels. We have more diversified investments and funding. In 2014, we had 266 million in state appropriation, and this year we have 447 million. We have a more of a balance between in-state and out-of-state students. An update to the full senate will be given in October.

VII. B. Behn – Updates.

He mentioned that he has been teaching for about 25 years and everyone has the same reaction initially to online modality shift. He thanked J. Zomchick for talking about modality change. He thought there were things he would never be able to do online but covid forced him to move a very hands-on activity online and it worked very well. He helped start a few programs in Haslam and mentions that most of their online programs aren't fully asynchronous but most have synchronous components. All their courses start with learning objectives. They go through accreditation processes that include looking at online classes. There are issues like testing where

technology is getting better but there are legitimate concerns. Access is the point of developing the online programs.

ASU update – the contract is still in works being negotiated between lawyers. After the contract is worked out it goes through the state fiscal review committee. We want to develop our capabilities and ASU is going to try to help us. They are advising us already on how to do things better. They have a huge portfolio of classes that we hope to tap into. We already have 50 courses accepted by faculty.

It was requested to create a written report about the planned partnership. B. Behn indicated that they are putting together a term sheet to use for the BOT meeting and that perhaps they could share this document with faculty.

It was asked if these classes would be for pure online students vs face-to-face campus students who may take class online. It was also asked if everything has to be asynchronous when working with ASU. For example, if you were doing a course mostly asynchronous but with some synchronous elements would it fit within this model?

VIII. Jacob Haramule – Curriculog Updates

This update has been tabled until October due to time.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm by A. Roessner.

Information Items and Committee Reports

- Unapproved [Faculty Senate Minutes](#) from May 01, 2023
- [Senate Goals & Priorities Survey](#), Executive Summary, [Committee Goals](#) & Draft [Committee Reports](#)
- [Vol Core & Distance Education](#) (J. Steele)

Appendix: Prospective Agenda Items For Future Senate Meetings This Fall

Sept. 18:

Senate Service Resolutions for Millie, Bonnie, and Beth (A. Roessner)

Baker School Program Modifications (M. Wannamaker and J. Scheb)

Quality Enhancement Plan (E. Hardin)

Online Ed Plus/Potential ASU Partnership (B. Behn)

Volunteer Experience (S. Hunter and M. Collins)