DRAFT UTK Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 20, 2023
3:05 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Strong Hall, Room 101

Not in attendance: S. Abdoli, R. Acharya, D. Ader, D. Alderman, J. Atherholt, M. Bryson, J. Chyz, C. Ferrigno, N. Fomin, M. Griffin, A. Griffith, S. Groenke, H. Goeritz, M. Harris, A. Hu, B. Issa, M. Jones, J. Jordan, R. Kite, B. Krumm, B. Long, K. Martin, C. McAlvin, K. McCormick, J. Miller, M. Misawa, S. Mobley, M. Moon, T. Mueller, C. Noble, J. Norrell, M. Nowicki, M. Pittman, S. Rampold, S. Schaeffer, C. Sneed, L. Trujillo-Mejia, T. Wang, J. Watkins, K. Waugh, S. West, R. Zakrajsek

I.   **Call to Order** at 3:05 p.m. Quorum is met.

II. **Approval of Minutes**

     a. Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes, October 16, 2023

     Motion to approve by Senator Haselschwerdt, Second by Senator Shefner, no corrections, minutes approved by majority vote.

     b. Approval of Undergraduate Council Minutes, October 31, 2023;
         UG Council Voting Summary, October 31 (J. Coble, Chair)

     Motion to approve by Senator Mahony, Second by Senator Norris, no discussion, minutes approved by majority vote.

     c. Approval of Graduate Council Minutes, November 2, 2023;
         GC Summary for November (P. Thompson, Chair)

     Motion to approve by Senator Horton, Second by Senator Russell, no discussion, minutes approved by majority vote.

III. **Announcements and Reports**

     a. President's Update (A. Roessner)

     President Roessner shared a message of gratitude for the work that Senators do within this campus community, including recent conversations spearheaded by the Senate leadership team with partners across campus, including Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Diane Kelly, Vice Provost for Student Success Amber Williams, Associate Vice Dean of Online Learning Josh Steele, and college deans, among others, to support a pilot initiative under the system's Non-Tenure Track Educational Leave of Absence policy. In light of recent re-naming conversations, she encouraged continued advocacy for underrepresented voices.

     She shared several updates, including news from the last University Faculty Council meeting related to a potential legal defense fund [the system noted that not be able to provide support because it would circumvent state law and policy]; an informational item containing Senate Leadership's recent statement to the Daily Beacon; and encouragement for dialogue around the meeting's updates and new business.

b. UTK [Chancellor's Report](#) (D. Plowman)

Today's report will focus on three big operational things that we are working on right now and all are based in our strategic vision. Digital Learning, Access and Engagement, and Guaranteed Admission.

Digital Learning: We've been having a conversation about this for nearly 2 years to step up what we are doing in the digital learning space. We have a team of people led by Bruce Behn. This links to the strategic plan and our goals around wanting to meet learners where they are. Why online? Why now? We have unfilled jobs in TN because we don't have people with the training to fill the jobs. The unfilled jobs require 4-year degrees. Last year 90% of graduates were either employed or on their way to grad school. There is a population in TN who would have an improved life and opportunity for these jobs if they had a college degree. The focus of the effort initially will be undergraduate degrees but, right now, where we are strong is graduate degrees. Our focus is how will we get more undergraduate degrees up and ready to go online.

Growth of online learners:
Fall 2021 – 125 undergrad, 1,433 grad
Fall 2022 – 162 undergrad, 1,662 grad
Fall 2023 – 244 undergrad, 2,170 grad

We have some information about the adult learners in Tennessee. They are about 30 years old and working full time. 83% of online learners say they choose based on modality first. 87% of adult learners pursue degrees based on career outcomes. 70% of online learners choose a school located within 100 miles.

Our effort will be student-centered and data-driven. Digital learning will provide focused support to academic and support units to grow a portfolio of online degree programs. The university will provide central resources to support instructional design, marketing, enrollment, student success, and technology. They want to partner with colleges to support both transforming existing programs and creating new programs.

We are moving full steam ahead on digital learning. One thing we are doing now that we have not done in the past is that the central unit will be able to support and pay faculty to develop a course.

Question: Regarding academic advising for online learners, will they follow pathways or engage in academic counseling? What work is being done to identify viable credits for those who have some college credits. D. Plowman: We are going to be identifying students for you and figuring out where they are and what coursework they need. We will not use the same academic advisors we have for residential students, but we may use some of the same approaches. We are not going to measure the success of these students by the same metrics as the residential students. B Behn: From an undergraduate perspective, right now we are targeting learners who are transferring in. They will go through the normal transfer process we have. For advising, we are in the process now of hiring enrollment and success coaches for the online students.

Question: What does tuition look like and is there in-state tuition for TN students? D. Plowman: It's not in-state or out-of-state but a different structure. J. Zomchick: In-state is the same but without the mandatory fees residential students pay. Out-of-state will pay in-state tuition plus $75 per credit hour.

Access & Engagement: This next major operational initiative grew out of conversations the President and Chancellors have had together. A couple of things happened: in the June meeting of the Board of Trustees, they called us out on why we haven't made more progress in recruiting and retaining students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups. We also had the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action that came down, and all higher education had to figure out how we deal with that. We need to figure out how we move in this space and have higher impact while minimizing the distraction and noise around DEI right now. We are a land-grant university. We have not historically done well attracting people from lots of different groups such as minorities, low socio-economic status, veterans, etc. We have had some successes developing programs targeting these populations such as our Student Success Academies that have been focused on men of color. After 2 years we are seeing retention rates dramatically increase. A second academy for first generation students was more recently started. Diversity has often been narrowly defined as racial diversity but it's really about making the campus available to everyone.

In terms of the recent Division of Access and Engagement name change, the idea behind it is to think about how to expand their role and have more impact in this space. They have three areas of priority:

- Student Access and Success: Flagship high school and rural community support. 38 low-income schools in the state have been tagged as flagship high schools. Any student who graduates from these schools and meets admittance standards to the university can attend tuition free. They will work to build relationship with the flagship high school communities to increase people taking advantage of this program.

- Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Retention: They want to be of more service to academic departments with data and research to support retention and to help track progress toward reflecting TN demographics.

- Assessment: They want to provide data back to university leadership regarding demographic trends to help inform decisions.

Implementation: The new website was launched November 15. Guidance was provided to Deans regarding how to align with the Division of Access and Engagement. Not everything a college has been doing makes sense to be called access and engagement, but they should align with the central Division of Access and Engagement. Changes are to made by December 15. Exceptions can be requested by individual colleges and departments. Any questions regarding name changes or what needs to be changed should go to the Office of the Provost.

Question: Concerned that we don't have a good record on retaining diverse students. How does taking the term diversity out of our mission encourage diverse

students to come here? D. Plowman: There's nothing about changing the title that will change anything – we need to do the work differently. What are the obstacles that we can remove to access to help us have a more diverse community. Taking the word out gives it a broader focus, but diversity is still part of it.

Question: What about using the language of diversity and inclusion in our initiatives and actions? Should we also consider language there that are aligned with access and engagement? D. Plowman: It would be nice if there is a connection, but initiatives and actions do not need to be changed.

Question: Some discussions were happening toward the beginning of the semester but this announcement seems sudden. Why can't this wait until spring semester? We have a holiday this week and then the end of the semester is chaos. There's not a lot of care to get this done so quickly. D. Plowman: We have been talking about this all fall. This is going to take a long time, and we're trying to get the umbrella set up and some connection to the colleges. I'm not sure this involves much work for faculty.

Statement: The challenge is that this communication has not been great. Some colleges haven't received an email from the Dean about what is happening, but others have. There is a lot of anxiety and confusion. With these quickly announced dates with no information there is a lot of distrust. We don't know what is really going on and why it is going on. D. Plowman: I feel like we are getting hung up on the wrong things. These are the dates that administration and deans determined; we want to get this initial step done. It's going to take a long time to fully get this rolled out, and this is just a first step.

Question: I appreciate the focus on diverse students. I am concerned that two constituencies will be offput or not convinced by this. In recruiting diverse faculty, there will be concern about the language change and what the strategies are to address this. I am also concerned about legislators who will be looking for red meat from the university in an election year, and that this won't satisfy them. D. Plowman: What has happened is those words have become weaponized – they create noise and distractions away from the real work. One piece of this is an attempt to put that noise aside and focus on the work in a different way. I hear what you are saying that they will think this is a campus who is not interested in diversifying our faculty. When we bring faculty to campus, we have to show the work we are doing in this area. We've all got to focus on how we get there. This is partly a move to say to quit talking about what some people say DEI means.

Question: Has the university discussed how we will be defining access so that we will be able to align in this mission? What are some of the pointers that would let people see we are doing the work currently and how does this align with the term access? D. Plowman: This will take time. Look at the new website, and the language there. It is taking a good first step at how we are mapping out access.

Statement: If we define it well, and we stick by our definition then maybe it can help. We ran a search recently, and people didn't want to move to Tennessee. If we define it well it could help. D. Plowman: We are just starting this, and I appreciate your comments.

Statement: As senators and as faculty, we need to take some ownership of this. If people in our college are distrusting or worried, maybe we need to talk in our caucus about this and share information. After the retreat, I was able to share information with colleagues about the change to access and have some conversations so we weren't blindsided. We are overemphasizing the label around it. We have more important issues than the divisive concepts bill to stop problematic and exclusionary behavior for our colleagues of color. We need to do work on this campus to change these things internally. We need to create healthy and safe spaces for our colleagues.

Question: What I hear from colleagues is that part of the issue is the sudden directive to change the name of committees by December 15. Engaging with faculty earlier in the process would be helpful. D. Plowman: Good point, administration has been working at it the whole semester but you haven't. I also didn't mean to imply that every committee had to be changed by December 15.

Question: There is also an issue around shared governance and the fact that communication is coming in this way is an issue. Plowman: We have been talking to groups across campus to talk about it and we talked about it at the Senate retreat. We all have work to do, and I'm asking you to engage in the spirit of what this is about. What we are trying to do is move aside a label that creates a lot of distraction. The rest of it is about adding to the work and broadening our scope to bring people to the university who don't find a way for one reason or another.

Statement: The feeling of my colleagues is that the conversation of the retreat didn't alter their concern about the directive nature of this change.

Question: Part of the disconnect here is that we were aware from that retreat about the change to the division. What came out last week was pushing down to departments, and we had no idea that was coming. Changes to titles of jobs is one thing but changing names of committee is problematic. Do we have to change committee names or do we have the freedom to say no, we would like to keep the name diversity committee. D. Plowman: You can keep your committee names, but we need to know what the committee names are in the Office of the Provost. We are the ones who get the contacts and have to track down the information from the website, so we need your help.

A. Roessner: We need to pause the conversation here to move forward in the agenda. Questions in the zoom chat will be shared with the Chancellor for follow-up later.

c. Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

Admissions update for next year. As you know we instituted guaranteed admissions for a certain group of people in the state. Part of the reason we're doing that was to increase access among the undergraduate population. If you follow local reports, you'll have noted that we admitted students from Fulton, Central, and Austin East, 3 local flagship schools. Last year we admitted 12 students from these schools, and this year we have 47. We are looking for new ways to open our doors wider for individuals that would not normally have been

here. Applications from students of color are up 40% from last year. Applications from flagship schools are up 25%.

If you look at the fact book and look at data for underrepresented groups of students, it is not something where we can show progress. We trail our peers, SEC school and aspirational schools. Access and engagement will have a large role in the state of Tennessee to broadening the gates so we can get more of those students.

I did instruct Deans to look at job titles and committees. There is an exception process in the messaging I sent. I respect the fact that some units might decide that they cannot change. As the Chancellor said, we need to know. An outcome I hope from this is that we move away from spending our energy on defending a label that has divided us as a country and emphasize the actions that can help bring people here who want to come here. I understand these labels mean things to many people on campus. Diversity and inclusion has a place and will continue to be in our website just as they continue to be part of the Board of Trustees policy statement.

This was never intended and will never reach into what you do in your classrooms, your research, and engagement with the community. That is work that must continue.

Question: This month I learned of the passing of a student via social media and there was no official communication. What are the guiding principles for a response from UT for a tragic event? J. Zomchick: There is a protocol for a tragic death of a student. The first principle we follow is to be sensitive to and honor the family and how they feel about the situation. The next is to try and reach out to all of the offices including college and major where the student was enrolled to inform them. After that the protocol is managed by the Dean of Students. If you send me your concerns, I'll make sure he hears about them. We do not want faculty in the dark about what to do and how to deal with these tragic events. K. Locke (Director of Rec Sports): If you have a student in distress, the best thing to do is have the student reach out to the 974-HELP. Follow-up question: We had a severe deficit to cover mental healthcare needs for student population. It took months for students to get appointments. How are we going to help with mental health needs moving forward: J. Zomchick: We are doing capacity studies across all these services. Mental health reports to Student Life. K. Locke: We had a lot of staff turnover in this area but have been remedying this problem. We are working to manage the overload issue, and students should not have these same delays. 974-HELP is the best place to send them for assistance.

A. Roessner: We will have an opportunity to hear from Jill Zambito and her team in February around student mental health.

Question: If applications are up from students of color, what in total is the increase in percentages of students of color on campus? J. Zomchick: We won't know what the yield will be on our applications. Once these students are admitted then we'll be able to see where the numbers are.

Question: Once we have the change to access and now that we are considering additional language to reference inclusion, how are we accounting for the inclusion that students are actually able to come and be here. How do we show evidence of change from our efforts? J. Zomchick: One of the barriers for low-income families is cost. The TN Promise was increased from $65,000 to $75,000 in gross family income to expand access. If you look at the efforts across Student Life and Student Success you will see lots of programs that are meant to convince students that they have a place on this campus and can find community. One thing we know is that rarely students leave due to a failing academic record but more often due to financial reasons or that they "didn't find a place here." All of us have an obligation to work to welcome and support our students who might not otherwise be familiar with higher education or who do not have a network to support them here. What we want to do is begin to work together to create the climate and circumstances that will keep our students here. We have two challenges in this area, developing the pipeline to bring them here and then, once here, getting them to want to stay.

Question: I would like to see us recruit from academic minority groups like National Hispanic Merit Scholars. Other schools offer scholarships to recruit from groups like this. J. Zomchick: Student Success advisory council services are doing a lot with helping students.

Question: If one of the reasons students leave is financial, and knowing the housing crisis, is there a resource for students who need housing support? J. Zomchick: We have a program called TN Pledge for families with an income below $45,000 where students get tuition, fees, and expenses paid. We have other need-based scholarships like the flagship schools, the Pledge and UT Promise. UT Promise does not cover expenses. We are going to look at need-based scholarships again to see if we should raise the income threshold for the UT Pledge. We are also in the process of building new residence halls with the hope that we can accommodate more 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students.

Question: Does the Provost's office have the ability to approve or deny a committee name? J. Zomchick: Yes, the Office of the Provost has the ability to deny a committee name.

IV.   **New Business**

a.   Motion to Revise [Faculty Handbook 1.6.3](...) (J. Laughter & A. Langendorfer)

A. Roessner: Senators Jud Laughter and Anne Langendorfer will share a motion to review faculty handbook 1.6.3. Though this comes to you from faculty affairs, I wanted to share the following context about the motion. In a monthly meeting with the Chancellor, the Chief of Staff, and the Provost, Senate leadership noted that some NTT faculty do not have voting rights over the curriculum that they teach due to their unit-level by-laws. They recommended partnering with the Provost's Office to eliminate this problematic inequity through a handbook change that guarantees minimum voting rights for NTT faculty over the curriculum that they teach, and President-Elect Derek Alderman drafted an initial version of the recommended language that you see before it went through faculty affairs for

revision. We encourage your input on the verbiage, which we will then vote on to send to the Provost's Office to who will facilitate community feedback and input amongst Department Heads, Council of Deans, and the Office of General Council.

J. Laughter: To provide background on the process, the motion came to committee for review but it has not yet received administrative review. The Senate vote today is a recommendation for this but it is not the final revision that will go through the administrative review process.

Motion to approve by Senator Horton, Second by Senator Cooper

Question: I am NTT faculty and they have discussed this departmentally. Do we want the *Faculty Handbook* to dictate to departments how to do things? Would the voting outlined in a college bylaw take precedence or would this? J. Laughter: levels of precedence from lowest rank is department, school, college, faculty handbook, etc., so this would trump departmental bylaws.

Discussion: Having NTT faculty not recognized for their expertise of the subjects they teach is directly against shared governance. The rule of majority only works if the rights of minorities are defended rigorously. This is a step toward making the university more fair and just. A. Roessner: Based on our bylaws analysis, most units already offer voting rights but some departments don't even allow NTT faculty to attend faculty meetings. Discussion: The math department already does it and it hasn't started any fires.

Discussion: what about NTT faculty who are not part of a department? J. Zomchick: All faculty have an appointment in a unit. Some are appointed to interdisciplinary programs that are not within a department but part of a unit. All tenured faculty are appointed to academic departments.

Discussion: NTT faculty may include adjunct faculty and does this motion include them? J. Laughter: Adjunct faculty have a separate definition in the handbook, and they are not generally full-time. This revision is for full-time faculty.

Discussion: How does the language of this amendment work with bylaws where NTT faculty are partially disenfranchised like in English where NTT faculty get $1/4^{th}$ vote. A. Langendorfer: The committee didn't talk about this, but I assume we are talking about a full vote.

Friendly amendment by Senator Knox to include language to specify a full vote in the draft.

Discussion: While I support the concept of voting for full-time NTTF, we are one of the departments that has no NTTF voting or attendance at faculty meetings. What is a vote and is it a one person/one vote situation, which would mean that NTTF could outvote TTF on matters that may not be directly relevant to them (e.g., graduate admissions)? J. Laughter: Departments would have to make an exception request to the Provost that they would not be able to vote in an area that does not impact their work area.

Motion to vote on the motion with the friendly amendment by Senator Mahony, Second by Senator Haselschwerdt, motion passed unanimous vote.

   b. Hazing Prevention (H. Flavin)

   Tabled and will be put on the agenda in February.

V. **Information Items and Committee Reports**

   a. Executive Council Minutes (unapproved), November 06, 2023

   b. Teaching Evaluation Policy Update from Institutional Effectiveness Team (H. Hartman, M. McFall II, E. Pemberton)

   c. Senate Committees and Councils Summary Reports and Minutes

   d. Faculty Senate Leadership Team Statement – Daily Beacon (A. Roessner)

VI. **Adjournment** Moved by Senator Langendorfer, second by Senator Norris, motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 4:49pm.

Appendix:
Mark Your Calendars:
- Optional Academic Calendar Informational Session for Senators: Monday, November 27, 2023, 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., Zoom Details: https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/81000898741 Password: 578162
- Winter Retreat for Committee and Caucus Chairs: Monday, January 22, 2024, 3 p.m., 377A Student Union (Executive Dining Room)

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Prospective Agenda Items For Future Senate Meetings This Spring:
February
- Mental Health & Wellbeing (J. Zambito)

Future Meeting upon Determination of Undergraduate Council
- Expedited Modality Review Process Potential Voting Item (J. Zomchick)

Future Meeting upon Determination of Faculty Affairs
- Faculty Handbook 5.6 (J. Laughter and A. Langendorfer)