

UTK Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting
Monday, February 26, 2024
Minutes

AGENDA

I. Call to Order at 3:05pm, quorum confirmed

In Attendance: D. Alderman, M. Brannen, C. Clark, J. Coble, B. Coldren, M. Collins, B. Cooper, B. DuBois, M. Griffin, M. Hinten, O. Kilic, R. Kite, B. Krumm, J. Laughter, A. Langendorfer, E. Lukosi, S. Madison, A. Roessner, E. Schoenbach, B. Schussler, M. Scoggins, R. Spirko, A. Steiner, P. Thompson, R. Zakrajsek

Derek Alderman, President-elect, presented President Roessner and Past-President Schussler with flowers in honor of Faculty Appreciation Week

II. Approval of Minutes

a. [Faculty Senate Executive Council Minutes from January 29, 2024](#)

Move to approve by Senator Cooper, Second by Senator Schussler, no discussion, minutes approved

III. Announcements and Reports

a. President's Update (A. Roessner)

President-Elect Derek Alderman and I just returned to Knoxville over the weekend from the SEC ADLP in Mizzou, and I wanted to take a moment to share out some promising trends that we've seen across the SEC this academic year, in particular in the areas of athletic investment in academic initiatives and university investment in faculty success, equity, and wellbeing initiatives. We've attempted to translate the importance of these best practices within our conference in our regular conversations with the Chancellor, the Provost, and the Chief of Staff here on Rocky Top and to partner around existing system and university initiatives. Most recently, your faculty senate leadership team guided the Council of Deans in a conversation around strategies for implementation of our existing system level Educational Leave of Absence program and successfully lobbied the Chancellor to advocate for and encourage the implementation of our academic investment initiative by the athletics department. We look forward to continuing these dialogues and to partnering with the Provost's Office on Faculty Success strategies and initiatives. Moreover, as we move into Faculty Senate Nominations and Elections season, I would like for our committee chairs to encourage the nomination of diverse voices willing to continue to advocate for the equity and wellbeing of everyone on Rocky Top and, during this Faculty Appreciation Week, to express my gratitude to you for the ways in which you give of your whole selves in these labor intensive committee chair roles that often go under recognized and rewarded. On this campus in this moment, we often talk about building the proverbial plane while we fly it, but I feel certain that this plane would head into a tailspin without the extraordinary efforts that you undertake day in and day out. As you'll see on our agenda today, we have several items that focus on the non-tenure track experience and create pathways to leadership for all

faculty. Before we launch into our new business, Derek and Beth, would you like to say a few words about the Academic Investment Initiative or the Educational Leave of Absence policy, respectively.

[Academic investment initiative](#) (D. Alderman)

In the past the athletic department invested in the academic arm of the university. We would like to return to this type of model. Peers in the SEC are doing this. The linked proposal includes endowed professorships, graduate teaching assistantships, etc.

[Educational leave of absence policy](#) (B. Schussler)

This policy exists at the system level but it was brought to our attention that the way this is implemented varies greatly between departments. Because it is not part of our institutional culture, there is a lot of variation on how it is interpreted and implemented. At the Council of Deans, they discussed how this policy might be implemented. The policy exists for NTT faculty members to take advantage of. We would encourage you to inform NTT who are interested about the policy. We will continue to advocate for this to be equally available to everyone and to be implemented in all colleges. This is a system level policy.

- b. Chief of Staff J. Scoggins and other administrative representatives are here in lieu of the Provost. Open moment for questions to this group. No questions

IV. New Business

- a. [Revisions to Faculty Handbook 4.1.1](#) (A. Langendorfer, J. Laughter)

This brings more clarity to the various titles teaching faculty can have. Making distinctions between lecturers, teaching faculty, and instructors. The primary difference is that the teaching faculty series requires the terminal degree in the field.

Question: What happens to people who might have the wrong title right now? Does anything actually change with this? P. Thompson: Yes, to teach graduate level courses and to serve on graduate committees requires Ph.D. D. Kelly: We would have an implementation plan based on how other universities have rolled out a change like this for having faculty adopt new titles.

Question: If you change positions, can you still count all the time toward promotion? D. Kelly: Yes, this is confirmed, all of your time at the university count toward promotion.

Question: I am a Lecturer in the graduate program and teach in it as well so would I need to change something. D. Kelly, there was likely an exemption request in your situation and there are policies in place for that.

Today we decide if we want to approve this to move to the full senate. D. Kelly, the Council of Deans support this so we have done some administrative reviews

and approvals. It would need to be approved by the Chancellor who would submit this to the system. I do not think this would need to go to the Board of Trustees as it is not about review but that determination would need to be made.

Question: Would Senior Lecturer be promoted to Teaching Assistant Professor or teaching associate professor line. The teaching degree series is only for terminal degree holders in that field. The choice to move to the new series would be negotiated in your college. D. Kelly: Nobody is going to be forced to move from Lecturer to Teaching Professor so if people want to keep their Distinguished Lecturer title even if they have a terminal degree they can keep that title. One important thing about this model is that the biggest distinction between the series is the terminal degree in the field. Also, the Lecturer title series can be used for part time hires.

Suggestion for Friendly Amendment: Can we adopt the word “should” instead of “must” in the handbook to indicate that this is not required.

Question: When you transition, does only the job title change or does the pay scale change too? D. Kelly: This is just a job change, any pay change would need to be negotiated in the department.

Question: Is there is a promotion ladder involve like in the line from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer to Distinguished Lecturer? Is there a ladder like this for Assistant Teaching Professor to Associate Teaching Professor? D. Kelly: I am not sure what the committee has discussed but it should follow the same model. The progression is agnostic of the title series

Question: In this decentralized model where Deans make all decisions, are there any checks and balances that would keep Deans from hiring more heavily in these faculty lines as opposed to tenure track faculty? D. Kelly: Every unit is trying to do many things including increasing research output and expenditures. Each unit needs different types of faculty to meet these various types of goals. Question follow-up: What we are seeing is that Deans are overloading faculty and that it’s cheaper to overload 5 faculty rather than to hire a new faculty and reduce the load. D. Kelly: Some of this that is happening right now was done to address an increase in demand for some courses where departments didn’t have time to find enough people to teach. If we start seeing this repeatedly then we will have to look to see what’s going on.

Question: What is the benefit of having this new system of titles? I hear in this potential elision between titles of people who have protections of being on the tenure track and who don’t and I am skeptical of potential consequences. What’s the benefit of having this additional series of title. A. Langendorfer: Peers have shifted to this model and part of it is to acknowledge the situation on the ground. The title Lecturer does not adequately describe the work being done. Part of it is for recruiting purposes and we see other schools advertising teaching faculty type

titles rather than Lecturer positions.

Motion by Senator Spirko Second Senator Violanti, vote approved – will move forward to next senate session

- b. [Suggested Bylaw](#) Revision Article 2, Section 10, lines 269-70:
Change - (1) the holding of full-time faculty appointment with tenure TO (1) a tenured faculty member at Associate or above or a non-tenure track faculty member at Senior Lecturer or above

Question: The Office of Research may want other changes after March 11.

Response: if any committee chairs have any suggested changes, please send them to President Roessner no later than March 20.

Question: Will we have a backup to include the teaching faculty series to this list?

Response: When this language says senior Lecturer and above it includes the teaching faculty. D. Kelly. All ranks would be included if you remove the tenure part.

Friendly amendment to change the language to, “*a faculty member at Associate or above or Senior Lecturer or above*”

Motion by Senator Spirko, Second by Senator Alderman, vote approved – will move forward to next senate session

Reminder: committee chairs, any suggested bylaws changes need to be submitted to President Roessner by March 20.

- c. [Survey Executive Summary](#) J. Shipley

285 total responses to survey. Most questions were open-ended so this summary is based on qualitative analysis of comments.

Communications:

We asked where people get information about campus: word of mouth, provost newsletter, TN Today, communications from College/Department or faculty meeting, faculty senate communications through email or departmental updates. Some people requested more frequent information from Senate, but most are generally pleased with the information shared. Faculty want more information from administration, and they want opportunities for input before decisions are made.

A. Roessner: Jordan and I have been working with the intranet team and the beauty of such a system is that we would be able to communicate more frequently with faculty. When crises emerge, this would allow us to offer quick office hours around a topic.

J. Shipley: Some faculty mentioned that some sources like TN Today feels like marketing materials rather than administration communicating with faculty.

Questions for NTT faculty around support for professional leave were overwhelmingly positive. They asked how centralized guidelines around leave should be, and they responded that this should mirror guidelines given to tenured faculty. In terms of service expectations, responses varied. Most noted that contracts do not explicitly mention service, but that it is expected. Extra service is not defined and varies greatly in different departments for NTT faculty.

Research Council Questions included questions regarding support for research that were responded to favorably, but UT is not seen as doing a strong job in communicating research out to the broader community. Faculty feel there is support for large, intensive research but not for smaller projects. They indicated that research staff are not knowledgeable about research processes in different disciplines. Faculty are interested in research infrastructure and promotion of NTT faculty research. Some expressed concern that preference is given to STEM fields in terms of publicity and focus. Sometimes quantity is valued of quality. In general, faculty want more communicating of research success and streamlining those processes.

When asked about development support, faculty want more support in forms such as teaching release, funding for travel, development funding for NTT faculty, and leave so development doesn't mean playing catchup with workload. Faculty specifically mentioned needing development and resources for management as many find themselves managing people and do not feel prepared for management work. Faculty mention their increasing role in student academic success and general wellbeing. Students need increasing support. Faculty don't feel equipped to direct students to resources they need or to support students in the range of needs they have.

There were lots of requests for grant-writing workshops. There were concerns about the appeals process with about 80% of respondents being neutral or having concerns about the process. There were also many other concerns such as capping out-of-state enrollment, guns on campus, and the divisive concepts bill.

In the area of institutional growth, faculty are concerned with classroom availability and large class sizes that are hard to manage. Other faculty concerns raised include parking, the housing crisis (both in terms of faculty themselves and the impact on recruiting graduate students), lack of office space or shuffling office spaces on campus, increased administrative burden, and traffic.

Discussion: How do we plan to disseminate this info to the rest of the faculty?

Response: We could put a summary like this in the next mini-minutes. This survey was generated to offer committee chairs some information to the business

of their committee. In many of the concerns they raise, we are making concerted efforts within the work of our committees to address these concerns and to seek information. For example, when we talk about things like institutional growth, we have been active in bringing in people like Vice Chancellor Bolton to share information and respond to questions, and we ask for follow up information after questions are raised. We should share with faculty how we have been or how we plan to address some of their concerns. Regarding appeals, the committee is looking at how we can modify the appeals process. J. Shipley: some people did put forth ideas for solutions. We could go through the data and pull out the solution-oriented comments. A. Roessner: The first step would be to thank people for taking the time to respond to the survey and to let them know that this information is being shared with relevant committees to consider for action. Suggestion: Can we please give them some indication in this message about when we will share more information about the outcomes of the survey as often we do not ever hear what has been done with the information.

d. Committee Reports:

Budget Committee: Review of support unit budgets. Units with significant percentage increase are flagged. The Office of Research and Office of Innovative Technology were flagged for new hires in both areas. OIT new hires in cybersecurity area. These were the only ones that exceeded the 10% budget variance. Hiring process for new VC F&A has started. This will overlap with Allen Bolton who will leave in December. IT hires in cybersecurity: are any of these related to research security? I can find out. Healthcare RFI expected March 25.

Teaching and Learning Committee: Teaching evaluations taken over by 2 taskforces. Should wrap up by May. Will focus on faculty handbook language. TLI is having meeting March 25 and conference March 26 focused on teaching principles for UT, reconsidering teaching evaluations, and a session on AI. We are keeping pressure on administration regarding answers to questions about online teaching to get information so we don't just get things told after decisions are made. We're watchdogs.

Communications Committee: One of the chief charges is to engage in supporting elections for senate. It is difficult to get nominees for senate positions. We ask everyone, not only caucus chairs, to encourage this type of service. In our next meeting we'll be hearing about the course program of study federal mandate and how this is interpreted, carried out, and enforced at UT. Senator Harrison Meadows is leading that initiative.

Appeals Committee: In conjunction with Faculty Affairs, we will be bringing proposals forward minor handbook revisions regarding appeals. I was taken aback by the survey responding so negatively to the appeals process. I wonder if this is a signal of some kind?

Shared Governance Committee: This is a new committee with leadership from senate and staff committee, SGA, and GSS. Discussing where priorities and concerns intersect of these groups.

A. Roessner: [Regarding the survey] We just got these survey results this weekend. As a first step, we wanted to share these results with committee chairs, leadership, and members of executive council. We want to be mindful that we can start to make progress on reporting out this information and getting committees on the path to working to addressing the issues raised.

Suggestion: May I suggest is that we put some kind of a time frame on when we will hear back. We often hear after surveys that something is being done but then we never hear anything back later. Response: I appreciate this perspective but that is in part determined by committee chairs. Maybe we could provide an end of year report of activity and actions taken by senate committees.

Discussion: These issues that faculty are bringing up are things the committees have been talking about since August. Sometimes we push administration but don't get a response.

Suggestion: I think confirming to faculty that these things are shared and engaged with by others is helpful.

Question: Have we had follow up about the number of instructional personnel that was part of the presentation A. Bolton gave us at the last meeting? That was asked about at the faculty senate meeting. For example, articulating the consequences of there not being enough tenure-line faculty to do the tasks that people are describing being overwhelmed by such as the service that NTT faculty are talking about.

President Roessner just received an email from A. Bolton providing follow-up information from the discussion last week. This information will be shared at Faculty Senate.

D. Kelly: O. Driscoll and D. Kelly are meeting with Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Analysis. With the move to Interfolio, we have a lot more reporting capability than we have had in the past. For example, reporting out new hires might be better than what we have had in the fact book in the past. In October of last year, we had 134 open tenure track positions in Interfolio. Another thing we are seeing because of the changes in the budget model, are that when a search is successful and there are 2 strong candidates, several Deans are taking advantage of it and requesting to hire an extra position.

B. Schussler: In the past I have done a 10-year trend of types of employees. The trend data might be useful. She will update this so we can determine if we want to append that information. The trend shows that the percentage rise in students is

higher than the percentage rise in faculty.

Discussion: Hiring trends in different job categories seems to be changing and research faculty allow departments to be nimble and respond to funding opportunities. D. Kelly has seen increase in requests for tenure-track faculty.

Question: Next year, could we work on not having Vol Success Week the same as Faculty Appreciation Week? Response: We set the week too early to catch all the conflicts. We are trying to set the date about a year in advance.

Discussion: The numbers in fact book are maybe not nuanced enough to answer faculty hiring trends. It shows overall numbers but doesn't give good breakdowns. There are needs for reports with more nuanced information to answer frequent questions.

Suggestion: We have these faculty survey results. What is really going to be resolved and addressed in 2 months? Perhaps this survey could be used as a framework for the committees who work to plan goals and areas to focus on for the upcoming year.

e. Announcements:

April 12 – Dawn Culpepper in to talk about faculty workload and rewards project. Special faculty session at 2-3:30pm

Reminder to read informational items and committee reports.

V. Information Items and Committee Reports

- a. Unapproved Faculty [Senate Minutes from February 12, 2024](#)
- b. [Winter Retreat Materials](#) and [Working Google Document](#)
- c. Draft [Committee Reports](#)

VI. Adjournment

Move to adjourn by Senator Violanti, Second by Senator Alderman. Meeting adjourned at 4:28pm.

Appendix:

**Prospective Agenda Items For Future Senate Meetings This Spring
March 4, 2024**

Hazing Prevention (H. Flavin)

Faculty Handbook Update (D. Kelly)

Proposed Meeting Dates (A. Roessner) for 2024-2025 AY:

1. Executive Council: 09/09/24, 10/14, 11/04, 01/27/2025, 02/24, 03/24, 04/28
2. Faculty Senate: 09/16/2024, 10/21, 11/18, 01/13/2025 (if needed), 02/03, 03/03, 04/07, 05/05 + Reception

Future Meetings

Upon Determination of Faculty Affairs

Faculty Handbook 5.6 [Voting Item](#) (J. Laughter and A. Langendorfer)

Upon Outcome in Undergraduate Council

Expedited Modality Review Process Potential Voting Item (J. Zomchick)