



*Empowering Voices, Fostering Success, Shaping Futures*

**Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting**

Monday, January 27, 2025

3:05 pm – 5:00 pm

440 Haslam Business Building, West Wing Conference Room

MINUTES

**I. Call to Order at 3:05pm President Alderman presiding**

In Attendance: D. Alderman, M. Brannen, D. Butler, M. Bryson, B. Coldren, D. Coleman, E. Cowell, B. DuBois, F. Harper, N. Hristov, K. Franck, O. Killic, B. Krumm, S. Laursen, E. Lukosi, B. Lyons, G. Null, N. Russell, B. Schussler, H. Sedges, J. Shefner, C. Staples, T. Teale-Tate, L. Teston, M. Violanti, D. Watts, J. Zomchick

**II. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Faculty Senate Executive Council [Meeting Minutes](#), November 04, 2024  
Motion to approve minutes by Senator Coleman, Second by Senator Null,  
Discussion: none, vote: passed unanimously

**III. Announcements and Reports**

**a. President's Update (D. Alderman)**

Faculty Appreciation Week will take place February 10-16. The Provost's Office is appreciated for organizing a series of events. Several activities require an RSVP by February 3. A virtual recognition board will be available for faculty, staff, and students to contribute messages of appreciation to specific faculty members.

President Alderman and Senator Bob DuBois serve on the University Faculty Council (UFC). The UFC seeks to inform faculty that two surveys will be distributed this semester. The Gallup survey on free speech is now available, while the COACHE survey, which focuses on faculty satisfaction, will be released in mid-February.

Nominations are open for the Heart and Soul Award, given at the beginning of every full Senate meeting to recognize faculty who contribute significantly to UTK's climate. The Senate encourages Provost Zomchick to ask Deans to submit nominations in recognition of their faculty.

Senate leadership continues to advance efforts in drafting the procedures and policy of the Emergency Needs Fund (ENF), which would provide donated, non-state dollars to faculty and staff facing emergencies, disasters, or other dire, unexpected events. The committee in charge of drafting ENF includes representatives from Human Resources, Advancement, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Provost's Office.

A special reception, co-hosted by Chancellor Plowman and the Senate, is scheduled for January 30 at 4:30 p.m., celebrating all UTK faculty, graduate students, and postdocs who have contributed to The Conversation. Additionally, a drop-in coffee social with Bruce Wilson, one of the Conversation's founders, will be held from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. on January 30, and that is co-sponsored by the Senate and UT Communications and Marketing.

Later in February, the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee will begin a fact-finding survey to determine the extent to which faculty requested to work outside the 9-month appointment period. The survey will ask: Who makes these requests, and how often? What duties are faculty asked to perform? Are faculty members provided any additional compensation? The Senate will share data with Senators and Administrative partners as we gauge the extent of the problem and identify points of discussion and possible collaboration.

Later in February, the Finance and Benefits Committee and the Senate leadership team will release to Senators a set of faculty salary reports containing specific, granular data showing how UTK faculty compensation compares across colleges and with other universities (peer and aspirational). The Senate has long prepared and released an annual faculty salary analysis report (which will continue this year), but this is the first time the Senate has released all the data reports from which the analysis is derived. Giving the Senate access to the complete data set is meant to jumpstart discussions between Senators and their units and colleges about gaps in competitive compensation & faculty well-being. President Alderman appreciated the leadership of Finance and Benefits Committee members Karen DeLong, Eric Lukosi, and Cary Staples. The Finance & Benefits Committee will follow with a streamlined analysis, recommendations, and guidance on how to hold discussions with administrative partners about pay. President Alderman noted that before Senators can access the salary data, some of which come from a third party (Oklahoma State University), they must agree to specific terms of use—namely, agreeing not to disseminate the data outside of

UTK and not to post the data on a public-facing web site or other communication channel.

President Alderman noted that the January 13 virtual workshop held with the Faculty Senate was highly productive. Senators received a legislative update from UT Vice President of Government Relations Carey Whitworth (her slides are included in the informational items of the agenda). Senators also engaged in a discussion of a UT System policy regarding the use of AI in the classroom and identified pressing issues and concerns to be addressed in spring 2025.

At the January 13 meeting, the Senate also learned of a one-page promotional flier created by the Department of Chemistry (and used by VP Whitworth in Nashville) as part of advocacy for a badly needed new Chemistry building. This flier, which is provided in the informational items, has spurred President Alderman to think of the broader value of such fliers in helping UTK departments to promote and demonstrate the value and educational and social impact of their degrees.

Alderman proposed that departments work with their College Communication Staff and the central UT Communication Office to produce such marketing materials as part of a project entitled “Degrees of Impact: Showcasing the Value of Higher Education in Shaping Careers & Communities.” This initiative would respond to Chancellor Plowman’s call for the campus to discuss and strategize about communicating the value of a college education.

A Senator in attendance recognized the value of such an idea and of such resources but also noted the value of departments and college education in terms of broader societal impact beyond job-related outcomes. President Alderman agreed and indicated that these one-page promotional materials can and should include such broader value. He said that this is why the proposed title of the initiative contains the word "communities" and reflects the importance of showcasing education’s influence in the broader community.

**b. Alderman yielded the floor to President-Elect Charlie Noble as part of the President’s Report.**

**i. Report on Nominations and Elections (C. Noble)**

The President-Elect oversees the Senate’s nomination and election process.

Senate nominations and elections are underway, with efforts to start the nomination process early. The nomination packet includes a promotional

one-pager for Senate nominations, prepared by Pamela Durban, along with remarks from President-Elect Charlie Noble.

Serving in the Senate provides an opportunity to become more familiar with the campus, expand professional networks, and engage in shared governance. Later this week, a message outlining available positions for the upcoming year will be sent to caucus chairs. The next step involves actively recruiting nominations.

Phase two of the process will focus on nominations for leadership roles, including the positions of President-Elect and representatives for UFC (University Faculty Council) and TUFS (Tennessee University Faculty Senates).

**c. Alderman yielded the floor to Communication Officer Nathalie Hristov as part of the President's Report**

**i. Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) (N. Hristov)**

The Cost of Poverty Experience, created by the organization Think Tank, will be hosted as an opportunity to build empathy and awareness about poverty. Think Tank's mission is to share the realities of poverty and foster understanding among those who serve, work, and teach. This three-hour poverty simulation allows participants to assume personas based on real individuals, offering insight into the challenges those living in poverty face.

Administrators, faculty, staff, and anyone who works with students or serves others are encouraged to attend. The event is scheduled for a Monday afternoon that does not conflict with Senate or executive meetings and will take place in the Student Union Ballroom. Registration is open until February 17.

**d. Provost Update (J. Zomchick)**

Spring semester is off to a strong start, with a persistence rate of 97.5%—reflecting the percentage of students who were enrolled in the fall and have registered for the spring semester.

The McClung Museum is preparing to open a new exhibit that has been five years in the making. This sponsored exhibit focuses on Native American mounds and has been developed in collaboration with four Native American tribes. An opening ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday this week; all are encouraged to visit the

museum.

Nominations for honorary degrees are due by March 4. The Provost's website provides details regarding the process and requirements.

Ozlem Kilic has issued a call for applications for the Generative AI Faculty Fellows program. This initiative will support 5-9 faculty teams, each receiving \$35,000 to design and integrate generative AI into their courses. Applications are due by February 12.

Faculty Appreciation Week shout-outs are now available online.

Two key initiatives regarding transfer students are underway. First, a new Transfer Task Force has been established. Second, Beth Foster will discuss barriers transfer students face when changing institutions in the Undergraduate Council. These challenges often result in increased time, costs, and mental health impacts. The task force aims to evaluate the university's transfer processes to identify areas for improvement while maintaining faculty control over the curriculum and shared governance. The vice chair of the Undergraduate Council is serving on this committee.

In 2010, the state of Tennessee passed the Complete College Tennessee Act, which ensured that any Tennessee resident who earned an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree from a Tennessee community college would meet the state's core undergraduate curriculum requirements upon transfer to a Tennessee university. This allowed students to transition more quickly into major-specific courses. A request has been made for Beth Foster to explore the possibility of extending this policy to include students who have earned an AA or AS degree outside of Tennessee.

**Question:** Does this include online AA and AS degrees? **Response:** Yes, no distinction would be made.

**Question:** The original act was implemented before the creation of VolCore. VolCore introduced categories unique to this campus. How would accepting any AA or AS impact these unique aspects? **Response:** AA/AS degrees and VolCore aim to provide a broad general education foundation. Rather than focusing on what is unique to this institution, the priority should be ensuring that students receive a degree that enables them to complete their major successfully. While the number of affected students may be small, this initiative aligns with the university's access mission and efforts to expand recruitment opportunities for

potential students in this space.

#### **IV. Information Items**

- a. Legislative Updates (C. Whitworth)
- b. Value of Chemistry Degree – One Pager (for possible replication)
- c. Senate Elections – One Pager (please use to generate Senate nominations)
- d. Faculty Appreciation Week, Feb. 10-16 (Register/RSVP by Feb. 03)
- e. Call for Heart and Soul Award Nominations
- f. Help distribute and promote Faculty Excellence in Action Infographic
- g. Robert's Rules Primer (H. Sedges)
- h. Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) (N. Hristov)

#### **V. New Business**

- a. **Finding Solution to After Hours Parking for Academic Outreach Events (T. Teale-Tate) (Discussion)**

Concerns have been raised within the Faculty Senate regarding a policy change that would eliminate free public parking after 5 p.m. This change is expected to impact attendance at campus events such as lectures, concerts, and theater performances, which are paramount to UTK's outreach and land grant mission.

The director of parking services, Tanara Teal-Tate, who has 25 years of experience in the field and joined UT last March, has acknowledged the challenges surrounding after-hours parking. Current regulations indicate that parking is charged 24/7. As an auxiliary unit, the parking department is self-supported and relies on revenue to maintain operations. There are approximately ten parking garages on campus, with plans to expand parking availability. However, outstanding debt from constructing seven garages necessitates continued revenue generation. Visitor parking accounts for about 2% of the department's budget, and approximately 7% of visitor parking spaces will be lost next year. The Parking and Transportation Office if UTK is collaborating with TDOT and a consultant to explore alternative transportation initiatives, including shuttles and car-sharing programs.

#### **Discussion and Questions**

Concerns were raised about how the change (requiring the public to pay for parking to attend after-hours outreach programs) would impact evening programming that engages the broader community. For example, an event on International Holocaust Memorial Day was cited as one that could be affected.

The impact of the parking policy on events like Ready for the World music

celebrations was also discussed, particularly regarding accessibility. The Volunteer Garage is a significant walking distance from humanities and performing arts venues, potentially deterring attendance. Many programs rely on donor support, and increased parking costs or accessibility challenges could negatively influence donor enthusiasm and participation.

It was noted that a collaborative event involving donors and UTK's design community members had already been relocated off-campus due to parking concerns. A question was raised about what portion of the 2% of visitor parking revenue is generated specifically from evening events. The response indicated that while immediate financial need is not the primary issue, sustainability remains a concern, as maintaining parking lots and installing gate equipment requires funding.

**Question:** This is the first semester where a student has not arrived late due to parking difficulties. How will this policy impact disciplines like theater, where visitors tend to be older and accessibility is already challenging? **Response:** A letter outlining the impact of such a policy on the Clarence Brown Theater has been submitted. Free programs are particularly vulnerable when ticket prices cannot be adjusted to offset parking costs. Some departments may not experience significant demand for after-hours parking, but others, such as performing arts, will.

**Question:** How much does after-hours parking cost? **Response:** Visitor parking is \$2 per hour.

**Question:** Could a pilot program be implemented to assess whether the policy significantly impacts attendance? If parking remains under \$10 for theatergoers, is it genuinely prohibitive? Could the university identify groups with the greatest need for after-hours parking and explore targeted solutions?

**Comment:** Campus culture plays a role in evening attendance. A vibrant campus includes students in music, art, and library programs who often rely on after-hours access. Students living off-campus need to be able to engage in evening activities easily.

**Comment:** Theater programs that apply for Tennessee Arts Commission grants must provide details about parking accessibility. Parking policy changes could affect grant eligibility.

**Comment:** Communication about policy changes is crucial. The parking policy shift was first heard informally, creating confusion since many had thought that after-hours parking was free. Clear and timely communication is essential.

**Response:** There has never been an official policy granting free after-hours parking. The perception of free parking may stem from a lack of enforcement.

**Comment:** Alternative revenue strategies should be considered, such as differential parking rates for faculty and staff.

**Question:** Athletics events offer free parking at the Agriculture Campus with a shuttle service. Will this policy change impact that practice? **Response:** No changes are made for this season, as the shuttle is funded separately. However, the discrepancy between free basketball parking and paid theater parking raises questions about consistency in parking policies.

b. **Research Council – Proposed Expansion of Membership and Duty Revision (M. Bryson & K. Franck)** (possible voting item for Senate Bylaws)

Research Council is proposing changes to its portion of the Senate bylaws regarding ex-officio membership, adding one post-doctoral representative and one undergraduate student representative to the council. Additionally, revisions have been made to a section of the bylaws concerning research centers. Since these centers operate at the college level rather than across the wider university, their placement within the bylaws has been eliminated since the Research Council no longer reviews those centers. Finally, the relevant text has been moved to the scope section of the council's description.

**Questions/Discussion: none? Any objections?**

Motion to approve as written by Senator Franck, Second by Senator Sedges,

**Discussion:** A point was raised regarding SARIF grants, noting that future updates will be needed since SARIF is no longer the system used by ORIED. Response: While this was recognized, the decision was made to proceed with the proposed changes as the language had already been circulated. **Vote: motion passed.**

President Alderman noted that the proposed bylaw changes, now that the Executive Council has approved them, will be placed on the agenda for the next full Senate meeting as an informational item. All bylaw changes require at least a 28-day review period. Research Council's proposed bylaw changes will be formally introduced, discussed, and voted on by Senate at its March 3, 2025 meeting.



c. **Proposal to Address Tenure Track Faculty Hiring (J. Shefner)**

Since 2019, student enrollment at UTK has increased significantly: undergraduate enrollment has grown by 31.23%; graduate enrollment has increased by 32.32%; and overall enrollment has risen by 31.46%. During the same period, the number of full-time, tenure-track (TT) faculty has increased by only 8%, from 1,175 in 2019 to 1,270 in 2023. This growth lags behind student enrollment increases, leading to a decline in the proportion of TT faculty relative to non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty in all but three colleges.

Tenure-track faculty play a unique role in producing scholarly and creative output and developing curriculum. The Budget Allocation Model (BAM) provides greater flexibility to colleges, but this remains a university-wide issue that must be addressed at the administrative level. Faculty hiring should align more closely with student enrollment growth. Data collected from UTK's peer and aspirational institutions suggest that a higher TT faculty-to-student ratio correlates with increased research expenditures. A strategic investment in faculty hiring is needed to enhance UTK's research capacity, particularly in securing external research funding. *A working group of faculty and administrators is proposed to develop strategies for increasing research expenditures through targeted faculty hiring.*

**Question:** The University of Missouri has high research expenditures despite fewer faculty. Why is this the case? **Response:** Missouri has implemented a very targeted effort to increase research expenditures. **Provost Zomchick:** Missouri's medical school could contribute, as institutions with medical schools tend to secure significant NIH-funded research. A task force dedicated to examining TT hiring would be valuable. As Senator Shefner pointed out, TT hiring has not kept pace with student growth, partially due to the pandemic-related hiring freeze. The university has been working to recover, including launching seven cluster hiring initiatives, each bringing in 6-7 TT faculty. A task force could strategically assess where TT hires are most needed. While student enrollment has grown by 30%, the growth has not been uniform across colleges. More than 100 TT positions have been approved for searches this year.

**Comment:** Faculty representation on this task force should be equal to administrative representation. Would you support this structure? **Provost Zomchick:** Yes. Deans are already required to submit a three-year hiring plan, which is updated annually. While administrators provide critical insights, it is equally important to hear from faculty perspectives.

To move forward, the Executive Council is seeking endorsement of this initiative. Conversations among colleagues highlight concerns about faculty workload and maintaining high-quality engagement, research, and instruction without excessive strain. Increasing the number of TT faculty directly addresses issues related to 9-month faculty appointments, research engagement, and workload balance. A strategic hiring approach would help faculty continue their work effectively and sustainably.

Motion to support the proposal by Senator Roessner, Second by Senator Violanti,  
Discussion: none, vote: passed unanimously

d. **Diversity & Inclusion Committee – Proposed Committee Name Change (F. Harper & J. Brown) (possible voting item for Senate Bylaws)**

Current name: Diversity and Inclusion

Proposed name: Access and Engagement

The committee has two primary reasons for proposing a name change: to reduce tensions and misalignment with institutional priorities and to provide clarity and relevance to its mission. The committee unanimously approved the proposed name change. This change is hoped to catalyze strategic planning, aligning with the Division of Access and Engagement's strategic plan.

The agenda link includes the full proposed changes, which consist of renaming the committee to reflect better its evolving role and updating the Vice Chancellor's title to reflect the correct, current title.

**Question:** What will happen to the Chancellor's Council for Diversity and Inclusion? **Response:** The councils are currently being reorganized, and name changes are expected as part of that process.

**Question:** Can accessibility be included in the second paragraph of the proposal? **Response:** This may require an amendment to include "accessible explicitly." The committee has not yet discussed this possibility. The last sentence of the proposal could be revised accordingly. The group could decide to revise it now or refer it back to the committee for modification. No motion has been made at this time.

**Question:** Would a friendly amendment be considered? **Response:** A proposed wording change included modifying the first sentence to "To support a diverse, engaged, inclusive, and accessible environment" and the last sentence to "The committee also reviews campus practices for accessibility."

**Question:** The committee's name is changing from diversity to access. Will it be actively working on engagement or engagement policy?

**Response:** An Engagement Council is already working with the Division of Access and Engagement. The intention seems to mirror the name, but if engagement is not a focus, should it be included in the name? Further clarification was provided, stating that the rationale for including "engagement" is to align with similar office name changes. The term "engaged" already exists in the bylaws for this committee. While the committee's programming involves campus engagement, it is not necessarily focused on student or public engagement in the way higher education typically defines it.

**Question:** Did the committee consult with individuals from underrepresented groups about this name change? **Response:** Aside from the committee members (some of whom are from historically marginalized groups), there was no strategic outreach to wider underrepresented groups for feedback. The committee considered both the positives and negatives of the change. Some ex-officio members who work in relevant offices, such as the Division of Access and Engagement, determined that this change best aligns with institutional goals.

Additional comments suggested that aligning with the Council for Diversity and Inclusion as it reorganizes and rebrands makes sense. This committee is essential in liaising with commissions, and that work will continue. Another perspective was that given the current state of institutional and political transition, the committee should wait for an alignment meeting to assess the specific needs of this committee before making a change. Another suggestion was to poll the commissions for their input before proceeding.

A final comment acknowledged respect for the work of the committee.

Motion to postpone the proposed bylaw change (name change for Diversity & Inclusion Committee) by Senator Coleman, Second by Senator Teston, Vote: passed by majority. Faculty senate leadership will work with the committee on next steps.

e. **Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs – Changes to Annual Retention Review (V. Keppens) (possible voting item for Faculty Handbook)**

Tabled for next meeting or later depending upon Dr. Keppens collaborations with the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee, who is reviewing a possible change in

annual retention vote for probationary tenure-line faculty.

VI. Adjournment of Formal Meeting

Motion by Senator Violanti, Second by Senator Noble, meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

VII. Workshop Mode – Committee Progress Reports (if time allows)

- a. [Senate Committees and Councils Summary Reports and Minutes Summaries](#)
- b. [Committee folder for uploading documents + reports](#)

**Upcoming Senate Meetings:**

**Executive Council:** 02/24, 03/24, 04/28

**Faculty Senate:** 02/03, 03/03, 04/07, 05/05 + Reception