



Empowering Voices, Fostering Success, Shaping Futures

Faculty Senate Meeting

Monday, March 3, 2025

3:05 pm – 5:00 pm

Student Union, Room 270

MINUTES

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

Not in attendance: S. Abdoli, R. Abedi, D. Ader, B. Cooper, C. Cronley, M. Ecklund, N. Eggers, C. Ferrigno, N. Fomin, D. Gilmer, H. Goeritz, H. Guo, R. Habib, J. Han, F. Harper, J. Hathaway, A. Hu, B. Issa, B. Keck, J. Kenna, L. Kim, O. Korotych, B. Leard, B. Long, S. MacKenzie, M. Madurga, T. Mengesha, T. Moeller, L. Platter, S. Rampold, S. Ray, D. Sain, C. Sneed, L. Teston, H. Thapliyal, J. Watkins, S. West, T. Wu, J. Zastoupil, W. Zheng

II. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of Faculty Senate Minutes, [February 03, 2025](#)

Motion by Senator Russell; Second by Senator Harris; Discussion: none; Vote: passed.

b. Approval of Undergraduate Council [Meeting Minutes](#) + [Executive Summary](#) + [Spreadsheet of Proposals](#), February 18, 2025 (D. Coleman)

Motion by Undergraduate Council, Second by Senator Collins, Discussion: All proposed curriculum changes were approved with overwhelming majorities at both the Curriculum Committee and Undergraduate Council levels. Regarding the revised program proposal for Communication Studies, the proposal was initially tabled due to being categorized as low impact. Upon reconsideration, the impact level was adjusted (to medium), and the committee conducted a re-vote, ultimately approving the proposal as submitted. A concern was raised regarding the determination of impact levels. The committee identified discrepancies in how impact was being interpreted by registrar staff and faculty. As a follow-up, efforts are underway to meet with relevant stakeholders to clarify the categorization process. Vote: passed by majority with 2 abstentions.

c. Approval of Graduate Council [Meeting Minutes](#), February 20, 2025 (S. Laursen)

Motion by Graduate Council; Second by Senator Mayra Roman-Rivera;

Discussion: none; Vote: passed with 2 abstentions.

III. Announcements and Reports

a. President's Update (D. Alderman)

- i. The President emphasized the importance of reviewing informational agenda items. In the tradition of beginning Senate meetings with gratitude and a recognition of faculty contributions, President Alderman recognized two recipients with a Heart and Soul Award, meant to honor faculty who make significant positive contributions to the climate/culture of UTK.

Heart & Soul Award Recipients

The Senate honors Dr. Megan Bryson, Associate Professor in Religious Studies, with the Senate Heart and Soul Award. Dr. Bryson has significantly impacted the University of Tennessee community through her unwavering commitment to creating inclusive and supportive spaces. As co-chair of the Faculty Senate's Research Council, she has fostered a collaborative environment where faculty, research deans, and staff can address critical issues related to research needs. Dr. Bryson has also tirelessly worked to expand representation on the Research Council by advocating for the inclusion of undergraduate students and postdoctoral researchers, clearly reflecting her dedication to inclusivity. What truly sets Dr. Bryson apart is her exceptional attentiveness to everyone she interacts with. She listens with care, offers thoughtful guidance, and ensures that all voices are heard. Her remarkable service to the Research Council, along with her dedication to her students and the field of Asian Studies, reflects her deep investment in the UT community. Dr. Bryson is a remarkable scholar, balancing her academic responsibilities and public engagement with her service to her department and students. Her unwavering support for everyone she works with is a testament to her profound impact at UTK, making her an ideal choice for this award.

The Senate honors Dr. Tara Bryan, Associate Professor in the Baker School of Public Policy, with the Heart and Soul Award. In her first year at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Bryan has already made an indelible mark by fostering a deep sense of belonging for students both on and off campus. On campus, she is a dedicated mentor to graduate students in the Masters in Public Policy and Masters in Public Administration programs, providing individualized support to help them feel connected and heard during challenging times. Dr. Bryan's commitment to building community extends beyond her faculty role. She recently volunteered her time to

accompany Baker School undergraduates on a Civil Rights tour of Nashville, Birmingham, and Selma, Alabama. This trip, which was outside her official responsibilities and uncompensated, allowed her to strengthen connections among students and enrich their experiential learning. Additionally, Dr. Bryan is cultivating strong partnerships with local non-profit leaders, ensuring her students gain valuable insights while also benefiting the University's relationship with the community. Her tireless dedication to supporting students, building inclusive spaces, and engaging with the broader community makes her a deserving recipient of this award.

ii. Updates on Initiatives

Progress is being made to establish the Emergency Needs Fund (ENF). A committee has completed drafting and approving a set of procedures and rules that would direct the process of providing financial assistance to faculty and staff experiencing hardship from natural disasters and other life-altering crises. Special policy and procedure forms required of UTK have also been completed and submitted. The next stage is for the ENF to be reviewed and hopefully approved by university administrative partners.

Senate leadership team is responding to Senator calls for increasing transparency in faculty appointments to university committees and task forces. In the informational items for this Senate meeting, please note that it lists three faculty colleagues who were recently appointed by President Alderman to serve on committees/task forces.

Efforts are ongoing to secure a Faculty Senate Headquarters, which would include space for storing archives and awards as well as hosting small meetings. Senate leaders are working with Linsey Graff, the new Director of Academic Infrastructure, to locate a space for these headquarters.

The Senate Awards and Professional Development Committee and the Senate Leadership Team have recently constructed a faculty survey on professional development. That survey will soon be disseminated to faculty to determine their professional development needs and priorities, with the hope that results can inform discussions with administrative partners and strategic planning by the Awards Committee.

Senate committee and council chairs are currently reviewing Senate bylaws to identify areas in need of updating or correcting. Those revisions are March 11. Any proposed bylaw changes will be considered by the

Executive Council and then the full Senate after the Executive Council vote.

Faculty affected by federal changes and orders are encouraged to attend office hours with ORIED and the Provost.

The university's FY26 Budget Assumptions and Strategic Priorities document is available for review within the agenda's informational items. The document outlines strategic priorities for next year's budget, which include student success, research programs, CECS, and online/digital learning. Colleges have been instructed to grow revenue, prepare for increases in grad student stipends, & work away from subventions.

The next Senate meeting is scheduled for April 7 and will include an update on the Google-to-Microsoft transition/migration by Dan Harder, Chief Academic Technology Officer at OIT. A link is available in the informational items for faculty to provide feedback on this transition. OIT's establishment of this feedback survey resulted directly from collaboration with Faculty Senate. President Alderman encouraged faculty to consult with deans and department heads regarding the expected rollout timeline for the transition from Google within their departments, schools, units.

Athletic Director Danny White has confirmed that athletic professorships will be continued for the next academic year. Senate leadership proposed and won approval for the establishment of the athletic professorships in AY 23-24 and Senate expresses its appreciation for this support and recognition of faculty.

The Faculty Senate is co-organizing a series of programs, including two faculty roundtables (with Division of Student Success) on "Rebuilding Public Trust in Higher Education" (scheduled April 14 & 17) and two town halls/listening sessions (with Vice Provost for Academic Affairs) on Vol Core (scheduled March 28 & April 3).

b. Provost's Report (J. Zomchick)

Paul Armsworth, Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, has received the SEC Faculty Achievement Award, as announced in *Tennessee Today*. At the recent Board of Trustees meeting, three new academic programs were approved, and two parking garages and a master

lease for the entire Cherokee Mills building were constructed. The lease includes an option to purchase the property, primarily designated for housing staff without student-facing responsibilities.

Several task forces are currently underway or being launched, many of which were developed in consultation with Faculty Senate leadership and will include Faculty Senate members. Most of these task forces focus on campus operations. A new standing committee has been established to address class scheduling. The Transfer Task Force is reviewing transfer policies with the goal of making the university more transfer-friendly for students. Another task force is examining the end-of-course evaluations completed by students each semester. Additionally, federal and state guidelines regarding Course Program of Study (CPOS) rules and regulations are under review. (CPOS dictates the number of credit hours students with financial aid can take outside their major program.) A Vol Core working group will be formed based on discussions led by Beth Foster later this semester. At the recommendation of the faculty senate executive council, a task force will also be launched to examine faculty hiring practices (see question/response below for clarification).

For Fall 2025 undergraduate applications, there has been a nearly 6% increase in overall applications, with a 5.5% increase in in-state applications. The only decline has been in international applications. An international recruiter has been hired within enrollment management to help address this trend. The final release of admission decisions will occur on March 4, after which a waitlist will be compiled to ensure the target first-year class size of 6,900–7,000 students. Predicting the yield of admitted students remains challenging. Historically, the in-state yield has been between 46–50%, while the out-of-state yield has been 15–16%.

The Chancellor and Provost addressed campus leadership at a recent town hall to provide updates on federal executive orders. The Department of Education has released an FAQ related to the Dear Colleague Letter issued earlier this month. Recognizing the widespread concerns on campus, university leadership is closely monitoring these developments and communicating with those who may be directly affected. The Chancellor reaffirmed the university's commitment to obeying the law, complying with funding agency directives, supporting faculty and staff, and ensuring researchers have the resources they need. ORIED and the Provost's office are holding office hours to address questions, and faculty are encouraged to attend or reach out via email if they are unable to participate. University leadership remains committed to providing support in this rapidly

evolving environment.

Question: Can you clarify what is meant by “follow the law,” as some executive orders are not laws passed by Congress? **Response from Provost:** The university will follow the law as interpreted by the Office of General Counsel.

Question: What is the role of General Counsel? No statements have been issued outlining what is considered legal and what is not. It is difficult to assess the implications without clear information. For example, is the cutting of NIH funds legal? **Response from the Provost:** The university is addressing issues as they arise rather than issuing a broad statement. The Chancellor is preparing a general statement regarding the current environment, which will be released soon. Much of higher education is still seeking clarity on these matters. At this time, no institution-wide changes have been made to university operations, though some individuals have received stop-work orders on their funded projects.

Question: The pending task force on tenure-track hiring was noted, but the description did not explicitly state “tenure track.” Can you clarify? **Response from the Provost:** The language was intended to be inclusive of all faculty, including both tenure-track and professional (non-tenure-track) faculty, who contribute to the university’s mission in different ways. The task force will focus on tenure-track hiring within colleges.

Question: Is there an update on graduate student housing, as this is important for recruitment? **Response from the Provost:** There is no update currently. A development on Alcoa Highway, currently under a master lease with the university and primarily housing undergraduate students, has been under consideration as possible graduate student housing. One challenge remains the price point of that particular housing development option.

Question: What is the best way for Faculty Senate Committees to liaise with the new task forces referenced earlier? Should this be done through Faculty Senate leadership or the Provost’s Office? **Response from the Provost:** Both options are appropriate. Faculty should coordinate through Faculty Senate leadership but may also reach out to Owen Driskill in the Provost’s Office for information regarding the charges and membership of these task forces.

IV. New Business

- a. (Voting Item) Proposed Change to Senate Bylaws: [Research Council](#) (M. Bryson & K. Franck) (bylaw change initially announced and posted Feb. 3, 2025) Note:

Senators should review before meeting.

Bylaw change approved at Executive Council. The committee is proposing three changes: (1) adding representation by including one undergraduate student and one postdoctoral student as ex-officio members, (2) removing the term “research centers” as it is no longer used on campus, and (3) relocating relevant information to the purpose and scope section. Motion by Executive Council, Second by Senator Blackwell, Discussion: none; vote: passed.

b. Brief Research Council Report (M. Bryson & K. Franck)

- [Creating Multiple Disciplinary Collaboration](#), [Compliance Regulations](#)

The committee discussed recognizing multi-disciplinary collaboration, emphasizing the need to acknowledge such collaboration in annual review and promotion and tenure (P&T) considerations. There is interest within the Research Council in seeing academic units encouraged to revise their bylaws to formally credit multidisciplinary collaboration, and the Council is proposing that the issue be reintroduced for possible inclusion in the Faculty Handbook by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. The Associate Deans prepared a document outlining this approach for Research to allow academic programs to maintain their own tenure and promotion standards while ensuring recognition of multi-disciplinary contributions. (The document is linked to the Faculty Senate agenda.)

The Research Council is also proposing an initiative to enhance awareness of the research grant proposal process, collect faculty experiences, and consider possible improvements. Given the challenges of the current political and funding environment, a survey will be distributed early in the next academic year to gather insights and improve understanding of the process.

A resource from COGR (cogr.edu) was highlighted. It includes a graph (included in the Faculty Senate agenda) summarizing the increase in federal regulations and policies over the past decade. The chart illustrates the growing complexity of compliance requirements. The review process for ORIED staff has become significantly more intricate, and this resource may assist faculty in better understanding the procedures and time in approving grants for submission.

c. Panel Discussion and Senator Q&A with Faculty Athletics Representatives (discuss changing landscape of college athletics, issues facing UTK student-athletes, and how to best represent faculty interests).

- James Chyz, Co-Chair, Senate Athletics Committee
- Matt Harris, SEC Faculty Athletics Representative
- Brian Krumm, [Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics](#) (COIA)

- Rebecca Zakrajsek, Co-Chair, Senate Athletics Committee
- James Williams, [Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics](#) (COIA)

Goals of panel discussion:

- Re-start a Faculty Senate tradition of receiving reports from the Athletics Department and Faculty Athletics Representatives (working to bridge the academic-athletic divide).
- Introduce Senators to those who are our Faculty Athletics Representatives (points of contact for faculty with questions or concerns in the future).
- Create greater shared understanding of the changing economic and legal landscape of college sports and what it means for UTK.
- Address key developments and issues in the evolving student-athlete experience.
- Allow Faculty Athletics Reps to collect faculty questions and concerns.

The discussion addressed pressing issues in athletics, both current and anticipated. The most immediate legal concern is the recent NCAA settlement in the House case, which amounted to \$2.8 million. The settlement funds will be distributed with 60% allocated to Division I schools and 40% managed by the NCAA. Institutions may face an annual financial burden of \$22–30 million over the next several years as the NCAA reduces school distributions. Additionally, there will be an expansion in the number of scholarships that can be issued, and some institutions may begin offering scholarships to all students. These financial and structural changes are expected to strain the athletic department considerably.

Concerns were raised regarding the impact of gambling on campus, as it affects both traditional students and student-athletes. Research indicates a connection between gambling and increased suicide rates. The transfer portal was also identified as a challenge, with a decreasing percentage of student-athletes recruited after entering the portal. Previously, 65% of athletes who entered the portal were picked up by another program, but that figure has declined to approximately 55%. The transfer portal allows student-athletes to leave their current university in search of new scholarship opportunities, raising concerns about the academic implications of such transfers.

Holistic athletic development was discussed, including the pressures placed on student-athletes due to NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness), the transfer portal, and legal issues. The increased openness of student-athletes to utilizing support services suggests that additional resources may be necessary in the future. The university's athletic department has been expanding mental health services, and maintaining a strong emphasis on academics remains a priority.

The concept of NIL was reviewed, noting that it allows student-athletes to be compensated for their name, image, and likeness. Different types of NIL agreements exist, and revenue sharing is already occurring. Revenue sharing has the potential to create significant disparities between revenue-generating and non-revenue sports. Despite concerns that student-athletes may receive differential treatment, the athletics department has reiterated its commitment to supporting all sports. Additionally, some concerns have been raised about the potential repeal of Title IX and the impact it could have on gender equity in athletics. However, the university administration has affirmed its commitment to supporting all existing sports, regardless of any changes to Title IX. Reports from peer institutions indicate that some universities provide different levels of financial support, with higher levels allocated to revenue-generating sports.

The broader legal context was also discussed, with courts determining that the NCAA has functioned as an illegal monopoly for an extended period. This has weakened the organization's authority to enforce rules. The transfer portal remains a topic of debate, as worker mobility is generally supported, but academic disruptions for transfer students are a recognized issue.

Regarding NIL, it was noted that the university does not participate in these agreements due to state law. NIL deals are made exclusively between student-athletes and external companies or collectives.

Question: Based on morale, faculty have never faced this level of scrutiny. Morale is further impacted when comparing faculty salaries to those of coaching and sports management staff. This raises concerns that may not be addressed simply by appointing a few faculty members to athletic professorships. Additionally, the planned entertainment district is expected to directly impact athletic revenues, while academic buildings, such as McClung Tower, remain in disrepair. There is interest in seeing data demonstrating a direct correlation between athletic and overall institutional excellence. How much does the emphasis on athletics contribute to faculty feeling marginalized?

Response from the Panel: It is a complex issue. Faculty salaries are significantly lower than those of coaches, yet when athletic programs succeed, enrollment tends to increase. Competitive coaching salaries are necessary to remain on par with peer institutions.

D. Alderman: The original proposal for establishing Athletics Professorships included not only professorships but also athletic support for graduate assistant stipends and undergraduate research. However, the proposal was reduced to focus

solely on professorships. This is a step toward reinstating a model from the past where athletics contribute directly to academic support.

Response from the Panel: While coaching salaries are high and societal value is debated, athletic staff face job security concerns. Equity remains a critical issue. Athletics raises funds largely from donors. In representing faculty, it is important to understand how the Athletics Department engages with faculty. It is essential for faculty to feel like equal partners in the university's mission.

D. Alderman: Athletics has still contributed to the professorship initiative despite financial challenges. There are additional opportunities for athletics to support academics. Restoring past norms, such as having the athletics director provide a "state of the union" address to the faculty senate, may improve dialogue and transparency on campus.

Suggestion: A few years ago, football held spring training from 7–11 a.m. on Tuesdays, a high-demand class time. It may be beneficial to request adjustments to avoid conflicts with class schedules.

Question: What percentage of student-athletes receive NIL deals? **Response from Panel:** Currently, most NIL deals are concentrated in revenue-generating sports. A small number of student-athletes receive significant deals, while a larger group benefits from smaller agreements.

Question: Do student-athletes have a voice in the Faculty Senate? Are there issues they face that should be elevated? **Response from the Panel:** The Student-Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) includes representatives from every sport and serves as a platform for student-athletes to voice concerns.

Suggestion: In the College of Architecture and Design, a student-athlete once had to change majors due to challenges balancing studio courses with practice schedules. Exploring ways to provide more flexibility in practice times could help student-athletes pursue their desired degrees.

Question: Regarding the entertainment district – will there be space for academics or daytime activities? **Response from the Panel:** A presentation on the entertainment district project was given last year, but it remains in the conceptual phase. There may be opportunities for Faculty Senate to provide input. One goal mentioned was ensuring that space remains accessible when not in use for events.

Question: NIL deals – As a state university, do these deals fall under sunshine laws, and how are they tracked? **Response from the Panel:** Student-athletes

negotiate their own NIL deals and report them to the university. However, some organizations have introduced NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements), complicating the reporting process. Moving forward, NIL deals will be handled through a clearinghouse. While the university does not directly interact with these agreements, systems are in place to help student-athletes navigate them.

It would be beneficial to receive more regular reports from the Athletics Department, gain further insights into the entertainment district, and increase faculty input.

Motion to adjourn by Senator Horton, Second by Senator Shefner, Meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.

V. Information Items

- a. [Senate Elections One Pager](#) (please use to generate Senate nominations)
- b. [Announcing Faculty Roundtables](#) (Rebuild Trust in Higher Education)
- c. Recent Senate Leadership Team appointments to committees/task forces (many thanks to these colleagues for serving)
 - Dr. Bob DuBois, Advisory Committee on Timetable & Scheduling
 - Dr. Tracey Norell, TNVoice Task Force (replace B. Cooper)
 - Dr. Tore Olsson, Generative AI Faculty Fellow Selection Committee
- d. Workshop: [What's Your Scholarly Impact for Promotion and Tenure?](#) An Introduction to measuring and visualizing the Impact of your research with Bibliometrics.
- e. [FY26 Budget Assumptions](#)
- f. [Legislative Updates](#) – from Jan. 13 Senate workshop (C. Whitworth)
- g. Call for [Heart and Soul Award Nominations](#)
- h. Help distribute and promote [Faculty Excellence in Action Infographic](#)
- i. [Robert's Rules Primer](#) (H. Sedges)
- j. [Senate Committees and Councils Summary Reports and Minutes Summaries](#)

VI. Adjournment of Formal Meeting

(Administrative Partners are welcome to leave at this time)

VII. Workshop Mode

- a. What faculty needs are not being met on campus?
- b. What can Faculty Senate be doing to recognize and meet those needs?
- c. What campus entities or partners should we invite to answer questions?

Upcoming Senate Meetings:

Faculty Senate: 09/16/2024, 10/21, 11/18, 01/13/2025 (if needed), 02/03, 03/03, 04/07, 05/05 +
Reception