

## **UTC Faculty Senate Report 2022-2023**

This report is a year-end summary of the general activities and accomplishments of the UTC Faculty Senate during the 2022-23 academic year (AY), as well as a description of related unresolved issues. Accomplishments and unresolved issues in this summary are presented in no particular order.

### **General Activities**

**Leadership.** The UTC Faculty Senate Executive Committee for AY 2022-23 included President Jennifer Boyd (Biology), President-Elect Don Reising (Electrical Engineering), Past President Tammy Garland (Criminal Justice), Vice President and Faculty Handbook Committee Chair Josh Ozymy (Political Science), and Secretary Jaclyn Michael (Religious Studies). Marcus Mauldin (Political Science) served as Parliamentarian.

**Senate & Faculty Meetings.** The UTC Faculty Senate met monthly during AY 2022-23, on the third Thursday of each month. In addition, the Faculty Senate organized and hosted meetings of the Full Faculty on September 26, 2022, and February 29, 2023. All of these meetings were hosted in Zoom in late afternoons. Agendas and Minutes are available on the Faculty Senate webpages or archives (which are linked from the webpages).

**Meetings with Executive Leadership.** The UTC Faculty Senate Executive Committee met monthly in-person throughout the academic year with UTC Chancellor Steven Angle and Provost Jerry Hale to discuss upcoming items on the Faculty Senate agenda and faculty concerns.

**Committees.** Assignments of faculty to lead and serve on Faculty Senate Committees was made in summer 2022 based on faculty responses to a committee preferences survey administered in spring 2022. Committees included: Athletics, Budget and Economic Status, Course Learning Evaluations, Faculty Administrative Relationships Committee (members elected), Faculty Awards, Faculty Grants, Faculty Handbook, Faculty Rating of Administration, General Education, Grade Appeals, Learning Environment, Non-Tenure Track Faculty, Student Media Board, Undergraduate Academic Standards, Undergraduate Admissions, Undergraduate Curriculum, and Undergraduate Petitions. Annual reports from each committee are available on the Faculty Senate webpages or archives (which are linked from the webpages).

**Bylaws.** The UTC Faculty Senate Bylaws received some minor updates from motions that were passed in previous years due to lags in updates associated with the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Representation beyond Campus.** Faculty Senate President Jennifer Boyd and Faculty Representative Felicia McGhee (Communication) represented the UTC faculty at monthly meetings of the University Faculty Council. Faculty Senate President Jennifer Boyd and President-Elect Don Reising represented the UTC faculty at monthly meetings of the Tennessee University Faculty Senates.

## **Moving beyond COVID-19**

**Accomplishments.** COVID-19 continued to exist during AY 2022-23 but below pandemic levels. The Faculty Senate had been heavily involved in University-level COVID-response plans during the past couple of years. The end of the pandemic allowed the Faculty Senate to resume its focus on other items of faculty importance.

## **Campus Safety and Security**

**Accomplishments.** Serious concerns were expressed early in the academic year by faculty that communications about safety concerns on campus were absent or delayed to the point of not being effective. As an example, we had an incident in which an individual committed a lewd act in the direction of graduate students in one of our academic buildings after hours. The individual was not apprehended (they got away) but faculty with offices and labs in that building and who are often in the building afterhours and/or are mentoring students who are in the building afterhours were not informed of this incident until a full month later after word spread among students and faculty and they inquired about it. Another issue was that faculty expressed being unaware of various options to help ensure their security (especially afterhours), such as calling Campus Security to be escorted to their vehicles afterhours. This concern referenced a carjacking that occurred at gunpoint on campus afterhours while evening classes were in session. Interim Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Vicki Farnsworth and new Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Brent Goldberg met with the Senate regularly in late fall and early spring 2023 and responded seriously to this concern. They disseminated information about Campus Security escorts, and by the end of the academic year, communications to the campus community about safety and security incidents were notably improved in their timeliness. Response training for active shooter incidents also seems to have increased around campus, as reported by numerous faculty.

**Unresolved Issues.** Campus safety and security is a fundamental issue. Faculty concerns about their safety and security on campus should continue to be addressed seriously when they arise. Faculty who teach and/or who have office space in rooms with glass walls (where they are highly visible), such as those in Lupton and the Library have continued to express concerns about their safety in those spaces.

## **Course Learning Evaluations**

**Accomplishments.** In response to faculty concerns about bias in course learning evaluations, particularly toward female and minority faculty, the Faculty Senate President and Vice Provost Lauren Ingraham considered the potential to pilot a new evaluations program that assesses courses based on their integration of high impact practices (HIPs) rather than how students perceive that courses affect them. This program, called IMPACT, is being developed and has been tested preliminarily at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and found to minimize bias. The program team was invited to visit UTC in spring 2023 to describe the program and address questions from faculty. Our impression was that the program was not developed fully enough to implement at this time, but that elements of the program could be piloted here during AY 2023-24 for faculty who would like to pilot it alongside the existing UTC course learning evaluations. This would allow for preliminary assessment of the program on our campus, as well as contribute (anonymized) data to the UNO team that could inform further program development.

**Unresolved Issues.** Faculty concerns about biases in course learning evaluations have not yet been addressed, and course learning evaluations play a major role in faculty evaluations at UTC. However, both Chancellor Steve Angle and Provost Jerry Hale have expressed support for piloting a program designed to reduce biases in course learning evaluations at UTC. Faculty Senate President Boyd will continue working with Academic Affairs during AY 2023-24 as Past President to provide faculty with the opportunity to pilot the IMPACT program at UTC.

## **Ombudsperson**

**Accomplishments.** Former UTC Faculty Ombudsperson Joanie Sompayrac resigned from that position in summer 2022, in part citing the heavy workload. Following her resignation, UTC Executive Leadership reimagined the ombudsperson role at UTC as full-time position (rather than part of an additional role for a UTC faculty member). UTC Chief of Staff David Steele reported to the Senate that the revised position was informed by practices at other institutions. UTC launched a search to fill the vacant ombudsperson position during the 2022-23 academic year that culminated in candidate interviews in early summer 2023. The search committee included campus administrators and faculty.

**Unresolved Issues.** The faculty ombudsperson position remains vacant, and as such, faculty at UTC have not been able to consult with an ombudsperson in attempt to resolve work-related issues for more than a year.

## **Faculty Wellness and Work-Life Balance**

**Accomplishments.** Faculty expressed concerns through AY 2022-23 and earlier about stress combined with a poor sense of work-life balance due to workloads. Notably, faculty responses to a spring 2022 survey conducted by the previous Faculty Senate President Tammy Garland revealed that faculty experienced high stress levels, difficulties finding a sense of work-life balance, and the perception that the UTC administration was not helping to support their work-life balance. These conditions could negatively impact faculty mental and physical health. To help support faculty well-being and work-life balance, UTC instituted formal Employee Wellness programming in fall 2022. To further investigate faculty wellness and work-life balance concerns and devise potential solutions, Faculty Senate President Jennifer Boyd assembled an *ad hoc* Faculty Senate Faculty Wellness and Work-Life Balance Committee in fall 2022. The Committee was led by Dawn Ford (CHEPS). During AY 2022-23, the Committee developed an extensive set of recommendations for best practices that would help to support faculty wellness and well-being at UTC. These recommendations were presented to the Faculty Senate, Chancellor, and Provost in late spring 2023. The Committee's annual report and recommendations are available on the Faculty Senate webpages or archives (which are linked from the webpages).

**Unresolved Issues.** Faculty continue to express concerns about their wellness and work-life balance, often attributing these issues to workloads and expectations that are seemingly increasing. The issues of low morale and burnout among faculty have been reported beyond UTC as a national trend. As a result, there is continued need to address these issues, potentially through formal workload policies and expectations about faculty availability and responsibilities.

## **Meeting Attendance (by Faculty and Administrators)**

**Accomplishments.** The Faculty Senate continued to meet via Zoom during AY 2022-23 to increase the accessibility of meetings for faculty. Overall attendance at Faculty Senate meetings was relatively high. The Faculty Senate continued to be invited to new Faculty Orientation at UTC to disseminate its purpose in shared governance. Faculty Senate meetings continued to include reports from administrators, and we appreciated that administrators were available at Senate meetings to address questions and receive comments from faculty. Beyond their role as administrators, most of our administrators technically have tenure homes, so they are always invited to Faculty Senate meetings. However, faculty expressed concern about the lateness with which faculty matters/issues/concern were addressed in Senate meetings due to the length of administrative reports. Faculty also expressed their discomfort in speaking about certain issues critically with administrators present in meetings. To resolve the former, the Senate voted to revise the agenda order for Faculty Senate meetings, as described in the Senate Bylaws, so that Administrative Reports would come after Unfinished Business and New Business. attempt to make faculty feel more comfortable to participate in discussion with administrators present, faculty were provided the ability to chat directly with the Faculty Senate President individually during meetings, so that their concerns could be expressed by the President on their behalf without retribution. Faculty Senate President Jennifer Boyd also set up discussion boards in the Full Faculty Canvas site with themes focused on issues of faculty concern, in which faculty could share their input with attribution or anonymously. Discussion board comments were regularly reviewed and used to inform Faculty Senate agendas.

**Unresolved Issues.** While Senate attendance was generally good, overall attendance at our full faculty meetings was low (around 20%), which limits the faculty role in shared governance. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee discussed this and proposes that making the Faculty Senate a bigger presence in new faculty orientations could help to address this issue. Currently, the Senate is allocated Just 10-minute slideshow during new faculty orientation. Having a longer period of time with new faculty would allow the Executive Committee to introduce more fully their roles in shared governance early in their careers at UTC and to disseminate information about how to stay informed about issues relevant to faculty and how to express their concerns.

## **Summer Funding Model**

**Unresolved Issues.** The model for funding summer course offerings at UTC is confusing and do not seem to give much power to individual academic department departments. The vast majority of the revenue from summer courses goes to the University rather than to departments, but departments have to budget for faculty to teach summer courses. Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Brent Goldberg and Provost Jerry Hale both expressed interest in developing an improve funding model for summer courses, but changes have yet to be made.

## **Hiring and Appointments**

**Unresolved Issues.** Faculty expressed concerns related to faculty hiring and appointment processes during during AY 2022-23. Examples include reports from some departmental search committees that they are being encouraged to no longer request DEI statements from candidates, issues related to the late timing during the academic year of approvals to issue advertisements and initiate the hiring process (which could limit the applicant and candidate pools), and

concerns that internal appointments are made by administrators without search process given that these appointments can become gateways to permanent positions.