

## Faculty Senate Minutes - April 16, 2020 - 3:10 pm

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 pm via Zoom. At the outset of the meeting, there were 64 online attendees.

A motion was put forward by Jack Zibluk to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2020 meeting as posted on the Senate website. The motion was seconded by Barry Kamrath and passed unanimously.

### **Administrative Reports**

Provost Hale addressed the group on behalf of the Administration. Chancellor Angle was on a conference call with UT President Randy Boyd and the other campus Chancellors. Provost Hale says that he hopes to be able to someday give a report when we are not in crisis mode. It seems to have been one thing after another ever since he arrived.

The first issue Provost Hale addressed was the revised academic calendar following the Easter Sunday tornadoes. He began by thanking Sherry Marlowe Ormsby for preparing a report that helped the Executive Team assess how to deal with the storm on top of pandemic. We know just from zip codes that we have 1356 students and 607 faculty and staff living in affected areas. If you consider the adjacent zip codes, there are another 612 students and 519 fac and staff. So in total there were over 3000 members of the UTC community who were potentially affected. Administration felt an adjustment in the calendar was clearly needed to help those affected manage their classes. The Executive Team began meeting intensively about this on Tuesday morning and an announcement came out late in the day on Tuesday. Administration knew there would be no perfect solution to the situation we were facing. Both students and faculty have other children learning in the home, students and parents are all trying to work in the same space, everyone is experiencing these very stressful and trying circumstances, many did not have power or access to the internet or a phone during the first few days. Administration recognizes that this additional disruption made everything that much more hectic for faculty but could not find a better way to get to the end of the term. They considered a range of options from doing nothing to adjusting assignments to extending the semester. Simply ending the semester abruptly did not seem a good option for a number of reasons. The final decision about the calendar changes was made by multiple Vice Chancellors, the Deans, The President and President-Elect of the Faculty Senate, and the Chair of the Council of Academic Department Heads. There was broad administrative and faculty consideration.

Jack Zibluk commented that he thought it was well considered and sensitive and put students first.

Provost Hale added that there would definitely be some debriefing about this in order to ensure we learn from it and are better prepared in the future. Nothing went perfectly with the tornado response but the Administration will continue to try at every turn to do the right thing. The whole academic year has been so difficult with a long string of unexpected crises. The Administration

has earnestly tried to learn from each of these incidents. They have sought input from a variety of stakeholders: students, faculty, administrators, community members. They hope we will not repeat any of these. Rest assured that there will be plenty of opportunities for faculty input towards drafting updated policies for addressing weather crises such as this.

Gretchen Potts was very concerned as to why there was no official word from the University for almost two whole days? Why was there no message sent out on Monday morning? Why was there no heads up given to faculty and students at any time on Monday or Tuesday that semester changes were in the works? And why send out a note out at 5:00 pm on the second day of classes after the tornado hit? The timing of the response was very upsetting and distressing.

Provost Hale acknowledged that the response was slower than it should have been. Emergency planners did not receive alerts as to the extent of the storm. None of the weather alerts on tv, radio, etc. indicated the storms would be as severe as they turned out to be. It was also not clear beforehand that the storms would hit Chattanooga directly. It was also noted that no sirens went off anywhere in Hamilton County (because our sirens are generally only used for nuclear emergencies). The event took everyone by surprise.

The second topic Provost Hale addressed was the ongoing uncertainty about the budget. Thus far we have received some pretty good news about enrollment. Our YTD comparisons are down a bit but not as severe as one would expect. We are down about 400 students as of right now. But we are also up in credit hours that students have enrolled in. We hope those numbers hold as we move through the summer and begin to plan for fall. Enrollment prospects will help us out in our budgeting. However, there are still other uncertainties. Will we return to face to face instruction in the fall? Will students be comfortable moving into dorms? Budget deficits will result if we lose housing revenues. We really won't know until fall semester actually begins how many will show up and where they will be living. We also do not know what the state budget will look like either. We do know as of now that we will not have the 1.5% tuition increase that was originally planned. We will have a zero percent tuition change. Administration is working through a set of contingencies to see what things might look like depending on what percentage of shortfalls we may face. Information will be shared as soon as we have a good handle on what we are going to be facing.

Provost Hale then invited Executive Vice Chancellor Brown to briefly address the budget. At this point there are still a lot of unknown factors. The budget outlook looks promising in terms of enrollment but we are still not sure about the state budget piece just yet. Vice Chancellor Brown did indicate that the state budget reserves are strong, so he hopes there will be some funds to contribute to covering shortfalls.

Provost Hale then indicated that we would have a decision about Summer Session 2 (face to face or online) by the first week of May. It is still too early to tell. We also have so many classes with special needs - like labs, the arts. We hope to have more definitive data in the next couple of weeks so that we can make some of these determinations.

## **Committee Reports**

Academic Standards (Irina Khmelko, Chair. Her report with proposed wording is posted on the Senate Minutes page)

The Academic Standards Committee voted unanimously to adjust the wording of the guidelines to allow undergraduate students in accelerated bachelors to masters programs to take graduate courses as an undergraduate student with approval. The existing language is absolute and prevents the university from allowing undergraduates to ever take graduate courses as an undergraduate. The current strict wording prevents us from attracting some of our strongest people to certain courses and programs.

Hill Craddock asked how many students are we talking about? Is it a handful or hundreds? Ethan Carver responded that we do not have any programs that approve this at the moment but we are trying to open this door for accelerated bachelors to masters programs. We really don't know how many off the bat. It's none at the moment.

The motion was put to a floor vote and passed with no objections.

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (Burch Oglesby, Chair)

Burch began by commenting it was nice to join this meeting without having to bring forward a huge number of proposals. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee had a fairly quiet year. There were a total of 172 proposals. There is one meeting left to consider some Curriculum changes. Curriculum has worked reasonably well the first full year in use, but it was slow this first time around. It is still new to us. All in all, it was a pretty easy year.

Grade Appeals (Susan Thul, Chair)

The Grade Appeals Committee heard two grade appeals in the fall. They were the catalyst for this proposal. Currently we have two options for those seeking a grade appeal - a hearing or no hearing. The Committee encountered difficulties with the no hearing option and felt they could not gather enough information under those circumstances. The no hearing option does not serve the student or the faculty member properly. There is simply too much information that is lacking without any formal hearing. The Committee requests that we amend the committee charge. The prior wording was to "address grade appeals". The proposed new wording is to "review and revise grade appeal process as necessary to promote clarity and effectiveness" giving them the option to adjust the process moving forward to ensure sufficient information is gathered in all grade appeals.

The motion was put to a floor vote and it passed without opposition.

General Education Committee (Lane Wilkinson, Chair)

Lane Wilkinson brought forward a request to amend the committee chair practices for the General Education Committee. Currently there is no rotation schedule and the Committee is suggesting that they adopt an incoming, current and past chair model. The change is motivated by a need for consistency over time. The current chair will remain on the committee for the 2020-21 AY, as past chair. The new chair will (ideally) be a current or recent committee member. The incoming chair will be determined by the committee.

The motion was put to a floor vote and passed without opposition.

### **Old Business**

Please remember that Senate elections are running through Friday, May 1, 2020. There are slots for Divisional, At-Large and President-Elect.

Also remember to submit your Senate Committee choices by responding to the recent email. List your 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices for Academic year 2020-2021

The call is still out for UT Promise Mentors. There are going to be an estimated 1,400 mentors needed for freshmen fall 2020. It is easy to register online: <https://tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring/>. You will be assigned students from OUR area. They are not from just anywhere in the state, they will be aligned with our institution.

Randy Boyd was approved for a 5 year term as UT System President.

### **New Business**

TUFS will meet this weekend (Saturday, April 18) via Zoom rather than meeting at TN Tech. A topic of discussion will be shared governance as applied to each TN university.

### **Faculty Concerns**

Boris Belinsky brought a faculty concern about paid sick and maternity leave for 9 month employees. Currently, UTC does not have paid sick or maternity leave for 9 month employees. The Math department feels this makes us less competitive than other schools in NC, SC, GA, and KY. They would propose forming a committee to explore implementing this. They also realize that the UT System would have to be involved. His recommendation is that we do something to get this ball rolling.

Charlene Simmons responded that she has been advocating for this at the UT Compensation Advisory Board level but it keeps getting kicked back. There was a statement that all state employees were to get paid sick leave shortly before the pandemic hit. Executive Vice Chancellor Richard Brown responded that he currently chairs the Compensation Advisory Board at the System level. He has presented this idea for the last 3 years. There is a new HR VP at the System level and that person has also appointed a subcommittee about this benefit. The governor kind of sent everyone into a tailspin with his announcement about paid leave for state employees earlier in the year. As soon as Covid calms down some, there will be a discussion

about this and every effort will be made to move it forward. EVC Brown totally supports that benefit and will continue to move towards that through these channels.

It was suggested that perhaps a subcommittee of the Senate could send forward a recommendation? President-Elect Charlene Simmons will put out a call and form a subcommittee over the summer to address this topic.

Dr. Belinsky followed up by asking if our current leaders can somehow find a way to work around this lack of policy in the meantime so faculty who have cancer or life threatening illness during the upcoming semesters can be supported? Dr. Brown and Provost Hale will work on this to ensure our faculty can have their situations addressed. EVC Brown concluded by noting that he looks forward to an Ad Hoc Subcommittee bringing forward a good policy to address this.

Dr. Hill Craddock commented that the campus looks beautiful even without you. He walks through it almost daily and the trees and plants are thriving and blooming. And construction still continues.

President Harvey concluded with a statement of thanks for the chance to serve as President during 2019-2020. It has been a real joy. Meetings were well attended, and there was plenty of active engagement. She praised our UTC Administration as well - they are the best. They have shown themselves to be caring and outreaching during a very challenging year.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was brought by Jack Zibluk and seconded by Hinsdale Bernard. The meeting adjourned at 4:17 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Cairns  
Senate Secretary