

UTC Full Faculty Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2026- Derthick 101 and Zoom, 3:30pm

Faculty Senate President Beth Crawford, presiding
Minutes prepared by Faculty Senate Secretary Hannah Wakefield

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order. The minutes from the previous meeting, which had been distributed prior to the session, were approved without corrections or concerns.

Administrative Reports

Chancellor's Report:

- **Leadership Appointments:** Jermaine Freeman has been appointed Executive Director of Economic and Workforce Development to align academic programs with regional needs and explain this alignment to the public. Andrew Sheehy is serving as Interim Vice Chancellor for Advancement and Executive Director of UC Foundation, and a search for a permanent replacement is underway. The search committee is being chaired by Todd Womack and Mark Wharton. Additionally, Mina Sartipi has been named Interim Vice Chancellor for Research and Executive Director of the UTC Research Institute.
- **Strategic Plan:** The Chancellor announced the presentation of the University Strategic Plan to the Board of Trustees, centered on five pillars: academic excellence and student outcomes, developing and supporting our people, innovative and impactful research, operational excellence, and community engagement and impact.
- **Enrollment and Retention:** The university achieved a record spring enrollment of over 11,000 students and an all-time high freshman retention rate of 91.4%.
- **Health and Safety:** A new partnership with Parkridge Mental Health provides an on-campus counseling center for students, faculty, and staff. The Chancellor also shared positive feedback from recent active violence training, which saw over 95% participation. The administration is reviewing specific results from faculty surveys and working to respond accordingly.
- **Faculty Compensation:** Results from a Huron compensation assessment showed that, following recent market adjustments, faculty compensation of tenured/tenure-track faculty as an aggregate is at approximately 100% of the market median.
- **Research and Community Engagement:** One in four faculty members served as a Principal Investigator on external funding proposals last year, submitting proposals to over 70 unique sponsors. The university also maintains its Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement designation, highlighted by projects like the RCOB/Journey Health Foundation healthcare data hub and the MobileMoc clinic.
- A question was raised about faculty who were recently promoted and therefore were not considered for the fall market increases. Beth Crawford responded that Laure Pou recommends that affected faculty go back to their department head and the dean. There is a reserved pool of funding that was held back to resolve those issues. The Chancellor also clarified that if faculty were already above median, they would not have received a market adjustment.
- The Chancellor addressed questions about the ombudsperson position. The previous ombudsperson left the university, and the administration plans to put out a call for a faculty member to serve in this role on an interim, part-time basis until there is a long-term plan for a permanent ombudsperson.

Provost's Report

- **Merit Pay:** Department heads are expected to develop collaborative rubrics for evaluating faculty. These rubrics should be shared with the dean and the department. Department heads and departments should think broadly about the kinds of work encompassed by research, teaching/advising, and service categories. The Provost expressed that EDO goal-setting need not be tied to rubrics for raises.
- **Commencement:** Graduate and undergraduate ceremonies will now be combined into single ceremonies. The ceremony date/time slots will rotate annually among the colleges.
- **Legislative Updates:**
 - **HB 0291/SB 1077 (American Civics):** Requires UTK Institute of American Civics to develop a required course that would be offered by all institutions of higher learning in Tennessee. Consideration of this bill has been postponed.
 - **HB 1822/SB 1828 (History Instruction):** Caption form only. Anticipated content would allow American history faculty to provide instruction on the positive impacts of religion on American history.
 - **HB 1833/SB 2079 (THEC Changes):** This bill is expected to pass and will shift the funding formula to prioritize four-year graduation rates over six-year rates.
 - **HB 2194/SB 2259 (Tenure/Misconduct):** This bill is likely to move forward. It affirms tenure but requires separate processes for granting tenure and terminating faculty for misconduct. UT already has separate processes for these two situations. The bill also may truncate the due process for termination by removing faculty committee deliberations in favor of hearings with the chief academic officer or the chancellor or president of the public institution.
 - **SB 1838/HB 2581 (Prohibiting Tenure):** A bill that would have prohibited granting tenure after July 2026 was withdrawn by its sponsor.
 - **SB 2634/HB 2167:** Would require public institutions of higher learning to observe an academic holiday on days when there are general elections. The bill has been deferred to a further date.
- Chancellor Bruce noted that once a week her office's staff reviews and responds to any proposed bills that may have an impact on higher education.
- **Faculty Concerns:** In response to a query regarding the absence of university-wide attention to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the provost noted that no legislation prohibits such celebrations. The traditional MLK lecture has not typically been funded by academic affairs but by other divisions. President Crawford said she will work to provide a broader answer regarding sponsorship of related events.
- An attendee raised a question regarding whether the UT system had taken a position regarding the part of HB 2194/SB 2259 that would remove faculty deliberations in the case of consideration of a faculty member for termination.

Strategic Enrollment Plan

Vice Chancellor Wesley detailed the "Mocs Flight Plan," the university's strategic enrollment initiative:

- **Growth Goals:** The plan aims for an enrollment of 15,000 students by 2030 while maintaining a strong focus on retention and student success.
- **Implementation:** There are thirteen different initiatives and metrics to support this goal. All employee personnel serve as critical enablers of the strategic plan. Eight work groups led by chairs and co-chairs have been established to focus on specific populations, including first-time freshmen, transfer students, and graduate students.

Public Health Announcement

Vice Provost O'Brien issued an advisory regarding a rise in measles cases in the region. Faculty and staff were encouraged to verify their immunization status via titers or records, especially ahead of spring break travel. Quarantine protocols for exposure were also outlined. Further information about this public health update may be found here: <https://www.utc.edu/enrollment-management-and-student-affairs/university-health-services/measles>

New Faculty and Announcements

- Vice Chancellor Brent Goldberg was not able to attend the meeting, but his slides and an accompanying narrative have been posted to a module in the Full Faculty Canvas site.
- **New Faculty:** Four new faculty members joined the College of Arts and Sciences, and one joined the College of Nursing.
- **Elections:** Dr. Hannah Wakefield was congratulated on her election as the Faculty Senate president-elect.
- **Tennessee University Faculty Senate (TUFS):** Beth Crawford and Sarah Einstein attended this recent quarterly meeting with other state faculty senates and left with renewed appreciation for working at UTC.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned following a formal motion and second.