UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Date: September 17, 2026 | **Time:** 15:15 EDT | **Presiding:** Dr. Sarah Einstein, Faculty Senate President

Approval of Prior Minutes

- President Einstein opened the floor for questions, concerns, or corrections regarding the minutes of the previous Faculty Senate meeting. No edits or objections were offered by members present in person or attending virtually.
    - **Action:** The minutes of the prior meeting were approved as distributed by acclamation.

Elections & Committee Proposals

FARC Representative Announcements

- Past President Elizabeth Crawford announced the election of two new faculty representatives to the Faculty Affairs Rights and Committee (FARC):
    - **Virginia Carnes** (Library)
    - **Marcus Mauldin** (Political Science & Public Service)

Note: Roster details for continuing committee representatives remain accessible via the official Faculty Senate website.

Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee Proposal

- **Presenter:** Priscilla Simms-Roberson, Chair of the Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee
- **Proposed Policy Change:** Amend the graduation residency requirement in the undergraduate catalog from requiring the last 24 credit hours to be completed at UTC to requiring 24 out of the last 32 credit hours to be completed at UTC.
- **Rationale & Key Clarifications:**
    - Institutional Context: A peer review indicated that UTC was one of only four peer institutions maintaining the stricter "last 24 hours" rule. An audit of UTC graduation petitions over the past three years revealed that 91% of student exception requests under the old policy were granted, demonstrating that the proposed amendment aligns formal policy with established practice while reducing administrative overhead.

    - SACSCOC Compliance: The policy modification does not alter or override the SACSCOC mandate requiring at least 25% of overall course credit for a degree to be earned through UTC.
    - Departmental Autonomy: The change does not supersede department-specific requirements for UTC-anchored coursework, nor does it circumvent standard departmental course substitution approval processes.
- **Authority Verification:** Registrar Joel Wells confirmed that approval by the Faculty Senate grants the immediate administrative authority required to update the undergraduate catalog.
- **Vote Tally & Result:**
    - **Yes:** 38
    - **No:** 0
    - **Abstentions:** 1
    - **Status:** Motion passed.

Interim Provost Report (Provost Matthews)

Personnel & Reporting Updates

- Interim Provost Matthews outlined administrative points of contact and organizational realignments within Academic Affairs:
    - **Laura Perryman:** Assistant / Budget Manager (serving as primary point of contact for scheduling and administrative messages).
    - **Lauren Ingraham:** Administrative oversight for University High.
    - **Dr. Elizabeth O'Brien:** Administrative oversight for Dual Enrollment programs.
    - **Cindy Williamson:** Director of the Office for Accreditation and Assessment (OAA), assuming operational oversight of the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research (OPIER) following the departure of Dr. Sherry Marlowe Ormsby.
    - **Ethan Carver:** Dean of the Graduate School, assuming administrative oversight of the Center for Global Education following the departure of Dr. Takeo Suzuki.

Academic & Bylaws Updates

- **Quantum PhD Proposal:** A new doctoral degree proposal in Quantum Information Science and Engineering has cleared campus-level reviews and is currently undergoing review at the UT System level.
- **Bylaws Status Tracking (Report Card):** Maintained in coordination with Dr. Elizabeth O'Brien:
    - Under Dean Review: Department of Art, Department of Political Science & Public Service, College of Nursing, Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies (with the Dean of Arts & Sciences).
    - With General Counsel (Yusuf Hamadi): Department of Criminal Justice.

    - With Academic Affairs: Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Geography.
    - Returned for Departmental Revisions: Department of Psychology (minor editorial adjustments); Department of Occupational Therapy (substantive revisions).
    - Under Provost Direct Review: Applied Learning & Leadership.
    - Communication Department: Dean Riggs Glasgow communicated via meeting channels that active dialogue remains ongoing between the Dean's Office and the department to reconcile submission status.
- **Curriculum Workflow:** Registrar Wells confirmed that an active 24/7/365 curriculum workflow is online for continuous departmental bylaws submissions.

Faculty Awards & Grant Distribution Analysis

- **Guerry Professorships (5-Year Term, $2,500 Base Salary Add-on):**
    - Dr. Murat Farasi (Mechanical Engineering)
    - Dr. Jajal Reddy Bhatti (Civil & Chemical Engineering)
    - Dr. Kristen Jennings Black (Psychology)
- **UC Foundation Professorships ($2,500 Base Salary Add-on):**
    - Dr. Brooke Epperson
    - Dr. Jannatul Ferdoush
    - Professor Bart Bruchaw
    - Dr. Jessica Taylor
    - Dr. Xunan Guang
    - Dr. Justin Weimer
- **Holmberg Grants (2026–2027 Cycle):**
    - Dr. Josh Hamblin
    - Dr. Loren Hayes
    - Dr. Shaogang Ren
    - Dr. Serkan Varol
    - Dr. Yingfeng Wang
- **Equity & Discipline Distribution Discussion:**
    - Concerns Raised: Faculty and department leadership raised concerns regarding discipline distribution in internal awards, specifically citing underrepresentation of Arts & Humanities relative to Engineering, Sciences, and Mathematics.
    - Historical Data Disclosed by Provost:
        - Holmberg Grants (Last 4 Years): Engineering & Computer Science (10), Natural Sciences & Math (7), Behavioral & Social Sciences (2), Arts & Humanities (1), Health & Professional Studies (1).
        - Guerry Professorships (Last 3 Years): Engineering & Computer Science (6), Natural Sciences & Math (2), Arts & Humanities (2), Behavioral & Social Sciences (1), Health & Professional Studies (0).
    - College of Business External Grant Criteria: Nilesh (College of Business) observed that scoring rubrics emphasizing external grant acquisition systematically disadvantage business and humanities faculty, where external funding opportunities are scarce.

    - Review & Action Plan: Provost Matthews acknowledged a potential structural flaw in the historic review model, wherein the prior year's grant recipients evaluated the subsequent cycle's proposals—a self-reinforcing process prone to discipline biases. The Provost did not clarify future steps, but suggested a potential solution might be something like forming review panels composed of Full Professors across colleges who are not active candidates.
    - Increased Feedback for Applicants: Provost Matthews confirmed that there is movement (in coordination with Elizabeth O'Brien) toward providing applicants with some scoring information to help them prepare future applications.

Professional Development Leave

- **Fall 2026 Recipients:** Dr. Marisa Colston, Dr. Michelle Deardorff, Dr. Linda Frost, Dr. Loren Hayes, Professor Rebecca Nazdowski, Dr. Junrong Shi, Dr. Prashant Stravistava, Professor Chantel Swaran.
- **Spring 2027 Recipients:** Dr. Chris Acuff, Dr. Leonore Brown, Professor Matt Greenwell, Dr. Joseph Owino, Dr. Heather Palmer, Dr. Tom Wilson.
- **Full-Year Leave Structure:** Involves a 50% salary reduction with retained benefits; unexpended salary allocation is retained institutionally to fund replacement instruction.
- **Application Cycle:** The application portal is open through **October 30, 2026** (Friday deadline). Decision letters are targeted for distribution in early December 2026. Academic Affairs is implementing proposal score-feedback mechanisms for applicants and reinstating non-support notification letters.

Post-Tenure Review (PTR) Clarifications

- **Notification & Administration:** Approximately 50 tenured faculty received candidacy notifications in Spring. PTR is administered directly at the College level by Deans and college committees meeting in September, reporting to Deans in December.
- **Material Extraction:** Candidates can extract prior EDOs via a self-service Team Dynamics (TDX) portal link provided in notification correspondence, replacing the former process where Faculty Records directly supplied annual reviews.
- **Promotion Exemption Rule:** Associate Professors eligible for PTR who choose to apply for promotion to Full Professor may exercise a one-time exemption from PTR during that cycle:
    - If promotion is successful, the 6-year PTR clock resets.
    - If promotion is unsuccessful, PTR resumes the following academic year.
- **Timeline Commitments:** The Provost recommitted to strict adherence to standard Faculty Handbook deadlines (e.g., the March 1 candidate notification window).

Special Presentation - Focused Baccalaureate Degrees (Vice Chancellor Ingraham)

Overview & Core Requirements

- **Definition:** Focused Baccalaureate Degrees (also designated as 90-hour or reduced-credit degrees) are program frameworks authorized between 90 and 119 credit hours under THEC, SACSCOC, and UT System guidelines.
- **Conceptual Framework ("Tiny House"):** Chancellor Ingraham conceptualized these degrees through a "tiny house" model, where structural efficiency is achieved through multifunctional courses and front-loaded entry requirements rather than stripping away core academic rigor or essential learning outcomes.
- **Purpose:** Designed to meet targeted, high-demand workforce needs in professional fields.
- **Mandatory Elements:** Direct industry partner collaboration in curriculum design and formal integration of workplace-based learning into the program structure.
- **Recommended Structure:** Creation of stackable credentials to facilitate transitions into standard 120-hour BA or BS programs.

Key Clarifications & Institutional Caveats

- **Existing Programs:** Focused Baccalaureate Degrees do not replace existing 120+ credit hour undergraduate degree programs.
- **Optional Participation:** Proposing these degrees is entirely optional for academic departments.
- **Institutional Unknowns & Risks:** Graduate school acceptance of 90-hour degrees across external institutions remains unverified. Specialized programmatic accreditors (e.g., ABET in Engineering) currently do not sanction 90-credit-hour degrees.
- **Financial & Career Expectations:** Decreases tuition costs and time-to-degree for students, but degree completion guarantees neither specific employment nor defined salary metrics.

Degree Framework Comparison Table

Current UTC Standard Degrees	Proposed Focused Baccalaureate Degrees
1. General Education Hours: Standard general education requirements.	**1. General Education Hours:** Minimum 30 hours (SACSCOC requirement); must include at least 1 course in each of the 6 general education categories (18 hours), with program proposers allocating the remaining 12+ hours to align with program goals.
2. Upper Division Hours: Standard upper-division minimums.	**2. Upper Division Hours:** Proportional parity maintained relative to total program hours (~50% proportional alignment).

3. Elective Hours: No baseline catalog minimum required.	**3. Elective Hours:** None required; program proposals including electives must explicitly justify why free electives are included over dedicated/focused hours.
4. Minimum Major Hours: No baseline catalog minimum required.	**4. Minimum Major Hours:** Minimum of 42 credit hours dedicated to the major.
5. Total Degree Hours: 120+ credit hours.	**5. Total Degree Hours:** 90 to 119 credit hours (typically targeting a 90 credit hour / 3-year track).
6. UTC / Residency Credit Requirements: 24 out of the last 32 credit hours completed through UTC.	**6. UTC / Residency Credit Requirements:** Proposed requirement of 50% of total degree credit hours completed through UTC.
7. Prior Learning / Experiential Credit: Evaluated under standard existing transfer/PLA policies.	**7. Prior Learning / Experiential Credit:** Expanded Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), military credit, and workplace portfolios evaluated directly by faculty subject-matter experts.
8. Transfer Pathways / Articulation: Established Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP).	**8. Transfer Pathways / Articulation:** Under statewide review by the THEC Articulation & Transfer Council; formal statewide TTP articulations are not yet established.

Discussion on Prior Learning & Articulation

- **Prior Learning Assessments (PLA):** Evaluating student portfolios and work experience requires direct faculty expert evaluation. Administrative compensation models for faculty conducting PLA portfolio reviews are under development. Work experience may also be structured as an entry gatekeeping requirement rather than an exit requirement.
- **Community College Articulation:** The alignment of 90-hour degrees with 60-hour Associate degrees under Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP) is under ongoing review by the THEC Articulation and Transfer Council.

Faculty Concerns - Center for Student Accessibility & Testing Center

Identified Issues

1. **2:00 PM Exam Start Cutoff:** Forces all proctored exams at the Center for Student Accessibility (CSA) to conclude by 4:00 PM, creating barriers for working students enrolled exclusively in late afternoon or evening courses.
2. **24-Hour Advance Exam Submission Rule:** Creates operational conflicts for faculty conducting late afternoon review sessions prior to exam days, preventing instructors from tailoring exam questions based on final pre-exam review performance.

Center Constraints & Explanations

Administrative responses were presented by Veronica Warren (Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs) and Kimele Carter (Executive Director, Center for Student Accessibility):

- **Operating Hours & Logistics:** CSA operates from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The 2:00 PM latest exam start time ensures that students with double-time testing accommodations finish by 4:00 PM, leaving staff one hour to process and return completed exams to faculty before closing at 5:00 PM.
- **Volume & Staffing Limits:** The CSA serves approximately 11% of the UTC student population. Operating with 6 professional staff members, the center experienced early-term staffing vacancies that were fully filled as of September 1. Despite these initial bottlenecks, the center proctored over 100 exams within the first four weeks of the semester.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Operational rules ensure strict adherence to federal accessibility mandates and university risk management guidelines.

Alternative Options & Interim Solutions

- **Departmental & Instructor Options:** Faculty may proctor extended-time exams directly within their academic departments or arrange alternative testing dates with the student.
- **Interim Testing Overflow Support:** Through a collaboration between Provost Matthews and Vice Chancellor Wesley, the newly opened University Testing Center has offered to assist with proctoring overflow and extended-hour testing needs while long-term solutions are evaluated.

Announcements & Adjournment

"Mocs Faculty Moment" Radio Feature

- **Media Partner:** WUTC (local NPR affiliate).
- **Format:** 90-second pre-recorded audio spots featuring individual faculty highlighting community-engaged research and teaching.
- **Broadcast Schedule:** Airing weekly during local breaks in Morning Edition, beginning January 2027.
- **Participation & Support:** Open to faculty across all colleges and departments. Content must demonstrate a clear connection to local or regional community impact. Recording

is pre-recorded, with Academic Affairs and WUTC providing direct script development assistance and audio delivery coaching to alleviate public speaking anxiety.

Governance Authority & Advocacy Guidance President Einstein provided operational guidance regarding institutional hierarchy and faculty advocacy:

- Faculty are urged to direct policy grievances to the appropriate administrative level (e.g., Department, College, Campus Administration, UT System, or State Legislature), distinguishing campus policy options from statutory legislative mandates.
- To ensure faculty advocacy is targeted effectively, Senate leadership will include explicit designations of administrative jurisdiction on future policy reports.

Adjournment

The meeting was formally adjourned by President Sarah Einstein.