

Faculty Senate Meeting with the President March 19, 2018

Members present: Douglas Airhart, Ismet Anitsal, S.K. Ballal, Jason Beach, Chris Brown, Andrew Callender, Corinne Darvennes, Billye Foster, Stuart Gaetjens, Melissa Geist, Mark Groundland, Paula Hinton, Steve Idem, Barbara Jared, Christy Killman, David Larimore, Regina Lee, Jessica Oswald for Jane Liu, Tony Michael, Holly Mills, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Cara Sisk, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, and Holly Stretz

Members absent: Deborah Ballou, Tammy Boles, Troy Brachey, Debra Bryant, Ward Doubet, Ahmed ElSawy, Steven Frye, David Hajdik, Jeremy Hansen, Ann Hellman, Shelia Hurley, Lori Maxwell, Christine Miller, LeeAnn Shipley, and Jeremy Wendt

Guests: Lee Wray, Chief of Staff

President Oldham immediately began discussing topics listed on the agenda.

Graduation Office

There are some disagreements between faculty advisors and the Graduation Office. President Oldham said he likes being lenient on these matters, but there are policies in place. His understanding is that a committee is being created to hear appeals in the future. As long as a student is within a reasonable distance of graduating, they should be allowed to walk. There is probably no chance of summer commencement returning due to its high cost and large production. It is not known if exception forms will be reviewed by the committee, besides any appeals. There is a concern of reversing decisions by Chairs and Deans. Appeals should be very few. See the latest updates on their website.

Lee Wray made note when Senators pointed out that an advisor's signature is not required to process these forms. Some advisors don't always know their students are walking.

Dr. Brandon Johnson starts April 2nd, so he'll be looking at efficiency of operations throughout, including the Graduation Office.

UTK and Post-Tenure Review

UTK's Board of Trustees re-structure and post-tenure review have received media attention lately. President Oldham didn't have much more to share beyond what's been in the press. The Legislative bill to restructure UTK's board is probably a done deal, and would result in a smaller sized board, which would be similar to the LGI (Locally Governed Institutions) boards.

The post-tenure review issue clearly has some differences of opinion on faculty contributions. There's a lot of interest around the State with tenure and post-tenure review. President Oldham said we have nothing to be concerned with about what's going on at UTK. We should continue to do a good job of enforcing our policies and hold everyone accountable. This needs to be conveyed to all stakeholders. Pres Oldham said he'd stand up for communicating tenure issues. We would be at a disadvantage, financially, if tenure was not part

of the equation. We make tenure mean something. Granting someone tenure is a \$3 million decision with salary, benefits, career time, so this is a big decision not to be taken lightly. Look at each decision very closely and responsibly. Faculty should justify their tenure every year. Many are concerned about tenure allowing someone to stay forever. It has to be earned. UTK is looking at some reinforcement of their tenure. President Oldham doesn't think it's really warranted, but we need some mechanism. Tech has a process, but it's not used much. There may be a better way to do it. Tenure just means you have to be fired with cause.

The Board should be educated about tenure in higher education, and how different it is from tenure in K-12. Here, we don't work for big money. There are incentives built into the system, because you don't know if you'll be able to hire to replace that person if they leave. President Oldham said he never wants to see a department lose a position because of not granting tenure to someone. That should never happen. President Oldham says he reviews each tenure dossier, but mostly focuses on ones with split votes in the department. We could make all departments have tenure and promotion guidelines, which is just good practice, especially for new faculty. President Oldham said he wants more discussion on this at a future date. Senator Geist said she has told Board members that our tenure is a 6-year rigorous process of mentoring and evaluations. President Oldham said we need to tell them why tenure is valuable and how it also protects faculty speaking frankly.

Evaluation of Administrators

President Oldham said he doesn't see any reason why response rates can't be shared, but not tied to any individual. Senators were curious what the response rate of each administrator evaluated was relative to the total number of participants, since many faculty don't know every administrator listed on the survey.

Yes, evaluations are used, but he can't speak for everybody. President Oldham said administrator evaluations are used significantly in the evaluation process as one piece of the evaluation process. Evaluations of the President's cabinet are tied to raises the same way others are.

Outsourcing

JLL got the State contract last year for providing janitorial services. Tech has evaluated what JLL has to offer, but determined that it is not in our best interest to go with them. Tech's cost would be about a \$500,000 more. We will probably extend the current contract with SSC for a year, and send out for a RFP. Tech saves over \$1 million per year in cost savings by outsourcing custodial services. President Oldham said he is not opposed to doing this in-house again, but there would be a significant cost to us. He went on to say that he is not a fan of outsourcing, and likes control of doing it in-house, but these services (food, bookstore, custodial services) are not our core function. President Oldham is very pragmatic when it comes to this, and wants to find the best business operation for services.

Tenure and Promotion Pay Increases

With the new policies on tenure and promotion, assuming it gets approved by the Board in June, compensation for promotions can be handled. President Oldham doesn't know exactly how much money that involves. There will be automatic pay grade increases.

As an update, the new Provost will be reporting to work on April 16th. She is working on a schedule for when she arrives. There will be a reception planned for late April. Senators suggested sending out a press release about her soon, since many faculty don't know who she is.

Other Such Matters

President's Contract

The contract with the President is a Board decision, and President Oldham said he had no part in developing the contract template. About 80% of university presidents have contracts (source: AGB - Association of Governing Boards). It's good to know what the ground rules are, and a contract lays out an orderly transition for when the time comes. It's just good practice for the university to have. President Oldham will likely accept the contract when presented. There are other LGIs in Tennessee also looking at contracts: MTSU and APSU, and TSU. If he doesn't accept, then President Oldham will either carry on as now, or be terminated. President Oldham was only told that Vice-Chair Harper got information from AGB for contract language, and Kae Carpenter assisted with the template.

President Oldham said this is standard practice across the state. If he steps down as President, he would receive significantly lower salary. This is the same with others such as deans and chairs. There is no written policy, but keeping a portion of the higher salary was the practice and it's hard to deviate from prior practice. With a new Provost, she has agreed to have her salary reduced more in-line with department faculty salaries should she step down. Going forward, we want to be cautious with new administrator posts. It's important to put this in their offer of what's expected of them should they step down. There needs to be some reasonable salary adjustments, but it shouldn't penalize a person. That model breaks down if that salary is out of line with peers.

President Oldham said he was not asked what he wants in the contract. He has had no negotiations about it, but at a late date, if he takes a faculty position, he takes a reduction in salary. Each president can negotiate a contract. The template of a contract is what the Board is voting on this week, not the actual figures and specifics. There are no bonus provisions, nor performance rewards. The Board can adjust salary for any reason. There is no timeline discussed if the template is approved this Thursday, and when Board offers a contract to President Oldham.

Searches for New Deans

Job searches for new deans would probably begin soon after the new Provost arrives. Financially, Tech is doing well, up about \$5 million assuming level enrollment. Money will be used for salary increases and to balance some funds. President Oldham said we are better off than many in surrounding states. We are expected to receive an average 2.5% salary increase this year, so this would make seven consecutive budgets with salary increases. The budget target gap is \$900,000 for all the revenues vs. all the needs expressed and submitted. The assumptions with this is that there is no overlap between these things, and no prioritizing of those needs. This is a gap we would like to close, so they will be working until the end of June to close it. President Oldham said it is not his expectation that units will be asked to return money. There are other multiple ways to address that without asking for money back from units.

Budget

Money available for distribution was questioned, but the \$910,000 gap may eat that up. There's a fund balance issue. This year's current budget was balanced with \$2 million from reserves, which makes us live on the edge too often. Carryovers are a different issue. President Oldham said VP Stinson is pretty conservative about this, so she has a prudent approach laid out. Overall, we are pretty healthy financially. Increasing our overall budget this year will help, as will a salary increase. Admissions may be up, but we aren't counting on that. Investing is also very important, but there is always a risk. Most risks we have taken has been with non-recurring dollars. The iCUBE, that is independently funded, brings in \$2 to \$3 million per year with a variety of projects. The STEM center is an expensive operation, but does not pay for itself. Many of their functions could be done by the College of Education. Once things get ingrained, it is very hard to change. There are similar discussions about the Centers for Excellence, which have been State funded for many, many years now. Maybe a new approach, or re-structuring would spur progress.

The budget is a planning tool, but gets outdated quickly. It's a good way to help set priorities for units and the University, and also move us where we want to go. A declining revenue picture is harder to work with, but has a built-in tool for incentive. Unfortunately, there are no funds available while we are in a declining revenue. President Oldham said we are positioned now to see an increase in enrollment, and hope to get back to the growth curve we had before the TN Promise. Going forward, we will have to make some tough decisions on what we are doing, what we should quit doing, or what we should do differently.

Curriculum

Senators asked if we have a committee study that looks at curriculum related to demographics. President Oldham said none that he is aware of, and continued by saying there's talk about this issue, but no group that routinely does this, but we probably need this. We have only 79 programs on the inventory list by THEC, which is the second lowest in Tennessee. The average college graduate today is expected to change jobs and careers 6 to 8 times. The world around us is changing rapidly, so we need to be relevant and change with it. The class of 2030 will get jobs in 60% of positions that don't exist yet.

President Oldham said we have a lot of work to do with online options, and to be more strategic. The new Provost will have to dig into this quickly. Currently, Tech is not structured well to do this, and we need to give serious thought about how we are structured. Where would you like to see this in 5 years? President Oldham feels the answer is with programs, not individual courses. Programs need to meet the needs. It's like a separate business start-up and you have to have someone who really understands it. We need an infrastructure to help put courses together to make it easier for faculty to develop programs, and need a financial model for incentive. Online programs can be revenue generating, but it's not really a cash cow. Courses need to be grounded within the academic discipline, as they understand the clients they need to serve. The faculty don't want to put out a bad product. President Oldham would like to see a more streamlined process. He said it mostly comes down to having the right people. Some online programs are going very well even with the infrastructure not here. Instructional designers only makes the process faster, but streamlining would make it more efficient. We need

to realize that faculty have different strengths – some are good at online instruction, and others are good at lecturing to 100+ students. President Oldham would love to have the new Provost work with faculty to find out what functions need to be provided and how to make them work, and leave structure until last.

VP Enrollment Management

President Oldham said he wants Dr. Johnson to think of student progression more holistically. We want to move the goalpost from graduation to career. Everything needs to be intentional in a student's path and help develop their content knowledge, but also develop them holistically to build a successful career. His mission is to get that straightened out, and also leverage that into attracting more students. Tech has the lowest default student loan rate in the State, the lowest public loan debt, and is in the top two in investment. We want to take it to the next level of a successful career, so we need to track graduates better. This is what has excited Dr. Johnson to come here, and we hope he will share this with us as he progresses.

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Lee, Faculty Senate Secretary

Approved: April 2, 2018