Faculty Senate President's Meeting

September 30, 2019

Members Present:
Douglas, Airhart, Jeremy Blair, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Wei Tsun Chang, Yun Ding, Ahmed Elsawy, Mary Lou Fornehed, Stuart Gaetjens, Mark Groundland, David Hajdik, Barbara Jared, Brian Jones, Christy Killman, Matt Langford, Susan Laningham, David Larimore, Lori Maxwell, Mark Melichar, Christine Miller, Allan Mills, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Anthony Paradis, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Troy Smith, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Lenly Weathers, Zac Wilcox, Kim Winkle, Jeannette Wolak

Members Absent:
Michael Best, Andrew Callender, Steven Frye, Shelia Hurley, Mary Matthews, Ben Mohr, Joseph Ojo, Lee Ann Shipley, Craig Zamer

Guests Present:
A.J. Donadio, Lee Wray

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m. by Senate President Smith-Andrews.

Opening remarks by President Smith-Andrews

Meetings with the President will involve a new format without an agenda in hopes of better meeting President Oldham's needs and ours. New senators were recognized before the floor was given to the President.

Remarks by President Oldham:

- The Library Friends of the Library Champagne Gala was announced by Susan Laningham at the President's suggestion.
- President Oldham wants Faculty Senate to be an integral part of the conversation on campus in a timely way.
- The President shared his proposed personal goals (from his annual evaluation) in case there is overlap with Faculty Senate, and so that senators will be aware of his focus for this academic year. His goals are as follows (the first two goals are of the highest priority/urgency):
    - Enrollment and Diversity: The goal by 2025 is 12,000 students with 22% minority representation (currently, the student minority population is 16%). Diversity is needed not only to check boxes but to have a vibrant and effective educational experience. In consideration of these goals, budget impacts mean administration is considering a 15 credit hour model for tuition (like UT-Knoxville adopted around 10 years ago). Previously, Tech tried to incentivize students to take more than 12 credit hours by reducing tuition, but it did not work well, even though data show if students take more classes and graduate early, they will save money on the backend.

    - New Engineering Building: There is short window of time to finalize plans, and the state has given us $3.25M to design. The President hopes THEC will make it a high priority. This would be a roughly $55M building.
    - Research: By 2025, the goal is to increase research funding on the front-end to $40M. Tech recently exceeded $20M, which was a doubling in six years. Cornerstone help should grow Federal funding 5%
    - Career Placement: Though Tech is doing well in this area, he would like us to differentiate by doing it even better than we already are, focusing on soft skills and more integration in planning and tracking.
    - Online & Distance Education
    - Strategic Plan Initiatives
    - Public/Private Partnership (P3): The President would like to purse this type of partnership for a new innovation-themed residence hall (like on the University of Florida - Gainesville campus). Financing isn't the drive as much as working with a private partner who can make this happen better and faster. As an aside, the President mentioned that the future of the college experience involves practical components; the world will demand more tight connections to student talent, so creating spaces where business can come in will help. The state has not done many P3s. Normally structured, the state would give a land lease to the partner who would build the facility to our specifications, and either the partner or Tech could manage it based on the contractual agreement. Through the lease, the partner would recover their cost through students' residence fees.
    - Rural Reimagined Grant Challenge: The President thanked those involved, and stated there are around 15 courses this fall with a curriculum associated with this grant.
- Though those personal goals were part of his annual evaluation and planning, the President assured the senators the focus on these goals would not exclude other ideas and issues he would need to address.
- Provost's survey calling for ideas: So far, there have been 17 responses with only one from faculty. The President encourages everyone to submit ideas (these are not official proposals). Results and details may be shared later.
- Fall Preview Day this Saturday, 10/5/19: Over 900 students responded. The President urged everyone to make a good impression on families because if they are showing up, we must be high on their list for consideration. Everyone is urged to pitch in to give the families a great experience while they are here. As an aside, the President mentioned campus visits are up 85% from last year, and that applications and admits are running high right now, though they may not necessarily be predictive of final outcomes.
- Raises: The Board of Trustees and administration are position to consider raises based on the university exceeding budget projections. If passed, there would be a 1% raise tied to performance, plus a 1% bonus; the salary pool would go into effect 1/1/20 if approved.
- Enrollment: Currently we stand at 10,140. FTE is down a bit.
- New Board Member: Governor Lee appointed the replacement to fill the Board of Trustees vacancy left by Barbara Fleming. The new appointee is Tennessee Tech Mechanical Engineering alumnus Fred Lowery.

Discussion

- Lower out-of-state tuition as a way to increase diversity

- Concerns regarding a 15-credit-hour model for full-time tuition
    - Possible negative impact
        - students employed outside the university
        - commuting students
        - non-traditional students
        - increased financial burden in addition to already increased fees
    - President Oldham believes all UT schools have changed to this model and that UT-Knoxville has seen increases in retention and graduation rates
    - Possibility in making the model flexible
        - 13, 14, or 15 credit hours – still beneficial?
        - Freshman year tuition freeze?
        - Making out-of-state tuition fall just below neighboring states' in-state rates
        - President Oldham stated all factors were in consideration in looking at this idea
- Online fee – does it go back to the College or School? President Oldham confirmed the fee is to go back to the college or school, but that Deans make decisions; senators feel Deans should be held accountable if fees are used to fund other projects
- Concerns regarding insufficient staffing numbers to support research both in initiating new proposals and managing existing research
    - Research goals do not reflect our capacity to support them
    - Part-time IRB chair could expedite proposals
    - Marketing Tech's research and outcomes
- IP Attorney AJ Bahou
    - Making protections and patents successful
    - Evaluating possible partnerships for marketing and licensing Tech's IP
- Publishing as a way to market our research
    - Ahead of research instead of always behind
    - Open Access or Archival
- Incentives for faculty to reach research goals
    - Discretionary money/rollover money
    - Faculty workload policy to allow for more research
    - May not need more faculty, but a shifting of focus among faculty in departments
- Slow graduate student admissions
- Allocation of money to track and bolster resources to aid in approving and retaining students
- Certificate programs that allow students to increase their skill set
- P3 – senators suggest pulling in the Innovation Committee for input
- Merit-based evaluations and IDEA timing; perhaps merit evaluations will have to be for previous year's IDEA evaluations when considering raises and bonuses that would begin on January 1.
- Deferring any annual salary adjustments to January 1 instead July 1 as administration has a better financial picture mid-year

Senator Stretz motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and carried.

The meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Approved: 11/04/2019