

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Meeting with the President Notes

Via Teams

In attendance: President Maxwell, Secretary Killman, Past-President Luna, President-Elect Allen, Senators Smith-Andrews, Rand, Null, Liu, SSmith, Manginelli, Lee, Turner, Meadows, Park, Mullen, Fornehed, Brachey, Upole, Alley, Frye, Rajabali, TSmith, Fennewald, Reames, Burch, Langford, Cravens, Allcott, Winkle, Hutson, Witcher, Mills, Loftis, Sisk, O'Connor, Ojo, Isbell, Hajdik, Hasan, Adams, Crockett, Spears, Pickering, Hermann-Turner, Shipley, Howard

Guests: President Oldham, Lee Wray, Melissa Geist

Absent: Senators Comer, Duncan, Swartling, Canfield, Weathers, Ding

Call to Order: 3:35pm

President Maxwell called the meeting to order at 3:35pm and welcomed each of the members, the President and chief Ray. She requested that the questions be addressed in order to help with some of the specifics and additional bullets listed for each.

Topic: Campus Police/Safety

Question:

Why was the police force and campus safety not prioritized at Tech over raises specifically more than a dozen administrators received market equity raises of \$15-20,000 per individual in the 2020-2021 year? Tech has the lowest number of officers (5) in the state for a mid-size university. Why should the TTU community continue to have confidence in the VP of planning and finance, Dr. Stinson when she has not prioritized funding for retention of qualified campus police?

Answer:

The confidence issue with Dr. Stinson is addressed first. Tech is the most financially sound institution in the state, based on facts. That is audited by the state's office. We generally have clean audits and any findings are immediately addressed and corrected. The budget analysis is routinely posted on the website to view. There is one budget for Tech that is managed by the VP. All of the questions are about hard choices. How to best use funds. Decisions are not all made at one level, some at departmental levels and cabinet members have choices, too. The issues presented today are very important questions, however, they do not fall solely at the feet of one VP, they are collective decisions. When thinking of confidence, that is where I put my confidence...in audited financials that show we are financially sound. Best use of funds, is different from a confidence issue.

We have known needed to pay attention to the numbers and the ability to recruit officers. Chief Nelson informed me last summer he was having difficulty hiring trained police officers because our compensation was not competitive enough. We worked to make it more competitive. Through continued loss of officers, it got to where there was a shortage in officers. The staff is more like 17, but not all of them are officers. Since the revised budget, there have been 2 positions identified and offers made. Unsure if accepted, but moved quickly to address the issue, although doesn't solve the long-term issue.

The issue of trained officers has been around for a while, so we moved to having security officers, which is a bigger distinction, but they can lock and unlock doors, do basic security checks, etc. We are down to 5 certified police officers, potentially 7 with the new hires. It is not where we want to be.

Question:

We have been losing officers since before the summer. Why was this group not prioritized last summer long before individuals got these really large raises? Why wouldn't the safety of the university not be a priority if there are tens of thousands of dollars to be given in raises?

Answer:

Safety is my top priority. Can't say why it wasn't brought up earlier. Don't really know. I make it clear in cabinet and budget discussions that campus safety is a top priority. Consistently added additional resources and addressed a number of concerns.

Comment:

Not suggesting these are decisions that you need to be making. The point is the questions stop at the level of the CFO.

Response:

Police don't report to Dr. Stinson, police report to student affairs.

Topic: Library

Question:

The TTU library funding allocation is the lowest in the state of Tennessee. Faculty Senate has brought this issue to you for more than four years with no correction. Why do faculty and students at TTU have less access to resources than faculty and students at all other Tennessee universities? Why should the TTU community continue to have confidence in the VP of Planning and Finance, Dr. Stinson, when she continually refuses to prioritize library research allocations?

Answer:

Again, this is a unit that does not report to Dr. Stenson. It reports to academic affairs. Of total E&G budget, about 2/3 goes to academic affairs. There is plenty of opportunity for academic affairs wanted to prioritize library resources. In fact, this year they have. Provost Bruce moved about \$110,000 into the materials budget of the library and from the central budgeting with the revised budget we have moved an additional \$150,000 of recurring money. So that brings the recurring materials budget to \$260,000 above what it was previously. Provost Bruce is working with a group to prioritize how to best utilize those funds strategically to benefit the campus, particularly with the questions that you have addressed. There are multiple levels involved here and we're finally getting to a point where we've got all the pieces in place to address it in a coherent way that makes the most sense long term. I see that primarily as an academic affairs issue.

Comment:

In checking with the library and even with the money you just spoke of, we still rank last in the state. The Provost's Office and academic affairs has allocated already from their own budget. We still rank extraordinarily low, 38 of 42 in R2 comparable institutions.

Response:

The problem is not solved, but being addressed. Need a workable plan that puts these dollars to best use. Will not be solved overnight as didn't get into this shape overnight. There are other resources within academic affairs that could be utilized as well if that's the priority within academic affairs.

Question:

From the chat, how many trained police officers, not security officers, would be able to respond to an active shooting situation? You said that it may be under student affairs, but the ultimate payment situation comes back to the CFO. She controls the budget. I believe that another Cabinet officer noted a comparable institution would employ up to three times the number of officers that we currently have. So how do we get around this sort of shell game of another cabinet officer might control it, but ultimately, it's the CFO that controls the budget and makes those decisions about hiring and payment?

Answer:

It's the President and the Board of Trustees that control the budget not the CFO. It is a priority. I can't answer the question technically about how many officers would be available at any time to respond to an active shooter. That's something probably Chief Nelson could do better. The way we prepare for an active shooter is by training with city and county law enforcement as well as THP. If an active shooter there will be far more officers responding than campus police. In a coordinated fashion we go through active shooter training fairly frequently. We're not flat footed. Yes, we want more campus police officers and we will get there, but that's not the extent of our security and protection on campus.

Topic: Study Abroad

Question:

With regard to study abroad, in an email from VP for planning and finance from 2020 on international travel funds not being used due to COVID, there is approximately \$509,000 that wasn't spent. So where is the money? Why should we continue to have confidence in the VP of Planning and Finance, Dr. Stinson, if she reallocated student tuition dollars without authorization from yourself or the board? And here again, what actions will you take to address our continued lack of confidence here?

Answer:

The leftover funds from last fiscal year have been rolled over to this year to accommodate study abroad. The funds from fiscal year 2021, as you noted there was no activity then there was no opportunity for activity at that time and so those dollars appropriately went into the fund balance. Those are tuition dollars. They went into the fund balance and as would be in a lot of cases of year end monies that don't necessarily roll over. So that's where those monies went and have been utilized for general opportunities on campus. But it's not alone in that regard. Other funds do the same.

Comment:

The International Education Office only used 2693 dollars of their total budget, permanent and temporary. In FY21. The universities administration used the unspent funds from this index as they do other unspent departmental funds across the university for one time needs primarily related to capital improvements and projects across the campus. And when it's not international travel then it goes to capital projects, that seems duplicitous to me. I don't believe that students or parents understand that they pay for things like intramurals and international travel and then the university, just puts it toward capital projects.

Response:

These are tuition dollars that are used for international travel. They are E&G budgeted tuition dollars. It's not indicated when they are collected to be a special fee. There was a commitment made that we would maintain an appropriate allocation of those funds toward study abroad and it has been honored. We could have rolled it over into study abroad and continued that, but there was no requirement to do so. Why would we? There was no demand for it at that time.

There was further discussion related to the study abroad funds that ended with President Oldham sharing that he asked Provost Bruce if there are sufficient funds to satisfy the current demand for study abroad and received the answer of yes.

Comment:

There was this unmet pent-up demand. Why was that not anticipated? We knew there were going to be students who didn't get to do trips that wanted them. Seems to me that it would have been prudent to anticipate the demand this year and next year, perhaps the year after, was going to be higher than normal and that money would have been available so that trips would not have had to be cancelled or been told no when they were told ahead earlier that they would have the highest priority. Obviously, that didn't happen. I hope you can see why there's some concern, why people hear that and feel it's administrative sleight of hand. It's like a shell game. I'm not concerned about the procedures. When internal audit does an audit, they're not looking whether or not judgment was good, they're not looking to see if decisions are made that give people faith in leadership. They're looking whether not procedures were followed and I have no problem with the internal audit outcome. My concern is that I'm not convinced that there's an understanding about the level of morale and the level of feeling of abandonment by folks on this campus that that there is the slight of hands the money was all rolled into tuition is now no longer calls student fees so now it's a free for all. I do suggest that it gives the appearance to a lot of people that there's something going on that just doesn't feel right. Do you get that?

Response:

I can understand on some level. You know, budgets are planning documents and you know when you reconcile that at the end of the year with actual expenditures they seldom will match. In the 10 years I've been at Tennessee Tech, we've consistently underspent our budgets by millions of dollars. If we follow this line of argument, that once budgeted, it stays where it was budgeted -that doesn't really get us anywhere, does it?

Question:

When we had a bunch of money left over from the raise estimate that didn't go to the 4% pool, why was it not given back to the state since we didn't spend it?

Answer:

Some states do that and I think the state of Tennessee has in the past as well. We decided to give it to a group of people.

Question:

Why in the world didn't we give admins an across-the-board bump in those pay raises, raises for them, we're paying graduate students more per hour than we're paying our administrative people on campus. That's ridiculous.

Discussion continued about the raise pool, budgets and the fact that there are several support units on campus but academic affairs gets about 2/3 of the E&G budget.

Comment:

The theme that's happening and the heart of why we're talking about this vote of no confidence is that there's leftover money, right? And in some cases, it's leftover because of the raise pool. I sat in every cabinet meeting that summer and through the fall I missed a few, but I always got caught up and I never heard the office of Planning and Finance come in and say, hey, we have \$400,000 left to spend. It just got reallocated. I found out later from other cabinet members that they were not approached and told that there was excess. So that money got spent mostly in the office of Planning and Finance. The money for study abroad did not get carried over and it got spent on capital projects also managed by the Office of Planning and Finance. So what safeguards are in place here? We're going to have October revised, but there doesn't seem to be any safeguards as to transparent reporting. Do you really feel that every cabinet member gets a fair shake of the leftover money? I'm curious to hear.

Response:

It doesn't always happen like you think it should. And that is to say, OK, we've got these dollars, are we going to vote on how to spend them? A week or two ago I had Dr. Stenson and Dr. Bruce in my office and through the budget committee's conversation, there were I think about 18 high priority matters that were being requested for funding. We were able to collectively resolve 12 of the 18. We have addressed in one form or another and the other six, it doesn't mean that they're not still a priority, it just means we can't do them immediately and we think deferring them is OK for now. Every cabinet member has had the opportunity because they had the opportunity to make requests and make their case for what they felt like was the highest priorities. The police department was part of that conversation and that's one that we took care of immediately. In general, the process may not be as clear and obvious to everyone but it does work and we can continue to make it better but that's how we're functioning right now.

Comments:

I respectfully disagree. Sometimes it doesn't work because as noted, there are people on campus that we feel were deserving of some of that raised pool last year for equity-based raises. This was brought to the attention of Faculty Senate, and once it was realized that those raises had been given out and some academic units requested equity changes and those were not approved.

You didn't get the request because we were told not to request them.

It feels like we're playing by a different set of rules.

Response:

I don't agree because we have addressed equity issues on the faculty side in my time here on a number of occasions. To my original point that you know these are these are tough calls and you don't always have all the information you would like at a time and you certainly don't have sufficient resources to address everything at one time so you have to make decisions and move on.

Question:

Do you think you've made the right call over the last year and a half?

Answer:

I do not know, in hindsight. We could have communicated better. But in terms of the decisions that were made - regarding adjustments, those needed to be made. So yeah, I think I made the right choices.

The board has looked at all this as well. And the board has let me know that they support the decisions that were made. Individual board members may feel differently, but as a unit, the board supported the actions taken.

Question:

It seems with the money available for the library that there is an attempt to try to make an equitable decision about how the money will be spent. You have a committee, right, that you mentioned?

Answer:

Provost Bruce is arranging one, yes.

Comment:

Trustee Alcott shared insight from the recent board meeting and his dismay with AVP Vetter's answers related to raises at various levels of employment. Oversight is the board. The President works for us, the Vice-President works for the President, AVP Vetter works for Dr. Stinson which is potentially a problem. Other supervisors are asking for raises for employees that deserve them, but they didn't get a big raise like some. The faculty are talking about staff raises, not faculty raises. We are not saying WE didn't get enough. We wonder where the magic money is – when money suddenly appears, it's coming from someplace. The finance director and HR are together and we all need to know who has what and what money is available.

Frankly, I'm going to be suspicious when a hire is held up. I think that money which was budgeted for the year, that money disappears into that place where we can make up money.

Comment:

I would like to stipulate that the Tennessee Tech University Faculty Senate does not disagree that it is important that we maintain our state mandated fiscal reserves and that we do not have negative audit findings. What we are suggesting is that those are not the criteria whereby we evaluate the CFO.

Response:

I didn't say that that's my evaluation criteria for Dr. Stenson. No more than my evaluation criteria of Provost Bruce would be whether we have SACS accreditation or not. The question you guys were posing is different than evaluation, it's confidence and confidence insinuates integrity and following rules and doing things appropriately and that's the way I addressed that question.

Comment:

I again suggest that we are not measuring confidence on personal integrity, but budgetary expenditures.

Discussion about confidence and a vote of no confidence continued. President Maxwell made several points related to the deliberative process of faculty senate and spoke against comments by President Oldham related to agreeing or disagreeing with decisions. President Maxwell stated that it's been about 40 years since there's been a vote of no confidence at Tennessee Tech and was clear to dispute the inference that faculty senate would measure confidence on personal characteristics rather facts.

Comment:

Everyone has their own perspective of administration and the philosophy behind it. Look at it from the perspective of the students. I'm here for the students. If I'm here for the students, I see the students gaining something from the university. The things that have just been mentioned in this meeting. Police, safety, library, education, academics research are all relevant. Administrative staff are the people who

are in direct contact with students. The research office is a direct influence on all research that happens, and the only people who majorly benefit from that, in my opinion, is students. We cannot access papers that we need for research through our library, which is a direct student need. Is there safety looked at first? Clearly not the case here. OK, is there social life? There's the social aspect that they should have in an academic life. Travel abroad, get a broad perspective, look at research from all different fields. Get a broad perspective. Is that being looked at? Clearly not the case. Doesn't not appear that the university budget is student centered. It appears the administrative side is being looked at so much more. Faculty senate is saying that the academic side is not being considered enough, not given enough weight, even if the budget is student centered. You look at it from a top level and expect that the top level is going to get information from the bottom level. There's a blockade from the bottom level coming up, which you never see.

Response:

I appreciate your comment, but couldn't disagree with you more than I do about it because and I would challenge you or anybody else to find anything in our budget that doesn't have direct impact on students. I can't think of a single thing in our \$200 million annual budget that doesn't have a direct impact on students. I challenge anybody to find anything in our budget, that's not student directed.

Comment:

We've all seen the data of the equity raises last year. What was the impact? I mean we're talking several 10s of thousands. The interim AVP for HR approved for himself one of the largest raises on campus. In that same office approved several \$15,000- \$20,000 raises.

Response:

If we make a move in a classification of a job, and give a salary above the approved range, you're saying that the market requires you to go above the norm here. There are two options. You can just leave everybody as they are, or systematically, as best you can, go in and look at the similar positions and try to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate that in an equitable fashion. And that's what was done.

Discussion continued related to hiring and compensation of new hires at a higher rate than current employees and that these decisions are hard, but made in the best interest of the university. No one was excluded intentionally and work continues to review compensation. Faculty senate supports a strategic adjustment of CNS salaries.

Comment:

Our lack of trust in the vice president for finance probably is disturbing to you. There is some level of mistrust here whether intent was good or bad. Faculty Senate is saying if intent is part of the equation, we may not feel that our area is close to her heart and mind when decisions are being made. It's an ongoing problem. How can it be rectified? Faculty Senate is very well informed and astute about the policy, and trying to make sure that it is a fair situation. The board has a slightly less intense relationship with policy. Most of us are looking for leadership from you in this situation, because we're running up against this repeatedly and that's why we are where we are.

Response:

The board has a very important perspective, students too, and the public at large. Where I'm trying to provide more assistance is to ensure that the priorities as expressed and advocated by the Provost are being adequately addressed in budgetary discussions, that's where I think I can provide the best support. I want to make sure that the majority of funds in our budget do go to directly toward academic

support. I'm proud that 2/3 of the budget goes to support academic concerns and has direct control within academic affairs.

Question:

Is it in the strategic plan to address the salary inequities across campus? If so, is there a timeline associated with that? Here's where we're going to address faculty inequities. We call it strategic but I'm not really sure that's the right word.

Answer:

Tactical is a better term than strategic. Part of the strategic plan is to be good stewards of resources and to have the sufficient talent to perform our functions as an institution. There hasn't been a formalized plan around what you suggest. Now we could do that and I'd be all in favor of doing that and possibly after we have this compensation study completed, we'll have sufficient information to think about that.

Question:

The Office of Research staff is now reduced to less than five employees in critical positions-director, bookkeepers and grant specialists remain unfilled. No staff are available to oversee federal or state create compliance. One of three 2021 career award recipients has already left due to a lack of research infrastructure. Why did you, as the President of Tennessee Tech, indicate to the board that no grant deadlines nor activations have been missed when many examples have been shared with you by individual faculty and the challenges and ORD were shared with you more than a year ago? Why should the faculty have confidence in you that the ORD crisis will turn around at TTU?

Answer:

All of these issues are being addressed and have been actively being addressed for months now. It ought to be pretty clear that substantial changes have already taken place in leadership and other things that are moving us toward an eventual solution. As you know we've brought in a temporary senior experienced individual to lead the unit and to provide further recommendations as we proceed. He's hit the ground running and got a lot done. I think he joins us the first week of December. We filled the director of sponsored programs position. And we will continue to address the other vacant positions as quickly as possible. Progress is being made and will continue. Not aware of any grant proposals that have not left campus because of issues in research office. I asked about a week ago if everything is moving, and the answer came back, yes.

Comment:

Some preliminary concerns that in his initial meeting with the Deans, the consultant that was hired to lead ORD, floated the idea of requesting funding from the colleges. That is troubling in the extreme.

Dr. Pinkert is here. I'm hearing this, but I don't think that information is trickling down to faculty. I understand that he's met with Deans, he's met with people in the Office of Research. But it would be really useful maybe to push out some communication so that faculty know that he's on campus and that he's available and exactly what he's available to help with.

Question:

Who is pressing the button? It is usually the VP of research. We don't really know who's filling those roles. Just rolling out some communication would be very helpful. It's making it to the Deans, but I don't think it's making it to faculty yet.



Answer:

He's met with University Research Advisory Committee because I was in that meeting myself as well and I know he's meeting with Deans and some others. We'll continue to push that out but a lot of progress is being made and it's very important and we'll continue to do that.

Question:

Under the topic of student discrimination, why should the faculty have confidence in a president who denies access to facilities on campus for some students because of their protected symbolic speech or sexual preference? More specifically, was the request to have the longstanding annual dragoween event at Tennessee Tech denied?

Answer:

There was a temporary pause of public activities of the groups involved pending review by student affairs of all policies and practices related to public activities. There's no shortage of passion around this issue. It was appropriate to take a pause and take a good look at all of our policies and practices that relate to something of this nature. That committee has just finished its work. It gave me a list of recommendations last Thursday. We're currently in the process of reviewing those recommendations and I suspect we'll move very quickly toward implementation.

Question:

For those of us who don't measure time in words like pause or very quickly, could we have a calendric interpretation of that or are we talking days, weeks, months?

Answer:

The committee finished work last week. I got the recommendations on Thursday. Some of the recommendations I think could be implemented very quickly. Potentially, all could be implemented no later than the start of the next calendar year.

Question:

Are you saying that this committee work is why the Lambda access is continuing to pause? They sit and wait as the only student group who doesn't have equal access to Tennessee Tech during the time that committee worked.

Answer:

Yes, the pause was directed towards them because that was the event in question. The committee has come back with recommendations that will help clarify and provide a little more specificity on matters related to involvement of minors in activities on campus. They've done a good job pretty expeditiously. We'll move forward with it pretty promptly.

Discussion continued about the logistics of minors involved in campus activities and the Lambda group not being allowed to have dragoween. The new guidelines will benefit all the student groups moving forward, but the pause had to be in place while that committee did their work. Faculty advisors of student groups look forward to having clear guidelines.

President Maxwell called for any other questions, and seeing none, thanked President Oldham and Chief Ray. Meeting was adjourned at 5:17pm.

Respectfully submitted by Christy Killman

