Notes from Faculty Senate Meeting with President Oldham

- **Date:** Oct. 12, 2026
- **Location:** In-person in Bell Hall, 260, and online via Teams

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- **Present:** M. Allen, A. Alouani, M. Atkinson, J. Baier, D. Bell, C. Brown, S. Browning, C. Carlton, W. Carroll, H. Cathey, R. Chitiyo, M. Comer, K. Craven, A. Donadio, R. Dunn, J. Gannod, K. Grimes, R. Hall, C. Hill, A. Hill, M. Hu, J. Jenkins, A. Kalyanapu, C. Killman, T. Kyaw, A. Manginelli, M. Nattrass, L. Null, B. O'Connor, M. Olsen, H. Park, E. Park, Y. Peng, R. Sanders, A. Spears, D. Tennant, T. Timmerman, K. Trent, S. Wendt, K. Winkle, K. Xu

- **Absent:** B. Carver, W. Gichuhi, J. Gray, S. Hasan, M. Holben, D. Mann, J. Ojo, M. Rahnama, M. Rajabali, T. Smith

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1. **Call to Order:** 3:30 p.m.

2. **Athletics Funding and Academic Budgets**
   - Oldham discussed funding for athletics and stadium construction, noting that projects are funded through auxiliary revenues, ticket sales, private fundraising, sponsorships, and bonds rather than academic (E&G) funds.
   - Carroll asked about safeguards to protect academic budgets. Oldham stated that building projects are expected to be self-supporting and that multiple funding plans are in place to meet debt obligations.
   - Gannod asked about transparency and public access to athletics-related financial information. Oldham noted that these funds appear in overall university financial statements and state audits rather than academic budgets.

3. **Shared Governance**
   - Oldham reaffirmed his support for shared governance and described Faculty Senate as an advisory body to the President. Discussion focused on the distinction between the advisory role of Faculty Senate and the governance role of university councils.
   - Gannod asked whether there was a pathway toward a greater faculty role in governance. Oldham responded that faculty could pursue changes to the governance structure if desired, though such efforts would need to originate from faculty leadership.

- Oldham noted that the Faculty Senate President serves on Cabinet and that faculty also have a voting representative on the Board of Trustees.

4. **Leadership Continuity and Administrative Planning**
    - Oldham outlined how responsibilities are shared among senior administrators to ensure continuity during absences. He explained that the Board of Trustees would provide oversight and direction if leadership transitions or emergencies required additional support.
5. **Campus Construction and Facilities**
    - Allen raised concerns regarding construction activity around Southwest Hall and soil placement against the building. Oldham stated that the situation would be reviewed and that construction plans ultimately include replacing Southwest Hall in the future.
    - Oldham discussed plans for future academic facilities, including proposals related to Matthews-Daniel, Crawford, Lewis Hall, the Foundry, and a potential Life Sciences Building.
6. **Tech Tomorrow Strategic Plan and Future Growth**
    - Gannod asked about the decision to extend rather than replace the Tech Tomorrow Strategic Plan. Oldham explained that extending the current plan allowed the university to continue progress on existing initiatives, including the School of Architecture and plans for a School of Computing.
7. **Artificial Intelligence Initiatives**
    - Carroll discussed the need to adapt to post-pandemic student expectations and emerging technologies, and Alouani asked who was leading AI efforts on campus.
    - Oldham indicated that AI expertise currently exists across multiple areas rather than within a centralized office. Gannod noted the role of the MInDS Center in supporting related initiatives.
8. **Parking Questions**
    - O'Connor asked about additional signage for reserved parking spaces. Oldham indicated that such measures were likely implemented in response to concerns from those paying for reserved parking.

9. **Provost and Faculty Senate Engagement**
    - Carroll asked how the new Provost was integrating into the leadership team.

- Oldham expressed interest in establishing a regular practice of having the Provost attend Faculty Senate meetings. Gannod suggested the practice could be incorporated into Faculty Senate procedures.

10. Talon Update

- Winkle raised concerns regarding Talon implementation. Oldham acknowledged ongoing challenges and described the system as a work in progress that will continue to improve over time.

11. Preview Day

- Null expressed appreciation for those involved in Preview Day.
- Oldham reported approximately 570 attendees with a show rate of about 60%, noting that weather likely affected attendance.
- Allen observed that departmental engagement appeared strong despite lower attendance numbers.

12. Other Matters

- Grimes praised the Nursing School and shared positive experiences with Tennessee Tech nursing graduates during a recent hospital stay.

Adjourned: 4:24 p.m.