Notes from Faculty Senate Meeting with President Oldham

- **Date:** Nov. 9, 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, B. Carver, H. Cathey, R. Chitiyo, M. Comer, K. Craven, A. Donadio, R. Dunn, J. Gannod, W. Gichuhi, J. Gray, K. Grimes, R. Hall, S. Hasan, C. Hill, A. Hill, M. Holben, M. Hu, J. Jenkins, A. Kalyanapu, C. Killman, T. Kyaw, A. Manginelli, D. Mann, M. Nattrass, L. Null, B. O'Connor, J. Ojo, M. Olsen, H. Park, E. Park, Y. Peng, M. Rahnama, M. Rajabali, R. Sanders, T. Smith, A. Spears, D. Tennant, T. Timmerman, K. Trent, S. Wendt, K. Winkle, K. Xu

- **Absent:** The Teams attendance malfunctioned, so it could not be determined who attended online.

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1. **Call to Order:** 3:45 p.m.
2. **Faculty Senate's Role in Shared Governance**
   - Atkinson shared observations from the recent TUFS meeting, noting that some institutions, including UT Martin, incorporate Faculty Senate more directly into administrative decision-making and advisory processes.
   - Discussion centered on how Tennessee Tech's Faculty Senate might become more engaged in university planning and governance.
3. **Future of Faculty Senate**
   - Gannod asked what impact it would have if Faculty Senate were ever dissolved.
   - Oldham stated that he is not aware of any serious effort in Tennessee to eliminate faculty senates and believes the current Senate structure remains important, though it could evolve over time.
4. **Faculty Senate Involvement in University Decision-Making**
   - Gannod asked how Faculty Senate could have a greater role in decisions that are discussed at Cabinet meetings.
   - Oldham emphasized that Faculty Senate leadership is already included through the Senate President's participation on Cabinet.
   - He noted that administrative decisions often operate on different timelines than Senate meetings but suggested there are opportunities for more meaningful, long-term collaboration between Faculty Senate and administration.
   - Members discussed ways to improve communication and involvement earlier in the decision-making process.

5. **Provost Participation and Faculty Fellows**
    - Atkinson described practices at other universities where faculty leaders regularly advise senior administrators.
    - Oldham expressed support for involving the Provost more consistently in Faculty Senate discussions.
    - He also indicated support for exploring a Faculty Fellows program as Hill described from the TUFS meeting, provided appropriate funding or release time could be identified.
    - Discussion focused on reducing misunderstandings by increasing regular interaction between faculty and administration.
6. **Historical Perspective on Senate-Administration Relations**
    - O'Connor reflected on previous Faculty Senate relationships with university presidents, noting that effective communication, mutual respect, and cooperation have always been important.
    - Members discussed whether Faculty Senate could take on a greater advisory role and be consulted earlier on significant issues and initiatives.
7. **Committee Structure and Governance**
    - Carroll asked whether administration could delegate projects or responsibilities to Faculty Senate.
    - Oldham noted that Senate committees are advisory rather than administrative bodies and do not have supervisory authority.
    - Gannod explained that the Senate is currently reviewing its operating procedures and governance structure. Oldham encouraged the Senate to review governance practices at peer institutions and consider ways to strengthen existing committee structures.
    - Discussion included the possibility of evaluating standing committees, participation levels, and committee effectiveness before creating additional committees
8. **Strategic Planning**
    - Gannod proposed providing the Senate with additional information about upcoming updates to the Tech Tomorrow Strategic Plan. Oldham encouraged senators involved in strategic planning efforts to share information with the broader Senate and faculty. Members discussed the value of making strategic planning discussions more transparent and intentional.

Adjourned: 4:19 p.m.