

## **Faculty Senate President's Meeting**

November 25, 2019

### **Members Present:**

Douglas Airhart, Jeremy Blair, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Andrew Callender, Wei-Tsun Chang, Kris Craven, Mary Lou Fornehed, Steven Frye, Stuart Gaetjens, Mark Groundland, David Hajdik, Shelia Hurley, Barbara Jared, Nancy Kolodziej, Matt Langford, David Larimore, Lori Maxwell, Mark Melichar, Allan Mills, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Arthur Banton for Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Lee Ann Shipley, Troy Smith, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Lenly Weathers, Zac Wilcox, Kim Winkle

### **Members Absent:**

Michael Best, Yun Ding, Ahmed Elsayy, Brian Jones, Christy Killman, Susan Laningham, Mary Matthews, Christie Miller, Joseph Ojo, Anthony Paradis, Holly Stretz, Jeannette Wolak

### **Guests Present:**

Lee Wray

### **Call to Order**

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

### **Senate President Smith-Andrews' Comments**

Senate President Smith-Andrews warned that email phishing attempts are occurring, so please forward any emails from [facsenpres@gmail.com](mailto:facsenpres@gmail.com) to [abuse@tntech.edu](mailto:abuse@tntech.edu). The official Faculty Senate President email is [facultysenatepres@tntech.edu](mailto:facultysenatepres@tntech.edu).

Regarding the called business meeting taking place on December 2, the senators were reminded that all materials are confidential. Some senators have had trouble accessing the materials on the shared drive, so anyone with issues should reach out to her so she can work out the problem.

### **President Oldham's Opening Remarks**

President Oldham wished the senators a Happy Thanksgiving and stated this meeting will be a follow-up regarding the recent changes to fees and out-of-state tuition (OST), and the analysis of a proposed change in the tuition model.

The President shared that Tech recruits in 31 counties (approximately 50 high schools), and that a magnet school with a diverse student population may be sending juniors for a campus visit in the spring. Tech needs to get a feel for their academic interests before seeking faculty and staff to assist with the visit.

Marc Burnett is making great progress in his role leading up to his retirement, and his role of Chief Diversity Officer will continue after he leaves the position.

### **Follow-up:**

## **Fees**

The President sought concerns or feedback about the new simplified fee structure. Senators overall support the change and feel it is reasonable and less confusing. There were some concerns as to how the change may affect taxes, and President Oldham indicated it would be looked into.

## **OST**

The OST changes will take effect next fall if approved by the board, and will lead to a more than 25% reduction in OST revenue. This reduction will allow us to compete and recruit more students.

Senators' concerns regarding OST:

- Why don't we reduce graduate rates, too? What about international rates?  
There is a finite limit to how much we can reduce at one time so as not to dramatically impact the budget negatively. The timeline for changes to graduate rates is always open for discussion, but President Oldham believes we will get there eventually. International student rates are more complex and must be dealt with separately because budget implications could be high.
- Will the Board of Trustees be in favor of these changes?  
The President anticipates significant support as it is assumed an increase in the applicant pool increases the quality of the pool, the quality of the graduates, eventually leading to an increased quality of reputation for Tennessee Tech.

## **15-Credit-Hour Tuition Model**

Regarding the analysis and proposal to move to a 15-credit-hour tuition model, the President asked how senators feel about this as a way to simplify and encourage earlier graduation to save students time and money. He stated this is well-developed nationally with many examples of stimulation in student progression.

Senators' concerns regarding the tuition model:

- Can there be case-by-case exceptions?
- If the proposal is accurate and student behavior changes, how will we make it work? How will we handle larger teaching loads? How will we do this and still have research output?  
President Oldham looked at total faculty loads going back ten years. On the new model, the faculty load would still be below five years ago, even after four years on the new model. Some colleges would see a bigger impact, but no one would be affected as compared to 2014 load levels. On average, faculty load will come out the same over 120 hours. Better projections can come in the spring when SOAR planning begins.
- This will not work unless it actually takes less time to graduate.  
The President shared that statistics show the two main reasons for college choice are money and academics. It will be easy to sell our programs to prospective students because we can assure them we want to graduate them sooner at a lower cost overall. If this is implemented next year, there will be no tuition increases for current students.
- We will have to recruit more students to keep up the revenue.  
There is a risk, but also a risk to not moving forward with this.
- Do we know why students are not already taking 15+ hours each semester?  
Student focus groups and surveys could be developed to get a clearer picture about current student behavior.'

- How can we be funded predictably by department, difficulty, and need when we have no basis for the predictions? Departments like Psychology are hit with transfers in upper division with no predictability.  
More predictability will be built in to the planning over time after implementation.
- What about double-majors?  
Understandably those students will have to take larger loads, but this change will still allow them to benefit by finishing earlier. This will put in place a structure that will incentivize them to graduate earlier.
- What about classroom utilization – won't that be affected?  
Planning for classroom space will be impacted, but faculty are encouraged to be patient and willing to work through the changes.
- Advisors could consider encouraging some students to take 18 hours to build-in wiggle room in their timeline – this could be a student survey question.
- If the Calendar Committee avoids Friday afternoon classes, it could be hard to absorb the load.
- What about online, distance, and other non-traditional students?  
The President understands these groups may be impacted differently, but a unique tuition model could be considered for online or distance students at some point.

### **Closing Comments from President Oldham**

President Oldham thanked the senators for their input and assured them that all of the issues that were raised have been discussed at length and will continue being considered as the proposal is discussed further. No decisions have been made. The earliest the board could see or approve such a proposal in a regular meeting would be in March. Even so, it is unclear whether it could be implemented in the fall as there are still many variables to consider.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Approved: 01/27/2020