

**Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes**  
February 8, 2021

**Submitted by K. Craven**

**Members Present:**

Stephanie Adams, Douglas Airhart, Dan Allcott, Michael Allen, Jeremy Blair, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Wei Tsun Chang, Kris Craven, Dennis Duncan, Mary Lou Fornehed, Steven Frye, David Hajdik, Tammy Howard, Janet Isbell, Brian Jones, Christy Killman, Nancy Kolodziej, Matt Langford, David Larimore, Emily Lee, Chad Luke, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Mark Melichar, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Lee Ann Shipley, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Daniel Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Zac Wilcox, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Jeannette Wolak

**Members Absent:**

Yun Ding, Susan Laningham, Anthony Paradis, Troy Smith

**Guests Present:**

Lee Wray, Provost Lori Bruce

**Call to Order**

Call to order 3:35 p.m.

President Oldham began his remarks with an announcement of the State of the State address happening at 6:00 p.m. which will be televised on local TV. The governor will discuss the budget for higher education, this will be the first indicator of the financial aspects for the coming fiscal year. It would appear that the new Engineering Building will receive full funding and there are significant funds for capital maintenance, the funding formula, and salary increases. This is all positive news. The THEC recommendation will likely be for a 2% raise, which will become binding, but nothing will be final until the General Assembly finishes. The TTU Board will then meet in June for final approval. At this time, it would appear that the state is in a good place.

Regarding COVID, TTU's number of cases remains under control and there is currently a slight drop state-wide. We have been asked to host a pop-up vaccination center on campus, and we have agreed. This means that the state will fund the entire operation and it will likely be active from March through June. Unfortunately, this will not change the priority status for anyone on campus, just make it more convenient when the time comes.

As for the issues with the calendar, we must realize that this has been a lengthy process. Traditionally, our calendar was dictated by TBR and TTU had no control over the calendar. Therefore, there was no need to have a process for discussing potential changes and setting these

dates. When that changed and the TTU Board was established, this provided the opportunity to set our own expectations regarding the academic calendar. At first, there was an ad hoc committee. Considering the current issues with the calendar for the next academic year, President Oldham has approved the formation of a standing committee to address the calendar. This standing committee will establish a formal process for managing the interests of the different populations in regard to the academic calendar.

At this point, there was some background presented by Provost Bruce as to the process that created the 2021-2022 academic year calendar. There were 2 separate committees formed in 2018, one to look at the basic dates and the other to look at the class scheduling issues. There was a desire to establish a set of rules regarding the timing of classes that would be consistent across campus. The committees were comprised of representatives from the administration, the faculty, and the student body. They elicited input from the students through surveys, focus groups, and discussions with SGA. Their recommendations were slated to begin for the 2020-2021 academic year, but were postponed due to the COVID response. During the Fall of 2020, more questions were raised including the impact on research efforts and the group was reconvened to get more feedback.

The following issues/concerns/ were raised and discussed.

Question: Regarding the class scheduling, this has caused a lot of the concerns. Students were asked about having classes at regular times, but were they given sufficient information? Did they know that this would lengthen the semester? How is this affecting their costs?

Response: There is a SACSOCC requirement regarding the total number of minutes for class instruction. When the TBR decided to change from a 15-week semester to a 14-week semester, the class length was increased to meet this requirement. Now that it is proposed to shorten the class length, an additional week is needed to maintain the required minutes of instruction for the semester. There was a lot of input at the time prior to the decision.

Question: When will the standing committee be established? Will there be time to make changes for 2021-2022?

Response: The intention is to have the committee in place next year. Lee Wray indicated that there are a number of steps required and he will look into whether the committee can begin work sooner.

Question: There was a desire to look at the amount of time between class times, especially for the mobility challenged students. Also, concern about not holding classes on Friday afternoon and if this will allow enough time slots for everyone.

Response: There are a number of competing forces to consider. When you add more time between classes, then you must have classes later in the day in order to have enough slots to

cover the needs. This has been addressed on some of the days, but not all of them. Also, the schedule has been changed to include times on Friday afternoon.

Question: Have all of the issues with shorter breaks been considered? International students may not have enough time to return home over the holiday break between fall and spring semester. Will faculty have sufficient time to work on proposals and meet important deadlines before the spring semester starts?

Response: As for research concerns, Provost Bruce has compared the proposed schedule with a number of R1 schools and it is comparable on the start and end dates.

Concerns: This could possibly force heavier teaching loads. Faculty who wish to buy out time from teaching for research efforts, but not enough faculty in the department to cover them. Less time between the end of classes and the beginning of final exams, and the requirement for submitting final semester grades. There could be an impact on motivation of faculty, longer semester with no increase in compensation.

Response: Provost Bruce indicated that she is hearing a lot of conflicting statements. She discussed her goal as Provost, which is twofold.

- To recruit and retain the best faculty, faculty that are so good that other schools really want to steal them from TTU.
- To create an environment that is so appealing that no faculty member wants to leave TTU for any other school.

Provost Bruce also indicated that when the new calendar recommendation was presented to her, it was as a unanimous decision. She would need a good reason to not accept such a recommendation.

Other Concerns: Other activities that are impacted by the change in the breaks include: the joint degree programs with ETSU, the ability for students to participate in Study Abroad, Medical (and other) Missions, seasonal work over the holidays, more expensive living during extra instructional days.

Response: Provost Bruce is working with ETSU's Provost regarding the joint degree programs. The student surveys that were conducted asked students about work habits during the semester. Most of the data collected showed that the majority of students indicated no employment. This survey is conducted every year or every other year and there could be additional questions about this topic added in the future. Provost Bruce said that there was some consideration given to the ability to work during these times and that the proposed class times be limited from going too late into the evening as this is the most common time for students who do work during the semester.

Question: How will this affect recruiting for next year?

Response: There are some active strategies in place for competitive recruitment. The issues with the class schedule and academic calendar are minor compared to the other issues currently. Although this is something to consider, we will respond appropriately.

Question: There is concern that the faculty are being asked to evaluate the campus administration now but the faculty evaluations haven't happened yet. Since some of the evaluations are for the faculty member's direct supervisor, could that impact the evaluation of the faculty member?

Response: Although the evaluation of administration is happening first, the timeline is set up so that the administrators will not be given the results until after the faculty evaluations have been completed. The results will be held by the vendor until the appropriate time.

Question: There are two interim positions currently at the administration level, Dr. Bedelia Russel as the Director of the CITL and Dr. Jason Beach as Associate Provost. What is the status of the searches to permanently fill these positions?

Response: Provost Bruce said that they are ongoing, the intention is to not leave current personnel as interim too long. They are coordinating so that the Associate Provost will be filled first so they can have a role in the other search. The Associate Provost position will have an active role in online education, advancing faculty excellence, faculty development, non-instructional leave, and coordinating promotion and tenure. The CITL Director report to that person.

Question: What is the current thinking about summer school? What is the anticipation in terms of modes of instruction?

Response: Provost Bruce indicated that currently we plan to leave it up to the department chairs to make appropriate plans for their department. Last summer we were mostly online and there was a healthy enrollment.

President Oldham agreed with Provost Bruce. Summer school is primarily undergraduate who prefer to be in-person and not in the hybrid modes. The department chairs need to determine how best to serve their students. Therefore, the mode of instruction can vary by department.

Question: What is the status of the search for the Vice President of Student Affairs?

Response: The search committee is making good progress. They have already made the first cut and are moving onto the Zoom interviews. The hope is to move toward having candidates on campus toward the end of the semester.

Lee Wray added that the pool was very good with 126 applicants. The committee has selected 14 for the first round of Zoom interviews. The committee is hoping for a second round of virtual

interviews before selecting the candidates to visit campus. The desire is to make an offer by April 1.

President Oldham said that this hire is critical to the direction of the university. There are five basic areas where TTU scores low compared to other major universities by prospective students, at least 2 of these are associated with student affairs, campus life and student housing. Therefore, we want to get the new VP on campus to really dig in and address the campus culture.

Question: What is happening with the compensation plan? Some faculty have not had a raise in several years, is there likely to be a positive change?

Response: This is always top priority at the beginning of the budget cycle. There is still discussion about this and a desire to determine the long-term goals. There needs to be a coherent look at the faculty evaluation process and tool used for that purpose. We are hoping for a more consistent implementation across campus. There is a lot to unpack but we are hoping to move in a positive direction.

Question: There is evidence that some students were charged the online fee for courses that went online due to a faculty member having an accommodation and needed to convert to online due to COVID. Was this intended?

Response: No, that was not the intention. These instances should be passed onto the Provost Office.

Other comments:

The search for the Director for Human Resources is underway.

You can check the TUFS web site to see some results of the survey. We will be receiving a report on results about our campus soon.

The letter sent to the governor on behalf of the universities regarding the vaccine status for employees was politely declined. There has been no direct response from the Governor's office. Individuals will be eligible according to their normal status.

Adjourned 5:24 p.m.

Approved: February 22, 2021