

Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes

March 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, David Hajdik, Tammy Howard, Janet Isbell, Brian Jones, Christy Killman, Nancy Kolodziej, David Larimore, Emily Lee, Chad Luke, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Anthony Paradis, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Troy Smith, Barry Stein, Daniel Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Zac Wilcox, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Jeannette Wolak

Members Absent:

Yun Ding, Steven Frye, Matt Langford, Susan Laningham, Mark Melichar, Joseph Ojo, Lee Ann Shipley, Holly Stretz

Guests Present:

Lee Wray

Call to Order

Call to order 3:35 p.m.

President Oldham began his remarks discussing the Board of Trustees meeting later this week. The governor's proposed budget is favorable to TTU and includes full funding for the funding formula along with some new money. However, this is just a proposed budget and must be approved by the legislature. He still anticipates the new Engineering Building funding this year along with a larger than usual capital maintenance allocation and money for salary increases, however not all of the money is not coming from the state and TTU will need to provide the remaining amount. President Oldham said that he plans to propose to the BOT a plan for two buckets of money for employee compensation. One part will include a one time, across the board, supplement similar to the one distributed in December. The other bucket of compensation money will be distributed by the units allowing for a range of 1% to 7% based on performance.

Question: Many employees have not had a salary increase for several years. Will the decision this time be based on an average of performance evaluations over this time period.

Answer: Yes, unit leadership will consider the past two years evaluations.

Question: Some employees would prefer a bonus over a pay raise. This would provide more flexibility for the leadership making the decisions and allow each unit to decide what is best for their unit.

Response: That is exactly my thinking. I am trying to provide a large amount of flexibility while also requiring accountability.

Question: We know there are inherent bias in the IDEA course evaluations. There has not been any formal bias training for the leadership for how to account for this. How will this affect the process?

Response: The evaluations of employees are going on now, and we only have what we have now. The Provost has formed several task forces to look into these issues and is trying to make improvements in the process. Traditionally there has been too much emphasis in the course evaluations as a singular data point. They can definitely be useful and meaningful. However, they are not being used consistently across all units.

Question: The last time there was compensation distribution there was a range of acceptable limits on who could receive money. Will it be the same this time?

Response: Those were one-time distributions. That is typically not what I would prefer, but it was what the BOT approved. This time the intention is not to have limits on the number of employees who receive compensation. The chairs will be allowed to award compensation appropriate for their unit. What the correct range is for a unit is for the chairman to say. The purpose of defining such a large range of percentage amounts is to allow for that flexibility. It may be a narrower range.

Comments from BOT Representative Pardue: That is the nature of governing Boards. They have different approaches. At East Tennessee State University, the Senate proposes the plan for employee compensation and that is what the Board approves. This gives the chairs freedom which is very powerful, not sure if the deans agree. Since the disbursement of the compensation has not been decided, please discuss your thoughts and suggestions with your dean and department chairman.

Senate President Elect Wolak asked President Oldham to pass on to the BOT that we appreciate their consideration in this matter and reminded him of the recent passing of the Resolution related to this topic.

Question: Would you say that we are still handling the COVID-19 response well?

Response: President Oldham believes that TTU has handled the response to the pandemic exceptionally well. There has been a lot of work and effort, meetings, thoughtful strategies implemented. The entire university has learned valuable lessons and pivoted as needed. There is nothing that we could have done better. This includes having had a little luck. The decisions that were made early on regarding the residence halls – remaining open at the regular capacity – allowed only a small loss in revenue compared to others. The level of COVID positive cases has remained fairly flat at about 2%, never approaching serious levels. The majority of the positive

cases and the sources of spread of the virus remained off-campus. As of today, there are 14 reported positive cases. There is, however, some concern about Spring Break. Tons of credit goes to Leigh Ray in Health Services. The administration has received nice comments from parents which have been very heartwarming. They feel that the university has lived up to the strong commitment to students first.

Question: There are still concerns about enrollment.

Response: TTU is moving forward. This is something that is tricky to predict. The administration is pulling out all of the stops. There are only a few schools who are currently having in-person events, however, by and large students want to be on-campus and have some sense of returning to normal. The Provost is continuing to compile data and there will soon be a decision about the mode of classes in the fall semester. The issue with getting ACT data is starting to return to normal. Many students were not able to take it on schedule or as many times as they would have in the past, but this situation is beginning to change.

Question: Does this mean that we will be full capacity on-campus?

Response: The current thought is $\frac{1}{2}$ normal capacity (meaning a larger number of sections), but this could change as we get closer to starting. We still expect to have 10 to 12% of the classes fully online, which is double the pre-pandemic numbers. President Oldham gives credit to the chairman for how they have handled this daunting challenge.

Question: Students attending the showcase events have been asking about the availability of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only one shot. Will this be available to students at TTU?

Response: This situation is constantly changing. There is some money for campuses to receive vaccines. We are partnered with the Putnam County Health Department. They currently have plenty of capacity for distributing vaccinations and are in the process of moving the operation from Hyder-Burkes Pavilion to the Fair Grounds. Although we had agreed to become a distribution site, it appears that this will not be needed. TTU will be receiving shots to distribute to the campus based on the priority set by the state.

Question: This was a question submitted through the e-mail site regarding the stimulus money and how it will be spent.

Response: The stimulus money is not applicable to all of the things listed in the message. This is one-time money that has to be linked back to a cost related to COVID-19. For example, money for extra adjuncts to provide more sections. The stimulus package expires at the end of the calendar year, which is only half of the academic year. This will require some financial gymnastics. There are a lot of costs and lost revenue that can be recaptured, but this will not completely fix the issues with the budget. Some of the lost revenue includes \$200k in student

housing, a fair amount from campus dining services, enrollment dollars, FTE was down (more on graduate than undergraduate), and athletics income lost for fall sports. \$4.3M must be passed directly to students and those payments are getting out now. There is more money expected to be approved by the Congress, but no one knows what the guidelines will be for this. We must follow the guidelines.

Question: Another question from the e-mail – Are there external searches for the CITL Director and Associate Provost positions?

Response: Yes, but I am not aware of the specific time frame.

Question: There has been some discussion about supporting student athletes kneeling during the National Anthem to express their support of the current issues. What are your thoughts?

Response: I have not received any letters about this from athletes and it has not really occupied any of my time. I have met with the coaches and staff and I give credit to Mark Wilson and Dr. Owens for doing a great job working with the students. It is important to listen to the issues and concerns and allow them a voice and platform to be heard. We have not had any incidents of kneeling during the anthem that I know of. Personally, I don't believe that it is constitutional. Chief of Staff Wray mentioned a press release and a student group that sent a letter to some recipients. President Oldham continued saying that he has read the letter and found it mature and respectable. There has also been a meeting with some students and the TTU Police Department. They discussed what it is like to be a police officer, what to expect if you are in a situation with law enforcement. The result was positive feedback and a better relationship was formed with those in attendance. The goal is to be honest and supportive of all students, to listen and communicate. I certainly don't want to do or say anything that would make things worse, I don't have all of the answers.

Question: Another e-mail question – What is the situation with the Title IX and Cleary Act changes? Have they made it through the Councils?

Response: Those issues were updated in an emergency status. The changes were required by the Department of Education that put out new rule changes which required a response on a very short timeline. This required that it be completed over the summer, there was a 180-day deadline. This meant that they had to be implemented by August 14 to receive the funds. This required us to move quickly. After the initial implementation, they must go through the Councils to become permanent, but the Senate is not in that loop.

Question: Since this was the result of a Presidential Executive Order, will it all be reversed now?

Response: This is not a new idea. Changes in Washington often cause something like this to happen when there are new philosophies in the new leadership. Lawmakers are aware of this

and are interested in ideas to mitigate the effect, not sure if they can. We have very little control or advanced notice. I wouldn't be surprised if it happens again.

There was additional discussion regarding the changes and improvements happening on campus. This included updates on the new Engineering Building, grounds beautification (trees, memorials, green spaces, water features), and the replacement of the copula on top of Derryberry Hall

Adjourned 4:58p.m.

Approved: March 22, 2021