

## Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes

March 7, 2022

Submitted by K. Craven

### Members Present:

Douglas Airhart, Michael Allen, Sean Alley, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Melissa Comer, April Crocket, Kris Craven, Yun Ding, Dennis Duncan, Mary Lou Fornehed, Steven Garner, Scott Hagarty, David Hajdik, Syed Rafay Hasan, Katherine Hermann-Turner, Tammy Howard, Samantha Hutson, Janet Isbell, Christy Killman, Matt Langford, Jane Liu, Mark Loftis, Jeanette Luna, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Kristin Pickering, Elizabeth Ramsey, Richard Rand, Christopher Reames, Lee Ann Shipley, Drew Sisk, Scott Smith, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, Holly Stretz, Dan Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Laith Zuraikat

### Members Absent:

Stephanie Adams, Dan Allcott, Steve Canfield, Emily Lee

**Guests Present:** Lee Wray – Chief of Staff, Jeff Shaeffer

### Call to Order

Call to order 3:33 p.m.

### Announcements from President Luna

1. Nominations open for Administrative and Academic Council
  - a. At-large nomination email sent by Academic Affairs (Angie Denson), due March 15th
  - b. College nomination emails sent by Dean's office
2. Senate Breakfast with the Board of Trustees this Thursday, 7:30am, RUC 2nd floor lobby
3. Old Business Updates from previous meeting with President Oldham
  - a. ORED – new hires Joe Driver and Katherine Wallace
  - b. Policy 606 (Faculty Code of Conduct) – brought to Admin Council as info item on March 2
  - c. Policy 206 (Promotion) – Mark Stephens working with Senators to make edits

Question: Has there been any progress on the issue of medical insurance for graduate students?

Response: President Oldham has spoken to the Graduate Office and they are assembling a group to look into the options.

### Remarks from President Oldham

1. Board Meeting this Thursday, March 10th
2. Capital Projects Updates
3. Budget Updates
4. Enrollment Updates (where are we relative to last year?)

## 5. Other remarks

President Oldham began by discussing the recent Showcase event held on campus. There were a record 1100 students in attendance, this is close to double previous numbers. He would like to give recognition to all of the academic departments and university staff for a job well done. He is looking forward to the program continuing to improve and can't overstate the importance of this event. He also announced the TTU Women's basketball team has received a bid to participate in the NIT tournament and this is just one of the many things happening in athletics on campus at this time. The baseball team is currently undefeated at 10-0. We were also proud to host the TSSAA Division II (private schools) basketball championships at the Hooper Eblen Center and he is hopeful that we will continue to have the ability to host this type of event.

The Tennessee Tech Board meeting on Thursday has a solid agenda. President Oldham also stated that TTU is scheduled to host the next THEC meeting which will take place in May. There are two buckets of items on the agenda for the meeting, financial and academic. He discussed the Governor's proposed state budget which has many positive aspects for TTU. This includes funds for raises, capital projects and the funding formula but is strictly prohibiting any increase in tuition and fees for students. TTU must find additional money for some of the items, approximately \$2M of the total \$175M. However, President Oldham does not see any issue with completing this task. The Board will also be asked to approved new academic programs including a BS in Design Studies. There will be a policy update on Title IX policy which requires changes as a consequence to changes in DC. We are approaching the interim report for the SACSCOC accreditation. President Oldham also discussed the decision to purchase a property in Crossville, which has been approved to use Foundation funding and will be a site for research and outreach activities. There will also be a brief report on intercollegiate athletics at the conference and national levels where there has been some instability, but there is hope that this will improve.

Question: TTU is no longer the location for the TSSAA football championships, what happened?

Response: That contract is up for bid every 3 years. TTU had 4 consecutive successful bids. Some felt that it was time for an alternate location within the state. There was concern about the facilities and this was a contributing factor in the current plans to overhaul Tucker Stadium. This was not the only reason, but it is a very positive move and will likely improve our ability to host the tournament again. It is a positive sign that TTU was chosen to host the basketball tournament and there are other opportunities for hosting these types of events moving forward.

Question: One awkward part of the Board meeting is the election of the student representative to the Board. This is primarily due to the discussion that takes place with the student candidates present. Is there an opportunity to change this process?

Response: Yes, this can be modified, but will require the Board to act. This issue has been raised before and the Board has been reluctant to make a change. The question is what would be a

better procedure. This would be a good discussion topic for Senators to have with the Board members at the breakfast on Thursday.

Question: There is still much confusion on the idea of a budget cut. In the past, there were plans put into place in anticipation of a decrease in enrollment that never happened. Should there be an agreement up front about what happens with the money if that the same thing happens now?

Response: There is no budget cut anticipated. Overall the budget will increase. The issue is that costs tend to go up more rapidly and that requires the need to reallocate funds, but from where. The general rule is to try to do a good job at estimating tuition revenue. All students do not contribute the same amount of money to this revenue. We do not budget off of anticipated increases, which is a conservative approach. This is a good question to have. There needs to be legitimate conversation about funds, especially one-time versus permanent funds.

Question: Does this mean that the academic units will have use of some of the funds?

Response: The academic units always receive considerable share of the funding. However, it is hard to track and follow exactly where the money goes and where it came from. A lot of the budget goes into salaries. There is a trade-off. These are tricky questions.

Question: There is concern among the faculty about the amount being put into new buildings and whether some of that should be used for other stuff. There is confusion about the different line items and the requirement of match funding. There is a lot of costs from other sources. Can you help us to explain this to others?

Response: The money for new building has minimal impact on the operating budget. There will be other cost impacts even without having the new buildings. There are always multiple analyses done before committing to a capital project. Should an existing building be renovated or torn down for a new building in its place. There are a lot of factors and cost associated with both. The money received from the state for capital projects is one-time money that can't be used for recurring commitments. The goal is to build a stronger infrastructure that will create the opportunity for raising more money. We want to make the campus efficient and attractive in order to recruit more people to live and work here.

Comment from chat: There was an anticipated drop in enrollment in 2020 with no actual decrease.

Response: There was not a decrease in enrollment, however the tuition dollars were not the same. We took a conservative approach. We didn't anticipate funding from the care act, etc. from the federal government. This served us well in the long run.

Comment from Senate President Luna: The Provost is asking the academic units for a growth plan. This is encouraging.

Question: There is a concern about fair play, similar to the concern about the election of the student representative to the Board. The Senate has suggested to the Board that they would prefer a cost of living raise as opposed to the merit-based raises which feels like competition among faculty. This is not fostering the spirit of a team. The Showcase is a feature that draws potential students to the campus. The stadium needs fixing. There are a lot of problems with Matthews-Daniels building and THEC has recognized that it needs to be replaced. Nursing is getting their own water feature. Are we using our money in the best way we could?

Response: Matthews-Daniels is at the top of the list of future projects. We considered submitting it in the latest round of capital project proposals. The stipulations for the proposals would not allow it to be competitive. There were other projects being considered that were more worthy based on the objectives set by the state. We have been pursuing the Matthew-Daniels project aggressively for several years. We have to make decisions where to put our effort to be successful.

Question: There are also complaints about Pennebaker.

Response: Both of those buildings are at the top of the list. The faculty who are located in Pennebaker were asked if they would prefer to renovate the existing building or replace it and they chose to wait until it could be replaced. We don't know how long that will take. They may be regretting that decision.

Comment: Agree with wanting an across the board cost of living raise rather than the merit-based raise.

Question: What are the long-term plans for Crawford Hall?

Response: Communications and Marketing as well as parts of the Research Office will be moving in there. This is due to a need to renovate space in the RUC for Student Activities. The eventual plan is to replace Matthews-Daniels with a new building that would connect to a renovated Crawford Hall.

Question: Can you tell us more about the building in Crossville?

Response: There is a start-up company called Wisper Arrow. Some of our engineering faculty are doing work with them. They build electric airplanes. President Oldham has met with the CEO. There is a state-of-the-art wind tunnel which is ideal for electric vehicles which will be part of the deal at essentially no cost. For now, we will be using Foundation funds but there is an expectation to raise private money for additional expenses. The building is half office space and half industrial with a high bay. The College of Engineering is very excited and there is no perceived downside for the university.

### **Questions from faculty**

1. In an era of Budget Reallocation, is it necessary to have both the CITL and the CAFÉ?  
“For me, when I look at the CAFÉ, all it does is send faculty to other resources. Do we need that middle man?”
2. What is the timeline for hiring a new AVP for the Office of Research?

Response to #1: This is a fair question. President Oldham did not have an answer. The CAFÉ was created as a direct result of the strategic plan that was recently completed. Not sure if the purpose has been realized. The intent was to provide different type of support. If there is a need to combine them, President Oldham is not opposed. He would defer this to the Provost Office.

Comment: They have different missions. The CITL is about supporting and improving teaching and the CAFÉ is about faculty development.

Response to #2: President Oldham has encouraged this to move forward. He has nothing to add at this time. It is in the works but there are a lot of variables.

### **Supporting underprepared students (Senator Bryant)**

1. Are we providing enough support to underprepared students?
2. Discussion

In the early 1980's, the learning support program had 17 to 20 staff with about 65 sections of topics. Over the years this has dwindled due to policies and other things to where it was disbanded in 2021. The question becomes – which offices will continue to provide the much-needed student support services?

Response: President Oldham does not have an answer. You are right in regards to remedial courses on campus. By statute we are prohibited from offering these after 2010. He would need to rely on faculty to identify what needs aren't being met.

Comment: Senators are asked to take this back to their departments. We need ideas about how to help. The three math faculty members that were left in learning support program have been officially relocated into the math department. The single English faculty member has retired. At this point, all of the English classes have stopped and the only developmental class remaining is reading.

### **Other Questions?**

Question from the chat: Is there an update on the state bills?

Response: There have been limited conversations last week. President Oldham is hesitant to predict what will happen in the legislature. His guess is that some version of the one bill will pass but will most likely not have any impact on the university.

Question: There was an element about affected students could take legal recourse which was vague and confusing.

Response: President Oldham knows that this answer is unsatisfying. However, we need to wait and see what language is in the final version. There is always a chance that it could not pass. Sometimes they just want a platform to make a statement. However, it is not likely to be terribly intrusive on our operations. There could be cause for concern but we are urged not to over-react.

Comment: There are elements that might be beneficial regarding academic freedom and accreditation. There was a worse bill being proposed, but it has died in sub-committee.

Question: Why has the Center Stage budget continued to be cut when it is funded through student fees?

Response: President Oldham is aware that there was an issue a few years ago. That money has now been replaced. He is not aware of any continuing history, but is willing to have someone look into it. Chief of Staff Wray agreed to look into it further.

Comment: The Center Stage budget is definitely lower than it was in the past.

Response: This is not an area where the administration has any direct impact.

Comment: It is now administered through Fine Arts. There was a cut years ago which has been mostly restored, however the budget is still lower than it was.

Comment: Regarding the earlier issue about the CITL and the CAFÉ, the English department uses the CITL a lot and would really like it to remain. English also has a plan for students with low ACT scores and they are doing 2 searches for faculty to help. They are looking for an Assistant Professor to train other faculty to assist students and also to teach classes, and a Lecturer to teach classes who has specific experience with these students.

Comment: The new building is great. The Showcase event was also great. However, there was an issue with a lack of cleaning in the new Lab Science building the week before the Showcase. There is also issue with the condition of some of the roads on campus.

Response: President Oldham appreciates this. The new contractor for custodial services needs this feedback. There will be some time lag with road conditions with the new projects on campus. He feels that we have the prettiest campus in Tennessee.

**Adjourned** at 5:16 p.m.

**Approved:** March 21, 2022