

Faculty Senate President's Meeting

May 4, 2020

Members Present:

Douglas Airhart, Jeremy Blair, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Andrew Callender, Wei-Tsun Chang, Kris Craven, Yun Ding, Mary Lou Fornehed, Stuart Gaetjens, Sheikh Ghafoor, Mark Groundland, David Hajdik, Shelia Hurley, Barbara Jared, Brian Jones, Nancy Kolodziej, Matt Langford, David Larimore, Lori Maxwell, Mark Melichar, Christie Miller, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Anthony Paradis, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Lee Ann Shipley, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Zac Wilcox, Kim Winkle, Jeannette Wolak

Members Absent:

Michael Best, Steven Frye, Christy Killman, Susan Laningham, Mary Matthews, Allan Mills, Troy Smith, Lenly Weathers

Guests Present:

Lee Wray

Call to Order

Senate President Smith-Andrews called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m.

Senate President Smith-Andrews' Comments

Senate President Smith-Andrews opened the last official meeting of the year by reminding senators that there will be working groups looking at issues regarding reopening the campus in the fall, and that any senators interested in serving in those groups should get their names to the Provost.

President Oldham's Opening Remarks

The President thanked the senators and their colleagues for finishing the semester with a job well done, and thanked them for putting the students first under difficult circumstances.

Reopening Campus in the Fall:

The President's cabinet is serving as a steering committee to draft a plan for reopening the campus for in-person instruction in the fall. The final form of this plan will be ready for evaluation and questions in the next two weeks. Though the pandemic status is ever-changing, the plan is an attempt to cover every base but still be adaptable to changing circumstances. There will likely be a management plan to accompany the reopening plan, and someone will be in charge of enacting the plans. Care is being taken to look at every aspect, as several areas are affected based on how other areas are treated.

Tennessee Tech has full autonomy over the decisions regarding reopening plans; Governor Lee's office provides some basic guidance and best practices, and those along with the CDC guidelines will be considered in making decisions locally. The focus of the plan is to offer a traditional on-campus experience in the fall, provided it is possible to do so safely and with regard to health concerns.

Current Plan Draft Details:

In May, the goal is to bring more facilities and departments back to campus to insure the infrastructure is

good. After Memorial Day and through June, non-faculty employees will be phased-in on-campus. Considerations will be made for those who have health issues or are dealing with family who are sick. While on-campus, distancing measures should be observed, as well as the use of face masks and hand sanitizer. All events through June have been canceled or rescheduled, and all support staff without exceptions will be back on-campus by the end of June.

In July, the hope is to reintroduce visitors to campus, have some in-person instruction, and have in-person orientation sessions. Modifications to allow for distancing and sanitization will be monitored for adequacy.

In August, the push will be to make sure all on-campus modifications are functional, to make sure there are procedures in place for any eventuality related to the modifications, and to make sure everyone is comfortable with protocols.

Working Groups

Classes: The Provost is working with deans and chairs to determine what classes will look like in the fall with special attention to: traffic flow in and out of buildings and rooms, using online resources, creative solutions, and considering all options.

Housing: Dr. Rob Owens and his team are looking at housing and meals and how to best navigate students in and out of those services, with a consideration for isolation possibilities should it become necessary.

Screening/Monitoring: Kim Hanna and Lee Ann Wray are considering protocols to address health screening, COVID-19 testing, no-touch thermometers, face masks, sanitizer, and best practices to stay ahead of outbreaks.

Facilities: Dan Warren is investigating any current or potential supply chain issues, plexi-glass barriers, and best practices for cleaning and disinfecting.

Work groups are to submit a plan of action in the next two weeks. The intention in implementing work groups and plans is to get it right instead of doing it quickly. Phasing staff back to campus has been delegated to Vice Presidents to determine for their divisions, and faculty still may come and go as needed without expectation that they be on-campus until determined by their department/chair/dean/VP.

President Oldham opened the floor for senators' questions and comments.

Q: Will there be large lecture classes in-person? Are faculty given the choice between in-person or online course delivery?

A: The President defers to the Provost, but knows that the plan is to try matching need with enrollment, faculty, and other determining factors. Prior to the pandemic, 5% of courses were online, and fall courses may reach 10% online which is still only a small part of how we deliver instruction. The goal is to find a balance and please students, and faculty will have opportunities to decide.

Q: Was someone hired to replace Cheryl Sullivan?

A: Lee Wray stated Torry Cheney is now the liaison between the university and SSC, and this information will be relayed to faculty. A suggestion to include how to file a ticket/work order was offered to accompany the announcement.

The President added that facilities is working on ways to dispense and make sanitizer available.

Q: Regarding CARES Act funds: how much did Tech receive, how is it being used or distributed, and will there be transparent reporting of the use of funds?

A: Tech received around 9.1 million; half of the money was designated for students based on guidance from the Department of Education. Students have to be Title IV eligible and have completed the FAFSA. Around 7,000 are eligible for Title IV, but ineligibility for CARES funds include students who are international, DACA, fully online, transient, non-degree, dual enrollment, or not registered as of March 13. We will begin sending out around \$3.7 million to student accounts this week, and checks will be issued for those without direct deposit. The amount of money students receive will vary based on need status; for example, Pell-eligible students will receive more than non-eligible students, full-time will receive more than part-time students. Those amounts are roughly between \$200-\$750. Each student will be notified by email, and those who may be eligible but can't be verified will be notified. There could be approximately 1,000 students in that category, so some money was held back to address need on a case-by-case basis.

The other \$4.3 million is available to the university to offset costs due to the pandemic response, but cannot be used for facilities, athletics, or to offset future revenue loss. Tech issued \$3.3 million in refunds for housing and meals. Other monies help account for new and increased software licensing and technology costs due to moving all-online. Tech has one year to spend the funds and must account for the money in detail with the Department of Education. Much of the information was relayed to the Herald-Citizen, but has not been published yet.

Q: We were asked to give feedback to TBR about which learning management system (LMS) to use – are we switching?

A: The President did not have an update but would check. Other senators offered that Tech put out an RFP when TBR did, but that Tech would still have to wait for a decision from TBR. Tech is leaning toward staying with D2L, but would probably not change any sooner than fall 2021 or fall 2022 and changing is dependent on how easily content could be migrated from D2L.

Q: Is there a plan to reinstate travel and study abroad funds for faculty?

A: Foreign travel was prohibited, but domestic travel was not. Much depends on next year's budget, but we are not sure when international travel limits will ease. Study abroad options are unlikely through December, but maybe likely in the spring depending on the state of the global pandemic. Circumstances are too unpredictable for a clear answer at this time.

Q: What about travel funds for student organizations?

A: No funds at this time, and it was considered to call it off for the whole year but the President was told to hold off on that decision for now. Some senators commented that first priority of any available funds will likely be given to those whose trips were cancelled, and that it would be nice to know for the year since availability could impact recruitment.

Q: When is the SACSCOC five-year review?

A: Dr. Huo is working on it and it is probably in 2022; we are not sure of any schedule changes at this time since the on-site visit for March was postponed a year.

Q: Are we anticipating being able to open the Laboratory Sciences Building and Recreation Center in the fall?

A: The Recreation Center will open in July with full function; the Lab Sciences building will be fully complete in December or January, but the lecture halls are expected to be available for the fall this year.

Q: Is there any particular guidance for domestic travel with students over the summer? (Specifically a trip to Utah/Rocky Mountains)

A: It is hard to know and is based on the comfort level of the people involved. The current planning underway should provide some guidance, but defer the decision as long as possible.

Senators comments: This will help calm down faculty who are anxious about the effect of the pandemic and will help them feel cared-for by the University.

Intellectual Property Policy

It was suggested faculty approve the policy now and make any edits next year for better readability; the approval cannot be deferred indefinitely.

Closing Remarks

President Oldham thanked the faculty for their great works this semester and the last two weeks in particular. Special thanks were given to Sandi Smith-Andrews as outgoing Faculty Senate President, and the President looks forward to working with Holly Stretz as Faculty Senate President next year. The President wished a happy retirement to Christie Miller after her 27 years of service. Douglas Airhart was thanked for the flowers and reminded all that marigolds were available.

Sandi Smith-Andrews thanked the senators for their tolerance and for excelling at being positive this year, and thanked Holly Stretz for her service as president-elect. Everyone should be reminded that nominations for at-large seats were being accepted.

All senators wished Christie Miller well and said she would be missed and that she is wonderful.

If anyone is willing to serve on the working groups, please stay online at meeting's end to speak with Sandi. She thanked everyone for allowing her to serve and the senators congratulated and praised her.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

Approved: 8/31/2020