

Faculty Senate Business Meeting
September 28, 2020

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, Susan Laningham, David Larimore, Emily Lee, Chad Luke, 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, Troy Smith, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Zac Wilcox, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Jeannette Wolak

Members Absent:

Yun Ding, Ann Manginelli, Mary Matthews, Anthony Paradis, Daniel Swartling

Invited Speaker: Provost Lori Bruce

1. Call to Order

Senate President Holly Stretz called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Senator Rand made a motion to approve the agenda. Senator Allen seconded. The motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes from August 31, 2020 Business Meeting and Notes from September 14, 2020 Meeting with the President

Senator Andrews-Smith made a motion to approve the minutes and the notes. Senator Fornehed seconded. There was some brief discussion pertaining to changes to the notes from the meeting with President Oldham. President Stretz requested that the approval of the notes be tabled for further consideration. The vote to approve the minutes from the Business meeting passed.

4. Provost's Survey Results - Bruce

A PowerPoint presentation was given with explanation from Provost Bruce. This included results from 2 surveys given by the CITL. Students and faculty were surveyed separately and the results from both were presented. The general impression is that despite concerns that the students are confused with many diverse modalities of course delivery and struggling with keeping track of their schedule, the majority appear to be satisfied. As for the faculty, the Provost hears that there is a diverse set of opinions about the current status, with many faculty members expressing no preference on a number of the topics.

Question: When will we know about decisions regarding the spring semester?

Answer: The goal is to have a framework developed sometime in October so that we can build the spring schedule by November 1, in time for registration. There is still more learning from this semester and things will need some tweaking at the department level.

Question: In the numbers presented, where were the no response answers included?

Answer: They were not included. The percentages only included those who gave a specific response to the question.

Question: Is it time to start mixing the modes in order to change the learning? This may look very different from the current implementation. We have to consider the faculty accommodations. We know that students saying they want classes on campus, but it appears that they are not attending. How do we know what to plan?

Answer: When students are saying that they want classes on campus, they may actually be saying that they want it to be like last fall, which we all know is not possible right now. We need to try to tease out exactly what can be done and hear what the students are saying.

Question: We have seen that there are classes where the majority of students are taking more and more advantage to the online option and not attending classes in person. While the instructor is doing twice the work to deliver both options. What should we be doing in a situation like this?

Answer: Address the options with the students and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities being offered. Discuss the time management issues, the opportunity for immediate feedback with the synchronous and on campus attendance. This can be overwhelming – do your best.

Question: Situation: Doing asynchronous and in-person with good attendance, answering lots of questions and highlighting important concepts. But the first test comes and it is not good (few A's, mostly F's). Is the issue that the students aren't connecting with the material or something else?

Answer: Students are feeling that videos are boring and they are struggling with concentration as well as the issues we are seeing with time management and schedule confusion. Each class is different and there is not one answer for all.

Question: For this semester there were questions about the distribution of online vs in person classes. It is unclear how departments are expected to meet the expectations when there are multiple faculty members on accommodation. Are the departments expected to maintain a certain percentage and/or balance of modalities for the spring semester?

Answer: Deans have been told that we would like to see a third, a third, a third split with modalities. Each department should determine what is best for their classes and their students. If a department wants to be more heavily weighted toward online delivery, we ask that they submit documentation to show the reasons. We have had complaints and expect that there will be more complaints with the coming semester. With documentation, it can be explained and hopefully resolve the issues. We are still hoping for a balance.

Question: There are concerns about students paying the online fees for classes when they had not planned on taking these courses online. Will there be consideration of lifting the online fees because of the pandemic?

Answer: This is currently being discussed.

Question: Other universities have tried a number of different strategies including changing the calendar, defining different schemes for student attendance. Have we considering anything like this?

Answer: Indication is that the students are already struggling to adjust. We don't want to try something different that makes it worse. The focus groups have been looking into options. Instead of whole week off for spring break, are smaller breaks better? We are open to other creative recommendations.

Additional Comment: With other schemes for semester breaks, we need to be sensitive to the distribution of MWF days versus TR days. This was definitely an issue last spring. It is really hard on the MWF classes when there are long weekend type breaks.

5. Draft Resolution on Faculty Compensation

An ad hoc committee formed last spring is looking into the current strategy of merit based compensation. In general faculty are not pleased with merit based pay raises. The committee has met twice and prepared a draft Faculty Senate Resolution on Faculty Compensation. The committee asked Senators to take the draft resolution to their departments and colleges for feedback.

Comments:

There were some minor editorial suggestions given. It was suggested that the Resolution include wording regarding the national rankings that the administration likes to promote. Senator Wolak indicated that they are interested in including a support page and this could be incorporated there. There is concern that some board members don't believe in raises for surviving another year of life; however, with the current circumstances isn't that something worth recognizing. The timing of passing the Resolution is also a concern. We need to get appropriate feedback, but the Board of Trustees considers this in December, so it needs to be on the agenda. May also want to consider the intention of the Tennessee State Legislature in regards to the funds.

6. Joint Committee on Procedures

The procedures for Academic Council & Administrative Council have been completed. Now it is time to consider the other procedures and be sure they are all consistent. The committee needs to meet – need a chairman. Senator Smith-Andrews nominated Douglas Airhart. He accepted the position. The biggest concern is the wording is consistent with the others. The committee will endeavor to get a report to the Senate by the next Business Meeting.

7. Update from National and State TUFs

Senator Smith-Andrews was elected as the Region Chair, this is a 2-year appointment.

President Stretz discussed the initiative regarding rural broad band internet access. Comcast & AT&T are generally too expensive and there are issues with local utilities using fiber optics. Chattanooga starting trying something and they were blocked from continuing. President Stretz also discussed the plan for a National Score Card for Shared Governance. This group wants a survey of its constituents to contribute. The goal is to move the administration to work more closely with the shared governance bodies. She encourages all the Senators to take the survey.

8. National Rankings

There is a presentation about the national rankings of TTU that President Stretz now has permission to share with the Senators. There is no discussion at this time, will do that after the presentation has been distributed. This item is tabled until the next Business Meeting.

9. Old Business

Reports:

The Board of Trustees: Meets tomorrow.

Academic Council: At the last meeting the Academic Council discussed the Library Procedures Policy, Policy 260. She introduced an issue that will be coming soon – calendar changes for 2021/2022 academic year. The semesters have been extended and that is causing a lack in a break between terms. President Stretz indicated that Provost Bruce is concerned. The question was asked if this is a 1-time thing or a persistent change. Answer is that we don't know at this time.

Administrative Council: Most of the meeting was information only items. They also looked at the Library Procedures, Staff Procedures, and Intellectual Properties Policies. There was some heated discussion, but they all passed, with a few nay votes and abstentions.

President Stretz announced that she is still working on forming the 2 committees to write white papers on the communication improvements that are needed on campus. She indicated that Provost Bruce has recommended Bedelia Russell.

10. Such Other Matters

None

Adjournment

Senator Rand moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Pardue seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Supporting documents: Draft Resolution on Faculty Compensation

Approved: October 26, 2020