

Faculty Senate
10/03/2022

The MTSU Faculty Senate met in regular session, Monday, Oct. 3, 2022, at 3:30 p.m., Senate President Stephen Salter presiding.

Members present: Jeremy Aber, Rafet Al-Tobasei, Anne Anderson, Jacob Avila (via Zoom), Vaughn Barry, Vishwas Bedekar, Lando Carter, Leigh Anne Clark, Michelle Conceison, Claire Cook, Douglas Dabbs, Elizabeth Dalton, Andrea Dawson, Carmelita Dotson (via Zoom), Laura Dubek, Tricia Farwell (via Zoom), Michael Federici, Andrea Georgiou, Robert Gordon (via Zoom), Lisa Green, Jeannie Harrington, Amy Harris, Samantha Johnson, Renee Jones (via Zoom), Kyle Kennedy, Rachel Kirk, Francis Koti, Preston MacDougall, Patrick McCarthy (via Zoom), Joan McRae, Kay Murphree, Kari Neely, David Nelson, Suman Neupane, Todd O'Neill, John Ouellette, Sharon Parente (via Zoom), Alicia Pence (via Zoom), Michael Principe, Patrick Richey, Jim Rost, Dianna Rust (via Zoom), Stephen Salter, Saleh Sbenaty (via Zoom), Philip Seagraves, Xiaowei Shi, Raj Srivastava, Suzanne Sutherland (via Zoom), Andrew Wyatt

Members Absent: Keely O'Brien

Members Excused: Ben Stickle

Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes from the Sept. 12, 2022, Faculty Senate meeting. Approved.

Academic Affairs Committee report (John Ouellette): The committee will begin a review and evaluation of academic affairs policies related to students and faculty, specifically those related to workloads. A significant question to be explored is, who sets workload guidelines? Another workload issue is the uneven distribution of workloads across the campus, which varies from 3-3 to 5-5.

Athletics Committee report (Dianna Rust and President Salter): The faculty-staff appreciation night at last week's football game went well. The pre-game tailgate was well-attended and ticket sales were brisk, with more than 200 faculty and staff tickets distributed. The half-time presentation featured Prof. Robert Gordon and his students who have been working with ESPN as part of their classroom activities.

More faculty achievements will be recognized at the upcoming homecoming game

Many senators present at today's meeting had positive comments about the event.

Committee on Committee (Kari Neely): We need to make sure there is adequate, and equitable, staffing of committees. MTSU Policy 32 deals with committee structure, and the Committee on Committees should begin discussions regarding any changes that may need to be made. The policy should also be reviewed by individual senators for any changes they feel should be made.

Senator Neely noted that the numerous and varied committee functions, and the fact that each committee has a different relationship within the University administration, makes formal evaluation difficult.

Finance Committee (Michael Federici and Jeannie Harrington): Solicited finance-related questions and concerns for future discussion with Vice President Alan Thomas. There may be overlap between discussions of scholarships and discussions of enrollments.

Sustainability Committee (Jeremy Aber): The committee will be meeting soon to discuss ideas for making MTSU more involved in sustainability activities.

True Blue Core Committee (Anne Anderson): The new course approval process is being finalized, and new course proposals can be presented after. Question: Can CurricuLog handle the expected multiplicity of course changes?

NEWS BUSINESS

Kari Neely: A faculty survey is supposed to be completed each year, but has not been done since 2018/2019 because of Covid.

A survey will be conducted this year, but we need to determine purpose of the survey, and in addition, several “pre-survey” issues need to be addressed:

- * How does the administration view the purpose of the survey?
- * What is the Faculty Senate position/view of the purpose of the survey?
- * Is there a formal mechanism by which the administration responds to survey data?
- * There needs to be some level of accountability in response to the survey data.
- * Previous surveys asked too many questions on relatively minor issues. In constructing the survey, questions should be limited to those concerns that can make a difference.
- * Longitudinal data should be collected for presentation to the Board of Trustees.
- * President Salter will ask Provost Byrnes if and how they will respond to the survey. There needs to be a commitment to respond, even if the faculty may not like the response. The administration needs to be proactive with the data, and respond to both positive and negative results.

TUFS (Tennessee University Faculty Senates) met last weekend, and TUFS representative Senator Neely provided the following notes:

- The legislative lobbyists were not there, but will be at the February meeting
- MTSU is unique among Tennessee universities because of how long our president has been here (22 years) while most universities change presidents every 5-7 years. We also have an internally-selected provost, which is not the case for most universities.
- ETSU and TSU have expanded their FMLA categories.
- TSU added 3,000 new freshman this year; UTK added so many new students they had to use a hotel to house them.
- ETSU is in the middle of an external review of its 1) budget, 2) redundancies between administrative and clerical positions, and 3) Academic programs. An outside consulting firm is conducting the review.
- Everyone is concerned about mental health. A faculty member at UT-Chattanooga committed suicide in their office at the beginning of the semester. There is a statewide need for more counselors for both students and faculty.
- UTK just implemented a winter/January semester which they use to "retain students" by allowing them to retake courses they failed in fall.
- Lots of talk about the demographic cliff and the need to find more students, especially those who started a degree but did not complete it. Online programs are being developed to target students who can't relocate to finish a degree.
- One school is analyzing whether or not there is a policy/procedure for appointing interims.
- Talk about ombudsman and successful implementation of that office. Must be housed outside of HR and be giving the authority necessary for the position to have meaning.
- Increase faculty senate presence on campus by having faculty senate representatives at new faculty orientation.
- Faculty senate is supposed to control the faculty handbook. MTSU's is currently controlled by academic affairs. Amending the handbook is one way of improving the working conditions of faculty.
- One campus audited the DAC because the accommodations were getting out of hand. They require some documentation and more justification for the accommodations.
- HEERF dollars can now be used to improve enrollments.
- The majority of faculty senates allow FTTs to serve on faculty senate at a ratio of at a minimum 1/10. So, for every 10 FTT faculty there is 1 FTT. At least one campus does this at a ratio of 1/7.

Comments from President Salter:

* MTSU very generous with tenure. Approximately 90% of faculty who start at MTSU are tenured six years later.

- * The MTSU Faculty Senate has a great deal of “soft power” which gives us a more significant role in self-governance than most other TUFS schools
 - * Enrollments are larger than FTEs because not everyone takes full load.
 - * 2019 enrollment: 19,500.
 - * 2022 enrollment: 16,000.
 - * For a total income loss of \$22-million.
 - * \$4-million of Covid money left, but loss this year is about \$4-million
 - * Provost Byrnes says despite enrollment declines, there are no plans to look at elimination of low-producing programs
 - * Vice President Thomas will be at the next Senate meeting to discuss budget issues.
 - * Will be talking with Vice President Deb Sells about how to increase enrollments
 - * Although the cost to borrow money is increasing, we are required to make a 5-10% “down payment” on new buildings
 - * A notice will be distributed regarding the election of a new faculty member on the Board of Trustees

Discussion item: Despite the fact that more scholarships are being offered to students, revenues are not increasing, so they appear to be counterproductive. Increasing enrollment puts a further strain on the University, but does not increase revenue.

Discussion item: there is concern about transfers and retention. Other schools track applications versus enrollments, but MTSU apparently does not

Michelle Conceison will take questions to be asked of Vice Presidents Sells and Thomas

Senator Joan McRae volunteered to be the steering committee representative for the College of Liberal Arts.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted
Larry L. Burriss, Recording Secretary*