

Faculty Senate Business Meeting Minutes, April 14, 2025

Present: Michael Allen, Megan Atkinson, Scott Christen, Melissa Comer, Kristine Craven, Mark Creter, Andrew Donadio, Ciana Bowhay, Mary Lou Fornehed, Jerry Gannod, Rene Grimes, Syed Hasan, Colin Hill, Alfred Kalyanapu, Krystal Kennedy, Jeannette Luna, Jennifer Mabry, Twanelle Majors, Ann Manginelli, Michael Nattrass, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Hyewon Park, Yi Peng, Mustafa Rajabali, Steven Seiler, Lee Ann Shipley, Sandy Smith-Andrews, Leslie Suters, Thomas Timmerman, Kristen Trent, Kyle Turner, Hannah Upole, Lenly Weathers, Brenda Wilson, Kexin Xu

Absent: Teddy Burch, Wei Chan, Yun Ding, Joshua Field, Melissa Geist, Amy Hill, Christy Killman, Matthew Langford, Richard Le Borne, David Mann, Holly Mills, Joseph Ojo, Amber Spears, Dennis Tennant,

Meeting called to order at 3:35

1. Approval of Agenda. Motion to approve by Majors. Second by Atkinson. No discussion. Agenda approved.
2. Minutes. Moving minutes to approval by email, with a Teams poll. (information item)
3. Amendments to Faculty Senate procedures –policy wording, TUFS meeting, budget committee. Motion to approve by Smith-Andrews. Second by Fornehed. No discussion. Motion passed.
4. Board of Trustees Update – Senator Luna. One more meeting left. Theme over the two years has been compensation (multiple phases); It's important for Senate to keep up conversation, especially with individual cases and things that need to be corrected. It would be good to have clear procedures for issues that need to be resolved. Next meeting is in June. Michael Allen will take over for September as the new faculty senate representative.

Discussion/Questions:

- Any items that have been tabled that need to be addressed? Haven't seen anything. Two items came up for a vote – academic misconduct policy, 1-5% on merit raises. I encourage everyone to tune into the board meeting. Could we possibly get an email invite like we get for the senate meetings?
 - Complaints with how HR communicates with staff – has HR been part of the conversation with the board? They present to the board regularly when compensation is covered. Seems to be a lot of confusion around the two-week pay cycle that will be happening. Employees feel that HR is dismissive to their concerns. Deans and chairs should be made aware of these concerns.
5. Report from TUFS – Senate President Rajabali. The minutes are published on TUFS website. Topics of discussion included:

- Faculty senate budgets – resources range from no budget to substantial; some have own space;
- Staff senates – staff feel like they are not heard; there is a staff advisory committee, but not a ‘senate; MTSU, TSU, UT Martin, Memphis have a staff senate; Dr. Oldham will investigate that;
- UTK started a fund for faculty support in case of disasters;
- Lot of international student concerns; statuses being revoked –a student at Tech who has status revoked; UT has had several;
- TSU reverting to a 5-day class schedule and post-tenure review in place;
- MTSU – inclement weather policy that will allow students to be taught and turn in work during closures;
- Federal funding for research has been impacted – all Covid funds are shut down; anything USAID related, TSU lost grad students because of a program shut down.

Other items of discussion:

- Storm alert system in Hooper Eblen tunnel? On a recent alert, everyone went to tunnel, later given an all clear but signals were still going on.
- indirect costs capped on DOE grants down to 15 %; NSF funds have been frozen;
- Student retention is currently at 74.9%, 320 graduate applications, undergraduate also up.
- Food pantry – donations to the food pantry are important. We have students and staff that experience food insecurity and homelessness.
- The voice of faculty in matters like peer recommendation, promotion/tenure, research, canceling concentrations (French and German), etc. It is important for faculty to use the opportunity to have their say and make their thoughts known. Also important for policies and guidelines to be aligned.

6. Such other matters

- There is a job opening in academic affairs for academic projects and analytic support. This person could help departments when trying to renew or create new programs, match up what we are trying to do to what skills are in job opportunities out there, help with viability of programs.
- What about feedback before and after the meeting with the department chair in foreign languages?
- Window on the World event was fantastic, one of the better attended events on campus.

Senate President Rajabali moved to adjourn his last meeting as president. Many thanks for his great service.