

Faculty Senate Meeting with the President
November 26, 2018

Members Present:

Douglas Airhart, Michael Best, Andrew Callender, Corinne Darvennes, Ahmed ElSawy, Steven Frye, Mark Groundland, David Hajdik, Paula Hinton, Christy Killman, Seth King, David Larimore, Christine Miller, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Mohan Rao, Jeff Roberts, Leeann Shipley, Cara Sisk, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, Holly Stretz, Zac Wilcox, Jeanette Wolak

Members Absent:

Ismet Anitsal, Deborah Ballou, Jeremy Blair, Tammy Boles, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Stuart Gaetjens, Melissa Geist, Jeremy Hansen, Ann Hellman, Shelia Hurley, Barbara Jared, Regina Lee, Lori Maxwell, Ben Mohr, Barry Stein, Kim Winkle

Guests:

Johnny Stites, Lee Wray

Call to Order

Senate President Smith called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Announcements by Faculty Senate President

Senate President Smith thanked Mr. Johnny Stites, Board of Trustees member, for attending the meeting.

President Oldham's Opening Comments

President Oldham briefly introduced Mr. Johnny Stites and appreciated his work on the Board. He then commented and took questions / comments on the topics listed on the agenda.

Parking

The Parking Committee, to President Oldham's understanding, allowed a lottery for students to have a gold permit. The ratio of gold parking permits to actual gold parking spaces is approximately 1:1. President Oldham did not advocate for this lottery. The Parking Committee will review it moving forward. A Faculty Senator on the Parking Committee did not recall the student lottery being discussed in any meeting.

President Oldham commented on other related issues. Students living on campus do not have enough green permits. The distribution of green parking areas around campus are not strategically located near the student dormitories. Faculty Senators noted the need to improve the shuttle system. President Oldham indicated that they did speed up one route from the campus perimeter to the library. A Faculty Senator suggested having a singular shuttle route so students know where they are going and when they will be picked up. Another Faculty Senator noted that the shuttle stops too early for those students who study late in the library. Faculty Senators also pointed out that construction workers are parking in gold spots. President Oldham was not aware of this situation. He will look into it. Another Faculty Senator suggested issuing student-parking permits by semester, instead of yearly. Finally, a suggestion was made to shuttle in students

during the upcoming busy TSSAA football tournament from different points in Cookeville, such as Tractor Supply. President Oldham was not familiar with this practice.

Update on President Oldham's Public Statement on the Research Misconduct Incident

President Oldham appreciated everyone's patience throughout this process. Valuable lessons were learned and he looks forward to moving on.

1. Senate President Smith asked for the reason to send the letter to Congresswoman Black in the first place. President Oldham replied that her office and the sponsor asked for the results of the study.
2. A Faculty Senator expressed concern for the lack of communication surrounding the change of the PI in this study. This smacks of a lack of institutional control. Better attention was needed in the coordination of the whole process. This may be symptomatic of a larger problem at Tennessee Tech. President Oldham responded that the change of the PI did not happen until well after the original report was provided to the sponsor. An internal peer review process may be possible, though he is not sure if this is the best solution. Another Faculty Senator asked who is in charge of these things. He has heard of names being changed on research proposals before. We need to implement an internal control in this and other important matters. President Oldham indicated that there may be a specific and limited reason why an institution might need to change a PI on a research grant, but he is dismayed to hear about these changes happening without a clear reason. Another Faculty Senator pointed out the recommendations made at the last faculty meeting to Ms. Trudy Harper to revise policy 780 and asked how they will be implemented. President Oldham responded that Trustee Harper would be involved in some of the policy's revision. He noted that anyone could propose a revision to policy and work through TTU's approval system. A Faculty Senator from the College of Engineering informed President Oldham that the ex-Vice President in the Office of Research was pressuring junior faculty to put his name on their research proposals. This is inappropriate. Engineering faculty are frustrated about not being able to communicate this and other unfair practices to someone in administration. President Oldham stated that if things like this are happening, he wants to know about them.
3. Senate President Smith asked whether a lesson learned might be to reconsider appointing senior administrators and instead to conduct searches for these important positions. President Oldham acknowledged the strong sentiments regarding appointments. Bad hires through searches also occur. Mistakes were clearly made; we are correcting them, and moving forward. President Oldham has no plans to hire someone without a search in the near future, but appointees may still be necessary if conditions warrant them. Currently we have an interim appointment in the research office. President Oldham intends to open up a national search for this position in the spring.

Faculty Morale / Appreciation of Faculty

1. President Oldham is a faculty member himself. He has tremendous respect for TTU faculty. We are in the business of educating our students for future success in the workforce. Students would not be served without an effective and talented faculty. The Board of Trustees feels the same way. President Oldham welcomes suggestions on how to express appreciation for faculty on campus. He considers the best way to

appreciate faculty is to try to provide optimum working conditions and increase salaries. He has consistently put salaries as a priority in the budget process. He welcomes other ideas.

2. A Faculty Senator from the College of Engineering noted that his College feels beat down by the research misconduct process. Faculty members from the College of Engineering believe that the President is not happy with them. Their needs are not being met. Some faculty question whether the 3 million dollars received is being spent appropriately. Their proposals are being turned down. President Oldham strongly expressed his support for the College of Engineering. If he did not believe in the Engineering faculty, then he would not have lobbied for 5 years to secure the appropriation for the College of Engineering. This money is already being spent strategically. The Interim Dean of the College of Engineering and members from the Provost's office have been meeting to determine how best to spend the money. Nashville wants to ensure that the money is being spend appropriately, for the purposes intended. Significant funds (half a million dollars) have been allocated to build a new building for vehicular engineering. The new Dean of Engineering will have input on how to spend these funds in a strategic and appropriate manner. This will certainly help in the recruitment of this new Dean. In short, it is the College of Engineering's money. The College of Engineering is critical for the future of Tennessee Tech University.
3. Senate President Smith pointed out that faculty morale is low. Some of this originates from injudicious language at some Board of Trustees meetings. He also indicated that President Oldham has not spoken up for faculty. President Oldham replied that he has spoken to Board member personally in support of TTU faculty and the importance of tenure, often in private. Sometimes it is inappropriate to make such statements in a public Board meeting. He apologized if faculty perceived him as not being supportive. This is not the case. As President, the best way to affect the lives of faculty is to hire more tenure-track faculty and by increasing faculty salaries. These are both ongoing goals of President Oldham.
4. A Faculty Senator has heard that new faculty are signing contracts that jeopardize their copyright privileges. President Oldham was unaware of this situation. He will investigate this issue in the new hires' contracts. He noted that Intellectual Property and Copyright policies are still pending. Standard practice, he indicated, is that intellectual property (i.e. research) is generally owned by the university, which shares royalty income (or the like) with the faculty researcher. He is hopeful that this will be reflected in TTU's new policy. Copyright of online course material is trickier. President Oldham has recommended two separate policies, one for Intellectual Property and the other for Copyright.
5. Another Faculty Senator revisited the issue of taking out funds for promotions from the raise pool. This practice began four years ago, since 2015-2016. This practice seems to be less impactful for faculty pay than the previous way of funding promotions by taking the funds out of the general pool. President Oldham understood

- and agreed with this statement, although he also pointed to the complexities of the budget. He would love to increase faculty salaries more, but the resources have to be there. There was confusion about the state mandated 2.5% raise, which led the faculty to believe that they would receive this same percentage. Faculty did not think that the promotion raises would come from this pool; hence, there was a perceived lack of transparency. President Oldham thought he communicated this well, but conceded that the administration will be clearer in the future. The Faculty Senator indicated that this was another example of perceived disrespect felt by faculty. This example and some derogatory statements made at Board meetings contribute to the low morale of the faculty. He suggested that efforts be made to mend the relationship between the administration, the Board, and faculty moving forward. President Oldham agreed with this recommendation. A public and laudatory affirmation of the importance and value of faculty will be a positive first step in this process. Senate President Smith interjected that he has witnessed President Oldham defend faculty and the importance of tenure in board meetings. Since faculty do not hear and see this, they do not believe it is happening. Hence, faculty would appreciate a more public affirmation by President Oldham and the Board of Trustees. President Oldham agreed, yet also mentioned the importance of timing to get the desired result. Sometimes these conversations are better held privately and in different ways.
6. A Faculty Senator pointed out how Tennessee Tech is losing young faculty who have found other jobs that support them better. He also questioned whether we want to be a Ph.D. granting institution or if we want to return to our previous research designation. His point is that Tennessee Tech needs to invest in its Ph.D. programs by hiring qualified, tenure-track professors, not lecturers. He commented on the long hours faculty put in throughout the university, far more than 40 hours per week. Faculty put in this effort because they truly love their jobs and are highly dedicated to their students. Finally, he indicated that TTU faculty salaries are lower than the national average. Again, faculty would value some appreciation for their efforts. President Oldham thanked him for his comments. He stated that Tennessee Tech University has a higher percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty than the other R-1 institutions in Tennessee. Furthermore, average faculty salaries are comparable to faculty salaries at other similar institutions.
 7. Another Faculty Senator pointed out that before President Oldham's arrival, there was a time when every Dean, the Provost, and the President departed from Tennessee Tech University. She felt a feeling of abandonment. The Faculty Senators in this room stayed, they were loyal. They worked hard to rebuild this university. It was demoralizing to note how the Office of Research took credit for the newly acquired Carnegie status, when faculty, in reality, toiled hard for years to earn it. It is important to acknowledge the hard-working faculty. We all share in the successes at Tennessee Tech University, administrators and faculty alike. She also indicated the raise disparity between the administrators and the faculty.

8. A Faculty Senator suggested President Oldham hire the new VP for Research from industry (Chrysler, NASA, GE...). President Oldham replied that the search committee would consider this suggestion.
9. Another Faculty Senator reminded President Oldham of her suggestion made at the Faculty Senate Retreat in the summer of a short-term PR campaign to celebrate research achievements on campus. She asked the status of this request. President Oldham responded that he is in favor of this initiative and he noted Dr. Birdwell's guest blog, Research Day, and the opportunity to include TTU news items on page 3 of the *Herald Citizen* every other week. Mr. Lee Wray will work on a plan to celebrate research at TTU. President Oldham also noted that the work of a faculty member or a student group is recognized at the beginning of Board meetings. He is committed to promoting TTU faculty and students.

Revamping of the Faculty Awards Ceremony

President Oldham would like to see a year-end celebration of all faculty. He asked the Senate for ideas on how to accomplish this. There has been poor attendance at the last few faculty awards ceremonies. How can we improve this to include the celebration of all faculty? Some discussion included changing of venue, announcing the winners at the ceremony (not beforehand), recognizing the finalists as well, and determining the types of awards and the prizes.

Questions for Board Member Johnny Stites

Senate President Smith took the opportunity to see if Faculty Senators had any questions or comments for Mr. Stites.

1. A Faculty Senator noted derogatory publicity stemming from some Board members, including from Mr. Stites. These unfavorable statements lower faculty morale. Has the Board discussed strategies on how to improve its relationship with the faculty with the aim of also improving faculty morale?
2. Mr. Stites noted that all of the Board meetings are online and he encouraged Faculty Senators to listen to them themselves. He has stated that he is in favor of paying good teachers more. He does not want to pay those who are not getting the job done. He never said that faculty members at Tennessee Tech were not getting the job done. He has simply noted that the state of Tennessee has adopted a pay for performance model, so he is supportive of this initiative, as are most of the Board members. It is our responsibility as Board of Trustees to attract the brightest and the best and to pay faculty what they deserve. You cannot do this if you are paying everyone the same across the board. The low performers would love this. Tenure allows low-producing faculty members to skate by more easily than if we did not have it. Education is the only place on the face of the earth that has the tenure model.
3. A Faculty Senator replied that faculty members work for less money in Academe partially because of tenure. She noted the detriments of applying a free market system to higher education. How many NSF grants, for example, might a professor win if tenure goes away?

4. Mr. Stites replied that tenure is not going away. His conversation with President Oldham has always been how to fix tenure so that unproductive people cannot hide behind it.
5. The Faculty Senator replied that a policy is already in place to remove a faculty member with tenure. This happens regularly. Another Faculty Senator remarked that she gave up a high paying job in industry because she enjoys teaching students and that tenure allows for flexibility in her research and teaching. Instead of the Board focusing on a handful of unproductive faculty, they could celebrate innovative teachers and researchers. Another Faculty Senator suggested Tennessee Tech develop a plan to recognize the stellar achievements of tenured, full professors. She recommended an endowment that included travel money for faculty scholars, funds to support graduate students, and supply money. She reiterated that the academic world is different from the business world and that faculty value tenure. In a sense, tenure is part of our paycheck. People do not understand how much faculty go through to achieve tenure. It is a difficult path.
6. President Oldham reiterated that tenure is not going away at Tennessee Tech University. A Faculty Senator replied that she is on a committee that is working on changing the policy for tenure. President Oldham clarified that this does not mean tenure is going away, but rather the committee is exploring how tenure will be rewarded and, afterwards, monitored. Faculty should not be concerned with this issue.
7. Mr. Stites interjected that this March marks the second anniversary of the existence of the Board at Tennessee Tech. He has learned from meetings with the last two Faculty Senate Presidents. President Oldham has also helped Board members to understand the role of tenure. Mr. Stites also noted that before tonight, he has never been asked to attend a Faculty Senate meeting, nor has any other Board member. He was told, "it is our meeting, you don't come to our meeting unless you are invited." Several faculty members clarified that was not the case. Mr. Stites continued that a lot of what has been told about what he believes and what he says is not true. His primary belief is that we ought to pay people for performance. Tenure is not on the table. Statements perceived to be said by Board members are misinformation. He and his wife are willing to give \$10,000 toward an initiative that supports faculty members. He has 20 years of experience working on different types of Boards of Trustees. He has always fought for Tennessee Tech University and will help us go to the next level. The Board has only existed for two years. He has noted how some faculty members have attacked President Oldham. He asked for more support for "our employee." Mr. Stites has great respect for academics. Some of his best friends have Ph.Ds. If anyone has a question about the Board, please ask a Board member for clarification. You should talk to someone, though, other than the faculty representative to get other viewpoints on issues. A Faculty Senator asked if he was referring to Faculty Senator Melissa Geist, to which Mr. Stites replied, "Yes, she is your representative on the Board." At this point, several Faculty Senators defended Faculty Senator's unwavering commitment to faculty concerns and to the well-being of the university. Faculty Senators have watched and listened to the Board meetings themselves and have gathered their own conclusions. Mr. Stites clarified that he has great respect for Tennessee Tech's faculty and recognized their dedication. A Faculty Senator suggested

that there be more interaction between the Board and the Faculty Senate. This will help cut down on miscommunication. Mr. Stites agreed and noted that he has suggested that Board meeting be longer to allow for this. He only wants the best for Tennessee Tech. He might not be perfect, but he has only the best intentions for TTU.

8. Senate President Smith thanked Mr. Stites for attending today's Faculty Senate meeting. He noted that honest frank discussions are good and he hopes to continue to have meaningful interactions with TTU's Board of Trustees. He also clarified that the faculty representative on the Board represents and expresses the views of the faculty. Faculty appreciate her for this. Furthermore, we were not sure if we were able to invite Board members to Faculty Senate meetings. The TTU Board of Trustees is still new and we are still figuring things out. President Oldham pointed out that a local Board system is new for everyone. The Board will evolve as members roll off and on. He noted that everyone in this enterprise has nothing but good intentions. We want the best for Tennessee Tech. President Oldham indicated that there might be a restructuring of the Board meetings to allow more time for Trustees to get to know faculty and students.
9. Mr. Stites agreed that constructive dialogue is always important. He also wanted to clarify his comments about Faculty Senator Geist. He has told her that she represents faculty well, but he emphasized that she is a Trustee of the university, not of the faculty. At Board meetings, the Trustees have to think of all of the constituencies of the university: the alumni, the community, the students, the administration and staff, and the faculty. All are important. If these constituencies were a spear, faculty would be the smallest part, because they are the smallest constituency, but they are an important part of the spear. He wants to help existing faculty members, to encourage new faculty to come to TTU, and to keep bright faculty from leaving. This is not just about money, though it is an important part.
10. Senate President Smith encouraged faculty to attend Board meetings. The next one is on December 6th.

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Groundland, Secretary