

## UTC Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes October 19, 2023

**Presiding:** Faculty Senate President Donald Reising

**Minutes:** Faculty Senate Secretary Hannah Wakefield

*(attendance follows the minutes)*

### 1. Call to Order

- a. Faculty Senate President Don Reising calls the meeting to order at 3:10pm
- b. Reminds attendees to use first and last names and that only representatives are allowed to vote.

### 2. Approval of the Minutes from the September 21, 2023, Meeting

- a. Approved, 33 yes-0 no-2 abstain

### 3. Unfinished Business

#### a. Administrative reports:

President Reising reminded administrators to supply early and available supporting documentation for administrative reports. All documents for today's meeting are available on the Faculty Senate website.

- i. Facilitate review by FS members and faculty in attendance.
- ii. Improves preparedness, questions, and promotes transparency.
- iii. Share via email afterward.

#### b. Wi-Fi Connectivity Issues:

President Reising revisited this faculty concern and communicated that IT has been working to resolve Wi-Fi Connectivity issues. Students had been unable to access Wi-Fi because of lack of cell service combined with the 2-factor authentication system, and IT has resolved this issue. IT has also deployed sensors in the library to measure the Wi-Fi coverage and quality. They can do this anywhere on the campus. If you're on campus and you find areas where Wi-Fi coverage is not great please bring this to the attention of IT. The response from IT has been very positive and proactive.

#### c. Senate seats:

President Reising announced Dr. Barry Kamrath as a new At-Large Associate Professor representative. The remaining open seat is in the Math and Science T/TT Division.

### 4. New Business

#### a. Academic Calendar Planning Committee – Mr. Joel Wells

Mr. Wells reminded Senate representatives that the Provost formed this committee at the end of August and charged it with reviewing our academic calendar and exploring ways that it might be modified in light of the ways education in Chattanooga and our experiences have changed over the years. The committee has met weekly for discussion. 1,154 students and 534 employees responded to the academic calendar survey that the committee administered. 271

respondents were faculty members. The academic calendar affects all university employees and affects total organizational health. The survey results contained strong and often opposing views. Specific feedback: very strong support for retaining our current summer structure, strong support for adjusting our spring semester start date to after the Martin Luther King holiday. Half of the population valued aligning breaks with Hamilton County schools, and half did not (likely not parents of HCS children); students did not value this at all. People do not want Saturday exams, nor do they seem interested in a January term. Current calendar: 17 weeks each for fall and spring, 13 weeks for summer, 5 weeks for breaks. Shifting the January spring semester later will reduce fall and spring by one week each or reduce summer by two weeks. These changes would require modifying how the individual class meetings are constructed in order to make sure that we're meeting our standards for the credit hours required by the Department of Education. The committee is also looking at increasing time between classes (currently ten minutes). The committee is meeting with constituent groups to collect feedback to incorporate it into models that will be provided to the executive team for review and possible adoption. If a new model for calendar is adopted that would permit a one-week shift of Spring 2025 semester. It is currently scheduled to begin on Monday January the 6<sup>th</sup>. It would shift to Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup> and run one week longer, reducing either Summer 2025 or Fall 2025 terms. Spring 2025 would likely begin on a Tuesday and Fall 2025 on a Monday. Mr. Wells invited feedback from representatives.

- i. Representative Deborah McAllister asked why Spring 2025 would begin on the 13<sup>th</sup> rather than the 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Wells responded that the post-MLK start would not be in place until the following academic year. The Spring 2025 shift to the 13<sup>th</sup> would allow some of the administrative processes that occur in between fall and spring to have more time to occur.

**b. New UTC Events Calendar – Ms. Stephanie Cona**

Ms. Cona shared that the Marketing and Communications Department has worked very closely with the Web Team and the IT Team to help launch a new centralized calendar system that has feeds that draw from and display events from across campus. Interested parties may also submit their own events that will then go through an approval process and be displayed. Individuals may subscribe to a weekly customizable events feed in order to see what events are happening across campus. The intent is to increase communication and attendance at events across campus. For set-up, go into your dashboard and select “create your events feed.” An [FAQ page](#) also contains tutorials on how to use the calendar. Additionally, upon request the department can build widgets on websites that can pull events directly on to their utc.edu website. The events integrate with the campus map system, providing a description of the location. Representative Emma McDonnell asked how to add an event to the event calendar. This is the link to do so: <https://calendar.utc.edu/>

**c. WCTL Simple Syllabus – Dr. Victoria Bryan**

Dr. Bryan explained that the Walker Center has been hosting demos of the “Simple Syllabus,” a platform for creating uniformity among syllabi and making syllabus changes more efficient while allowing the opportunity to view student engagement with the content. One feature is that policies that are standard across campus can be updated and managed by one person and implemented across those courses using the Simple Syllabus tool. The Walker Center has hosted a demo for administration, for department chairs, and for deans, as well as a demo for faculty last week. Dr. Bryan supplied a [link to demo recordings](#) and a [link to a feedback form](#). Please watch the demo and offer some feedback if able. Dr. Bryan also offered to schedule another demo if there is enough interest.

- i. Representative Emma McDonnell asked whether the goal is to shift units toward this or if it would be optional. Dr. Bryan said that she is not interested in setting policy or making the tool mandatory and instead wants to privilege relationships with faculty. Individual departments would likely decide whether the Simple Syllabus is right for them, especially given the extensive set-up process on the front end.
- ii. President Reising asked whether the tool would replace the current syllabus faculty are using across campus. Dr. Bryan responded that it would depend on outside accrediting bodies and/or the culture of individual departments.

**d. General Education Assessment – President Don Reising**

In Dr. Lauren Ingraham’s absence, President Reising presented a summary of the purpose of General Education Assessment. The main purpose of assessment is to maintain SACSCOC compliance and continuously improve our Gen. Ed. courses. Assessment involves evaluating two out of four outcomes per year. This year we are evaluating the outcomes “communicate effectively according to purpose using written oral or audio visual methods” and “cultivate inclusion by recognizing, examining, and reflecting on the diversity of cultural and individual experiences.” The next step of the process is to identify instructors that teach courses that align with either or both of those assessed outcomes and train them to collect and export the assignments that they’ll use to assess those outcomes. Assignments must address the outcomes and must have been uploaded to Canvas. This typically happens toward the end of the semester. From December to January the OPEIR staff prepare the assignments for assessment by removing identifying information from the documents. Faculty volunteers (compensated) score those assignments in February, and results are published in late spring. Professional development workshops aimed at improving results happens over the summer.

- i. Representative Chandler Harriss encouraged the institution to talk a little differently about assessment and not make compliance the very first priority. Doing so creates a cultural problem where it feels we are working to check boxes and satisfy outside interest. Dr. Cecelia Wigal spoke in agreement.

## 5. Committee Reports

### a. Tennessee University Faculty Senates (TUFS) – Dr. Donald Reising

President Reising reported on the September meeting of TUFS. TUFS is the Tennessee University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Senate for all the public institutions of higher education in the state of Tennessee. Topics for discussion:

- i. The need to create ombudsperson positions at other institutions (Tennessee Tech and UT Martin), whether a single ombudsperson or a committee.
- ii. UT System's board is significantly changing Chapter Four with respect to NTT faculty (details unclear). UTC's Faculty Handbook Committee may need to revise the handbook in light of this change.
- iii. Divisive concepts legislation: Some people expressed concerns that the divisive concepts legislation impinges on first amendment rights and academic freedom, and some also expressed concerns about legal defense in the case an employee was accused of violating the law since the Attorney General's office may not choose to defend the faculty member. President Reising reported that UT System President Randy Boyd addressed this issue at a recent University Faculty Council meeting, and President Boyd said that faculty could try to raise money for legal costs on their campus and also said that most divisive concepts the law prevents aren't even within the scope of university curriculums. President Reising raised the question of how divisive concepts violations are reported at UTC. UTK begins with trying to resolve issues within the student-faculty relationship. Concerns were also raised about the "chilling effect" of the legislation on UT campuses. President Reising invited feedback on whether others are seeing this "chilling" effect and suggested that more discussion may be needed.
- iv. Workload concerns: Tennessee State University has launched a study of faculty workload on their campus. President Reising reminds faculty to be involved in these discussions on UTC's campus.
- v. Post-tenure review: There's a sense among TUFS representatives that the process is a waste of time because the EDO process already captures much of the same information. System-wide, only one case was found to not meet requirements. In light of these factors, there is a great deal of interest in eliminating the post-tenure review system.

### b. University Faculty Council: President Reising reported on yesterday's meeting. Topics of discussion:

- i. Divisive concepts (see discussion of divisive concepts above). Links to divisive concepts resources:  
UT System: <https://tennessee.edu/transparency/divisive-concepts-law/>  
UTK: <https://provost.utk.edu/divisive-concepts-legislation>
  1. Associate General Counsel Yousef Hamadeh responded that students with complaints of divisive concept violations must either call a hotline number or submit their complaints to [divisiveconcepts@tennessee.edu](mailto:divisiveconcepts@tennessee.edu) for routing to the UT System

audit office, which investigates the complaint. There have not been complaints at UTC so far.

2. Several representatives responded with questions and concerns. Discussion can be found beginning at 1:18:39 of the meeting recording. President Reising plans to continue discussion of this issue at the Full Faculty meeting in the spring.
  - ii. Federal funding for public education: There was talk among some legislators at the state level to examine the possibility of no longer accepting federal monies from the Department of Education because of stipulations attached to those funds. However, it appears that they cannot afford to go without the money, so the legislature is not going to pursue it. President Boyd spoke to an increase in K-12 teacher salaries. Faculty concern had to do with long-term impacts on the number of people living in the state of Tennessee (and therefore the number of college students).
  - iii. The Health Sciences Faculty Senate voted to recommend that the UT Board of Trustees revise the policy BT0006 Article III, Section E.3 to “permit temporary suspension of the six-year tenure clock for demonstrably good causes.” Maternity, paternity, and family leave were part of the impetus for this proposed change. President Reising invited further discussion of this subject on UTC’s campus.

**c. General Education Committee – Dr. Lee Harris**

Dr. Lee Harris shared that the committee met in September and moved several proposals ahead. They are looking to evaluate proposals that came in for the October deadline.

**d. Faculty Handbook Committee – Vice President Jaclyn Michael**

The Handbook Committee is collecting feedback on the third chapter of the faculty handbook via three discussion boards on the Full Faculty Canvas website. Link to discussion boards: [https://utchattanooga.instructure.com/courses/1777/discussion\\_topics](https://utchattanooga.instructure.com/courses/1777/discussion_topics). The three discussion board topics are as follows: Chapter 3, Sections 4-7, which is related to the evaluation of faculty including reappointment, annual evaluation, and post-tenure review; Chapter 3, Section 10, which is the tenure process; Chapter 3, Section 11, which is on the topic of promotion. Discussion boards will remain open for the rest of the semester, and faculty may post feedback anonymously if desired. The Handbook Committee may build on discussion board feedback to facilitate a town hall related to this in the spring.

**e. Course Learning Evaluation Committee—Dr. Jodi Caskey**

The Course Learning Evaluation committee has voted to recommend the University of Nebraska-Omaha CLE system for trial implementation at UTC (on a voluntary basis at this time). Link to information about the system: <https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-affairs/stem-trail-center/research/impact.php>. Since the CLE system at U. Nebraska is an NSF-funded project, it is limited to STEM faculty, but the committee has voted to allow those outside of STEM to try

it, and they will filter non-STEM data out. At this point, only the faculty side of the system is set up, not the student side. Any faculty who would like to participate may do so using the link.

## **6. Administrative Reports**

### **a. Chancellor Angle**

Chancellor Angle reported that he and Stacey Lightfoot facilitated an Open Forum on Access and Engagement last week and assured faculty that diversity and inclusion remains part of the strategic plan at the UTC level and at the UT system level. The system-wide shift to the language of access and engagement removes wording that people might assume focuses on one set group of people. Instead, UTC is welcoming everyone and recruiting any student who can be successful at our institution. Additionally, the Chancellor reported on two campus open forums on AI. Administration is looking at how to support faculty from different disciplines in integrating AI and equipping students to use this tool.

### **b. Provost Hale**

- i. Search for Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs: WittKiefer principals have reported 30 completed applications for the position, some incredibly strong. Another 28 candidates have expressed an interest and/or started the application process. They expect even more completed applications at the deadline. The search firm personnel are meeting with the search committee tomorrow (10/20) to update the committee, finalize the candidate evaluation rubric, and discuss timeline and other details. The web page for this particular search should be completed at the end of that meeting.
- ii. Library Dean search: Dean Valerie Rutledge is chairing the search committee, and the university has contracted with WittKiefer to perform the search. WittKiefer has completed between 12 and 15 library dean searches previously. Following the recommendation of WittKiefer, 40%-50% of the search committee is comprised of library faculty and staff members. Each degree-granting college is also represented on that search committee. A web page eventually will be developed for this search.
- iii. Workload Policy: The most recent step in the attempt to develop a campus workload policy was to inventory the workload policies that are currently being used in departments and colleges across campus. The Provost has received responses from three of the four deans from degree-granting colleges and is anticipating the fourth of those reports shortly. Provost Hale will share responses with the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Senate leadership. Inventoried approaches vary widely from a requirement to generate a specific target number of student credit hours every semester to approaches that specify a targeted class credit hour total (e.g., 9 or 12 credit hours) with allowances to reduce those loads depending on other work that faculty members might be doing.

**c. Vice Provost Matt Mathews: A New Model for EDO**

Vice Provost Mathews reported that we are starting a new process for our EDO in January when we move to having our annual evaluations aligned with the calendar year. This involves not just a shift in the calendar but also a different model for conducting the evaluation. The new model encourages more engagement with department heads when setting objectives and involves fewer steps in the online platform. It also emphasizes faculty productivity and the trajectory of a faculty member's career, simplifies the exceeds expectations system, and offers more options for review at the dean and provost level. Faculty will engage with department heads about objectives at the beginning of the year, document the agreed-upon objectives (by October), and then report activity in Digital Measures throughout the year. Faculty will generate a report and submit it in December. The report will now include a six-year CV to provide context for evaluators. Department Head, Dean, and Provost evaluate in January through March of following year. The new model will provide new ways to talk about teaching work. Academic Affairs provides support for EDOs through synchronous and asynchronous training and one-on-one training. Reach out to [academic-affairs@utc.edu](mailto:academic-affairs@utc.edu) for training inquiries. Vice Provost Mathews reminded faculty that Digital Measures is customizable. If faculty want to report data that a form does not currently represent, Academic Affairs can create a mechanism for it. Provost Mathews is seeking faculty feedback; his slides have been uploaded to the Faculty Senate website.

- i. President Reising asked for a place in Digital Measures to indicate whether a submission has been invited.

**7. Faculty Concerns**

President Reising shared a faculty concern he received about the frequency of mandatory trainings. Because of workload concerns, the faculty member expressed a desire to see training frequency reduced to every two to three years and/or more pre-testing options integrated into the training.

- a. Associate Dean Brett Fuchs responded that a committee has been meeting about this issue and has been working on some pre-testing options. He will pass a note to the committee and ask them to respond to this faculty concern.

**8. Announcements**

- a. Full Faculty Meeting: Tuesday, February 13, at 3:00pm

**9. Adjournment**

Beth Crawford moved, Darrell Walsh seconded at 5:10pm

## ATTENDANCE

Abrha	Wolday	
Baker	Sybil	X
Bathi	Jejal	X
Boyd	Jennifer	
Bradley-Shoup	Mark	X
Caskey	Jodi	X
Crawford	Beth	X
Davenport	Stephan	X
DePrez	Bernadette	X
Einstein	Sarah	X
Epperson	Brooke	X
Evans	Matthew	X
Fleming	Rachel	
Franklin	Alycia	
Goulet	Ron	
Grubb	Matthew	X
Guinn	Cherry	X
Harbison	John	X
Harris	Lee	X
Harriss	Chandler	X
Hogg	Jennifer	X
Holcomb	Hadley	X
Huber	Thomas	X
Ibrahim	Hamby	X
Jeffers	Gaye	X
Kamrath	Barry	X
Kaplanoglu	Erkan	X
Kozak	Mark	X
Laing	Craig	X
Legg	Julie	
Littleton	Chad	X



Ma	Ziwei	X
Manning-Berg	Ashley	X
McAllister	Deborah	X
McDaniel	Ethan	X
McDonnell	Emma	X
McElrone	Marissa	X
McNutt	Dunstan	X
Michael	Jaclyn	X
Montgomery	Callie	X
Park	Han	X
Parks	Josh	X
Purkey	Lyn	X
Reising	Don	X
Strickland	Bryan	
Strickler	Jeremy	X
Taylor	Jessica	X
Treat	Sarah	X
Usman	Aneeka	X
Van Buren	Harry	X
Vincent	Nishani	X
Wakefield	Hannah	X
Walsh	Darrell	X
Xie	Mengjun	X
Zibluk	Jack	