

TUFS Meeting Spring 2015

Friday, March 20, 2015

Austin Peay's new President, Alisa White, hosted the group on Friday at the Pace Alumni Center. She offered personal observations on a variety of topics, including faculty governance, tenure, political influence on content, undocumented students, unfunded mandates, post-tenure review, and the fairness of evaluations.

Saturday, March 21, 2015

The meeting convened at 8:30 AM with all member institutions represented except the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. Neither the past president nor the president-elect were able to attend.

1. Approval of the agenda was unanimous.
2. The minutes from August 2014 were also approved.

The President, Jeff Roberts, welcomed all members and thanked them for their attendance. He offered special thanks to Sandi Smith for volunteering to serve as secretary after Holly Stretz had resigned.

He reported his observations relative to the 2015 State Legislature. There seemed to be little going on regarding higher education. Of approximately 100 bills considered by the Senate Education Committee, for example, only about a dozen had anything to do with Higher Ed. All of those seemed largely innocuous, such as those tinkering with Lottery scholarships or proclaiming Veterans Day as a holiday for all universities. He sensed few overt threats, but rather a sense of calm as the "Drive to 55" initiative appears to be making progress.

On the other hand, the Legislature's rejection of federal money for K-12 education – based apparently on ideology rather than practicality – seemed shortsighted and likely to have a negative impact even on Higher Education.

He ended with an open invitation to communicate with him at any time. His role was to help TUFS move forward in any way possible.

Senate Reports (copies of the written reports are available as an appendix)

Senate reports were delivered in the order in which President Roberts received them.

MTSU (William Canak)

1. MTSU is currently revising senate bylaws.
2. The Faculty Senate has initiated inviting a Dean to present for 20 minutes each month.
3. The Senate has been conducting comparative research with peer universities. (See full report for details)

4. The Senate passed resolution on the use of TAF funds reaffirming that expenditures be limited to support of academic departments and programs.
5. The Senate affirmed a resolution that university faculty members remain in charge of course curriculum in the midst of course redesign initiatives.
6. The Senate discussed Follett Bookstore's practice of bundling student tuition with payment for books assigned in certain courses.
7. "Quest for Success," the MTSU initiative for advising, is currently under Senate examination. Faculty are concerned that too much of advising is simply directing students to "easy" courses.
8. Some Senators are questioning revenue losses in Athletics and steadily rising Student Athletic Fees.

Item 6 led to a TUFS discussion on the same topic. The general consensus was a willingness to tolerate the practice given faculty support, but an overall concern given the inflexibility and lack of choice for the students. That students would be forced to pay, even if they already owned the book, seemed inappropriate. No formal action was taken on the topic.

ETSU (Virginia Foley and Tom Schlacht)

1. ETSU's opening convocation is now called a "celebration of faculty".
2. A Senate Committee is looking at Student Assessments of Instruction (SAIs) and assessing their accuracy given their high impact on tenure and promotion decisions. Online evaluations are particularly problematic.
3. An ad hoc Senate committee is exploring the possibility of creating a "Faculty Development Center".
4. Following the work of another ad hoc committee, the Senate approved a modification of policy on "Faculty Termination with Cause" to replace ETSU's policy with TBR policy.
5. The Senate requested a reexamination of the Academic Misconduct Policy by the Academic Council. Many would like the student transcript to reflect the misconduct and/or preclude offenders from Latin honors.
6. The Senate Approved policy for renewable contracts for instructors/lecturers.

Item 6 led to a TUFS discussion on the same topic. All schools are currently studying guidelines for these positions. All those present offered to share their current proposals and documents with the other member institutions.

TTU (Jeff Roberts, Sandi Smith)

1. TTU is undergoing SACS review next year. The Faculty Senate has various roles regarding input/or approval.
2. The Senate is working with legal counsel to determine the accuracy, role, and oversight of the Faculty Handbook.
3. Lecturer positions and "Tenure and Promotion Guidelines" are currently under consideration by the appropriate councils.

4. Various issues regarding online leave reports have been addressed with TTU's President. No formal change has happened beyond a reaffirmation that faculty have widely varied schedules and flexibility should be applied.
5. There is much ongoing discussion among at least three different committees regarding a new Budget model, to be piloted next year.
6. With many new administrators who have invoked considerable change across campus, there is "change fatigue" on campus.
7. The Senate has often called for better communication and input solicitation as essential for transparency and buy-in.
8. An inaugural faculty awards celebration is slated for April.

Item #2 led to considerable discussion as other institutions expressed their beliefs that Faculty Handbooks should be considered policy unless contradicted by higher authority. There was also consensus that the Senates should be the custodians of the Handbook.

The member Senates also agreed to exchange information relative to Item #3 – as many are currently discussing Lecturer positions.

Austin Peay (Mercy Cannon, Tim Leczszak, Tim Winters, Bonita Brewster)

1. Dr. Rex Gandy will begin as the new Provost on June 1, 2015.
2. Dr. Alisa White will be installed as the 10th President on March 23, 2015.
3. A nearby car dealership was purchased to expand the physical campus.
4. As with other universities, the Senate is examining the Instructor issue.
5. Issues related to enrollment include: working to increase international, graduate, and out of state students; TN Promise is expected to help since APSU already has several Associate degrees in place; a new guaranteed scholarship for community college graduates with high GPAs has been created.
6. Talk of sequester cuts may have significant impact on Clarksville and APSU.

University of Tennessee (Martin Griffin)

1. Faculty and Senators are frustrated with IRB and iMedris processing time.
2. ELEMENTS (tracking system for faculty productivity) rollout has been problematic. The system does not seem appropriate for all content areas.
3. Faculty handbook now includes engaged scholarship and outreach as criteria for promotion and tenure. This passed without opposition by faculty or administration.
4. University is addressing the issues of diversity and inclusion.
5. Gender neutral family style bathrooms will be installed in new and renovated buildings.
6. Findings from the Employee Engagement Survey will be released soon.
7. To pacify the state legislature, funding of controversial "sex week" activities has been cut via opt-in/opt-out plan supported by the Senate.

8. Changes in the faculty handbook originating with the Commission on Women have focused on faculty-student relationships
9. A fee of \$5.00 to support undergraduate student research, proposed by the students, has met opposition from Senators.
10. Non tenure-track faculty are permitted to serve on the Senate. Resolutions to require a percentage of such faculty have failed. Debate continues as to the probity and implications of this policy.
11. Post-tenure review and “tenure revocation” under consideration to fix “a broken business model”.
12. Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Policy was revised and renamed to “Prohibited Behavior”. Faculty are considered “mandatory” reporters and will receive mandated training.
13. Branding change for the “Lady Vols” has led to opposition.

The meeting took a break for lunch, returning at 1:00 for our guest speakers.

Mike Krause (an APSU alum, but grew up on the TTU campus)

Guest Speaker: Mike Krause, Executive Director of the Drive to 55 and Tennessee promise spoke with the group on Saturday afternoon. His key points were:

1. The Program is based on solid research about potential student success, covering seven years of data.
2. This arose in part because dual enrollment is “broken.” It is currently a system only for the elite. Only those already likely to go to college take it.
3. Under the Promise, everyone will get 2 free courses. If they start, the odds of their going to college improves substantially.
4. Tennessee is ranked 43rd out of 50 on percentage of citizens attaining an Associates degree or better. 6 counties rank higher than the national average. 89 counties rank below.
5. Lack of degrees aligns with incarceration, public health issues, etc. Those without college can expect an average annual income of only \$9000. Fast Food and Day Labor are typically their only options.
6. Three major goals: help students get into college, help them succeed, and reconnect with adults-especially those who have some college but did not finish a degree (tnreconnect.gov). Four year schools should make the latter a priority.
7. They hoped for 25K applicants, and got 58K. In 32 counties, everybody signed up! Tennessee is now the #1 state in the nation for FAFSA completion(89%).
8. Reporting and measuring process by an external evaluator is planned.
Email: mike.krause@tn.gov

Chad Brooks

Guest Speaker: Chad Brooks is faculty representative on the THEC Outcomes Based Funding Formula Review Committee. His summary points were:

1. The formula is only 68% funded. It should be 680 million, but is 427 million.
2. Topics on the table:
 - a. Complaints about the inequity of schools to compete for state monies
 - b. Differential STEM focus
 - c. Ph.Ds weight 20 times more
 - d. Measuring (counting) out of state students differently in the formula
 - e. Institutional mission and how it relates to weights in the formula

Urged us to think about unintended consequences of following students to employment as a data metric.

Following the guest speakers, Reports from the Senates resumed.

University of Tennessee at Martin (Bob Bradley)

1. A task force to study the Tennessee Promise Scholarship has been formed.
2. A revision of the Faculty Handbook has been completed and the Senate and Board of Trustees have approved the new draft.
3. Unauthorized student regalia at graduation was a topic of discussion. The issue was referred to the Honors and Ceremonies Committee.
4. A POST scholarship has been approved to provide out of state students a scholarship to discount tuition to match that of in-state students.
5. A future business model for the UT System was announced. Tenure and post-tenure review is a component of the model that has attracted significant faculty interest. Other concerns were the potential decrease in percentage of insurance paid and longevity becoming merit-based.

Tennessee State University (Phil Ganter)

1. The Senate is concerned that the new President seems to think ad hoc committees constitute "shared governance"
2. They are working on a new constitution/handbook calling for:
 - a. a strong statement about shared governance
 - b. a faculty salary study
 - c. appropriate peer institutions
 - d. increased faculty development support
3. Post-tenure review is another matter of Senate concern
4. There is concern because TSU continues to lead all TBR schools with percentage of budget spent on administration
5. At least the Senate President is not currently in jail!

University of Tennessee Health Science Center (Martin Donaldson)

1. Tenure and post-tenure review in higher education is among pressing issues at UTHSC, but President DiPietro did not use the word “de-tenuring” as erroneously reported in a press release .
2. A Faculty Handbook committee is working with the VP for Academic Affairs on edits and updates.
3. Sexual Harassment Policy is under consideration and review (as is the case at many other schools).
4. They are currently searching for two Vice Chancellors (Research/Academic Faculty Student Affairs). Both were national searches. Currently down to the final two in each category.
5. The University had no problems with SACS reaccreditation.
6. The State has been pleasant about providing money for buildings.
7. They are conducting a faculty salary survey. Tom Schlacht (who had chaired a similar committee at ETSU-med) interjected to have them look at salary bonuses, which are often not counted in equity studies.
8. UTHSC is trying to change its image...to become statewide; dentistry in several places; medical in Nashville and Knoxville. This has led to a large number of faculty grievances stemming from attempts to "clean house" on employees without following the faculty handbook). “Sanctions without termination” – suspensions without pay, are leading to court battles over due process.

Discussion followed regarding the issue of “administrative bloat.” TTU expressed its concerns about a rising number of vice-presidents. APSU traditionally has had the smallest percentage of administration among the TBR schools. TSU has the highest. This issue is one of which Faculty Senates must always be wary.

The meeting adjourned for dinner. There was no formal after dinner meeting.

Sunday, March 22

Emerging Issues and Action Items

The 2009 Higher Education Position Paper

President Roberts raised the issue of the 2009 Higher Ed Position Paper. TUFs had approved it only narrowly then, with substantial opposition from some schools. Should TUFs revise, rescind, or revoke it. He suggested TUFs might want to support general principals as opposed to a single comprehensive statement.

Tom Schacht made a motion to reaffirm without the last paragraph. Motion passed.

Discussion following regarding how TUFs should address the issue of diminishing state support and control in dealing with the state. If state is no longer funding a reasonable percentage of the budget, is it appropriate for them to "make all the rules" and impose bureaucratic regulations? Tom offered to explore future motions to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic redtape.

Guns on campus?

The general consensus among Faculty Senators across the state is that this is not a good idea. There are, however, a few Senators at each institution that support such. After a brief discussion, TUFs reached consensus that this issue is best left to other professionals, particularly law enforcement, who have already presented their arguments.

De-Tenuring/Post-Tenure Review/Fitness for Duty Policy

TBR has a statute on termination of tenure. TBR schools can use poor (or less than other faculty) performance to revoke tenure. The UT-system has no such policy. Fitness for Duty policies vary from campus to campus. TUFs resolved to explore all positions on this matter by asking member senates about their fitness for duty policies.

Incentivizing Faculty/Merit Pay?

Virginia Foley led this discussion, arguing that no research shows that it increases productivity, vowing to “fight merit pay to the nail.” Research instead shows that the results often end up demoralizing, especially if the dollar amounts are small, and faculty end up “fighting over table scraps.” ETSU had its departments adopt a merit plan from the University of Maryland, only to drop it for not working. There are additional issues regarding the consistency of merit. In general, TUFs remains highly skeptical of the concept.

Tom Schlacht reported \$100,000.00 stipends at the ETSU School of Medicine, given completely outside the boundaries of typical procedures. This served to reinforce concerns about a lack of transparency and accountability in merit pay decisions.

Health Care Compensation Issues

Several TUFs attendees voiced complaints regarding the Partners for Health system. Partners for Health is apparently selling our names to a businesses, for example a funeral service. This seems a violation of policy and privacy. Considerable discussion followed about the relative competence of “health coaches.” We speculated on whether any research would support claims that this somehow “works.”

Bookstore/textbook policies

Much of this had been discussed following the MTSU report. TUFs reaffirmed that students should have options as to where they can buy books, and that faculty should make textbook decisions, not bookstores or universities.

Sexual Assault Reporting Procedures

Several Senates reported ongoing discussions regarding Sexual Assault Reporting Procedures. As much of this is in the early stages of discussion, the consensus was to save this item to the August agenda.

Such Other Matters

Several suggestions were made to Secretary Sandi regarding improved communications. Possibilities included a Listserv or Google groups.

President Roberts asked the group if they had any items to share with Chancellor Morgan. (TTU hosted the TBR meeting the week after TUFSS).

President Roberts reminded the group to share information regarding Instructor positions and Faculty Handbooks. He further suggested that we compare notes regarding our campuses' experiences with search firms.

The last item of concern centered on the increasing popularity of Interdisciplinary Majors. There are concerns about quality, accountability, and an apparent lack of faculty input regarding these programs.

Host Site Selection for Fall Meeting

Regarding the site for the fall meeting, an initial proposal suggested the University of Tennessee. After discussion that delegation declined, but did volunteer to host the following March (2016) meeting.

Martin Donaldson of The University of Tennessee Health Science Center volunteered his institution as host. After discussion, those assembled voted unanimously to move the meeting from August to the first weekend in September after Labor Day. Thus the fall 2015 meeting will be held September 11-13th.

Respectfully Submitted by Dr. Sandi J.W. Smith