

TUFS Spring Meeting Minutes (April 8-10, 2016)

The meeting took on a slightly different structure and sequence than recent history. Campus reports were compressed to centralize major issues and avoid circling back to identical or similar issues several times throughout the meeting.

April 8, 2016

A small representative group met with UT Chancellor DiPietro for a pleasant dinner on Friday evening. He shared his perspectives and fielded a variety of questions from the group.

April 9, 2016

TUFS meeting officially convened on April 9th at 9:30 AM with President Shela Van Ness from UTC presiding.

Her address follows:

“Welcome. Very special thanks go to Martin Griffin and Bruce MacLennan, who have done so much to provide us a great setting for our meeting.

We find higher education in contradictory space, as the Legislature attempts to micromanage our work with students, while reducing and restricting our state funding. As the organization tasked to represent our institutions and convey our needs to state government, as well as the public, we need to enlarge our space to accomplish our mission.

TUFS has embraced the Essential Learning Outcomes for the 21st Century for this global century our students will enter. Research tells us that new hires need to have basic research skills, be able to think critically and creatively, and know how to communicate well, while applying ideas to tests of logic and ethical reasoning.

Yet, in Tennessee we face the challenge of students and parents who sometimes equate college degrees with getting a job by learning a series of factoids, ignoring critical analysis and without consideration of public citizenship. Finally, the prevalent mentality of assembly line education to merely supply corporations with new managers, weakens faculty governance, and control over educational quality.

The value of our meeting depends on our ability to develop a plan of action to better demonstrate to the Legislature and citizens of Tennessee, the value of providing high quality education for adding quality of life in Tennessee for the good of all.”

Campus Reports

Tennessee State University (Michael Catanzaro, Achintya Ray)

Constitution was updated. Amendments included changing Senate terms to two years instead of one and moving elections from Spring to Fall. Relations between their faculty and administration may be at an all-time high. Approved non-instructional assignments. Progress has been made in revising the faculty handbook (with the key element that the new handbook doesn't apply to anyone unless a change of status occurs), implementing a sick bank, saving day

care, and improving chair review. Concerns were expressed around their undergraduate grade appeal process not following protocol. TSU will host the next TUFS meeting, September 23-25 in Nashville.

A brief sick leave discussion occurred after the report.

Austin Peay State University (Mercy Cannon, Tucker Brown)

Faculty are happy with their President and Provost. The Provost is trying to simplify and streamline various aspects of the university. Their biggest problem is salary inversion. Human Resources wants them to hire at market but there are concerns due to level of inversion. The Fine Arts building was finally finished in January. The 40th Faculty Senate Anniversary was celebrated. They are worried about the implications of the FOCUS Act, especially regarding RODP.

University of Tennessee Knoxville (Bruce MacLennan, Bonnie Ownley, Martin Griffin)

Concerns were expressed about outsourcing, "guns on campus", the use and abuse of student evaluations, and most notably, attacks on diversity. This included not only attacks on "sex week," but threats of withholding funding of long-standing campus diversity efforts. A committee is examining Post-Tenure Review. The Senate passed a resolution providing family care leave for non-tenure track faculty. The new Student Assessment Instructional Success (SAIS) is still under development (reliability/validity issues).

University of Tennessee Martin (Bob Bradley)

UT-Martin is having a rough time. The university is currently searching for a new Chancellor. They hope to find someone by Spring of 2017. SACS put them on probation for failure to document student learning outcomes assessment. Concerns about outsourcing were also expressed.

Tennessee Technological University (Corinne Darvennes, Jeff Roberts, Sandi Smith)

The Faculty Handbook is not contractual at TTU. The SACS visit went very well with no recommendations. Tenure/Promotion policies are under review. Concentration in Master's of Professional Studies offered through Interdisciplinary Studies and outside of the Department of Criminal Justice has been problematic. TUFS President Shela, whose specialty is criminal justice, volunteered to review the program. Parking fees are changing with increases potentially over \$200 is a major topic of discussions across campus. Post-semester study abroad experiences are no longer permitted. Academic misconduct, Lecturer positions, anonymity of online evaluations of administrators, the large amount spent on student success initiatives, and the Personal Mobile Device Policy are concerns. TTU has taken a proactive stance on the review of all university policies in anticipation of FOCUS act.

Middle Tennessee State University (Tricia Farwell, Wendi Watts)

The SACS visit also went very well. Their biggest controversy surrounds "Forrest Hall," named for Nathan Bedford. Some groups really want that name to change. The current climate is more conducive to the concept of renaming. Faculty access to administrative evaluations and

no longer having a “write-in” option is a concern. They are currently conducting a salary study. The Senate expressed concern about low morale and potential handling of salary information. A general “shared governance” statement was drafted. A “no guns on campus” resolution was passed. The university is modifying teaching awards to focus more on quality teaching. A faculty mentoring program is becoming formal policy. There is currently no interest on Senate to revise the faculty handbook. An A-minus option for grading is being added.

East Tennessee State University (Thomas Schacht, Virginia Foley, Randy Byington, Susan Epps)

Summer teaching pay is an issue when reduced pay happened with low enrollment. They dissolved the motor pool. University wants a more transparent relationship with the President. ETSU is responding to FOCUS by drafting TBR policies as their own. Serious problems with an architect (and donors) who underestimated the cost of their new fine arts center by 50%. They’re also building a new football stadium (\$28 million). Senate is working on policy to select the new board member. A proposal on a “shared governance” handbook for all faculty was mentioned. Concerns were raised about the lack of vetting for volunteer faculty (medical school issue). They conducted their own faculty survey with the results to be disseminated.

University of Tennessee Chattanooga (H. Lyn Miles, Shela Van Ness)

UT-Chattanooga is facing some serious student lawsuits and responding with harassment training. A Title IX Officer was hired. Sexual harassment training among others are now required. The new library opened. Unfortunately, after a fire alarm tripped 6 hours of water came from the sprinkler system. A lawsuit is pending against the maker of the fire alarm. The books have been dried out. Concerns about outsourcing were also expressed. Many faculty feel alienated from the system of shared governance including meetings not being announced and administrators being added.

With response to harassment and reporting, the group discussed whether the student-professor relationship (particularly with graduate students) should be similar to attorney-client, physician-client, or minister-client relationships instead of the mandatory reporting as current policy.

Speaker Lynn Sacco

The luncheon speaker was the faculty organizer of “Sex Week”, Lynn Sacco A history professor, former divorce attorney, and self-described “lesbian Yankee,” her presentation was enthralling. She noted how the idea was student-driven, and initially supported by the administration, but they “caved-in” repeatedly under legislative and gubernatorial attacks. She dismissed the notion that this encourages students to have sex, noting “they don’t need any help.” She expressed great pride in her students, particularly in raising private funds to offset the cuts imposed by the legislature, to keep Sex Week going. (Thanks to Jeff Roberts for his colorful description.)

Unfinished Business:

1. Unintended consequences of the funding formula

Concern about pressure to inflate grades or hold faculty accountability for high percentages of low grades and the impact on academic rigor. "B" is now the new "C".
Academic freedom versus academic misconduct.

Potential impact on tenure and promotion decisions.

A suggestion of potentially having someone else grade assignments or peer review was offered.

2. Use and abuse of student evaluations of faculty instruction
Low response rates are a major problem.
Subjective in nature.
Validity?
Potential of just using a narrative.
3. The status of faculty governance on campus
Many topics here were addressed throughout the campus reports and revisited.
Access and representation of Senate on high level committees and meetings is essential to remain effective.

New Business Items:

1. Parental Leave
Discussed issue as it relates to faculty including:
 - a. Whether or not sick leave bank applies;
 - b. Concerns about how sick leave bank is funded;
 - c. Restrictions on donated or unused sick leave;
 - d. Faculty cross covering classes;
 - e. Team teaching;
 - f. "Bring your child"
2. Elimination of funding for diversity and related goals
 - a. Lawmaker response to "Sex Week" drew attention to several related issues;
 - b. Withholding funding (25% from state);
 - c. Address role of diversity offices;
3. FOCUS Act implementation/implication
 - a. Will be major discussion topic for fall meeting as it unfolds.
 - b. Consider expansion of TUFs representation and potential impact.
4. Consideration of group action proposals

April 10, 2016

Sunday morning saw continued discussions:

Topics included the new funding formula, the impact of "Drive to 55", sick leave/maternity leave (FMLA), FOCUS and implications, funding for diversity initiatives, "guns on campus", the

pros and cons of online evaluations, faculty representative on the FOCUS boards (policy to select and role), the status of faculty governance on campus, and improved communications initiatives. A discussion about “gender neutral language and the diversion of state money over “sex week” also occurred. The possibility of an expanded role of TUFs with the implementation of FOCUS would be welcomed.

TSU will host the fall meeting in 2016 in Nashville.

Administrative Issues

Elections:

Sandi Smith was unanimously reelected TUFs secretary, offering plans as to how to improve those communications. Google group was created. Email invitations would be sent based on the signed sheet that circulated.

No further elections necessary. Randy Byington was elected at the previous meeting.

Fall Meeting and other future locations:

Chattanooga was proposed as a potential site for the Spring 2017 meeting. Announcement and details to come.

For the fall meeting...think about how to make a resolution. Shela Van Ness will coin a letter to everyone about the topic for consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandi Smith