

Minutes from the February Meeting of the Faculty Senate

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate was held on Monday, February 10, 2020 at 3:30 pm in the Faculty Senate Chambers (JUB 100).

Attendance

Present

Sanjay Asthana, Sal Barbosa, Nita Brooks, Larry Burriss, Nancy Caukin, Chong Chen, Laura Cochrane, Song Cui, Trevor de Clercq, Andrew Dix, Rudy Dunlap, Latoya Eaves, Rebecca Fischer, Margaret Fontanesi-Seime, Stuart Fowler, Justin Gardner, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Michael Hein, Christina Hiers, Pippa Holloway, Seth Jones, Rachel Kirk, Paul Kline, Melissa Lobegeier, Alfred Lutz, Preston MacDougall, Dan Morrell, Pamela Morris, John Mullane, Susan Myers-Shirk, Kari Neely, Deana Raffo, Joan Raines, Patrick Richey, Brian Robertson, Stephen Salter, Scott Seipel, Mary Ellen Sloane, Raj Srivastava, Zhen Wang, Dennis Walsh, Elizabeth Wright, Andrew Wyatt

Excused

Bob Gordon, Shannon Harmon, Darren Levin (Jette Halladay, substitute), Garrett Salmon, Nat Smith

Absent

Rick Cottle, Marcus Knight, Brian Parsons

President Gardner called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. Gardner recognized guests, Mary Martin (Faculty Trustee) and Peter Cunningham (Vice Provost for Academic Programs).

Faculty Trustee Martin shared that the next Board Committee meetings are on March 17th and the Board meeting is on March 31st. Martin shared that more meaningful and detailed conversations take place at the committee meetings. She urged Senators to livestream or attend. The agenda comes out a week to ten days in advance. A Senator asked about the Board's focus on strategic planning. Martin shared that the Board strategy is continuing to develop.

Approval of November December 9, 2019 Minutes

Nancy Caukin moved to approve the December 9, 2019 minutes and Raj Srivastava seconded. The motion carried.

Reports from Officers and Committees

Treasury Report

Deana Raffo reported the Senate's budget. As of January 31, 2020, the balances are: Travel - \$1,527.14 and Operating - \$1,748.47.

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics

No report at this time. Shared concern about Policy 204 and 205 changes on promotion and tenure. A draft is at currently at Cope and it is anticipated that in February or March, the 30-day comment period will begin. Concerns include vague language with a post-tenure faculty development plan and that termination for adequate cause appears to be expanded and subjective.

Senators requested that discussion about these policies come to Faculty Senate prior to public distribution with a suggestion to invite the Provost to the next Senate meeting to answer questions. The Senate would like to see the final draft before the 30-day review period begins.

MT Engage

No report at this time.

Finance and Personnel

The Board confirmed the compensation plan that went into effect January 31 and approved the budget with little discussion.

Gardner stated that he will continue to apply pressure for raises next year.

Executive and Governance

No report at this time.

Audit and Compliance

No report at this time.

Carbon Footprint

No report at this time. Will meet later this month.

There was discussion about student printing costs and TAF fees. The committee will look at this and consult with the Library and MakerSpace Committees.

President's Report (Steering, Academic Affairs Liaison, President's Liaison Committees)

- VP Petryshak is looking at the TAF fee. It has not changed in more than a decade. Looking at incremental increases to meet TAF proposal demands.
- ITD is considering restricting local administrator privileges to increase security due to concerns about malware, phishing emails, etc. There were Senator concerns about specialized programs/applications, turnaround time, etc. A Senator suggested having a two-step authentication process to install software/applications on campus.
- Faculty should be careful about email scams. A recent email went out regarding security awareness training. Gardner encouraged faculty to complete this training. A Senator expressed concern about the quiz associated with the training.
- ITD is moving to a new model for passwords. Passwords will be required to be longer, but don't have to change every 6 months.
- MTSU is coming to the end of the current contract with D2L. A committee with faculty representation is looking at D2L pros/cons and other options and has gotten feedback from faculty. MTSU can align with other LGI institutions or make an independent decision. TBR may retain D2L for eCampus. All LMS providers are similar, however our IT staff can directly troubleshoot D2L. Email transferability (firewall) is an MTSU decision, not a D2L requirement. Senator Wright is on the committee and will share more info at next Senate meeting.
- There is currently a Tennessee state bill concerning guns on campus. In 2016 the state made it legal for faculty and staff to carry with a permit. In 2016, TUFs passed a resolution (that MTSU Faculty Senate ratified) that faculty do not want students to carry guns on campus. TUFs President, Pippa Holloway, shared the TUFs resolution.

Action: Susan Myers-Shirt moved to reaffirm the TUFs resolution. Dennis Walsh seconded. Discussion ensued regarding a concern about the mental health of our students and that young people today are more depressed and suicide rates are increasing.

Gardner called for a secret ballot due to sensitive nature of this issue.

Vote tally: 37 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention – Resolution to reaffirm the TUFs resolution passed.

- Gardner requested feedback on the proposed revision of Policy 258 – Criteria for the Evaluation of Bureaus, Centers, and Institutes. There's concern that the process is unclear. Peter Cunningham shared that approvals must go through Academic Affairs and the Provost (see Responsible Division at the top) before the President.

Old Business

Resolution on Winter Term

Gardner presented a Resolution Concerning a Winter Term at Middle Tennessee State University.

Peter Cunningham shared that the winter term must pay for itself and fielded questions. There was a question about compensation. Cunningham shared that this has not been decided. Options are that a winter term course be either a part of the faculty member's spring workload or that it involves extra compensation like summer. Cunningham shared some of the federal financial aid regulations. Cunningham stated that he preferred that Senate endorse the resolution but not limit it with language about compensation. Cunningham shared that there would be no requirement or prohibition to teach during winter term and prefers localized decision-making.

A Senator expressed concern that if it counted in spring workload, there could be fewer options for students. There discussion about the Library and other student resource availability. Cunningham shared that the tentative schedule would block out times when the university is closed. Meaning, classes would be active for 3 out of 4 weeks. Some level of technical support would remain available. Currently, the preference is to limit the winter term to study abroad and online classes.

A Senator asked if students had been polled. Cunningham shared that they had not, but ETSU (half our student body) had 900 students enrolled.

Action: The Resolution on Winter Term was brought to floor by the Steering Committee. Sanjay Asthana seconded. The motion carried with two opposed and one abstention.

University Chair Policy

The previously supported chair policy proposed by the Senate from last year was rejected by the Provost. At the December meeting, Senators indicated that they wanted to consider acting with a resolution.

A letter was drafted to inform faculty of the decision since there has been no formal communication. Departments can still have discussions about chair renewals, decide to vote, and forward decisions to their Dean.

Action: Motion to communicate to faculty the failure to enact the chair policy. Dennis Walsh made a motion to approve, Susan Myers-Shirk seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business

Senate Eligibility Requirements

There are a couple of small departments on campus that have difficulty with recruiting due to small size. According to the bylaws, the Senate can approve exceptions.

Action: Motion to delegate Election Committee responsibilities to Steering Committee, as has been standard practice in recent years. Michael Hines made a motion to approve, Steven Salter seconded. The motion was unanimously approved with one abstention.

Students on Standing Committees

A Senator inquired if a student can be removed from a standing committee for habitual nonattendance. This was an issue with the General Education committee which impacted a critical vote. Gardner will follow-up.

Communications

Lance Alexis, Director of ADA Compliance, shared a new service, AIRA, which is an app for students with vision impairments. Students can connect with a highly trained, live, AIRA agent, and by using the camera on the student's phone, the agent can vividly and richly describe visual content to the student. There is a "no record" feature in the contract for classes. MTSU is the 10th university to partner with them.

AIRA will be available to any MTSU community member – students, faculty, staff, visitors - and free on MTSU property. There is the ability to extend the geo-fencing to off campus (field trip, etc.). It can be also be put on an MTSU-issued tablet or laptop.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.

Submitted by Deana Raffo, Faculty Senate Recording Secretary