

20230501 FacSen

The May 1, 2023, meeting of the MTSU Faculty Senate was called to order by Senate President Stephen Salter at 2:30 p.m.

Members present: Jeremy Aber, Rafet Al-Tobasei, : Jacob Avila, Vishwas Bedekar, Larry Burriss, Lando Carter (Zoom), Leigh Anne Clark, Michelle Conceison, Douglas Dabbs, Elizabeth Dalton, Andrea Dawson, Carmelita Dotson, Laura Dubek, Tricia Farwell (Zoom), Michael Federici, , Robert Gordon (Zoom), Lisa Green (Zoom), Jeannie Harrington, Amy Harris (Zoom) Samantha Johnson, Renee Jones (Zoom), Kyle Kennedy (Zoom), Rachel Kirk, Francis Koti, Preston MacDougall, Patrick McCarthy, Joan McRae, Kay Murphree, Kari Neely, David Nelson, Suman Neupane, Keely O'Brien (Zoom), Todd O'Neill, John Ouellette, Sharon Parente, Michael Principe, Patrick Richey, Jim Rost, Dianna Rust, Stephen Salter, Saleh Sbenaty, Philip Seagraves (Zoom), Raj Srivastava, Ben Stickle, Suzanne Sutherland, Andrew Wyatt

Members Absent: Vaughn Barry, Claire Cook, Andrea Georgiou, Alicia Pence,

Members Excused: Xiaowei Shi

New Members Present: Joshua Aaron, Phil Loubere, Alfred Lutz, Janna McClain, Lei Miao (Zoom), Joseph Morgan, Timothy Nelson, Martha Norkunas, Shannon Randol, James Robertson, Robert Rogers

New Members Absent: Julian Kristi, Jack Purcell,

New Members Excused: Richard Meeks

Minutes from the March 2023, Faculty Senate meeting were unanimously approved.

Faculty Senate President's Report:

President Salter's full report was sent earlier today via e-mail.

Senator Patrick Richey will address the Board of Trustees in June.

Significant progress has been made moving the development of MTSU-O (MTSU On-Line). However, this is a long-term project related to resources.

The following Senators are rotating off the Senate, and were recognized for their service:

Vaughn Berry, Vishwas Bedeker, Claire Cook, Andrea Dawson, Trish Farwell, Renee Jones, Todd O'Neill, Alicia Pence, Michael Principe, Saleh Sbenaty, Xiaowei Shi, Ben Stickle, Suzanne Sutherland (who will continue to serve as president-elect).

The following Senators were recognized for their service as Senate officers:

Larry Burriss (recording secretary), Kari Neely (president elect), Patrick Richey (parliamentarian), Stephen Salter (president).

Anjali Sarvaria was recognized for her service as executive assistant.

The Steering Committee for the upcoming academic year was elected:

Library – Rachel Kirk

University College – Dianna Rust

College of Media & Entertainment – Shannon Randol

College of Basic & Applied Science -David Nelson & Jeremy Aber

College of Behavioral and Health Sciences – Patrick McCarthy & Richard Meeks
Jones College of Business – Philip Seagraves & Leigh Anne Clark
College of Education – Lando Carter & Jim Rost
College of Liberal Arts– Joan McRae & Andrew Wyatt

Patrick Richey will serve as non-voting ex-officio member of bylaws committee.

TUFS (Tennessee University Faculty Senates) met this past weekend.

Legislative report:

The new parts of the divisive concepts law preserve academic freedom, and the syllabi submission requirement removed. Students are more aware of the legislation, and there is a general feeling there will be a court test case to clarify the scope of the law.

Hope Scholarships may be extended to five years.

]Four-year schools can again offer remedial/developmental courses.

There was concern about legislative proposals to limit tenure, and higher education lobbyists are trying to offer alternative language to future legislative proposals.

Most other TUFS schools have a faculty handbook committee, and Senator Neely said there appears to be a desire to revamp the MTSU faculty handbook. The provost has also expressed an interest in such revisions.

President Salter reported there may be a 5% pay raise across institutions, but only partially funded by the State. Schools may hire a consultant to look at pay raises, merit, etc.

Tennessee Tech denies tenure more often at provost and president levels than other schools, but they have greater pay raises.

Expect a 3.6% drop in enrollment based on enrollment figures from last year, and expect a 2% tuition increase.

President McPhee addressed the Senate to close out the academic year.

Dr. McPhee said he looks forward to engaging with the Faculty Senate leadership as an opportunity for an exchange of views, and he values notions of shared governance.

He noted he has spent much more time at the legislature than usual dealing with system-wide issues. In his discussions with legislators he noted they seem to feel MTSU is a great school, but their actions do not support the institution, or higher education in general.

The President noted there appears to be “some limited traction” for better funding, but this year’s budget was one of the worst on record for high education, and that MTSU was the only school to receive capital funding.

The Governor’s budget provides an additional \$300-million to fully fund salaries for state agencies, which do not include higher education. The President said he is advocating for including higher education to be part of State-funding planning.

MTSU is only school to get capital funding, but the legislature has provided millions for technical/vocational schools.

Rural areas appear to be the governor's priority, and most technical/vocational schools are in rural areas; most legislators are from rural areas.

Legislators don't seem to regard higher education as a priority. There is concern legislators do not see any value in a college degree unless it leads directly to a job.

THEC (Tennessee Higher education Commission) recommendations were not accepted by Gov. Lee. The Commission recommended \$12-million new dollars for MTSU, but the governor proposed \$3-million.

Colleges and universities must find a "voice" for higher education with the State's leadership.

MTSU will be starting a public safety program.

Tennessee has a \$2-billion budget surplus, and is providing funding for a new Tennessee Titans stadium, and new funding for the FedEx Forum in Memphis.

Will be trying new initiatives for coming Academic Year

There is a planning disconnect related to funding and enrollments. By law the State law must have a balanced budget. The legislature is currently debating funding, but we won't know enrollment figures, which relate directly to funding, until the 14-day census at the end of September.

Each 1% enrollment drop results in a \$1.3-million drop in funding.

Question: Is there any movement towards increasing graduate student stipends and adding insurance coverage?

Answer: There had been money directed towards increased stipends, but following the shootings at Covenant School in Nashville the governor redirected the money to fund teacher school safety training. This may be a discussion topic for next year.

Following President McPhee's comments, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. for an incoming/outgoing senator reception.

Respectfully Submitted
Larry L. Burriss, Recording Secretary.