

**Faculty Senate**  
**09/12/2022**

The MTSU Faculty Senate met in regular session, Monday, Sept. 12, 2022, at 3:30 p.m. Senate President Stephen Salter presiding.

**Members present:** Jeremy Aber, Rafet Al-Tobasei, Anne Anderson, Jacob Avila, Vaughn Barry, Vishwas Bedekar, Lando Carter (via Zoom), Leigh Anne Clark, Michelle Conceison (via Zoom), Claire Cook, Douglas Dabbs, Elizabeth Dalton, Andrea Dawson, Carmelita Dotson, Laura Dubek, Tricia Farwell (via Zoom), Michael Federici, Robert Gordon, Lisa Green, Jeannie Harrington, Amy Harris, Samantha Johnson, Renee Jones (via Zoom), Kyle Kennedy, Rachel Kirk, Preston MacDougall, Patrick McCarthy, Kay Murphree, Kari Neely, David Nelson, Suman Neupane, Keely O'Brien, John Ouellette, Sharon Parente, Alicia Pence (via Zoom), Saleh Sbenaty, Philip Seagraves, Xiaowei Shi, Raj Srivastava, Andrew Wyatt

**Members Absent:** Francis Koti, Joan McRae, Todd O'Neill,

**Members Excused:** Andrea Georgiou, Ben Stickle, Suzanne Sutherland

MTSU President McPhee addressed the Senate and made the following remarks:

The Faculty Senate is an integral part of shared governance, and the Senate, through President Salter, is always involved in University policy decisions, and every major policy decision in the last two years has had input from the Faculty Senate.

There are several "headwinds" in Tennessee higher education having to deal with both financial and political concerns. Nevertheless, at all times and in all issues, the University is obligated to follow state and federal law.

The President said the needs of faculty and staff are his #1 priority. Related to these needs,

We must continue to improve enrollment.

University revenues are linked to enrollment.

Despite record state revenues, resulting in a state budget surplus of \$1-billion, higher education funding has not kept up.

According to the State Legislature, the state portion of the higher education raise pool has been limited to some 65% because of our inability to raise fees and tuition. Fee and tuition increases must be approved by the legislature, they have been reluctant to approve such increases.

The State Legislature says institutions of higher learning can generate their own income, but state law does not allow direct competition with private industry.

The University must develop new revenue streams that do not involve fee increases or compete with private industry. We are expanding corporate partnerships, but so are other high education institutions, which means there is increasing competition for a limited number of corporate partnerships. For example, the University is working with Amazon, McDonalds and Chick-Fil-A in corporate partnerships that bring in additional revenue.

At MTSU the majority of students are transfers from the community colleges. Unfortunately, community college enrollments have dropped, and thus transfers are also declining. Some community colleges revenue shortfall is such that they have also had to lay off staff employees.

Low birth rates at the turn of the millennium have also led to a shrinking pool of potential students. This is commonly called the “undergrad cliff.”

Despite this, MTSU has recorded a record number of applications, more than 12,000.

We also have a record number of freshman enrollments and first-time students.

Two years ago, MTSU had a record number of graduate students, but that number has dropped 10% this semester.

The new public safety program has attracted significant interest.

Following our move to R2 status we will be asking the legislature for several million dollars to support this move. Such appropriations have already been approved for other State institutions.

We must increase on-line programs.

The cost of new buildings is increasing dramatically. For example, the bids for the new Megatronics building were more than \$117 million over budget allocations. Despite this we must still move forward. Many of the LGI schools are experiencing cost overruns that are well above what MTSU has been able to negotiate.

Our major legislative priority is for state funding:

1. To work within the funding formula to increase University revenues.
2. We need state-funded budget allocations to complete the process of market raises.

John Hood has retired, so Bill Ketron will act as our legislative liaison.

We need to significantly increase graduate student stipends.

We need to complete various capital outlay projects.

Although numerous reports and studies show MTSU has a significant impact on the local community, there is no apparent correlation between this impact and legislative funding.

Gov. Lee will wait to appoint new member to the MTSU Board of Trustees. Although he has generally approved members put forward by President McPhee, there is no guarantee he will do so in the future.

Dr. McPhee was asked about rumors of a major restructuring of MTSU. He responded by saying he would avoid “draconian” restructuring “at all costs.” Any restructuring will involve not simply courses, major and minors, but external program activities as well

UT is “buying” students with \$65-million in freshman scholarships. This is extra money where as MTSU’s total scholarship budget is in the mid \$20 million range.

Dr. McPhee closed his remarks by saying we may not always agree, “But I respect your recommendations.”

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The Senate resumed the normal meeting agenda.

Senator Rachel Kirk made a motion to approve minutes from the May Faculty Senate meeting. Motion was seconded by Senator Vishwas Bedekar. Motion approved.

Senator Bedekar made a motion to approve the minutes from the August Faculty Senate retreat. Motion seconded by Senator Kirk. Motion approved.

President Elect Kari Neely reviewed PowerPoint presentations from the Faculty Senate retreat break-out sessions related to:

Senators expressed general dissatisfaction with the budget process, which is admittedly complex, and often seems non-transparent. Particularly the mystical “formula.”

Bonus (see item below on market equity).

The Senate was divided on the general subject of overloads. Overload work cannot be required, and is supposed to be compensated for.

Dual enrollment

Sustainability is an area of general interest.

There seems to be support for a café/bar/faculty lounge, but implementation could be an issue.

President Salter reported President McPhee favors market equity salary increases, but it is unlikely there will be money for a for new market study in the foreseeable future. Much of the market equity increase is based on “peer institutions,” but the

selection of such institutions is apparently out of the hands of faculty. Faculty would like more input into the selection of peer intuitions.

Everyone received a minimum of a 2 percent for market raises, based on what is called the CUPA data “market midpoint.” Assistant and associate professors were eligible to receive an additional market salary based on a combination of years of service and time in rank, up to the midpoint. Full professors could receive raises beyond the midpoint, also based on a formula regarding years of service and years in rank

In general, market equity raises may not have done what people wanted, but they did meet the formula

President Salter noted that Provost Byrnes favors the current formula; Dr. McPhee does not.

Senator Anne Anderson reported the data show assistant professors are closer to the formula mid-point than are associate and full professors, so it is not surprising their percentage raise is smaller.

A question was asked if the Senate can look into why people left the University in relation to pay and equity/market increases.

President Salter reviewed committee assignments.

The faculty Senate has three standing committees: Committee on Committees, Finance Committee, Bylaws Committee.

Other committees to be considered:

Election Committee/Nominating Committee to oversee the elections of Senate officers, steering committee, and Faculty Trustee.

Athletics Committee (to be chaired by Senator Suzanne Sutherland)

Sustainability Committee (to be chaired by Senator Jeremy Aber)

Academic Affairs Committee

Senator Dianna Rust reported on Athletic Department initiatives vis-a-vis the faculty:

Sept 30, 2022, football game activities will include a faculty appreciation night pre-game tailgate party.

Robert Gordon will be recognized for his efforts in classroom activities with students in broadcasting MTSU athletic activities.

Sept. 30 first game to acknowledge faculty

Other faculty awards will also be recognized during the Sept. 30 football game.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 for a Faculty Senate reception at the home of President McPhee.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Larry L. Burriss, Recording Secretary.*