2023 September 11 - Faculty Senate Agenda and Minutes

East Tennessee State University

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Faculty Senate Meeting Agenda

1. Celebrations / Good News
2. Introductions of Guests
3. Announcements
4. Guest Speakers
   a. Mr. Joe Smith – Faculty / Staff LGBTQ+ Association
   b. Dr. Amber Kinser and Dr. Allan Forsman – Faculty Ombuds
   c. Dr. Alison Davis, Director, ETSU Counseling Center – ETSU Counseling Center initiatives related to mental health and well-being for 2023-2024
5. Approval of Minutes from August 22, 2023
6. Action Items
7. Information Items
   a. Handbook Committee Update – Stephen Hendrix
   b. Board of Trustees Report – Steph Frye-Clark
   c. Notes from Meetings with Provost and President – Ginni Blackhart
   d. Reports from University Committees
   e. Other Items of Discussion from the Floor
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Comments from Guests
11. Final Comments/Announcements from Senators
12. Adjourn
FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

Meeting Date: 09/11/2023
Time: 13:00-16:30
Location: Culp

Next Meeting: 09/25/2023
Scribe: Ashley Sergiadis

Present: Alali, Walid; Beatty, Kate; Blackhart, Ginni; Blackwell, Roger; Blevins, Emily; Boa, Jen; Bradshaw, Patrick; Burns, Bracken; Bray, Sheree; Byington, Randy; Carnevale, Teresa; Chakraborty, Kanishka; Daniels, Jean; Desjardins, Mathew; Dowling-McClay, KariLynn; Dunkley, Lisa; Easterday, Mary; Ecay, Thomas; Ellis, Jon; Fisher, Stacey; Fiuza, Felipe; Foreman, Robin Ann; Frye-Clark, Steph; Garris, Bill; Geiger, Matthew; Gentry, Retha; Greene, Amy; Hauldren, Kacie; Hemphill, Bill; Hemphill, Jean; Hendrix, Stephen; Herrmann, Andrew; Hounshell, Jonathan; Kim, Sookhyun; Landis, Ryan; Lyons, Reneé; Mamudu, Hadii; McGarry, Theresa; Nivens, Ryan; O'Neil, Kason; Perry, Lisa; Robinson, Meg; Sayers, Adam; Schroder, Laurie; Sergiadis, Ashley; Thigpen, Jim; Trogen, Paul; Waller, Justin; Weise, Constanze; Yampolsky, Lev; Youngberg, George; Zahner, Matthew

Absent: Digavalli, Siva; Ramsey, Priscilla; Scott, Dane; Stevens, Alan; Uddin, Moin; Walden, Rachel

Agenda Items

Meeting called to order

1. Celebration / Good News

2. Introduction of Guests

2.1 Mr. Joe Smith, Faculty / Staff LGBTQ+ Association
2.2 Dr. Amber Kinser and Dr. Allan Forsman, Faculty Ombuds
2.3 Dr. Alison Davis, Director, ETSU Counseling Center
2.4 Joy Fulkerson, Staff Senate President
2.5 Karin Keith, Associate Provost for Faculty

3. Announcements

None.

DISCUSSIONS

1. Celebration / Good News

1.1 Yampolsky and his research team had their published image on the cover of an academic journal.

1.2 Sayers had a book go into an eighth language distribution.

2. Introduction of Guests

2.1 Mr. Joe Smith, Faculty / Staff LGBTQ+ Association
2.2 Dr. Amber Kinser and Dr. Allan Forsman, Faculty Ombuds
2.3 Dr. Alison Davis, Director, ETSU Counseling Center
2.4 Joy Fulkerson, Staff Senate President
2.5 Karin Keith, Associate Provost for Faculty

3. Announcements

None.
DISCUSSIONS

4. Guest Speakers

4.1. Mr. Joe Smith – Faculty / Staff LGBTQ+ Association

- **The Faculty / Staff LGBTQ Association** is open to all faculty (including adjuncts) and staff position as well as residents and postdoc fellows. Currently, the association has around 80 members. They meet periodically throughout the year and focus on social connections (i.e., no formal meetings, after-hours social events).

- Last academic year, President Noland asked to meet with them and listened to their concerns. The majority of our members feel safe and supported. However, there were some employees on campus specifically from the trans community who have felt unsafe. The association plans to have a similar meeting with President Noland again this year.

- You can visit their website and email the association at lgbtq@etsu.edu

**Byington:** Is there a relationship between Safe Zone and the Faculty / Staff LGBTQ Association?

**Smith:** There is not a formal relationship but there are some members who are connected to the Safe Zone program and the Pride Center.

**Unknown:** Are allies allowed to participate?

**Smith:** Yes, allies are welcome to join the events. There are also plans for a new ally organization.

4.2 Dr. Amber Kinser and Dr. Allan Forsman – Faculty Ombuds

- Ombuds are informal, impartial, independent, and confidential as detailed by the International Ombuds Association.
  - Informal: Ombuds do not keep records or notes. Because of this informality, nothing can be discovered and conversations can remain confidential.
  - Impartial: Ombuds advocate for a fair process not people. When they mediate a conversation, they remain a neutral party and do not advocate for one person over another.
  - Independent: The Ombuds is listed under the Office of the Provost but they are free from any administrative influence in addressing problems, resolving conflicts, or breaching confidentiality.
  - Confidential: They may report trends to the Provost Office but they do not reveal specific details. While ombuds are confidential, they are still mandatory reporters when it comes to imminent danger or risk of harm.

- Ombuds handle interpersonal (e.g., relationships between faculty and another person, whether student, supervisor, peer, etc.), intrapersonal (e.g., decisions, ethical dilemma, professional growth like advocating for oneself), and organizational issues (e.g., rights, rules, policies, etc.).

- Ombuds help faculty determine for themselves next steps but do not tell faculty how to fix the problem. This is through a culture of empowered engagement. Ombuds are trusted advisors and co-navigators. When faculty come to ombuds, they will encounter skilled listening, questioning, and constructive problem solving.

- Ombuds engage in shuttle diplomacy. With the permission of a faculty member, they can convey a message to another person and/or mediate (if both parties are willing to meet).

- Ombuds can educate faculty and host training or workshops on conflict resolution (different communication styles, facilitating difficult conversations, etc.).

- The ombuds are hoping that Faculty Senators will be ambassadors for the ombuds by encouraging faculty to speak to the ombuds as the need arises.

- The Ombuds has an office (Sherrod 449). However, they can meet virtually through HIPPA-approved program (e.g., doxy.me).

- Faculty can contact Ombuds at their general email address ombuds@etsu.edu, their individual email addresses (Amber Kinser – kinsera@etsu.edu or Allan Forsman - forman@etsu.edu). Faculty simply need to state in their email that they need to talk to an ombuds about an issue. It is in the best interest of the faculty to not add any additional information in the email. More information is available on their website.

**Sergiadis:** Can you mediate between a faculty member and someone who is not faculty (i.e., student, staff, administrator)?

**Kinser:** They would both have to come voluntarily.
DISCUSSIONS

Foresman: One of the involved parties must be faculty.

Beatty: What do you report?
Kinser: Broad trends. (Example: X amount of people have approached us about this general issue.)

4.3. Dr. Alison Davis, Director, ETSU Counseling Center – ETSU Counseling Center initiatives related to mental health and well-being for 2023-2024

- **“Be There” Certificate Program**: Students want to talk with the Counseling Center less and less but faculty and their peers more. The “Be There” Program is an online module that students can complete. It helps students develop skills to support their peers without being the sole resource. It helps with boundaries, selfcare, burnout, inclusivity, etc. Faculty may also find it beneficial to complete.
- **Peer Support**: A wide variety of student groups have requested support groups. The Counseling Center cannot provide a support group for all of them. They plan on launching peer support groups where they train a student to lead.
- **In January, the Counseling Center will be developing a “Supporting Students Workshop” geared towards preventative/proactive skill building for faculty on how to help their students.**

5. Approval of Minutes

Blackhart questioned whether there was an objection to approving the minutes from the 08/22/2023 meeting.
Sergiadis noted that Senator McGarry submitted corrections.

**No Objection: Minutes Approved**

6. Action Items
None.

7. Information Items

a. Handbook Committee Update – Stephen Hendrix

Hendrix: Susan Epps was hired by the Provost to work on the Faculty Handbook. She completed her tasks during the summer. The challenge are policies in the Faculty Handbook that need to be moved into policy. They are waiting for those to move forward by the President/Provost. The new Faculty Handbook will primarily be a resource of links that links out to policies rather than house them.

Keith encouraged faculty to review all the academic policies going out for public comment throughout this year.

McGarry: Who approves the Faculty Handbook?
Hendrix: Faculty Senate and Senior Leadership (Provost/President) both approve it.

Hemphill (J.): There are links on the current Faculty Handbook that do not work.
Hendrix: If you find those, please let us know.

b. Board of Trustees Report – Steph Frye-Clark

The Board of Trustees meeting will be on September 15, 2023 in the East Tennessee Room. All the materials are on the website.

c. Notes from Meetings with Provost and President – Ginni Blackhart

d. Reports from University Committees e. Other Items of Discussion from the Floor

Information Technology Council (ITC) – Hemphill
Hemphill (B.) stated that the ITC met over the summer and discussed Voyager at length. Blackhart stated that Karin Keith, Cheri Clavier, and Christy Graham will be attending a Faculty Senate meeting to provide
<table>
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<th>DISCUSSIONS</th>
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<td>updates on Voyager.</td>
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8. Old Business
   None.

9. New Business
   None.

10. Comments from Guests

   10.1 **Fulkerson** invited everyone to register for the [Equity and Inclusion Conference](#). Registration is $75 until September 22. Imani Perry will be speaking on September 28 as part of the conference. **Dunkley** encouraged everyone to sign-up to volunteer. **Gene Yang** (cartoonist) will be speaking at 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 29, in the D.P. Culp Student Center ballroom.

11. Final Comments/Announcements from Senators
   None.

12. Adjourn

   **Motion to Adjourn:** Unknown
   **Second:** Unknown
   Meeting Adjourned

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*Please notify Senator Ashley Sergiadis (sergiadis@etsu.edu, Faculty Senate Secretary, 2023-2024) of any changes or corrections to the minutes.*

*Note: Meeting minutes are not a word-for-word transcript. Statements and questions by Senators are edited and summarized for clarity.*
Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting with Provost McCorkle  
04/20/2023

**Question:** Please provide an update on where the new Faculty Senate office space will be located, if you have one. We are willing to share office space with Staff Senate and we also see this as a potential space for the ombudspersons to use when issues arise and they need to meet with faculty.

**Answer:**
- Provost McCorkle asked what the ideal space would be. Senators noted that having a conference room for the Executive Committee, future work groups, and appeals committee to meet would be ideal. The Executive Committee also has hybrid meetings, so having that technological capacity would be great. Senator Hendrix envisioned the ideal space as three offices (Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Ombudsperson) and a shared conference space.
- Provost McCorkle discussed this option with Joy Fulkerson, Staff Senate president. Fulkerson is consulting with the Staff Senate on what type of space they might need.
- Provost McCorkle will try to find a space by the end of the month. This will allow the Executive Committee to label the furniture to go to the new space. She suggested the library as a (temporary) space. It would be nice to have the space near CTE, another space for faculty.

**Question:** Last fall we discussed a clear plan for orientation events prior to the start of the semester. Has this been decided? We continue to want to avoid overlap of new faculty orientation, department meetings, college meetings, senates, etc.

**Answer:**
- New Faculty Orientation (NFO) will be scheduled soon. CTE is considering restructuring NFO from a two to one day event with additional recorded sessions. She is also considering having sessions throughout the year rather than having all the information on those one to two days. Karin Keith would like to have a strong mentor program for new faculty and plans on working on it over the summer. The CTE is also reviewing how they can support faculty at different levels (new, mid-level, established). Senators gave positive feedback around these ideas.
- All college liaisons have been meeting regularly and share a calendar that shows when events are scheduled.
- The Council of Chairs is being made aware of the events scheduled so department meetings do not conflict.
- Provost McCorkle has encouraged deans to meet all at the same time with their colleges.
- Senators reminded Provost McCorkle that their Faculty Senate Retreat is planned all day for August 22.

**Question:** Please provide a report on the SACSCOC accreditation visit.

**Answer:** The SACSCOC onsite team found ETSU in full compliance with all the standards and no findings with the QEP. They will make their recommendation to the full board in December. They felt that the QEP fit the mission of the institution well. ETSU provided them with additional information on faculty qualifications and finances during their onsite visit. Provost McCorkle noted that this was truly an institutional effort with many people across the institution contributing and writing.
Question: The new CON Dean is completing her second year. We previously discussed that reviews of administrators occur on a 4 year timeframe. There are some concerns that have been shared with faculty senators regarding the leadership of the CON. These include very high turnover of non-exempt staff, faculty both tenured and non-tenured (contract) faculty, with some leaving in the middle of the semester; concerns about transparency or clear communication of processes and a very top down style where faculty feel there is a lack of shared governance. Beyond utilizing the ombudsperson(s) what can be done when new administrators are hired or promoted to review them in a more timely manner than four years within a position? (We share this question with President Noland when we last met with him as well.)

Answer:

- Provost McCorkle is considering shortening the timeframe for administrator reviews. While we are in compliance with SACSCOC with the 4-year time frame, it may be more appropriate to have a 3-year timeframe.
- Provost McCorkle will conduct a more comprehensive review during the College of Nursing dean’s next annual review (specifically asking questions of CON faculty, staff, and administrators as well as peers). The CON dean is supportive of this change.
- Provost McCorkle tries to provide new deans mentoring. The CON dean was paired with the College of Pharmacy dean during her first year. The deans for the College of Arts & Sciences and College of Business & Technology did not have a formal mentoring assignment since they already had connections on campus.
- Provost McCorkle provides funds for professional development for new deans. Both the CAS and CBAT deans attended professional development at Harvard. The CON dean attended professional development specifically for nursing deans.
- Senators made some suggestions:
  - Deans need to be familiar with policies. Sometimes not knowing policies have created conflict early in deans’ careers.
  - Allan Spritzer (former dean of CBAT) used to have an onboarding for new deans. He might be able to give some advice on what new deans’ needs.
  - Deans not knowing the history of the college may also result in a bumpy transition. When Dean McGee started, the College of Graduate studies had just undergone a comprehensive review by a consultant for graduate schools. That sort of information is useful for a dean who is new to the institution.
  - The administration should pay attention to the amount of turnover. If a college is having a large turnover, then the reasons need to be explored. Provost McCorkle responded that she is in contact with HR about these numbers.
  - Staff and faculty (particularly untenured ranks) may not be comfortable discussing their concerns in their college. This can also depend on how well the college deans receive feedback. Anonymous surveys to all faculty and staff during reviews may help employees voice their concerns.
Notes from meeting w/ President Noland, May 1st, 2023

Juneteenth was recently made a state holiday. Will it be added to our paid holidays?

- Juneteenth – 2023 recommendation is to make it an official holiday and campus will be closed that day. Administration will work through the logistics from a course schedule perspective and this will likely be an administrative day in the future.

Faculty are asking questions about the implicit bias bill (Tennessee Higher Education Freedom of Expression and Transparency Act) passed that is meant to accompany the divisive concepts bill. Please discuss how this bill will impact faculty, staff, students, and ETSU in general. Some of the questions we have been getting include:

- How will this impact what we can and cannot teach in the classroom?
- If a student sues a faculty member as related to this bill, will ETSU represent that faculty member or will the faculty member have to hire their own council?
- Can we no longer ask for diversity statements for faculty searches?
- How will this impact which conferences we can and cannot attend (in terms of state funding)?

Response:

- Do not know everything yet as have not met with Mark Fulks about this bill yet – He will put a summary together that will be sent out to all faculty
- Diversity statements – can no longer ask for diversity statements for any search or hiring criteria – can ask interview questions regarding diversity during the interview
- University will represent faculty unless we knowingly and willingly violating the law (e.g., if President Noland had knowingly and willfully said Michael Knowles could come to campus, Noland could have been sued as an individual)
- President Noland does not believe it will impact what we are able to teach in the classroom, but Mark Fulks will send out information on this soon

Several faculty have brought concerns about disruptions due to events on campus, such as the drag show and Michael Knowles talk. Because of security for these events beforehand, faculty are not able to get to their offices or labs and students are not able to get to their classes. Here is one account that was shared regarding the Michael Knowles talk in Brown Hall. We have heard similar accounts from faculty in Brown hall and from faculty in the Brinkley Center prior to the drag show:

_I was locked out of (thankfully I have a key) Brown Hall, which houses my laboratory, this afternoon in preparation for the Michel Knowles event tonight in the BH auditorium. There is already a police presence outside of the building and 6-7 security guards posted in my hallway alone which contains one set of double locked doors that enter the back of the auditorium. Immediately upon entering the hallway, I was questioned and felt like I had done something wrong. Looks to be a long night for the security presence as they have brought with them small coolers and chairs._
When I asked a police officer why there was such a high level of security, I received a "that question is above my paygrade" response. When I asked the security guards about the situation, and shared that they were likely inhibiting the ability of students to attend their classes, they stated that the students could enter the other side of the building and cross over to this side on the floors above. Seriously? It's a hallway with only one set of doors to the auditorium with 5 security guards sitting directly in front of the door and the event doesn't start until tonight. Additionally, there are NO signs or explanation of what is happening on the locked doors without a posted security guard so students trying to access the building through these doors are likely leaving confused without attending class.

I am somewhat confused as to how having an event that will impede our students' ability to do what they are here to do, which is get an education, is beneficial to the students.

We recognize that ETSU has to allow these events (first amendment) and may need to provide security for some of these events, but it is unacceptable if these events and the security provided for these events prevents faculty and staff from doing their jobs and prevents students from going to class. We would like 1) advance notice about how these events may impact the campus, and 2) insurance that these events and the security provided for them will not prevent students from going to class or prevent faculty and staff from doing their jobs.

- Administration heard the feedback and intend to give advanced notice if this happens again and to not block people from doing their jobs or going to class, etc. Minimal disruption building may be the Brinkley Center, which is why ETSU is keeping the ballroom intact (and not converting to faculty offices). Unfortunately, this will have an impact on Digital Media and Computing.

Please provide an update on the final state budget.

- President's office will send out 2-page briefer on budget soon to campus. Nothing changed since last update – no money for capitol – no university received capitol money as that all went to TCATs. Big change for us is Pharmacy support, 2.5 million recurring, half of what they asked for. Board will ask for changes to fees and tuition for College of Pharmacy. No major windfalls at other institutions. No money for campus security – money instead went to build a new prison.

Please provide an update on the THEC Chair search.

- THEC Executive Director search – President Noland believes search will fail. They were supposed to meet next Monday and that meeting has been cancelled. The two leading candidates were apprehensive about their names being made public this early in the process and when their current institutions were informed, the candidates received competitive offers from their current institutions and decided to stay, leaving little left in terms of candidates. It is not known whether the Interim Director stay in place. Summer study will take place on THEC and make recommendations – will likely improve future search for THEC executive director. This impacts ETSU based on agenda released today –
will look at tuition increases only between 0 – 5.5%. Will go to Boards to ask them what they think fee increases should be. More to come here.

Updates:

- Brinkley Center ballroom will not be converted to faculty offices as ETSU needs an emergency space for large events and/or other campus needs (see above).
- Table top meeting was held to address gaps in campus security as there are a lot of new people at ETSU and in the community and public information offices are not necessarily connected. Several law enforcement agencies participated in this meeting, including JCPD, TBI, ETSU Campus Police, and JCFD to identify gaps in campus safety and they will follow up on that meeting.
- Schematics on new academic building presented to the Board and online
Meeting with Provost McCorkle (05-16-2023)

Commencement
Senators brainstormed the following ideas to improve ETSU’s commencement. During the afternoon spring commencement, much of the audience and graduates left before the ceremony was over. Senators focused on how to improve the attendance and engagement throughout the ceremony. Provost McCorkle will have an advisory group to discuss these and other ideas regarding commencement.

- Change the informality of the graduate’s entrance. Return to them proceeding together to begin/end the ceremony.
- Shorten the speeches. The Trustee commencement speech could be “On behalf of the Board of Trustees we commend you on this accomplishment.”
- Eliminate the speech from the Student Government Association Present as the Faculty Senate President does not give a speech either.
- Brighter lighting particularly on the graduates.
- Redesign the structure and experience of the graduation based on the needs/wants of the graduates. Survey students to find out more information.
- Faculty emphasize to their students the importance of staying for the entire ceremony to support all students.
- Move the ceremony outdoors.
- Have more ceremonies shorter in length (e.g., ceremonies by college). Students connect most with other students/faculty from their program and want to feel that connection at graduation.
- More contact between the faculty and graduates.
- Adjust our expectations of decorum during a ceremony. Formality and structure have lessened over the years with the prevalence of screens.
- Candid shots of people at convocation displayed on the screens.
- Go back to in-person training before the ceremony.
- Food trucks at the end of the ceremony for families who want to celebrate on campus.

Financial Aid
**Question:** Can financial aid be outsourced? There continue to be problems. Students who qualify for financial aid are not approved without extensive emails.

**Answer:** Provost McCorkle had not heard of this complaint before and asked for more details so she could investigate it further. Senators explained that they have high turnover but also require significant training time. Students have had issues with their scholarships dropping for reasons out of students’ control (e.g., grades were not in at a certain time).

Scheduled Events before Fall Semester
**August 16:** New Faculty Orientation [One day orientation with ongoing meetings throughout the year.]
**August 23 (morning):** Graduate coordinators
**August 23 (afternoon):** Colleges
**August 24:** Departments
**August 25:** Faculty Convocation

Other News
• Provost McCorkle and President Noland met with the College of Nursing to discuss leadership in the college.
• Provost McCorkle found an office for Faculty Senate and an office for the ombudspersons in Sherrod Library. The office spaces will not be large enough for group meetings, but the CTE conference room and Quillen Conference Room may be available.
Provost Meeting
07/17/2023

Question #1
With the change in the start of the semester it looks like all important dates and breaks shifted by a week. That means the ETSU fall break is now a week later than the JC schools’ fall break. Are there plans to address this in future falls? Even though it is not an official holiday for faculty many of us with kids take those days to cover childcare or to take time off with our families.

Follow-up to that question: We know that the academic calendar is planned a few years in advance. What goes into determining schedules for future academic years? Many faculty have asked why 2023-2024 is beginning / ending a week later than most academic years have in the past (and future academic years as well).

Response #1
Administration tries to align calendars with Johnson City schools fall breaks. Provost McCorkle is uncertain what happened this year. Moving forward, they will be extremely sensitive about this in future calendars. Senators noted that the next year calendar (2024) also starts later (on August 26th).

Question #2
For Provost McCorkle - Honors Classes have again been scheduled in large blocks of time that do not fit with courses in the "regular" course rotation. We asked that this be addressed last year, nothing has changed. Conversations with Dean Keller have a result of, "that's just the way we do it." Can Honors classes be moved to regular course times so the students do not have continual conflicts?

Response #2
Senators stressed that this disrupts classes that normally meet on Monday/Wednesday/Friday. This disruption happens across different programs. Honors students are negotiating with faculty to leave classes early and arrive to classes late.

Provost McCorkle and Senators agreed that it would be beneficial for a task force to consider this issue. Senators brainstormed ideas to consider:

- Consider scheduling (mostly) Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday classes to leave Fridays for meetings, open labs, etc.
- Making college more accessible to adult learners, such as more evening classes.
- Consider international students when creating schedules as their classes have to be onsite. This is leading to on-ground classes with primarily international students and online classes with primarily local students in some programs.
- Encourage cohorts with scheduling to help create a peer support network.

Question #3
Please provide us with an update on the Faculty Senate / Staff Senate and Faculty Ombuds office spaces in the Sherrod Library. (This is especially important as some unit moved our stuff to the Culp Forum and
Ashley had to move a lot of it out herself.) When will these spaces be ready for us? When can we get keys?

Response #3
Karin Keith will work to get the spaces and keys ready for Faculty Senate and the ombudspersons. Ginette Blackhart will be adding the AAUP Redbook to the rooms. Provost McCorkle stated that she can always order extra copies.

Question #4
Although it is not typical for Interim Deans do not typically remain “interim” for more than a year, for deans that remain Interim for more than one academic year, would it be possible to do a full review on their performance at the end of their first year within that position?

Response #4
- The work of the Academic Restructure Task Force has paused some dean searches until we know the results of the task force.
- Provost McCorkle is planning on requesting more input from faculty/chairs in the College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences, as they have had an interim dean for over a year.
- Senators stressed that the best way to get feedback was anonymously. Also, more details on how surveys are shared with administrators would be useful to mention when seeking faculty input.
- In relation to the conversation, Senators expressed that faculty also become concerned when they serve on a tenure/promotion committee for their own supervisor. This puts faculty in a vulnerable position and an opt-out policy may be useful. Provost McCorkle would like a culture where this is not a concern.
Notes from Meeting with Dr. Noland
07/14/2023

Question #1
Recently, the Office of the Attorney General for the State of TN asked Vanderbilt University Medical Center for records of all of their patients receiving gender affirming care with state insurance "in response to civil litigation."

It is my understanding that several ETSU employees' medical records are now with the Attorney General's Office. This is very concerning as an employee that the state appears to be collecting information about employees of the university based on received medical care and diagnoses.

What is the administration doing or prepared to do to protect the privacy of ETSU employees that may be the target of discrimination or harassment by the state of TN? In the current political climate it is concerning that the state may be singling out employees of our university receiving gender affirming care without an understanding as to the reason they are doing so. What assurances can you offer those employees to their safety, and privacy?

Response #1
According to President Noland’s conversations with legal and meetings in Nashville, the case is centered on fraudulent Medicare and not the type of care received. If this is the situation, then the case is about billing not privacy. He is still working on gathering all the details. Employees with concerns about individual privacy should consult with legal.

President Noland is currently exploring the university’s perspective in this case: At what point does the university act in the litigation of third-party providers (e.g., Vanderbilt)? What role does the university take to interject on behalf of employees in cases such as this? If the university intervenes, then it sets a precedence for the future.

Question #2
After the Supreme Court ruled that affirmative action cannot no longer be used in college admissions, the NAACP created a “Diversity No Matter What” pledge for colleges and universities in the U.S. (More information can be found at https://naacp.org/articles/naacp-launches-diversity-no-matter-what-pledge-colleges-and-universities; the pledge for university administrators to sign can be found at https://support.naacp.org/a/affirmative-action-pledge?_ga=2.53890728.1000086047.1689190044-1787805046.1689190044&_gl=1*9brwu4*_ga*MTc4NzgwNTA0Ni4xNjg5MTkwMDQ0*_ga_RVBYNEE1R4*MTE4OTExMDA0NC4xLiEuMTY4OTExMDA2Ni4zOC4wLiA.) Had ETSU already signed and committed to this pledge? If not, is the ETSU administration willing to sign and commit to this pledge?

Response #2
President Noland was involved before the Supreme Court’s decision, including signing an amicus brief. He is reviewing this pledge to better understand what this would require of our university if he signed it. The letter and ruling are targeted more towards institutions with highly selected submissions rather than institutions such as ETSU that do not have a selective admissions process. Examples: ETSU is an open admissions university (in other words most applicants are admitted with the exception of Quillen). ETSU has the Bridge Program, which supports the matriculation and retention of low-income and first-generation students. ETSU does not have legacy admissions. ETSU is in the process of partnering with
Tennessee State University where ETSU students will visit TSU for a few weeks and vice versa.

Question #3
It seems there has been a total breakdown in communication from ITS about the fact that they began charging all units and departments $120/ dept. email account. I spoke with the budget manager of our college this afternoon (Wed., July 12) and he didn't even know about it. Chairs seem to have only found out about a month ago? (And I am not even sure all Chairs know about it.) There is also massive confusion on campus about the difference between a shared email account (not charged) and a dept. account (charged the $120/year). Where did the breakdown in communication occur? Why do so many units and people on campus not even know about this? Why hasn’t ITS had more transparent and informative communications about this new policy? What is ITS going to do to fix this, and when?

Response #3
The Information Technology Council made the decision in May. The ITC representative can provide an update to Faculty Senate. Communication was directed towards specific employees/units that this affected rather than being university wide. Dr. King will contact President Ginette Blackhart to discuss this issue further.

Question #4
Although Title IX final rules release date has been moved to October 2023, how does ETSU anticipate the changes to impact the university and faculty, staff, and students at ETSU?

Response #4
The federal government is seeking feedback on proposed Title IX changes currently. At some point this fall, there will be new rules. The flashpoint issue is the possible rules regarding transgender students. However, we won’t know how it will impact ETSU until we know the new rules.

Other Notes
Voyager
The move to Voyager is still in progress. The business leger of the institution is now in Voyager, which is a major accomplishment. The system will be tested multiple times from now through December. Twenty town hall and listening sessions will be scheduled through August to October. We are about 7 months ahead of UT. Karen Glover announced her resignation on Monday. Christina Graham does not foresee any major hiccups with Voyager in relation to the resignation. Next year, ETSU will bid for the student-centered element.

The administration is reviewing how to best support the employees during the switch from monthly to biweekly pay periods, specifically during the first few months. Voyager is set-up for biweekly pay periods. Switching to biweekly pay periods will ensure that payroll is automated. (For example, all overtime is hand calculated currently.) Voyager also can receive updates better the less ETSU customizes the system.

Academic Structure Task Force
The Academic Structure Task Force has been meeting over the summer. They will have updates on their progress during the fall semester.
College of Nursing
Dr. Debbie Byrd is Interim Dean of the College of Nursing. Holly Wei is the Chief Operating Officer. ETSU will launch a national search in the fall.

Budget, Enrollment, and Capital Projects
- Enrollment is where we need it to be for the budget. Overall, it will be flat. ETSU has just over 2100 freshman at the time of the meeting, which is up from last year. However, our junior/senior classes are smaller due to Covid.
- Salary enhancements will most likely be a 5% pool – minimum of 4% raise and then possibly use 1% for market adjustments. This goes through the Board of Trustees in November.
- Budget from last year closed to a strong position. Fallout is between $4.5-5 million. $1 million will go back to the colleges and $3-4 million comes back to central administration. There will be less added to reserves than in previous years in order to support one-time capital projects. First, Millenium Center/Brinkley Center needs new central heat and air as the VA previously provided all the heat and air under an old agreement. However, the VA needs to buy a new chiller so they will no longer be providing the heat/air. Second, several renovations are needed to address ADA and safety concerns (e.g., curb cuts, elevators, etc.)
- Housing is at full capacity. Powell Hall is back in operation to house 80 students. Those students will be moved into other units as they become available. They are paying a reduced room rate. In addition, about 120 students are in hotels.
- The $29 million bonds from last year for housing are covering renovations, including central heating and air in Powell Hall. They are looking at the potential for new housing in the future.
- 244 steam traps are being replaced, which will create efficiency and cut down energy costs. We are on schedule for hot water to be ready for the start of the semester.
- There was some disruption with construction on Wilson-Wallis, but the building will be functional.
- There are plans for the old smokestack to be removed.
- The Campus Center building is being vacated. Dr. Alsop is still in talks about finding a new home for the train museum.
• We currently have 1,956 freshmen enrolled. (Last fall, ETSU had around 2,000 freshmen enrolled.) Enrollment of graduate students and total enrollment appear to be flat if not slightly up. Retention rates have increased by 3%. Enrollment will continue to fluctuate as the fall semester approaches.
• Housing is currently full – including the additional spots in hotels. They are considering ways to increase housing on campus – both this semester (e.g., giving RAs an additional salary to take a roommate) and future years (e.g., new residence halls).
• Bulk of the steam line will be done by the fall semester. Buildings will have hot water.
• Gilbreath construction may not be completed before the start of the fall semester as planned, but the campus is working on contingency plans. The renovations are great, especially the lab spaces.
• The Train Museum has a new home in a building near Founder’s Park.
• There may be adjustments to the implementation date on Oracle/Voyager to ensure everything is correct before launch. The biggest criticism of the move to Voyager is moving from 12 to 26 paychecks. The administration is reviewing ways to help employees with the transition.
• The task forces on General Education Redesign and Academic Structure have met throughout the summer and will have updates for the faculty on their progress in the fall.
• The administration is reviewing vacant positions, which they hope to reinvest in salaries (e.g., make market salary adjustments).
• The next Board of Trustees meeting is September 15, in which Dr. Noland will provide updates on enrollment, retention, etc.