

Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes
September 20, 2021

Submitted by K. Craven

Members Present:

Dan Allcott, Michael Allen, Sean Alley, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Steve Canfield, Melissa Comer, April Crocket, Kris Craven, Dennis Duncan, Mary Lou Fornehed, Steven Garner, Scott Hagarty, David Hajdik, Syed Rafay Hasan, Katherine Hermann-Turner, Tammy Howard, Samantha Hutson, Janet Isbell, Christy Killman, Matt Langford, David Larimore, Jane Liu, Mark Loftis, Chad Luke, Jeanette Luna, Ann Manginelli, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Kristin Pickering, Elizabeth Ramsey, Richard Rand, Christopher Reames, Lee Ann Shipley, Drew Sisk, Scott Smith, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, Dan Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Kimberly Winkle, Laith Zuraikat

Members Absent:

Stephanie Adams, Douglas Airhart, Troy Brachey, Yun Ding, Emily Lee, Lori Maxwell, Joseph Ojo, Holly Stretz, Russ Witcher

Guests Present:

Lee Wray

Call to Order

Call to order 3:35 p.m.

President Oldham welcomed all of the new Senators to the Senate and thanked all for their service to the university.

Capital Projec S4

COVID Concerns

President Oldham assured the Senators that he is working closely with the city, county, community, and school districts. They meet once a week and have a lot of conversations. Many have expressed that they are encouraged by the campus response and they feel the campus is doing well. The numbers are declining and we are currently at about half of where we were just 2 weeks ago.

Enrollment Numbers

President Oldham asked the Senate to consider the broader context when looking at the current student enrollment statistics. In total, enrollment was down 3.4% on the census date as compared to last year. Across the state, community colleges are down on average 6% and all of the major universities other than UTK and TSU are down. The increases at those two schools are mostly due to out-of-state students. Since the census date, there have been 60 or 80 new students admitted. Another factor is that the number of high school graduates is flat, but the percentage of those graduates who are enrolling at the college level has decreased substantially. This is a multi-year trend that is continuing, but could rebound. The number of returning students also dropped from about 78% down to 73%. The first-year retention rate is on par with normal and is mostly in the population of students who have not yet declared a major. This is also similar across the state. There has been a slight increase in the number of transfer students. The number of new freshman students didn't meet the expectations.

The administration is going to become more aggressive to combat this. The strategy is to work on increasing the number of scholarships by decreasing the ACT score and GPA requirements for receiving a scholarship. They have checked the financials and Tech has the funds for this plan. Currently, messaging is being developed and will be released soon. There is a lot more to it, but this is a very high-altitude flavor of the situation.

Another positive step is the Roane to Tech Program.

money can be spent. This method will be much easier for the students to understand the fees. However, due to the nature of the programs in Nursing, Engineering, Business, and Education students in those majors will pay a program fee which will vary depending on their specific major.

Question: The amount of compensation for those without the program fee is based on average of past 3 years expenditures before Covid-19. This average may be falsely deflated because some spending requests were denied and the budget during those years was tight. Will there be opportunity for it to grow with time?

Answer: That is how the amount was determined. This had to be approved by the Board of Trustees and it is hard to justify a need for an additional fee when the accounts show money that is not being spent. If departments are holding onto money for an insurance, it is hard to justify an additional student fee to the BOT. That is why the average was based on actual expenses with an added cushion. If the department needs to encumber funds for special projects, then this can be explained and justified. However, we need to use what we collect. With time the budget model should accommodate.

Question: Some departments may need to accumulate money for large expenses, like replacing expensive equipment. Will this be acceptable?

Answer: Yes. The department needs to follow the rules, but it can be done.

Question: How does this new fee rank among other peer institutions?

Answer: Substantially lower than UTK, but higher than some others. Overall, President Oldham believes that it is competitive. You want flexibility and not to raise it too quickly. We are not the cheapest but that is not where we want to be either. That would indicate a devaluing of the educational experience. This ties into the work on scholarships discussed earlier. He thinks this puts us in a decent place.

Covid-19

Senator Fornehed again updated the Senate on her experiences working in the hospital over the last week. There were 8 deaths over the weekend and talking to the families was very difficult. She discussed the need to constantly make critical care decisions about each patient. Her belief is that all of the current patients were unvaccinated when they contracted Covid. The current situation is much worse than it was earlier this year. Everyone in the health care profession is weary. Everyone getting vaccinated is a very good place to start.

Question: How can we support?

Answer: President Oldham has not received any specific needs or wants from Nursing. He spends time with Leigh Ray and sees that they are working very hard and doing an incredible job. It is different this year from last year. It is challenging to convince some people to get vaccinated. We are trying to get statistics for campus on the vaccine rate. One area is athletes. There has been some success there. Maybe half of that population was easily convinced and the

Adjourned 5:24 p.m.

Approved: September 27, 2021