

Minutes from the July 30, 2020 Meeting of the Faculty Senate

The Special Called meeting by President McPhee to address the Faculty Senate was held at 10:00 am, Thursday, July 31, 2020, via Zoom.

Attendance

Officers: Rick Cottle, Justin Gardner, Bob Gordon, Rachel Kirk

Senators: Sanjay Asthana, Sal Barbosa, Larry Burris, Lando Carter, Laura Cochrane, Claire Cook, Song Cui, Trevor de Clercq, Andrew Dix, Kathryn Fenton, Stuart Fowler, Seth Jones, Ryan Korstange, Rebecca King, Darren Levin, Alfred Lutz, Suzanne Mangrum, Preston MacDougall, Lei Miao, John Mullane, Kari Neely, Sharon Parente, Alicia Pence, Ariana Postlethwait, Joan Raines, Pat Richey, Brian Robertson, Garrett Salmon, Stephen Salter, Scott Seipel, Raj Srivastava, Suzanne Sutherland, Zhen Wang, Dennis Walsh

Excused: Rudy Dunlap

Absence: Jacob Avila, Vaughn Barry, Andrienne Friedli, Michael Hein, Francis Koti, Dan Morrell, Brian Parsons, Elizabeth Wright, Nat Smith, Andrew Wyatt

Mary Martin, Faculty Trustee, was also present for the meeting.

Administrative: President McPhee, Provost Byrnes, Joe Bales, Debra Sells, Bruce Petryshak, Alan Thomas, Heidi Zimmerman

Faculty Senate President, Rick Cottle, called the meeting to order at 10 am.

President McPhee addressed the Faculty Senate

President McPhee asked faculty to approach this time with the mindset that the decisions are being made in the best interest of the university with the information available.

President McPhee thanked the faculty for those who have gone the extra mile and noted that the executive lead team has been working nonstop. President McPhee said that he appreciates us. He is working to keep everyone informed. There have been seventy communications and updates from Dr. McPhee's office. President McPhee assured the Faculty Senators that he and the executive team are sensitive to our concerns and advised us to keep reading updates.

MTSU's plan to open this fall on campus requires tremendous support for faculty. Seven million dollars have been spent on technology for equipment and software to help professors teach virtually. President McPhee remarked that he and the rest of the leadership team wanted to see the faculty use the technology.

President McPhee announced that we are "holding our own" by sustaining our enrollment in undergraduates and seeing a small increase in graduate applications. He commented that "holding our own just didn't happen". Provost Mark Byrnes made some critical changes in the College of Graduate

Studies such as updating their application and tracking applications. Another positive change was the temporary reduction of the normal GRE requirements, and increased experienced of personnel working with the program.

Undergraduate enrollment is down for first-time freshmen. Many are taking a gap year. President McPhee understands the reasoning. Parents do not want to be stuck with a lease.

President McPhee praised Vice-President Deb Sells and the work of student advisors. Student advisors have helped the University achieve student success.

Vice President Deb Sells announced that there are slightly lower enrollments for freshmen and transfer students. The customs program this summer will be held online. Recruiters are doing daily Zooms. Vice President Sells also explained that any freshmen scholars' scholarships will still be honored next year. She also warned that enrollment numbers will be fluctuating in the next few weeks.

Earlier in July, President McPhee attended a Summit at the White House with President Trump and the presidents of other universities as well as a president of a community college. The community college experienced a 38% drop in enrollments for the coming semester. Dr. McPhee reiterated that we have people in place doing a wonderful job.

Newly elected President of the Faculty Senate, Rick Cottle opened the floor for questions.

Senator Stephen Salter asked about the net receipt of funds. President McPhee answered that MTSU is financed by tuition and fees and appropriations.

President McPhee continued that he is concerned about the surge of cases in this area. We are realistic, and not reckless. Dr. McPhee knows there is anxiety and understands. Realistically, we expect infections. We have put procedures in place for social distancing measures, masks, and disinfectant to mitigate COVID-19. MTSU has established a COVID-19 Resource Office hotline emails with a dedicated employee from the Health center to answer student concerns.

President McPhee addressed the current budget situation. He expected a 12% cut to the budget. MTSU lobbied Governor Lee's office and communicated that MTSU would not increase tuition and promised to take care of the students and employees. As a result, we still have to reduce the budget, but now only by 3%. President McPhee will be sending information and strategies to faculty regarding the 3% budget cuts. There is 6.5 million in mostly fixed costs such as the software maintenance licenses).

President McPhee answered the question that continues to arise, "Why? Why are we doing this (beginning the fall on campus)?" ; "We are trying to keep students."

Vice President, Information Technology Division, Bruce Petryshak, spoke about the new technology, OneDrive, provides lecture sessions out to 700 faculty members. The video and other equipment were difficult to acquire. The technology interfaces with other current systems. Students can choose the component. All faculty who do not currently have a laptop will be getting one. President McPhee stated that, "We want maximal agility." OneDrive offers four teaching version controls and provides controls for pair team editing. Mr. -Petryshak is confident all classrooms designated for Resource 25 will be ready for software. He also stated that FITC desktop support has been enhanced for faculty and student support. The goal to be there in 2 minutes. Additional training opportunities will arise.

Faculty are expected to use the software. President McPhee stated that there has been a lot of work done already. Professors have been doing professional development. The response of the faculty to the changes in technology have been gratifying.

Senator Suzanne Sutherland asked the President, "How will we know when it is time to stay home?"

President McPhee responded: We have 5 factors that we monitor 1. Mandate by state to close down. 2) Local and regional hospital/ICU capacity nears capacity, per public health officials. 3) On-campus isolation and quarantine rooms at full/near full capacity. 4). How do the confirmed case counts in MTSU and Murfreesboro compare to other counties, universities, and cities? 4). What is our ability to of quarantine and isolate students? 5) Absentee rates from documented illness of MTSU faculty/staff/students exceed acceptable margins to continue on-ground experience. A question about the conditions to relax campus restrictions arose.

Bob Gordon asked how the relaxing of the conditions would affect athletics and theatre. President McPhee informed the faculty that he had recently attended a Conference USA meeting. He stated, "We have not decided as a conference. Next week we will decide when NCA publishes guidelines."

Senator Pat Richey asked about travel.

President McPhee said that there will be information about travel sent out in the next few weeks. Ultimately, the virus makes these decisions, but the university is not going to shut down all travel, although there will be extra restrictions and considerations.

Board Trustee Mary Martin asked if convocation will be virtual? Deb Sells replied that convocation would be virtual.

Senator Kari Neely asked about the availability of childcare? Mark Byrnes responded that one childcare lab is already open, and that the University will be opening the two other facilities.

President McPhee said to expect a "what if" grid. Fall Faculty Meeting will be virtual.

Senator Larry Burris asked, "What is the reasonable last day to move everything online?" President McPhee replied, "We don't know yet."

President McPhee said that he wants to give faculty maximal flexibility. Provost Byrnes stated that the question everyone is asking is "How much change can we absorb?"

Senator Claire Cook asked for clarity about expecting students to disclose adequate health information.

McPhee assured the faculty that protocols have been established.

Vice President Deb Sells described some of the protocols that have been put in place. To answer Senator Claire Cook's question, Sells explained that FERPA allows sharing of health information if there is right to know. A student or faculty can fill out a form anonymously that states that a person seems symptomatic. Dr. Clark at the University Health Center will contact the person and start contact tracing. Contact tracing will be really important. Students will be using the same form as the report filled out by faculty. Want to be sure that language is clear to students. The university has enough tests for symptomatic students and will be able to offer tests for faculty and staff. The university is waiting for the rapid test.

Faculty were highly encouraged to add new syllabus language that stated, “We report anyone who is symptomatic.”

Senator Lutz asked about the temporary attendance policy and noted that it doesn’t apply to remote courses. Trevor de Clerq stated that Policy 311 is unclear in situations where attendance is remote. Zoom courses are considered live.

Faculty Senate pushed for a proposal for a change in the attendance policy.

A Senator stated that Dean Fischer addressed the problem of attendance by putting language in the syllabus that set the time commitment required for class.

Senator Kari Neely asked for clean guidelines for giving grades for incomplete and criteria.

Senator Kari Neely asked about the Title IX status.

Senator Dennis Walsh posed the question what is different now than it was in March? (when we shut down).

The President answered that the University continues to be concerned. The university has developed protocols and plans. The President is pretty clear about indicators. The university takes seriously the health of students. We have to be flexible. The virus is always changing. Be careful.

After the meeting with President McPhee ended, Faculty Senate President Rick Cottle addressed the faculty. President Cottle said that he has strengths and weaknesses. His strengths are his ideas and communication skills. His weakness is that he talks a lot. Rick said that the purpose of the Faculty Senate is to move the university forward. He wants every single faculty member to feel like they have a voice. He encourages the Senate to be clear about how important it is for us to communicate.

Senator Bob Gordon accepted the motion to be added to the ballot for the election for President-Elect. The vote occurred by proclamation. Bob Gordon was elected to the position of Faculty Senate President-Elect for 2020-2021.

President Cottle had a few topics to mention after the election.

1. Encouraged Senators to review intellectual property and temporary attendance policy.
2. He knows that dual enrollment is problematic and especially now. We will take up this discussion in the future.
3. There will be no faculty retreat this fall.
4. The first Senate meeting is at 3:30 on Sept 14th.

Senator Raj Srivastava moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Alfred Lutz seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Kirk

