

Minutes from August 22, 2023
Faculty Senate Retreat

The annual Faculty Senate Retreat was called together at 9:30 a.m., August 22, 2023, in the Miller Education Center, Faculty Senate President Kari Neeley presiding.

Attending: Joshua Aaron, Jeremy Aber, Rafet Al-Tobasei, Jacob Avila, Larry Burriss, Lando Carter, Leigh Anne Clark, Michelle Conceison, Douglas Dabbs, Elizabeth Dalton, Carmelita Dotson, Michael Federici, Andrea Georgiou, Lisa Green, Jeannie Harrington, Samantha Johnson, Kristi Julian, Rachel Kirk, Francis Koti, Phil Loubere, Alfred Lutz, Preston MacDougall, Patrick McCarthy, Richard Meeks, Joseph Morgan, Kay Murphree, Kari Neeley, David Nelson, Timothy Nelson, Suman Neupane, John Ouellette, Sharon Parente, Shannon Randol, James Robertson, Robert Rogers, Jim Rost, Dianna Rust, Stephen Salter, Raj Srivastava, Suzanne Sutherland, Sam Zaza.

Absent: Laura Dubek, Kyle Kennedy, Janna McClain, Joan McRae, Lei Miao, Martha Norkunas, Keely O'Brien, Jack Purcell, Phillip Seagraves, Andrew Wyatt.

Guests: Keith Gamble, Greg Jones, Michai Mosby, Mark Byrnes

9:00 Doors Open

9:30 Introductions – Kari introduced the Executive Board.

9:35 Orientation

Overview & Structure of Workflow - Kari Neely (President)

Bylaws - Suzanne Sutherland (President-Elect)

Parliamentary Procedure - Larry Burriss (Parliamentarian)

Communication Process - Joshua Aaron (Recording Secretary)

Financial Overview - Stephen Salter (Past President)

See slides distributed by Kari Neeley via email on Thursday August 24 at 3:58pm.

11:00 AI Initiative - Keith Gamble

11:15 College Caucus – Representatives from each college convened to discuss which senator would attend the following committees:

Standing committees - Committee on committees, Finance, Board
Ad hoc committees – Faculty Handbook, Faculty Engagement, Artificial Intelligence, Sustainability, Faculty Support

11:30 Small group discussions in breakout rooms

12:10 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 Greg Jones - Sr VP Education and Workforce Development @ Chamber of Commerce

Greg spoke to the Senate from 1:02 to 1:40. He left us with 5 main takeaways.

1. Rutherford County Workforce – Low unemployment but right where we were pre-pandemic. Labor force participation is strong! Rutherford County will work, and we have a young workforce compared to other communities.
2. National news and workforce trends – don't always go by the national level news. Look around to understand our local condition.
3. Some companies are adjusting to the fear of recession. Understand where they are and meet them there with educational and training opportunities.
4. Skills! Skills! Skills! Align education and training opportunities to the specific needs of the industry. (Supply and Demand) Social and Behavioral Skills #1
5. We must focus on our K-12 and especially high school students to inspire them into taking some post-secondary education.

1:30 Michai Mosby - Student Government Association, President

Michai began his remarks at 1:42. He thanked faculty for the job that we do and encouraged us to see ourselves as impactful mentors in the lives of our students. He discussed various ways that faculty can do a better job of engaging with students and acknowledged students can improve their own engagement.

2:00 Provost Mark Byrnes – Q&A

Mark Byrnes began his remarks at 2:10. He mentioned 7 topics in his introductory remarks.

1. Enrollment (numbers look pretty good, smallest purge in years)
2. Fall 2024 True Blue CORE
3. Quest 2025
4. Merging 3 strategic plans in to 1
5. SACS reaccreditation
6. Tracking fair use of AI
7. Divisive concepts (academic freedom still applies)

Mark engaged in a Q&A with the Senate from 2:21pm to 3:01pm.

Raj: lamented his Tik Tok career suffering.

Mark: Ask James Floyd.

Michelle: When trustees ask you questions, are there any that faculty can help you with?

Mark: Not really. Most questions are of a financial nature. In West Virginia, they are measuring the cost/benefit of particular programs.

Rachel: Is there a way to create metrics to help shape that type of conversation?

Mark: last November, the Board discussed it. We provided a one pager (front and back) with metrics.

Rachel: Mentioned the financial impact study of MTSU.

Mark: We still do that study. \$1.2 billion is the current impact. We are having to fight the battle that higher education is "worth it."

Stephen: Last year was enrollment Armageddon which led to a conservative approach to faculty lines. Will this year be better?

Mark: Last year, we cut \$5million. This year, we don't know.

Patrick: What is the anticipated timing of allocation decisions.

Mark: After the census. Mid September.

Patrick: The competition is already listing positions.

Mark: I am aware of the competitive disadvantage.

Leigh Anne: As we are redesigning curriculum, are there any preferences or prohibitions on delivery methods (face to face, online, hybrid)?

Mark: We are open to all of that. We are not taking a top down approach to delivery method. We do report space utilization to THEC, so we need to be somewhat cognizant of that.

Stephen: We need a new College of Liberal Arts building.

Mark: Yes we do. KOM will undergo a major renovation.

Lisa: Where are we being relocated?

Mark: David Edgar has the plan.

Stephen: Dorms are full. Any new ones on the horizon?

Mark: We have 2,800 beds on campus. Deb Sells and the President have been reluctant to build. There is a Public Private Partnership on the horizon. It will not result in a net increase in total beds. We know it is a competitive disadvantage to not have new, nice dorms.

Jeannie: Do we own the land across from the Miller Education Center?

Mark: The President has heard many ideas but has shot them all down.

Jeannie: What about a hotel?

Mark: We have a hotel on the horizon. Either on the Woodfins Lot or close to the football stadium. There is another hotel project somewhere downtown.

Josh: It will be on the site of the current Bank of America building.

Mark: Hopefully we can work with them in some capacity.

???: What about the national conversation about the prospect of doing away with tenure?

Mark: Board is not a huge fan of tenure. In our lifetimes, nothing will happen. 56% of the MTSU faculty are tenured.

Rachel: Asked for clarification on the 56%.

Mark: It is pretty stable, As people get tenure, people with tenure retire.

???: What are the odds on a Faculty Club?

Mark: Low. Too costly.

Larry: What about in a new hotel complex?

Mark: Hmm. I'll pass that along.

The Q&A concluded at 3:01pm.

Minutes are respectfully submitted by Joshua Aaron, Recording Secretary.