

Tennessee State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
September 19, 2024

Present: AVP Erik Schmeller, Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senator Reginald Archer, Senator Carlos Beane, Dr. Illeana Brandt, Dr. Valerie Brock, Senator Kenneth Chilton, Senator LaPorchia Davis, Senator Jason de Koff, Senator Poliala Dickson, Senator Cynthia George, Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Senator Sujata Guha, Dr. Retta Guy, Senator Mohammad Habibi, Dr. Beatrice Harris, Dr. Gary Jones, Jr., Senator William Johnson, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, Dr. Krystal Massey, Senator Nsoki Phambu, Senator Ljerka Rasmussen, Dr. Trena Richardson, Senator Twianie Roberts, Senator Brian Russell, Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry, Dr. ZaDonna Slay, Dr. Jason Smith, Senator Martene Stanberry, Dr. Toya Stoudemire, and Dr. Kimberly Triplett

Meeting started at 2:40 PM

AGENDA:

Welcome & Call to Order

Senator Tiriveedhi addressed the Faculty Senate and shared the meeting agenda. The meeting was called to order at 2:45 PM.

Approval of Minutes · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

The previous meeting minutes (from August 22) were approved by Senator Brian Russell and seconded by Senator William Johnson. The minutes will be uploaded on the Faculty Senate website.

Senator William Johnson mentioned that there is a Board of Trustees meeting on September 20, 2024 in the Farrell Westbrook Complex (Barn) at 9 AM.

Provost and Interim Vice-President of Academic Affairs Dr. Melton · Address to the Senate

AVP Schmeller mentioned that Provost Melton was unlikely to join today's Faculty Senate meeting, due to another meeting.

Student Affairs (TENTATIVE)

Dr. Bridgett Golman, Interim VP of Student Affairs was busy with the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees and could not join today's meeting.

Faculty Trustee Report · Dr. Young-Seigler; Faculty Trustee

Senator Artenzia Young-Seigler is busy with other meetings and could not join today's meeting.

Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi stated that the first three items of today's agenda will be on hold until Provost Melton, VP Golman, and Senator Young-Seigler are able to join.

Committee Reports · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

The committee members' names are on the Senate website. Senator Tiriveedhi asked to contact the current members to know exactly who is in the committees. If a member does not attend 3 consecutive committee meetings, that member may be removed – that is in the Faculty Senate Constitution. The committee chairs should update the committee list.

Senator Cynthia George asked to make sure that each College knows that elections are held in the Spring, and report to Senator Tiriveedhi.

Curriculum Committee (Senator Twianie Roberts) – the Committee met on September 12, 2024 and discussed leftover entry. The Committee hopes to meet next month and provide a robust update.

Post-Tenure Review Committee (Senator Kenneth Chilton) – Senator Chilton had a discussion with Senator William Johnson about post-tenure review. The Post-Tenure Review Committee will start working in October. Faculty interested in serving may email Senator Chilton. Faculty serving on the Post-Tenure Review Committee should be tenured faculty. The Board of Trustees wants a post-tenure system on campus. Other universities have post-tenure review, not as a tool for faculty removal, but as an assessment of quality of instruction and faculty activity, as well a tool for professional development. Senator William Johnson stated that the Post-Tenure Review Committee is a high-risk committee that will define the future of instruction. Faculty serving on this committee do not need to be a senator but should be passionate about the committee's goals.

Student Appeals Committee (Senator Brian Russell) – the Committee met this summer, and everything is going well.

Constitution Committee (Senator William Johnson) – it is a busy year for this Committee as they address various issues. The Faculty Handbook needs to be updated. The Board of Trustees

website and schedule of board meetings is available at:

<https://www.tnstate.edu/board/meetings.aspx>

Senator Tiriveedhi stated that the two committees (both ad hoc) that need complete population are the Post-Tenure Review Committee and Fair Funding Act Committee. By October or November, these two committees will need to provide updates. Senator Tiriveedhi stated that there can be a maximum of 4 members per College (minimum 2 members; and can always have non-voting members).

Benefits Committee (Senator Cynthia George) – some Benefits Committee members could roll over to the Fair Funding Act Committee.

Faculty handbook/constitution updates · Faculty Senate Vice-Chair and Senator William Johnson; Chair

Senator William Johnson said that the organizational charge of the Constitution needs to be changed, and strongly encouraged all senators to look at the Tenure and Promotion section of the current Faculty Handbook. The policies should be located in one place and not linked out. The senators were urged to look at the definitions and requirements of tenure and separate them from promotion. For tenure, the applicant needs to demonstrate good teaching skills. For promotion, the applicant needs to demonstrate impact and visibility, nationally and regionally. There are faculty whose priority is research, not teaching.

Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi asked Senator William Johnson to comment on APIP. Senator Johnson mentioned that APIP submissions were scored over the summer, and the dollar amounts were communicated to the VP and Academic Affairs. He stated that APIP is not out but has not been awarded.

Additionally, the executive leadership from R2 to R1 has collapsed. Senator William Johnson is not in charge. Information regarding payout and scores is in the hand of Academic Affairs. Provost Melton is in favor of payout, but the financial issue is being discussed at the President's level.

Senator Cynthia George asked if there was any conversation related to the faculty salary study report. AVP Schmeller said that Provost Melton realized the importance of the faculty salary study. However, it is not certain if Provost Melton has been able to push that issue to the President, due to financial challenges the university is currently facing. Senator George said that she would talk to the Benefits and Welfare Committee.

Faculty Survey update and Any other concerns · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Faculty survey update –

Senator Tiriveedhi emailed all faculty about the survey. AVP Schmeller and Senator Tiriveedhi are coordinating the survey, and it is conducted in a blinded way. A detailed report will be presented in the January 2025 Faculty Senate meeting. By September 5, 2024, 10 anonymous reviewers were chosen and put into 2 cohorts of 5 each. A total of 214 responses were received. No faculty members are identifiable in the survey. Each reviewer got about 45 surveys.

Reviewers will give their reports to Senator Tiriveedhi by October 7, 2024, working with AVP Schmeller. By October 20, 2024, the organization of the report will be discussed informally.

Around November 1, 2024, Senator Tiriveedhi and AVP Schmeller will meet with Provost Melton and go over the reports. Around November 15, 2024, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Board of Trustees will be briefed on the report, and the top 3 goals will be identified. By November 30, 2024, the report will be refined. Between December 1 and 15, 2024, Senator Tiriveedhi and Academic Affairs will meet with President Johnson to discuss the report. Senator Tiriveedhi will present the findings at the January 7, 2025 Faculty Senate meeting. The senators can then communicate with their respective units about the results of the survey.

AVP Schmeller is very pleased with the faculty's ideas – there was 49% faculty participation, showing faculty comments to enhance TSU. Senator Tiriveedhi is also pleased with the enthusiasm shown by the faculty.

Concerns –

Senator Kenneth Chilton commented that last year there were armed guards at the Avon Williams Campus (AWC), but those people are gone. There was concern as to what will be done with security on the AWC. He also mentioned about a college fair where there was no TSU presence.

Senator Brian Russell asked Senator Chilton if we have oversight over recruitment and what the strategies were. Senator William Johnson mentioned that we don't have oversight over recruitment. Previously, over 60% enrollment was out of state, but that cost us money. It was a reasonable request by Senator Chilton about bringing in people to oversee. Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry asked whether the Recruitment Office could help.

Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that the retention report from Student Affairs will be brought to the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Senator Ljerka Rasmussen asked to address the issue of registration. Colleagues in her department recognize the negative effects of late registration on students. Senator Tiriveedhi commented that this came up in several meetings. Academic Affairs is aware of this, and Provost Melton will address this issue in the October Faculty Senate meeting.

Senator Twianie Roberts mentioned about seeing no recent security on AWC after hours, and expressed concern as to why the security was cut in AWC.

Senator William Johnson commented about safety related to an incident that took place on AWC. He stated that it was a verbal assault and threat of harm against a state employee. The safety of our faculty and students is paramount. Senator Tiriveedhi provided a brief account of what had happened. On Monday, September 9, 2024, a faculty member walked out of the front door of the AWC at 1:20 PM. An unidentified person used racial slurs and threatened to kill the faculty (Full Professor). There was only one security lady present. The person had passed through the front glass door and presented a state ID to the security guard. The faculty member tried to get back inside the building, but the person chased the faculty into the building and continued with the abusive language. 4-5 faculty members tried to restrain the person. Senator Tiriveedhi has spoken to the faculty member. The faculty member has worked for 24 years and has never seen this type of incident happen previously. The faculty asked to teach via zoom for the next several weeks. The alleged perpetrator is not from TSU, as was later reported. The person was later identified, and investigation is ongoing. This incident raises questions and concerns about faculty security, which the administrators are aware of.

Closing Comments and Adjournment · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Faculty survey will end on August 28, 2024. The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on October 17, 2024.

Meeting adjourned at 4:07 PM.

Minutes recorded by Senator Sujata Guha, Secretary