

## Faculty Senate Minutes

September 9, 2024

**ATTENDING:** Jeremy Aber, Rafet Al-Tobasei, Angie Bowman, Larry Burriss, Leigh Anne Clark, Trevor deClercq, Carmelita Dodson, Kelsey Duncan, Michael Federici, Lisa Green, Jeannie Harrington, Natalie Hoskins, Samantha Johnson, Kristi Julien, Ron Kates, DeAnna Kempf, Rachel Kirk, Phil Loubere, Alfred Lutz, John Maynor, Patrick McCarthy, Janna McClain, Joan McRae, Lei Miao, Joseph Morgan, Kay Murphree, Kari Neely, David Nelson, Tim Nelson, Suman Neupane, Martha Norkunas, Keely O'Brien, John Ouellette, Sharon Parente, Jack Purcell, Shannon Randol, James Robertson, Jim Rost, Lauren Shouse, Everett Singleton, Carter Smith, Suzanne Sutherland, Andrew Wyatt, Sam Zaza, Kevin Zhao

**ABSENT:** Jacob Avila, Andrea Georgiou (excused), Preston MacDougall, Philip Seagraves

Suzanne called the meeting to order at 3:01pm and introduced MTSU President Sidney McPhee

President McPhee discussed an early concern that the FAFSA situation may negatively impact enrollment for AY 24-25 but the census currently showed approximately 2% increase from AY 23-24 with freshmen up 1.6% and increases in both returning and transfer students.

MTSU is still experiencing a lack of funding from the state for employee salaries and MTSU continues to make up the difference.

President McPhee opened the conversation to Q&A and responded to questions with the following:

MTSU is currently looking for recurring funds to support graduate students (health insurance, pay, etc)

President McPhee continues to recommend getting salaries to market before implementing incentive pay and that any incentive pay program would be problematic until salaries are fully funded. A few members of the Board of Trustees would like to a selective process when awarding salary increases or bonus pay. Board of Trustees has not articulated what "excellence" means nor has it stated what the end goals of an incentive plan would be. Senator acknowledged that current plan has incentive built into it since Chairs can choose to not give COLA adjustments to underperforming employee(s). Senator asked about other measures for excellence beyond financial considerations and the President stated that he has brought this up with the Board of Trustees without much success. He restated that the first priority is to key salaries to market. When asked about if the incentive pay would be a bonus or part of base pay, the President stated he would want it to go into the base pay.

MTSU True Blue Tour has restructured scholarships for the True Blue attendees and hopes that the new program will be more attractive. Currently the university will be offering a 50% discount on one courses rather than a specific dollar amount.

Suzanne introduced second guest speaker, Faculty Trustee Mary Martin

Martin began by discussing her perspective on the incentive plan by stating that faculty should be concerned with the goal(s) of the plan, implementation, sacrifices made, how much money it would take to make a difference for employees, and she encourage the senate to speak with a unified voice. Trustee Martin also reminded the senate that the Board of Trustees is a product of their success and several members are not used to being guided by external policies.

Senator asked what dynamics are at play when not official vote has taken place by the Board of Trustees and Trustee Martin noted that the President is feeling the pressure from a few board members.

Senator asked how the conversation has shifted from a bonus to being included in base pay when there are no recurring funds identified. Trustee Martin stated that the details may not be as important for the board and that it may be beneficial to see how peer institutions handle similar matters.

Senator asked about any perspective on movement from R2 to R1 status. Martin responded that the board recognizes this will take significant funding source(s) but that they do not understand teaching load would reduce. Martin stated that when faculty retire, the salary of their replacement(s) may be significantly higher.

Trustee Martin concluded by stating that the Board of Trustees does not always understand what faculty do outside of the classroom and this may be lost in the incentive pay system.

Michael Federici moved to approve Faculty Senate Minutes from April 2024. Motion was seconded. Unanimous approval. No abstentions.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS - Suzanne**

Reminder that the bulk of work happens in committees which allows for full senate meetings to work efficiently. The first meeting for all committees should take place prior to the September 30th Steering Committee meeting.

CLA Steering Committee Representative nominations are needed.

Faculty Trustee nominations are due December 14th. Eligibility requirements are as follows: must be a tenured, full-time faculty member who has at least 7 consecutive years at MTSU, performed less than 50% of their work in the area of administration during these 7 years, and served at least one year on Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate Steering Committee will review nominations for eligibility and present a ballot to the Faculty Senate for a vote at the beginning of the Spring semester.

NIA proposal deadline is October 11th. Having an increase in proposals may help with convincing the Provost we need to continue increasing the number of NIA awards. Current goal is set at 25 awards per academic year.

Funding for MT-IGO is going to be doubled during AY 24-25. Starting AY 25-26, internal research funding will be housed within colleges and administered by deans. Join the Academic Affairs Committee if interested in working on issues with MT-IGO. Provost will be requiring deans to have guidelines for allocation and make available to faculty. Revision to Policy 23 slated for the fall of 2024.

Canvas demo to take place and details will be announced at a later time.

Please make sure new faculty sign up for Sick Leave Bank during open enrollment.

#### **INCENTIVE PAY - Kari Neely**

Reminder that anything coming from the committee will be a recommendation and could be changed or ignored. With the \$1.5M set side for incentive pay, approximately \$2500 per employee would be the potential, depending on how the system is developed. Several

senators questioned the ability for this system to continue if the awarded amount goes into base pay rather than being considered a bonus and that state appropriations are the only place to get recurring funds. Taking from this allocation would impact COLA. Kari noted that the new deadline for a committee plan is Thanksgiving and that she has left the committee due to increased meeting schedule and fluctuations in proposed structures. Senator noted that replacing Kari might signal, to the Board of Trustees, that there is faculty support for this directive.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55pm