

## University Assembly

April 17, 2024

### TEAMS Meeting

**Members Present:** Alley, Atkinson, A. Brown, Burch, Carlile, Christen, Comer, Craven, Dewar, Donadio, Fennewald, Fornehed, Foster, Frye, Hanna, Hutson, Langford, John Liu, Loftis, Mabry, Majors, H. Mills, Mullen, Nelson, Null, Ojo, Owens, H. Park, Payne, Rajabali, Roberts, Russell, S. Seiler, Darron Smith, Scott Smith, Troy Smith, Smith-Andrews, Suters, Turner, Upole, Warren, Weathers, Wheeler (Stinson Proxy), B. Wilson, M. Wilson, Winkle, Yelamarthi, Zagumny.

**Members Absent:** Anderson, Canfield, Creter, Crockett, Ding, Edmonds, Edwards, Gotcher, Hale, Hasan, Kennedy, Killman, Le Borne, Jane Liu, Macleannan, Manginelli, Myers, Natrass, Reames, Rice, J. Shank, Shipley, Slater, Spears, L. Taylor, Tidwell, Westbrook.

**Others Present:** Allen, Baker, Braswell, L. Bruce, Aleta Cannon, Huo, Jason Luna, Oldham, Polk-Johnson, B. Seiler, Diane Smith, Vedder, Wilkerson, Wray, Wright

#### Summary of Proceedings:

Approved agenda

Approved minutes from November 15, 2023

Received annual report for Information Technology Committee

Received annual report of International Affairs Committee

Received annual report of University Planning Committee

Received report of the Academic Council for Spring 2024

Received report of the Administrative Council for Spring 2024

Received report of the QEP Selection Committee

Received remarks from President Oldham

Other such matters

## **Proceedings:**

President Oldham called the meeting to order. Sandi Smith-Andrews motioned to approve the agenda and Holly Mills seconded. Motion APPROVED.

A motion to approve the minutes from November 15, 2023, was made by Holly Mills and seconded by Mary Lou Fornehed. Motion APPROVED.

Brian Seiler presented the annual report for the Information Technology Committee. Seiler reported that new subcommittees were established during their meetings. Seiler stated that work was done by ITS and the ITC on the TAF Project Proposal submission page to make it easier for faculty, staff, and others to submit proposals for TAF funds to benefit students. The changes would be ready to go live once the project cycle was completed. Seiler reported that Sharon Holderman was elected to serve as the ITC chair, effective July 1, 2024.

Holly Mills motioned to accept the Information Technology Committee annual report. Sandi Smith-Andrews seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Charlie Wilkerson was not present to present the annual report for the International Affairs Committee. Diane Smith said she would reach out to his office and President Oldham moved forward with the next annual report.

Dewayne Wright presented the annual report of the University Planning Committee. Wright thanked the four faculty leads and other faculty and staff that served on task forces and committees, specifically the General Education Vision Committee, Holly Anthony, and Allan Mills. It helped establish a foundation for discovering where the general education program should be in the future. The committee would be having a final meeting to review materials as a committee and present the report to the Provost and President Oldham before making the report public.

Wright pointed out the SLOs and POs section in the report and thanked everyone who linked their work back to the strategic plan as reaccreditation was approaching. A section of the report must demonstrate that the strategic plan was being used at the program-level. Wright noted that he was appreciative of those who linked their student learning objectives or program outcomes to the Tech Tomorrow plan and explained that he was available to assist anyone in doing this.

Kimberly Winkle motioned to accept the University Planning Committee annual report. Scott Christen seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Kimberly Winkle presented the report of the Academic Council for spring 2024. Academic Council met three times during the spring semester. On January 31, 2024, a concentration name change was approved, on March 6, 2024, a change of admissions requirements was approved, and on April 10, 2024, annual committee reports were approved. A new MS degree program, two new minors, five new concentrations, and two program name changes were approved. Winkle thanked the Academic Council, as well as Amy McCoy and Angie Denson for their hard work.

Brenda Wilson motioned to accept the Academic Council report. Mustafa Rajabali seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Mary Lou Fornehed presented the report of the Administrative Council. Administrative Council met one time on April 3, 2024. Much of the meeting was submission and approval of annual reports that report to Administrative Council. Administrative Council received an information-only item for Policy 113 (Record Retention and Disposition) for a technical change and approved revised 606 Student Monies Allocation Committee and revised University Safety and Environmental Committee procedures.

Andrew Donadio was elected as vice chair of Administrative Council and Kristine Cravens was elected as new chair as of July 1, 2024. Fornehed wanted to thank everyone who served on Administrative Council, and she enjoyed being chair. Fornehed thanked Diane Smith for her work.

Mary Lou Fornehed motioned to accept the Administrative Council report. Scott Christen seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Lenly Weathers presented the report of the QEP Selection Committee. Weathers noted that in 2026 was time for reaffirmation of accreditation and there was a requirement for a quality enhancement plan. The Selection Committee worked this past fall and this spring on surveys of employers and a Qualtrics survey of faculty, staff, and students for QEP topics. There was then a call for mini proposals that ended in March and the QEP Selection Committee voted unanimously for the topic Transferable Skills and Career Readiness. This was based on the mini proposal entitled “Enduring Excellence: Cultivating Transferable Skills for Academic Success and Lifetime Achievement.”

Weathers explained that transferable skills, also known as durable skills, were typically what students learn in general education and continue to learn throughout their curriculum. This includes critical thinking, oral communication, written communication, and other topics. They follow the competencies adopted in Career Services. Next year, QEP would focus on this topic and expand the QEP document. Weathers had recently spoken to Faculty Senate and there was excitement about this topic.

Brenda Wilson motioned to accept the QEP Selection Committee report. Mustafa Rajabali seconded. Motion APPROVED.

President Oldham noted that Charlie Wilkerson had joined the meeting and asked him to present the International Affairs Committee report. Wilkerson presented the report and explained that two policies were renewed. One was Policy 240 (Full Course of Study Requirements for International Students), and the other was Policy 246 (Recruitment of International Students). Dr. Dennis Duncan was reelected as chair of the committee. Duncan had attempted to schedule an appointment with John Smith regarding recruitment and establishing an international scholarship through the alumni.

Wilkerson explained that during both meetings, the Center for ESL was discussed. It currently had 12 students and 12 students had matriculated. During the committee meetings, questions were asked about Wilkerson's recent trip to the Gulf where he had meetings with Ministers of Education of several countries.

Holly Mills motioned to accept the annual report of the International Affairs Committee. Mary Lou Fornehed seconded. Motion APPROVED.

President Oldham thanked everyone for their work and contributions on the reports summarized in the meeting. Oldham stated recruitment was going well and there was a record number of freshman applications for next fall, about 9,500, with 7,500 admitted at that time. This was above historical numbers in applications. It can be difficult because students were submitting applications to multiple campuses more so now than previously. Recruitment had gotten stronger, particularly in suburban counties of Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Tennessee Tech had begun to see applications from students who don't typically apply. Even if they chose to attend elsewhere, there is now more of a chance for them to attend Tennessee Tech.

President Oldham stated that personalized marketing and campus tours appeared to be working well. Upgrades have been made to Tech to You visits around the state and it seemed to be making a difference. The Presidential Scholarship program had been doing well and current estimates of acceptance were higher than those of last year. Having Cookeville highlighted as Tennessee's college town appeared to have resonated well in marketing efforts which is positive. There was an increase in transfer applications which have previously been lower the last couple of years. Lee Wray confirmed there was about 100 transfer applications ahead of last year at that time.

Oldham noted that there was continued use of focus groups and market surveys to understand the continually changing dynamics of recruitment and enrollment. Oldham thanked everyone on campus for a campus-wide approach to recruitment to individual programs and faculty involvement. It had made a difference to be able to speak with faculty and programs students were interested in and this can be heard in the feedback from students and their families regularly. Students and their families have felt welcomed and like they have a place on campus. President Oldham thanked everyone again for their additional labor and stated it had paid off and made a difference.

President Oldham noted final results of the state budget have not yet arrived. In an update on the supplemental budget, Oldham noted that it appeared in addition to the three percent salary pool, the state would provide around \$2,500,000 dollars in capital maintenance for the Wattenbarger Auditorium project. It appeared there was a possibility to get another \$1,000,000 one-time funds for Rural Reimagined next year. Additional funding is possible before the legislature goes out of session. The overall budget looked to be in good shape and a good, proposed budget was being prepared for June. There would be a focus on continuing the work with the compensation study and salaries as priorities.

President Oldham noted that most of the group should have received some of the information from Human Resources regarding the compensation study. There might be lingering questions,

but Human Resources would provide additional town halls and other events to allow questions. The first round of market adjustments take effect at the end of this month and would impact a large portion of campus in terms of personnel. The goal was to start with personnel whose salaries were furthest from their competitive median of their respective markets and move them closer to the median. Some colleges received additional help because they were further from their median. Support staff have received the largest boost, but this was only the first round, and it was intended to use part of the three percent salary pool to continue to make market adjustments in July.

Oldham stated that priorities would be set in July to address the new job classifications and faculty and staff who were below the minimum of their pay range for their new classification. The intent was to get everyone at or above the minimum pay range for their new classification. This was to be taken care of in the summer. President Oldham explained to keep sending questions to Human Resources and they would be answered. This was a multi-step process that would continue to be worked through.

President Oldham explained that Capital Projects was at the end of a few major projects. The Peachtree Road Project had neared completion, with around one to two months left. The Ashraf Islam Engineering Building should be turned over to the campus this summer, likely in June, to begin the process of moving in. The Johnson Hall renovation, the JJ Oakley Innovation Residence Hall, and the ACME Engineering Building were all in various states of the design process.

Oldham noted that final approval for the Nuclear Engineering degree should come shortly from THEC. This would hopefully get started in the fall. President Oldham gave a special thanks to the Provost, Dean Slater, and everyone in the College of Engineering for having supported the effort and putting in the work to make it possible. President Oldham noted that the goal of \$40,000,000 for research activations had been surpassed and was closer to \$43,000,000 for the fiscal year and still counting. Oldham congratulated everyone on campus who had made that possible, specifically Dr. Liu and the Office of Research for their support and leadership.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech continued to be a place of great value and return on investment among Tennessee public universities. Graduating students continued to be in high demand and saw the highest starting salaries of any public university. Oldham accredited this to the experience students received here and the quality of the work being done across campus.

Other such matters: Sandi Smith-Andrew noted that she and Lee Wray had been working on new procedures for University Assembly and hoped to have them ready to present to the respective councils in the fall.

President Oldham noted that he had walked through the research posters in Memorial Gym before the meeting and recommended everyone stop by for the event the following day at 11:00 am to see the quality work being presented.

Twanelle Majors asked when the second round of pay adjustments would be seen and when merit-based raises would be seen in paychecks. President Oldham explained that for staff, the

adjustments would be seen on the July paycheck and for faculty it would be on the August paycheck. The merit-based raises would be included in the July checks as well. Majors then asked if the July paychecks for staff would have retroactive pay. President Oldham explained that they would not. She then asked if lecturers in the College of Arts and Sciences would be grouped together and if there was a process in place for those who felt their new classification needed a correction. President Oldham explained they were being looked at in groups and not granularly yet and Kevin Vedder confirmed there was a draft for that procedure in process to address immediate corrections and others that would be addressed once the plan was in place.

Brenda Wilson asked how the minimums for faculty pay ranges were determined. President Oldham explained that faculty were evaluated differently than staff and that they have historically had accurate market comparative data. The Provost's Office worked closely with deans to ensure starting salaries were compatible with competitive data from CUPA. Wilson then asked what the goal was for faculty in step two, as the email from Human Resources said step two was getting employees to the minimum. President Oldham explained that there would be a continued look into groups of faculty by college primarily to see how far they were from the median and attempt to move the whole group closer to the median. Wilson asked if both CUPA and the Mercer study were both considered for faculty in the compensation study. President Oldham explained that Mercer used CUPA data and determined comparative and competitive distributions based on that data.

Julie Baker asked for clarification whether staff would start seeing increases that move them closer to the minimums this summer, or if staff would be at the minimum by this summer. President Oldham explained that based on what was known now it would be possible to make the adjustments to move staff to the minimum with the July budget but would remain a priority if not possible.

Mustafa Rajabali asked how the market median compared to the market minimum salaries. President Oldham explained that in most cases the market median was also the midpoint for a particular classification. The goal was to get staff in the range with their new classification, and in most cases the pay range was significantly higher than it had been for the old classification. This should make it easier to retain staff and adjust with market changes.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:26 pm.

Diane Smith, recorder

Documents on file with minutes:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of November 15, 2023
3. Received annual report for Information Technology Committee
4. Received annual report of International Affairs Committee

5. Received annual report of University Planning Committee
6. Received report of the Academic Council for Spring 2024
7. Received report of the Administrative Council for Spring 2024
8. Received report of the QEP Selection Committee