

Dear Faculty Senate Colleagues,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this Retreat and to tell you how proud I am to be serving as Senate President this year. As you will no doubt hear from our President, Chancellor, and Provost today, there are many opportunities open to us at UTK, the institution is viewed as being on the rise according to many metrics and our role as Senators is to assist our colleagues in advancing the Academic mission of UTK. Thus the theme for today's gathering "Planning for Academic Excellence". Our Chancellor has regularly remarked that there are few institutionalized components of UT that take a broad perspective across time and the institution aside from our Senate. Administrators and students come and go, but the faculty are here long-term (at least some of us). Our responsibility as faculty leaders is to encourage planning for UTK to be the best we can under our resource constraints; to collaborate with the UT family of students, administrators, alumni, and staff to accomplish the various educational missions of our diverse campus; and to enhance the welfare of the citizens of our State.

Much of the advancement of UT is due to the faculty. UTK faculty are doing their jobs very well. You have all noted that we have significantly greater numbers of students on campus now than 4 years ago, yet we have successfully dealt with the increased demands by these increasingly better prepared students with essentially no increase in faculty - the regular faculty numbers have remained essentially flat over the past four years. Yet we don't hear students complaining about the "Big Orange Screw" anymore. Though some might claim this is due to better administrative actions, I would argue that it is mainly due to the faculty's ability to provide a high quality educational experience. The faculty are doing their jobs very well.

If you compute the average external funding that comes to UTK, essentially all of which is generated by our faculty, the average for the last year with complete data (2004-5) is \$135,406 per faculty member. This includes all regular faculty, including disciplines that generate little external funding. The average faculty salary that year, including fringe benefits was \$97,520. This means the faculty generate over \$37,000 per faculty to fund this institutions budget. With an effective F&A rate of 20%, the faculty are generating, over and above their salary and fringe benefit cost, about \$7M per year (taking the  $\$37,000 \times .2 \times \text{number of faculty}$ ) to cover base budget expenses at UTK. We are doing a tremendous job in terms of paying our way for this institution's expenses. More than this, the amount of external funding brought in has increased by 26% over the past 3 years. We are doing our job better and better.

The above does not count the multitudinous ways that faculty contribute aside from external funding. Our colleagues in the Business College generate 20% of the total budget of the College through their Executive Education activities. Ask any of our development officers how important faculty are to their activities raising funds from alumni, and they'll tell you the faculty are essential. The faculty are doing their jobs very well.

Despite doing our jobs very well, we are very limited due to constraints imposed upon us. Some of these are structural and can be changed - such as the fact that interdisciplinary interactions are constrained by the East campus/West campus divide that affects our abilities to carry out innovative teaching and research across the divide between two separate System units. Some of these are resource constraints that clearly are not in the best interests of the State - though it is great that an initiative is being developed by the State to offer more opportunities for nurses to obtain graduate training, we are turning away over 120 students fully qualified after two years here to progress to the nursing degree program, but there is no space for them - this in a time when there are critical shortages of nurses everywhere. Our Business College, to continue its march upward in the rankings needs to at least double and preferably quadruple its regular MBA program. And these are just a couple of examples of programs that we are ideally suited to operate here, but cannot. Our challenge is to convince our legislators that our State needs our expertise, and the future of the State in many ways depends upon the resources provided to us. We can continue to improve, but this requires a partnership - the faculty and administrators here cannot do it alone.

This Retreat is designed to get us off and running this year by thinking about planning for excellence, hearing from administrators who we must work with to best make use of the opportunities presented to us, and discussing our hopes for the future with Board of trustees members. I'll say more about the breakout sessions later, but I do need to point out that the most talked about issue that has arisen recently, the merit salary debacle is specifically not on the agenda for this Retreat. I expect that there will be actions taken by the Senate in response to this, but that will follow committee deliberations. Look at the Senate President's web site for all kinds of issues that we have been dealing with.

Finally, there is a song from the 1880's called *Pans of Biscuits* about an old farmer with verses

"I saw an honest farmer. His back was bending low.  
He's picking out his cotton as fast as he could go."

and chorus

"It's pans of biscuits, bowls of gravy, Pans of biscuits we shall have."

and probably the saddest verse is

"I've toiled all my lifetime and still I find I'm poor  
Without an education. My children's left my door."

(one of the most frightening things for any parent is to have their children turn away from them as happened to this farmer).

This farmer's idea of heaven was pans of biscuits and bowls of gravy that was the limit of his imagination of what he could ever have.

I'm not satisfied and our faculty are not satisfied with pans of biscuits, we have much higher aspirations and hope to convince our legislators that it is in the best interest of the State to at least provide a little bit more "greens" to go along with our biscuits and gravy.

Now regarding the Breakout sessions for the Retreat, these are all structured around the theme and we have facilitators for leading these. Here are some of my comments on each breakout:

(1) Objectives and Challenges for Faculty Scholarship - Matt Murray

How can we better utilize the resources we have to enhance scholarship opportunities, what limitations are there that might be amenable to fixing, how can we entice more students into joint scholarship activities with faculty, how can we better mentor new faculty in dealing with the multiple teaching and scholarship tasks they have.

(2) Developing New and Modified Curricula - Marianne Breinig

We have a real change in students here - how can we ensure that we offer curricula that meet their higher abilities. Can we eliminate "remedial courses" (e.g. high school math) and offer different challenges?

(3) Institutional Impediments and Suggestions for Changes - Beauvais Lyons

The big orange screw may not be affecting students but many faculty feel it affects them - what constraints are there that affect our colleagues regularly that we might better handle.

(4) Developing an Interdisciplinary Agenda - Neal Schrick

The Chancellor has been regularly complaining that faculty stay in their offices, that there are few interdisciplinary initiatives (though he regularly points out the success of MARCO), and that a great university needs to have faculty collaborating between disciplines. I can argue with these assertions, but my thinking for this breakout session was to elucidate ways that might enhance more faculty collaborations (in teaching, service as well as research) and point out structural problems that the Provost may not be aware of that limit this.

(5) Ready for the World Potential New Initiatives - Mike Fitzgerald  
Auditorium rear

To make this successful requires far more faculty participation than has occurred so far and more than simply setting up a collection of lectures and events. What can we reasonably do so that 5 years from now we can say that this program has actually had impact.

Thank you all for participating today - I look forward to a great year.

Louis J. Gross  
President  
UTK Faculty Senate 2006-2007