

Tennessee University Faculty Senates (TUFS)

Proposed Resolutions for Adoption by Member Senates (August 2010)

1. Faculty and Staff Bonus Distributions

RESOLVED, that TUFS support the legislative plan that the one-time bonus be based on longevity.

2. Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Chancellor

RESOLVED, that TUFS should contact the national office of the AAUP regarding the procedures used in the selection of the TBR chancellor and for possible investigation and evaluation.

3. Tennessee Higher Education Commission (“THEC”) Public Agenda for Tennessee Higher Education, 2010-2015

RESOLVED, that as the THEC Public Agenda plan is being implemented, member senates should utilize TUFS for consolidating the response from those member senates so that a consolidated voice can be given to legislators.

4. Proposed Future Presentation to Tennessee Senate Education Committee

RESOLVED, that each senate should propose to the TUFS Executive Committee discussion points, concerns, and strategies for the anticipated presentation to the Tennessee Senate Education Committee.

5. Informal TUFS Response to Emergent Matters of Mutual Concern

RESOLVED, that in matters that are time-sensitive, after consulting with the Executive Committee of TUFS and the faculty senate presidents of all of TUFS member institutions, the president of TUFS is authorized to communicate to the public the consensus of those consulted.

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UTK Faculty Senate President’s Notes:

Resolution 1 amends the resolution adopted by the Faculty Senate at its May 2010 meeting (http://web.utk.edu/~senate/minutes/2009-10/May_2010.min.pdf) to conform to what the legislature actually adopted as a contingent bonus plan after our May meeting (see Interim President Jan Simek’s description at http://president.tennessee.edu/news/061810_erab.html). While the equal distribution method supported by the Faculty Senate in the spring called for an equal-dollar-amount distribution of bonuses to employees, the plan adopted by the legislature calls for the payment of bonuses to all state employees (including both faculty and staff) but bases the calculation on the employee’s longevity. TUFS asks for support of this resolution to signal to the state legislature that UTK, UTIA, and UTSI campus faculty members support the payment of bonuses to staff as well as faculty. I supported this resolution at the TUFS meeting.

Resolution 2 offers our support to our Tennessee Board of Regents (“TBR”) colleagues in their quest for more inclusive, shared governance. The recent Chancellor search for the TBR system lacked shared governance; faculty members were not included on the Search Committee. See <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/08/12/tennessee> and the TUFs Board minutes for August, available in unapproved form at <http://tinyurl.com/39qg8l7>. I supported this resolution at the TUFs meeting.

Resolutions 3 and 4 confirm and effectuate in specific contexts the provisions of the TUFs Constitution regarding the representation by that organization of the missions, accomplishments, and needs of public universities to state agencies and to the general public of the State of Tennessee, which was adopted by the Faculty Senate (http://web.utk.edu/~senate/docs/TUFs/TUFs_Constitution.pdf). The channels of communication endorsed in these resolutions are nonexclusive; the UTK Faculty Senate is free to separately express its opinions on all issues that come before TUFs. I was not present for the vote on this resolution at the TUFs meeting; my proxy, Toby Boulet voted in favor of both resolutions.

Resolution 5 allows for TUFs to make announcements of a more timely nature in between meetings in order to shape state higher education debates that may occur before campus Faculty Senates can meet to approve formal resolutions. This has proven to be an Achilles’ heel of TUFs—that it is too slow to act and respond to matters of importance to higher education in the State of Tennessee. Resolution 5 offers an option to deal with this short of the articulation of a formal TUFs position backed by the vote of a majority of the TUFs member Faculty Senates. I requested that this matter be addressed by TUFs but could not be there for the discussion. This resolution was proposed for a formal vote by electronic mail, and I voted in favor (but see my desire for better clarity, below).

Our Faculty Senate Executive Council, as well as the MTSU Faculty Senate (which has approved all of the resolutions), raised a question concerning Resolution 5: How will the TUFs President handle situations in which there is a diversity of views among the Faculty Senates? In response, Jeff Berman, a faculty member at the University of Memphis and the current President of TUFs, wrote the following to Warner Cribb, President of the MTSU Faculty Senate:

The point . . . is an excellent one and we could discuss possible clarifying language at the next TUFs meeting. In the interim, please assure members of your senate that during my tenure as TUFs president, I would always communicate accurately the sentiment of the member senates, including any diversity of opinions that might differ from a majority consensus.

If this resolution passes, I plan to advocate for this clarifying language and also for the use of language in communicating that appropriately clarifies the limited nature of the consensus (i.e., that it does not represent the consensus of the Faculty Senates as representative bodies, but rather that it represents the consensus of the elected leaders of those bodies as individuals). Again, the UTK Faculty Senate always is free to express its opinions on all issues.