

Tennessee State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2026

Present: AVP Erik Schmeller, Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler, Senator Martene Stanberry, Senator Reginald Archer, Senator Ahmed Aziz, Senator Carlos Beane, Dr. Mark Chaires, Senator Kenneth Chilton, Senator Poliala Dickson, Senator Fadi Fawaz , Senator Cynthia George, Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Senator Sujata Guha, Senator Retta Guy, Senator Mohammad Habibi, Senator Beatrice Harris, Ms. Ashley Hendricks, Senator Selma Izadi, Senator Kwaku Kankum, Dr. Ho-Jin Koh, Senator Reynard McMillian, Senator Megan O’Neil, Senator Nsoki Phambu, Senator Sean Posey, Senator Ljerka Rasmussen, Senator Brian Russell, Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry, Dr. Sarika Saraswati, Senator James Scholz, Mr. Brian Stanfield, Mr. Cedric Tyus, and Senator Janice Williams.

AGENDA:

Welcome & Call to Order · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senator and Vice Chair Stanberry addressed the Faculty Senate and shared the meeting agenda. The meeting was called to order at 2:46 PM.

Updates from the Office of Academic Affairs · Dr. Robbie Melton, Provost and Vice-President

The Provost was not available and will provide an update during the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Approval of November 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes · Senator Sujata Guha, Senate Secretary

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 2025 meeting, and it was approved after one minor correction.

Faculty Trustee Report · Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler

Trustee Young-Seigler is giving senators the opportunity to give her feedback to take to Board of Trustees. The last Board meeting was in November 2025 for which the materials and minutes are

posted online. The audit report was not out by the meeting time. If we go to the State of Tennessee audit, we will see that some work still needs to be done in terms of the current administration and institution. The President will talk about the next audit when he comes to the meeting and address the \$34 million deficit. Trustee Young-Seigler invited everyone to come to the Board meeting and look at the materials. The enrollment was more than the administration had predicted, but it was still not enough. Trustee Young-Seigler suggested that the Senate should invite someone from Enrollment Management to come to the Faculty Senate meeting and provide the enrollment numbers. We must increase enrollment – that will be the driving force to financial stability. The current rate of scholarships we offer to students cannot be sustained as a university. The university will consider capping the amount of scholarships offered to students, moving forward. The Board of Trustees is looking for a new level of accountability and asking questions about the information that is being presented. At the last meeting, the Board approved the permanent hiring of President Tucker (so President Tucker's position is no longer interim). President Tucker will be at TSU for 3 years. There will eventually be a presidential search and everyone – faculty, staff, students – should be involved. Trustee Young-Seigler asked the senators what concerns they had for the Board.

Senator Dickson asked Trustee Young-Seigler to communicate to the Board how much the faculty have been affected by the decisions taken and the benefits lost recently by faculty in the last two years (lost travel, paused NIA, denied cost of living raises, lost certificate and degree incentive pay, and paused tenure and promotion). The university's contribution to the faculty's 401 K was reduced from \$100 a month to \$50 a month, while the parking rate doubled. This is a big hit on faculty morale. Senator Dickson asked Trustee Young-Seigler to advocate for the faculty.

Committee Reports · Senate Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Chairs

Senator Chilton (Professional Development Committee) – the committee wants to clarify what they want to ask the Office of Academic Affairs about faculty not performing up to standard for the Post Tenure Review. The committee wants to add something for research as well.

Senator McMillian (Budget Committee) – there were no updates at this time but will be later.

Senator McMillian (Alumni Relations and Development Committee) – the committee did not have any updates at this time but will later. Senator O'Neil asked Senator McMillian to contact the Foundation Office to see how things have changed and determine if the Foundation funds have been directed to the right place and whether all donations are accurately reflected and sent to the right place. What the university has in place now will affect gifts. The question was raised as to how the alumni would know that their donated funds are being distributed to the correct accounts. The committee will review the guidelines of donations made to specific accounts. Senator George manages the Hollace Brooks Scholarship. \$800 from the scholarship is currently lost in the university system, and the funds are not getting routed to the right account. There is an issue which Ms. Tanya Mayes (TSU Foundation) is looking into.

Senator Ghosh (Academic Committee) – the committee has not met this semester yet. Senator Ghosh is trying to schedule a meeting and will share information in the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Senator O’Neil (Constitution and By-laws Committee) – the committee met on November 7, 2025, and will be meeting again in two weeks to follow up on the work they did in the Fall. They have been tasked with adding the post tenure review process to the Faculty Handbook. Senator Fawaz had a suggestion about faculty workload – stating that right now several faculty members teach 4 classes each semester but have small class sizes. It was suggested that perhaps the committee could meet with the Provost about faculty teaching 3 classes and increasing the class sizes.

Senator Sanford-Terry (Faculty Grievance and Appeals Committee) – the committee has two pending grievances which have not gone out to the full committee yet. Senator O’Neil and Senator Dickson shared in their reports that extra service pay (ESP) is still a part of that conversation which the Faculty Grievance Committee is leading. ESP impacts workloads and benefits, and the committee is trying to make sure that the interconnected issues are addressed.

Senator Sanford-Terry (Curriculum Committee) – the committee received quite a few curriculum proposals and is actively reviewing them. They will meet again within the next two weeks.

Senator Stanberry, Trustee Young-Seigler, Senator Archer, Senator Chilton, and Senator Guha (Faculty Senate Executive Committee) – the Faculty Senate Executive Committee met with the President and Provost on February 2 in which a plan for faculty buyout was presented. The plan is currently in draft mode and was partly motivated by the enrollment numbers. There was a discussion about updating the Faculty Handbook and having consistency with the university-wide tenure and promotion guidelines. There were also conversations about how and when the tenure and promotion process can begin again. The administrators want the Faculty Senate to work collaboratively with them.

Senator Dickson (Faculty Benefits and Welfare Committee) – the committee met on February 4 and 9 members were present. They are trying to get a meeting scheduled with Provost Melton to communicate with her and get support from the Office of Academic Affairs about the details and stipulations of paid family leave. All policies listed on the HR website are outdated. The committee is also asking for a formal remote work policy to be added to the Faculty Handbook, and compiling a list of benefits that faculty have lost in the past two years along with additional financial impacts on faculty, such as doubling parking rates, etc. The committee is also advocating for the return of NIA.

Senator Phambu (IT Committee) – the committee met last semester and invited Mr. Sterlin Sanders, Interim CIO of IT. They asked for new computers for the faculty. The committee also wants to talk about AI and will communicate with Provost Melton in 2-3 weeks.

Senator Phambu (Research Committee) – last semester, the committee wanted to build a champion mindset for research. But some faculty members said that when the President talked about the five-year plan, research was not a priority. The faculty cannot present the research findings and conferences, since they don’t have travel funds. Senator Phambu will provide

another update in 2-3 weeks. Senator Guha mentioned that individual departments can provide funds toward faculty travel.

Senator Ghosh (Nomination and Appointment Committee) – the committee met in January and discussed the action items this semester; one of the main ones being the Faculty Trustee election. The committee discussed the different vacancies. Senator Tiriveedhi will send an email to the Deans about the new senators list. There will be new senators in April, probably. The committee will coordinate with Trustee applicants once the process begins. Then the applicant's list will be forwarded to HR for initial vetting.

Senator Scholz (Library Committee) – the committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, February 11, and will have an update after that.

Senator Chilton (Ad Hoc Post Tenure Review Committee) – the committee is coming out with ideas for faculty members who may get low ratings during post tenure review. An update will be provided next month. The committee may need to look at things beyond the post tenure review.

Senator Chilton (Professional Development Committee) – the committee is flushing out ideas to help or support the faculty.

Senator Russell (Student Appeals Committee) – the committee met in early January. They reviewed 15 student appeals and had a successful meeting. They will meet again at the end of the semester.

Senator Posey (Ad Hoc NIA Committee) – the committee did not meet, since there is no NIA.

Senator McMillian (Ad Hoc Fair Funding Action Committee) – the committee had some questions for the Provost, but there were no updates for now.

Election for Senate Executive Committee · Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Chair of the Nominations Committee

Elections will happen this month (February). Dr. Tiriveedhi will ask the Deans to give him a list of updated senators for AY 2026-27. After that the Call for Nominations will be sent.

Faculty Trustee Elections · Senator Martene Stanberry, Senate Vice Chair

Senator Stanberry will send an email to all senators asking them to share with the faculty in their colleges the self-nominations or faculty nominations for the Faculty Trustee position. There are two eligibility requirements which will be included in the email. Nominations will be open until next week on Friday (February 13) and should be sent to Senator Ghosh, Senator Stanberry, and Senator Guha. Senator Ghosh mentioned that all documents, including videos, have to be submitted through the eLearn shell.

Research Funding Report Update · Senator Kenneth Chilton

Senator Chilton and the Research Committee met with the President in December 2025, during which the President had stated that the Faculty Senate would get the requested research funding data. The President has received information from Dr. Quick, and his staff is working to edit it. Senator Chilton hopes to receive the information in a week or two and will then report on the status of the data.

Other Concerns and Adjournment · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

At a special meeting held on December 2nd, 2025, Senate has approved (27: Yes; 0: No; 1: Abstention) a motion of NO CONFIDENCE in Dr. Quincy Quick continuing in the role of Associate Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs and Chief Research officer.

Senator Stanberry mentioned that we will go back to our regularly scheduled Faculty Senate meetings, which are typically on the third Thursday of each month. Hopefully, Provost Melton and President Tucker can come to some of the meetings and be able to present updates.

Senator Aziz had a question regarding the timeline for new senators. He asked when the elections would be completed and the list of new senators be obtained. Senator Ghosh reminded that Senator Tiriveedhi had mentioned that he was going to email the Deans by the end of January to ask them to have their own elections and send him the list by the end of February or March. Senator Ghosh mentioned that she would reach out to Dr. Tiriveedhi about the emails to the Deans and the timeline.

Trustee Young-Seigler mentioned that the Board of Trustees will meet on February 19 and 20.

The next Faculty Senate meeting was scheduled to be held on February 19, 2026, but was postponed to February 26, due to the Board of Trustees meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:47 PM.

Minutes recorded by Senator Sujata Guha, Secretary