

Tennessee State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2026

Present: Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler, Chair Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Vice Chair Martene Stanberry, Senator Lindsay Anderson, Senator Reginald Archer, Senator Ahmed Aziz, Senator Mark Chaires, Senator Kenneth Chilton, Senator Poliala Dickson, Senator Fadi Fawaz, Senator Cynthia George, Dr. Jemal Gishe, Senator Sujata Guha, Senator Mohammad Habibi, Senator Beatrice Harris, Senator Kamrul Hasan, Senator Selma Izadi, Senator Kwaku Kankum, Senator Teresia Mbogori, Senator Monique McCallister, Dr. Trea McMillian, Senator Behnaz Molaei, Senator Brian Nagy, Senator Megan O'Neil, Senator Wanda Payne, Senator Nsoki Phambu, Senator Sudipta Rakshit, Senator Ljerka Rasmussen, Senator Marquita Reed, Senator Trenna Richardson, Senator Brian Russell, Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry, Senator James Scholz, Senator Alex Sekwat, Dr. Tokesha Warner, and Senator Janice Williams.

AGENDA:

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

Chair Tiriveedhi addressed the Faculty Senate and shared the meeting agenda. The meeting was called to order at 2:32 PM.

Approval of March 19, 2026 Meeting Minutes · Senator Sujata Guha, Senate Secretary

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2026 meeting, and they were approved.

Faculty Trustee Report · Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler

Trustee Young-Seigler gave her farewell speech. She is leaving the Senate and gave farewell as Immediate Past-Chair of the Faculty Senate. Trustee Young-Seigler expressed her deep gratitude and appreciation. She stated that the faculty experience at TSU with students is important and that faculty are the backbone of the University. Trustee Young-Seigler is also transitioning from her role in the Board of Trustees. The work ahead is significant but she knows that the Senate will get there and be better at it. She urged the Senators to continue to collaborate and be transparent and focus on the shared mission of TSU. She also mentioned that the next Board of Trustees meetings would be held on May 14th and 15th. She then announced the next faculty

representative to the Board of Trustees, Chair Tiriveedhi, who thanked her and expressed his appreciation.

Faculty Senate Office Bearer Elections · Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Senate Nominations Committee

Since Senator Ghosh was on maternity leave, Chair Tiriveedhi coordinated the election. An email was sent by Senator Ghosh to all Senators who have a term at least up to 2027. The Senate received nominations and the candidates were vetted. Only the current Senators are allowed to vote. All new senators were invited but they would not be able to vote. The Senate Vice Chair is a 6-year position. The requirements for the Senate office bearers are (1) Full Faculty status, (2) Senate term at least for 2026-27, and (3) Tenured status.

Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry (Full Professor, Senator for 2026-28, College of Health Sciences, Tenured) gave her speech and was voted unanimously to serve as Vice-Chair of the Faculty Senate.

Senator Wanda Payne (Associate Professor, Senator for 2026-28, College of Life and Physical Sciences, Tenured) gave her speech and was voted to serve as Parliamentarian.

The nomination for Secretary had been withdrawn. Secretary is the only position which gets a 3-credit hour release. Senator Tiriveedhi asked the Senators to consider volunteering. He mentioned that the Secretary position will be tabled until August when there will be the next Senate meeting. Nominations cannot be accepted without vetting the process. Senator Tiriveedhi asked the new Senators to apply.

The nomination for Treasurer was for Senator Retta Guy. Senator Guy could not attend this meeting as she had another appointment. She was voted to serve as Treasurer.

Committee Reports · Senate Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Chairs

Senator Dickson (Faculty Benefits and Welfare Committee) – the Committee did not meet this month, so there was nothing to report. They will meet in the first week of May. They also had a meeting with Provost Schmeller during which they spoke about updates to the policy and policy software. Provost Schmeller acknowledges that there needs to be a big overhaul related to the Faculty Handbook, Tenure and Promotion Policy, etc.

Senator Phambu (IT Committee/Research Committee) – the Committee met with Mr. Sterlin Sanders, Interim CIO. There is a policy which states that forwarding emails from TSU accounts to external email accounts is not permitted and is a violation. Mr. Sanders mentioned that faculty and staff would have to disable the forwarding of emails directly. However, is it okay to receive forwarded emails from external sources. Mr. Armando Mpembele, Cyberinfrastructure Coordinator, would like the Senate to support the HBCU Computing Research Infrastructure Program. The Program will expire, but Mr. Mpembele would like to have the Senate's support to

extend the grant. That grant will end on September 30th. Senator Rasmussen asked a question about email forwarding and Senator Phambu replied he would check with Mr. Sanders.

Senator Rakshit mentioned that sometimes the server is down. He asked if a domain could be bought so that there would not be any security concern for forwarding. He also mentioned that several universities use Gmail. Senator Phambu said that TSU email is the property of TSU.

Senator McMillian (Alumni Relations and Development Committee/ ADHOC-Fair Funding Action Committee) – Senator McMillian had a tenure meeting with the President. The outcome of the VSP will be directly related to the administration. The Senate should be looking at the University's financial situation very carefully, moving forward, and consider the dollar impact of the staff to student ratio and the faculty to student ratio. The Committee does not have any financial statement from the University yet and will need to understand what exactly is going on. Knowing the numbers will be helpful for decision making and collaboration with the administrators.

Senator O'Neil (Constitution and By-laws Committee) – The Committee has reviewed workload policies, and the administration will take those into consideration moving forward. Additions to the Faculty Handbook will have to be set aside until the software is updated.

Senator Sanford-Terry (Faculty Grievance and Appeals Committee/Curriculum Committee) – the deadline for curriculum proposals to reach the Committee was April 15th. The Committee received 20 proposals which will be reviewed and moved forward. The Faculty Grievance Committee met on April 15th and will have their recommendations sent to the Faculty Senate Chair by April 21st. The Committee also received feedback on the IR process and is working on closing the loop for those who are involved. That process will be revisited in the Fall.

Senator Scholz (Library Committee) – the Committee did not meet in March, so there was nothing to report.

Senator Chilton (Professional Development Committee/Post-Tenure Review Committee) – there were no updates.

Senator Russell (Student Appeals Committee) – the Committee was getting ready to meet at the end of semester, so there was no report provided.

Senator Tiriveedhi thanked all Committees for their reports.

Research Funding · Senator Kenneth Chilton

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee had a special meeting with the President and Associate VP Quick (RSP). The focus was on the 100 million dollars of research funds. The data the Research Funding Committee used are the expenditures that are reported to the National Science Foundation. There is a huge gap between expenditure and the award amounts that TSU gets. It suggests that there is a leakage of about 60 to 65% in terms of us getting grant awards but not spending the money. If we are not spending the money, we are not getting the indirect costs. When thinking about budget issues within the University and how much an extra 10, 15 or 20 million dollars of indirect costs could add to our deficit reduction, that's a huge issue.

VP Quick accused the Faculty Senate Executive Committee of having a vendetta against him. Senator Chilton assured VP Quick that it was not the case and that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee had legitimate concerns. A lot of the defense that VP Quick had was related to the Faculty Senate survey. A vote of “no confidence” had been passed by the Faculty Senate, since there was no report from VP Quick for over 3 months. At the end of the meeting, VP Quick gave Senator Chilton a USB flash drive that mostly had 175 PDF forms. The Research Committee has a lot of work to do, since they will have to figure out how to use the PDFs to create their own spreadsheets.

Senator Sanford-Terry mentioned that there is a disconnect between RSP, Procurement, and Grants Accountable that has been identified but not addressed. After a grant is awarded, it does not make sense for Procurement to question it. As a result, the faculty get very frustrated and wonder why they should spend time focusing on grants when they are not getting institutional support.

New Tenure Policy (update) · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that the tenure policy, as stated, is for this university. The Faculty Senate will work for the best interest of TSU. One of the major things being looked at is tenure-track faculty having the same protection as tenured faculty. What it means is that tenure-track faculty are hired for five plus one years. After the fifth year they go through the process, so in six years they have full protection.

Trustee Young-Seigler stated that the way our current policy reads is that if a tenure-track faculty is notified that their contract is not going to be renewed, they have the right to appeal and follow the same appeal process as someone who is tenured. The University has to go through that appeal process with them. The decision is based upon the current policy.

Senate Office Transition · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senate Chair Tiriveedhi is now Immediate Past Chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. As he transitioned into his new role as Faculty Trustee, he thanked everyone. He mentioned that, in the past two years, there have been several changes made to the Faculty Senate, which has advocated strongly for our faculty at various levels. As related to the administration, the Faculty Senate had some successes, some failures, and some ongoing processes.

The new Faculty Senate Chair Stanberry thanked Trustee Tiriveedhi for his hard work. Chair Stanberry stated that she just had one year in the Vice-Chair position to try to learn and figure out several things. She appreciated Trustee Tiriveedhi’s guidance and mentorship and is looking forward to working with all Senators and the faculty as a whole to move forward on a lot of the things the Faculty Senate has started and also establish some new goals and a vision for what can be accomplished in the next couple of years as a Senate body. Chair Stanberry mentioned that the Senate Executive Committee would be in touch soon so that there could be some

conversations and probably at least one meeting, before the general body meeting in August with the full Senate body.

Other Concerns and Adjournment · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senator Aziz mentioned that his colleagues in the College of Agriculture had questions about the upcoming elections of new senators. Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that the maximum number of senators from each College can be five.

Senator George asked if the Committee Chair elections would be held in April. Senator Ghosh replied that the new Senate Executive Committee elections will be in April, but the Committee Chair elections will be in August. Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that all new senators were welcome to attend the Faculty Senate meeting in April.

Senator Izadi brought up the topic of a bill in Tennessee to stop tenure. Senator George replied that the bill was pulled this year, so it probably will not come back next year. A question was asked as to whether it is possible to lift the pause on tenure and go with the current policy before implementing the new policy. Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that he will bring it to the attention of Academic Affairs and encouraged the Senators to email him with any concerns.

Chair Stanberry asked if the Senators had any other comments or concerns before ending the last meeting of the academic year. She urged the current and new Senators to always contact her via email with any questions or concerns. Chair Stanberry then adjourned the meeting, wishing everyone a good end to the semester with final exams and graduation.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on August 27, 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 3:52 PM.

Minutes recorded by Senator Sujata Guha, Secretary