

Tennessee State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2025

Present: Provost Robbie Melton, AVP Erik Schmeller, Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler, Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senator Reginald Archer, Senator Ahmed Aziz, Senator Carlos Beane, Dr. Vijay Kumar Chattu, Senator Kenneth Chilton, Senator Cynthia Gadsden, Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Senator Sujata Guha, Senator Retta Guy, Senator Beatrice Harris, Dr. Gary Jones, Jr., Dr. Krystal Massey, Senator Reynard McMillian, Senator Megan O'Neil, Senator Nsoki Phambu, Dr. Frank Pleban, Senator Ljerka Rasmussen, Senator Brian Russell, Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry, Senator James Scholz, Dr. ZaDonna Slay, Senator Hongwei Si, Senator Martene Stanberry, Dr. Kimberly Triplett, Senator Zufen Wang, Prof. Janice Williams, and Dr. Tokesha Warner

Meeting started at 2:30 PM

AGENDA:

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

Senator Tiriveedhi addressed the Faculty Senate and shared the meeting agenda. The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM.

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

Provost Melton has presented the following information to deans, chairs, faculty, and staff senate. As of August 28, 2025, we have a headcount of 5462 students for this Fall. This is celebratory, since we exceeded our project in terms of headcount at FTE. Tomorrow (August 29) is the last purge, which is good news for TSU. On August 27, we had 850 students that were at risk of being purged. Academic Affairs is working hand in hand with Financial Aid and the Bursar's Office. The alumni raised over \$2 million and Foundation that raised \$3 million. We were able to save over 500 plus students to date. Faculty should start adjusting their workloads. Zero section courses that have staff are being canceled. Any course of 5 or below must be justified. The university is also looking at student credit hour production.

On behalf of the Office of Academic Affairs, President Tucker, and meeting with the academic sub-committee of the Board of Trustees, the university is ready to forward the recommendations

of tenure and promotion for all those who were recommended in June. That board meeting is the week after next.

Academic Affairs did not present the post-tenure review policy, which also must go up. They are working with the lawyers and the Board of Trustees in making minor edits.

Academic Affairs has been receiving several complaints from faculty. If the complaint falls in the discrimination category, it will go to the Office of Compliance. If it is a hostile working environment, there is a process, which starts with the faculty and department chair. If the issue is not resolved, then the Dean can be involved, and if that does not resolve the issue, it comes to the Office of Academic Affairs. If, even after that there is no resolution, then HR and the President will be involved. The faculty should not go straight to the President right in the beginning but should go through the steps so that the university can document and come to a resolution.

The university has AI tools for teaching and learning that are amazing. These tools are transformational and have been purchased for every faculty member who is willing to explore/try on how to use AI legally and ethically for the students.

Senator Chilton asked if we have a budget for that and do we have updates about what our current endowment is? Provost Melton replied that the university does not have actual numbers but will have Jim Grady and his group to come and give us a report. (budget, projections, etc).

Trustee Young-Seigler asked if AI policy has been sent to faculty to include in their syllabi. Provost Melton mentioned that she has sent out the related email 3 times previously but will send it out again.

Senator McMillian asked if we have an estimate of anticipating enrollment for tomorrow (August 29). Provost Melton stated that right now the enrollment is at 5468. Due to purge, the university will be losing about 500 students but is in the midst of registering dual enrollment students.

Approval of April 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

A motion was made to approve the minute the April 17 meeting, and it was approved.

Faculty Trustee Report · Trustee Artenzia Young-Seigler, Past Senate Chair

The Board of Trustees had 2 meetings (in June and August 2025). They approved an AI policy and got an Audit and Finance Committee report. There is a new Student Trustee (Azana Bruce) and a new Board Member (Leticia Towns). Another member will be added to the board as well. The Board appointed Mr. Tucker as the President of TSU.

President Tucker has a 5 year plan he has put in place for TSU – but the Board is still in the business of searching for the next president (the best talent for TSU).

TSU was given some funds for capital improvement from the State – that was approved back in the Spring. TSU had also received some installments from those funds, due to which the university was able to make payroll, etc. The university is also very happy to have met the enrollment numbers, and having stayed out of the news, as Provost Menton mentioned.

Senator Chilton asked - moving forward can we expect more share governance toward major decisions? Trustee Young-Seigler states that they hoped the Senate would have some type of input toward major decisions made by the university. When the presidential search was suspended, there were no candidates. As a part of an agreement with the state and in the interest of TSU being more stable, naming a permanent president was in the best interest of TSU. There were no other candidates in the pool available to name. Trustee Young-Seigler stated that Mr. Tucker has done a great job for the university and he was the best choice for TSU. The next time anything will be done in the broad interest of TSU, Trustee Young-Seigler will ask for faculty senate input.

Senator Chilton mentioned that now that Mr. Tucker is President, what are his contract details, metrics for evaluation, salary, etc.? Trustee Young-Seigler stated that it is public information. The Board of Trustees will put together the evaluation metrics for the President.

Senator McMillan thought that the number to hit performance target is 5100. Trustee Young-Seigler thinks it is 4200 and stated that she would check.

Senator Phambu asked about faculty development and travel to conferences. Trustee Young-Seigler stated that the decision is made lower than the Board level and advised Senator Phambu to talk to Dr. Melton about it. Senator Phambu mentioned moving forward from R2 to R1 and Trustee Young-Seigler stated that it is a question for Dr. Quick and his team. She advised faculty to spend their research dollars if they have them. The sooner the research dollars are spent, the better.

The next BOT meeting is on September 19. All faculty are encouraged to attend the board meetings. The senators should reach out to Trustee Young-Seigler if they have any questions.

Election for Vacant Senate Standing Committee Position · Senate Chair – Dr. Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi

Senator Tiriveedhi showed vacancy list of Faculty Senate committee chairs and asked all those who will be chairs or are chairs to meet with their committees before September 18. The names of members are posted on the senate website. The following are the committee names along with their chairs (either continuing or new)-

Academic Committee – Senator Ghosh

Budget Committee – Senator McMillian

Alumni Development Committee – Senator Dickson

Constitution and Bylaws Committee – Senator O’Neill

IT Committee – Senator Phambu

Nominations and Appointment Committee – Senator Ghosh

Library Committee – Senator Scholz

Professional Development Committee – Senator Chilton

Research Committee – Senator Phambu

Student Appeals Committee – Senator Russell

Post Tenure Review Committee – Senator Chilton

Non-Instructional Assignment (NIA) Committee – Senator Posey

Fair Funding Committee – Senator McMillan

Post-Tenure Policy · Senator Kenneth Chilton

Back in April 2025, the Post Tenure Policy (PTR) review was done. The PTR Committee met with the Board in July. The Memphis trigger language (below) was changed to the Senate version incorporating the April amendments. The clarifying language will be ultimately voted on. The modified language was voted on and supported.

Memphis Trigger Language:

Post-tenure review will be initiated by the Provost when a faculty member has:

- received one overall annual performance rating of “**Failure to Meet Responsibilities**”; or
- received one annual performance rating of “**Failure to Meet Responsibilities**” in the sub score of “**Faculty Teaching**”; or
- received two overall annual performance ratings of “**Improvement Needed**” during any four consecutive Annual Performance Review cycles; or
- received two annual performance ratings of “**Improvement Needed**” during any four consecutive Annual Performance Review cycles in the sub score of “**Faculty Teaching.**”

Research Funding Report · Senator Kenneth Chilton

Senator Chilton has put together a report on research funding, having worked with Senator Phambu and other committee members. The report includes federal and state agencies but no private foundations. Senator Chilton showed some slides that contained data, total competitive grant funding (2019-2024), indirect costs, and a follow-up report focus, as follows-

- The Faculty Senate requests that complete breakdowns of competitive grants and research be reported for each year (2019-2024).

- The Faculty Senate requests that Research and Sponsored Programs provide detailed explanations to the questions raised in the "Implications" section.
- The Faculty Senate requests that Research and Sponsored Programs explain why unrecovered indirect costs are high and what, if any, strategies have been implemented to reduce them.
- The Faculty Senate requests that Research and Sponsored Programs provide total budgetary allocations for SP for each of the years in the report. What are the trends in RSP expenditures, salaries, extra-service pay, and operating costs?
- The Faculty Senate requests that Research and Sponsored Programs report any strategic initiatives that are being implemented to react to uncertain federal funding environment. How have federal changes affected grant operations for TSU?
- How was the \$100 million claim calculated?

The Research Committee looked at indirect costs and found that the “unrecovered” amount is more than the “recovered.” They need to ask more questions to get additional information. The committee will follow up.

Senator Chilton made some comments about the Resolution. He stated that we are staring a new era at TSU. We the faculty are part of the positive changes going on. It is a good time to reaffirm our commitment to shared governance. Senator Chilton shared the Preamble which had previously been emailed to the faculty senators. Senator Chilton stated that we got good news earlier – faculty promotions are going through and hopefully salary will be increased, accordingly. He asked if the Faculty Senate would pass this and share with the President, Provost, and governing board. Senator Tiriveedhi mentioned that if the resolution is approved by the Senate, then we can send it to the senate bodies.

Senator Chilton asked to send the Preamble to the colleges and then vote on the senate floor. The senators should share this information with their units and get back to Senator Chilton by September 11.

Committee Duties · Committee Chairs; Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senator Tiriveedhi asked the committee chairs to meet with their respective committees, and suggested that they could perhaps only meet and greet during the the first meeting.

Other Concerns and Adjournment · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Some of the concerns sent to Senator Tiriveedhi were addressed.

Senator McMillian mentioned that in the College of Business they are in the midst of a Dean search. Four interviews were conducted before the contract year, which limited shared

governance and faculty participation. Senator Tiriveedhi stated that it also falls under the shared governance resolution.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on September 18, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 4:07 PM.

Minutes recorded by Senator Sujata Guha, Secretary