

**Tennessee State University**  
**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**  
**November 20, 2025**

Present: Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senator Martene Stanberry, Senator Reginald Archer, Senator Ahmed Aziz, Senator Carlos Beane, Senator Kenneth Chilton, Dr. LaPorchia Davis, Senator Poliala Dickson, Senator Cynthia George, Senator Sagnika Ghosh, Senator Sujata Guha, Senator Retta Guy, Senator Mohammad Habibi, Senator Beatrice Harris, Senator George Kakoti, Ms. Latonia Jackson, Dr. Sarah Martinez-Sepanski, Senator Reynard McMillian, Senator Megan O'Neil, Senator Sean Posey, Senator Ljerka Rasmussen, Senator Brian Russell, Senator Miranda Sanford-Terry, Senator James Scholz, Senator Hongwei Si, Senator Zufen Wang, and Senator Janice Williams.

Meeting started at 2:32 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 2:32 PM.

Approval of October 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes · Senator Sujata Guha, Senate Secretary

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the October 16 meeting, and it was approved.

Debrief: Faculty Senate Chair and Vice Chair-Meeting with President and Provost · Senators Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair and Martene Stanberry, Senate Vice-Chair

President Tucker met with the Faculty Senate Chair (Senator Tiriveedhi) and Vice-Chair (Senator Stanberry) on Oct 8<sup>th</sup>. Senator Tiriveedhi shared the following agenda items.

1. Senate resolution – shared governance – this was passed in the September 2025 Faculty Senate Meeting. There was minor grammar correction by the Provost, which was

incorporated. Senator Guha has sent the resolution to the Board of Trustees, President, Provost, and copied the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

2. Senate resolution – clarification on research funding – the Senate approves the Ad Hoc Committee on Research Funding. The Faculty Senate asked the AVP of Research and Sponsored Programs questions about TSU’s claims of exceeding \$100 million in research funding. The President’s response is that he is fine with the Senate investigating this. The Provost has made a minor comment about the wording of the report.
3. Termination policy emanation from Post Tenure (Performance) Review – there are some concerns about the termination policy coming out of Post Tenure Review. The President and Provost approve of the senate committee dealing with the concerns.
4. Errors on letters sent to students regarding financial balances – in Fall 2024, there were letters sent to specific students. For example, one student applied to TSU, never attended, but attended another institution. However, TSU sent \$4000 bill to that student, which, eventually, went to collections. It was brought to the attention of the Bursar, who zeroed out the amount. The Provost acknowledged that a mistake had happened. After Fall, no such issues were noticed.
5. Concerns about costs for TSU space/resource utilization – a faculty from another university, who has a friend at TSU, was trying to have a STEM-based conference at TSU and asked for space at TSU. TSU sent a personal quote of around \$2,500. However, when the faculty approached Vanderbilt for a more or less equal space, Vanderbilt quoted approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> or 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the price. Senator Tiriveedhi brought it to the President’s attention. The President said that the cost will be different between Vanderbilt and TSU, and due to TSU’s location and additional personnel needed, the bill will be higher for TSU.
6. Misinformation on faculty productivity – there is miscommunication about the definition of faculty productivity. The AVP of Research and Sponsored Programs made a comment that only 17% of the faculty are submitting grants and 83% are not doing their jobs. That comment is dismissive and unfair toward the faculty. There are several areas which need clarity. If a faculty is not performing research, the chain command should be followed, but neither should the faculty be directly blamed nor should a public statement be made. Senator Tiriveedhi has mentioned this concern directly to the President and Provost.
7. Extra Service Pay (ESP) policy – input was requested from the Faculty Senate to ensure fair treatment of all segments. The associated data was also requested.
8. Hiring administrators – the President and Provost have said that they are trying to balance institutional efficiency and transparency, which will be taken that into account before hiring new personnel.

Senator Stanberry stated that the President mentioned that the decisions being made now need to be made to make the institution financially stable. We will need to have shared sacrifice to achieve financial stability. Another item mentioned was about improving efficiency in everything that is done across campus. The Provost said that the Spring 2026 enrollment is expected to be low, and SACSCOC approval is critical this time.

Senator O’Neil mentioned that one of the big concerns from her unit is the legality around the pause of tenure and promotion. If the State gives across-the-board raises to all state employees –

did the state give the university that money, and if so, what is the university doing with it? Has there been a discussion? In the past, the university tried to match what the State gave. Senator Stanberry mentioned that in the last Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting, there was a discussion about requesting the President and Provost about benchmarks that need to be made, along with metrics for tenure and promotion and salary raises.

The President mentioned that there are no across-the-board raises. He is aware of the low salaries and fac morale.

Senator George will check with the university professor's legal team at AAUP about this. The legality comes in the discrimination when one university gets a raise, but another does not.

Senator Tiriveedhi has heard at other institutions got between 1.8 – 2% salary raise. For example, MTSU got a 1.9% raise.

Senator Chilton mentioned that up-to-date salary data was needed.

### Faculty Handbook Update 2026, Faculty Trustee Elections (2026-28), FSEC Elections April 2026 · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

The Faculty Handbook needs to be updated. It was last updated in 2018, after which there were only word adjustments. The Senate Executive Committee decided to delegate this work to Senator O'Neil. AVP Schmeller is updating the policies and procedures. Senator O'Neil was asked to have a final version by April 2026, so that by the Fall there will be an updated Faculty Handbook.

Our current Faculty Trustee, Senator Young-Seigler's term expires in April 2026, so a Faculty Trustee needs to be screened and elected. An official announcement will be issued in early Spring. All tenured faculty can apply. By April a Faculty Trustee will need to be in place.

Faculty Senate Executive Committee elections – a new Senate Executive Committee will be formed in April 2026. Dr. Stanberry will then move from Vice-Chair to Chair. There will be an official announcement in the first meeting in Spring. The Colleges will also be given sufficient time to elect new senators.

### Research Funding Report · Senators Kenneth Chilton, Reynard McMillian, and Nsoki Phambu

Senator Chilton gave an update. They passed the Faculty Senate research report that had several questions related to past funding amounts – whether they were accurate or not. The committee had shared data, which the Faculty Senate had approved in September. The committee had asked Research and Sponsored Programs to reply by October 26, 2025, but did not hear anything. They sent out a second request for Research and Sponsored Programs to respond by October 31, 2025. After that, Dr. Quick gave a short response. Senator Chilton responded to Dr. Quick's email but did not hear back again. They Research Committee does not know what options it has. Senator

Tiriveedhi mentioned that the President has said that he will not intervene. Initially, Senator Chilton had not copied the President in his email, so it is not clear why the President is being included in such issues that predate his administration. Several things are happening without faculty input. In the spirit of shared governance, a vote of no confidence was suggested against Dr. Quick. It was suggested that an email should be sent about it one last time and the President should be copied. The motion was put on the floor and was approved.

### Committee Reports · Senate Committee Chairs

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

Senator McMillian (Budget Committee) – encouraged the senators to watch the Board of Trustees meeting on November 21, 2025, and expressed concerns about budget.

Senator Ghosh (Academic Committee) – the committee is due to meet on November 21, 2025, to discuss related issues.

Senator O’Neil (Constitution and By-laws Committee) – the committee met on November 7, 2025, and assessed the definition of faculty workload. Senator O’Neil shared a screen about the general comments/observations about faculty workload. The biggest concern of the committee is that they don’t have clear definitions about what they are supposed to do.

Senator Sanford-Terry (Faculty Grievance and Appeals Committee) – concern was expressed that, previously, if faculty taught 15 hours, they got paid overload, but not now. There is confusion about workload – now faculty have 10 office hours. Their workload should be 37.5 hours, but they are working more than 37.5 hours. This is also linked to extra service pay. AVP Schmeller is also aware of some of these issues. The committee is waiting for data before having their next meeting.

Senator Sanford-Terry (Curriculum Committee) – the committee met on November 17, 2025. They had 11 proposals, which they are continuing to move forward. Senator Sanford-Terry has worked with Mr. Marcal Thorne to extend the deadlines.

Senator Dickson (Faculty Benefits and Welfare Committee) – the committee met on November 4, 2025. They are reviewing the workload policy, such as work from home policy and paid family leave policy. The committee will meet again on December 2, 2025.

Senator Scholz (Library Committee) – the committee met on November 17, 2025, and discussed document delivery services, and how to access them and use them. They also reviewed questions regarding requests for book purchases and departmental budgets for book purchasing.

Senator Russell (Student Appeals Committee) – the committee will meet final grades are submitted in December.

Senator Posey (Ad Hoc NIA Committee) – the committee did not have any updates. Senator Tiriveedhi stated that the NIA grant has been held off until further notice, according to the message from the Office of Academic Affairs.

### Other Concerns and Adjournment · Senator Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi, Senate Chair

Senator Tiriveedhi suggested that other concerns be kept for the Spring.

Regarding questions about financial exigency, there have been no official statement from the Board of Trustees or the President. Only the Provost/Office of Academic Affairs mentioned something related to it during the special meeting.

Senator Williams mentioned that the university is shrinking programs from 34 chairs to 12 chairs – and is concerned that it would shrink their program and put them at risk of being low producing. The university wants to move that program to a smaller space. Dental hygiene program – will be moved out of Clement Hall, since the university is not interested in repairing the old building. They did not get the simulation lab fund. Senator Tiriveedhi replied that this concerns our Faculty Senate Executive Committee and that he will follow up on behalf of the Committee.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on January 29, 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Minutes recorded by Senator Sujata Guha, Secretary