TENNESSEE STATE CONFERENCE FALL MEETING

November 12, 2016, Middle Tennessee State University

In attendance: Máté Wierdl, Tammy Ruff, Valerie Belew, Yvonne Simerman, Diane Eagle, Alfred Lutz, David Lee, Pippa Holloway, Josie McQuail, Dora Estes, Delphia Harris, Julia Gruber, Steve Murphree, Darlene Panvini, Raholonda White, Jackie Eller

Pippa Holloway (President of AAUP at MTSU) welcomed the Conference members. (10:00 am)

The minutes from the Spring, 2016 meeting were read and approved.

Discussion of the FOCUS act (A. Lutz):

The boards at each university will have immediate decision-making authority after they are constructed. This will help speed up the process. TBR will no longer have any authority with universities. The president of each university will be responsible for operations at each institution.

The governing board at each institution will receive instruction about the federal and state laws, policies and culture of higher education.

Tenure and promotion process at universities will be finalized on the campus between the president and the governing board of each institution.

The status of faculty representation on the governing boards was a concern during the discussion.

University of Memphis Financial Update (M. Wierdl):

A study of the contracts that the University of Memphis made with private firms raises questions about future conflicts of interest between board members and university contractors.

Report on TTU budget (McQuail):

The budget deficit reached $2.5 million plus an additional loss of $1 million due to loss of international students. Causes include the increase in number of VPs from 3 to 17 in 3 years. Many voiced the concern that Tennessee universities are developing a pattern of hiring more administrators at high pay.

Report about NSCC (V. Belew):

The administrators at NSCC have restricted the chapter of AAUP from using the campus facilities and email systems to conduct business for AAUP. The decision is based on a clause in the acceptable use policy, which restricts use of state property for “external organizations”. When asked, the administration argued that AAUP is an external organization because it has no direct business at the college.

Two faculty members were threatened with the loss of employment for violating the acceptable use policy.

A Dean asked several faculty members to falsify data for a report to SACSCOCS. She was reprimanded by the administration.

The COHRE assessment was completed on November 4. The Chancellor will receive the report and decide what changes, if any, to implement.

Ms. Belew requested a letter of support from the State Conference of AAUP in which the Conference voices concerns about issues of shared governance, academic freedom, acceptable use policy and intimidation at NSCC.

Motion made for the Executive Committee to write a letter of support, unanimous vote in favor.

Report on Private Colleges and Universities (Belmont and LeMoyne):

Increased hiring of administrators with no increase in full-time faculty hiring. More part-time and adjunct lecturers are being hired.

Belmont is a new chapter of AAUP and the Provost is concerned about the chapter presence on campus.

Report on Conference Development Grant (McQuail):

The State Conference received a grant to revitalize the AAUP website. The website has been redesigned and is up and running.

Discussion about a proposal and possible uses of funds for grant application that is due this year. The problems of free speech and issues with the Office of Diversity at UTK may be cause to request a speaker from FIRE.

Report on AAUP Foundation (D. Lee):

Robert Glenn established the Foundation fund in 1995 to support legal consultations when needed to defend free speech on campus. It was established as a 501(c)(3) and donations to it are tax deductible. No tax returns have been filed since 1998 and by-laws, tax identification number have been found. Currently, the fund includes $2,500. This fund can be adopted and maintained by the State Conference or cashed and donated to the Tennessee State Conference. Discussion continued in the Executive Committee meeting.

Report on Lecturer Positions and Tenure (McQuail):

Universities are hiring more lecturers instead of full-time professors on tenure track. Department chairs are assigning votes to faculty members as the chairs prefer. This trend has produced a conflict between the desire to improve the pay and benefits for lecturer positions while simultaneously supporting the system of tenure.

Report on Outsourcing by the State (McQuail):

The State of Tennessee has elected to save funds by outsourcing many jobs on campus: custodial, grounds keeping, IT, safety and security. AAUP questions the savings accumulated and the quality of work accomplished with this effort.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.