

Dean's Faculty Advisory Council  
University of Tennessee, College of Medicine

March 7, 2022

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Burt Sharp, at 12:01 PM on March 7, 2022, on the Zoom online platform.

### **Attendance**

The following **members** were present:

Penny A. Asbell, MD, Kevin Beier, MD, EM, Suleiman W. Bahouth, PhD, James Bienvenu, MD, Mark Bugnitz, MD, Mace Coday, PhD, Julio F. Cordero-Morales, PhD, Terry Cooper, PhD, Ian Gray, MD, J Patrick McConville, MD, F. Matthew Mihelic, MD, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, Lawrence Pfeffer, PhD, Crystal Pourciau, MD, Burt Sharp, MD, Joy Steadman, MD, Neena Thomas-Gosain, MD, Jerome Thompson, MD, MBA, Joe Willmitch, MPAS, PA-C, Thad Wilson, PhD

The following **guest(s)** was (were) present:

Scott Strome, MD, Fruz Pourmotabbed, PhD, Andrew Griffith, MD, Polly Hofmann, PhD

### **Approval of minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written. Minutes had previously been distributed by electronic means.

### **Business**

Dr. Strome provided his update. Last weekend was the first "Leap" gathering to encourage young minority students to consider pursuing a career in medicine. On Friday the Board of Trustees met. Among other items, the agenda included our community farms, the HealthHub, and student debt. The CoM's student debt load is now below the national average. Regarding education, we received LCME information a week ago, and although specifics are not yet available, it appears we will receive good news. Challenges regarding ROH include research, a new building, etc.

Dr. Strome introduced an idea regarding potentially extending the tenure clock. Currently people have 7 years, up or out. The average age at which the first RO1 is gained is in the early 40s. We invest large amounts in our young faculty, including finances and mentorship. Dr. Strome suggested that a binary up-or-out approach may not be best, especially in a 7-year timeframe. We want to make prudent decisions, neither for hasty tenure on the basis of too little information, nor for prematurely excluding people with great promise. We might consider something like 11 years for an assistant professor, 7-9 for an associate professor, 5 for a full professor. The proposal, Dr. Strome affirmed, is focused only on timeframes. Ideally these numbers would be data-driven, e.g. by looking at the average time it takes for someone at a given rank to be awarded a grant. It was suggested that such data might best be UTHSC-specific, in that the timeframes for Ivy League researchers may be different from those for UT faculty. Dr. Hofmann observed, from the NIH blog: The average age of first-time R01 funded investigators who have PhDs

remains 42 even after seven years of policies at NIH to increase the numbers of new and early-stage investigators.

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/blog/2015/04/r01-teams-and-grantee-age-trends-grant-funding#:~:text=The%20average%20age%20of%20first,new%20and%20early%2Dstage%20investigators>

DFAC questions included

- \*what impact, if any, such a plan might have for 6-year post-tenure review,
- \*what sorts of expectations might be written into each new faculty member's contract/initial letter of appointment,
- \*whether any such change would include a "grandfather clause" so that people who spent considerable time under the current approach would be able to continue as planned,
- \*in what ways it would affect the other colleges at UTHSC,
- \*in what ways it would affect the other campuses and colleges at UT generally,
- \*whether this would affect timelines for promotions in rank,
- \*in what ways this might change the timetable(s) for interim tenure review,
- \*whether this would be specific to research-oriented faculty (and how *research faculty* would be defined),
- \*what would be the actual fiscal impact of such a policy.

Dr. Strome has not yet proposed this to the new Chancellor or to the other deans, given that he would like to conduct initial conversations within the CoM. He indicated that any such change would ultimately be made at the level of the Board, but he wanted to elicit DFAC thoughts before proceeding. Pres. Sharp has asked the Policy Committee and the Research Committee to sketch out a draft framework regarding how this might work, and what questions might be generated. Dr. Strome indicated that part of this initiative, if it goes forward, will be to educate the Board regarding what tenure is and how it should best be earned at UTHSC. As process for this idea, the first stage is at the DFAC level, to consider what policy approach might be best; then confer with deans of other colleges at UTHSC, followed by the Faculty Senate, and then a more formal conversation with the Chancellor. At the DFAC level, it will be important to confer with junior faculty to obtain their perspective. In another observation, some of this idea might be more specific to the CoM's ByLaws, and less so for the other campuses in the UT system. Given that any change regarding tenure would have to be approved by the Board and applied throughout UT, flexibility in any new policy would seem to be important, so that it could be reasonably attuned to the specific realities and needs of each campus and college.

A somewhat different approach might be to identify options for extending tenure timeframes more easily than at present, rather than maintaining the current one-size-fits-all, up-or-out in 7 years. Such flexibility might be built into a more frequent series of mid-tenure review, for instance. Discussion suggested that this sort of approach may be more acceptable to the other campuses/colleges and to the Board. Additionally, it should be noted that as this potential proposal becomes known more broadly among faculty, it should be emphasized that this is only at the level of preliminary discussion, not concrete proposal.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the committee will be held on April 4, 2022, at 12:00n CT / 1pm ET by Zoom.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD  
Secretary