

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

**March 3, 2025**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Phyllis Richey, at 12:01 PM on March 3, 2025, in person and on the Zoom online platform.

**Attendance**

The following members were present:

Kevin Beier, MD, EM, Mace Coday, PhD, Terry Cooper, PhD, Tina Dudley, MD, Natalie Dunlap, DO, Jay Fowke, PhD, MPH, MS, Rajeshwary Ghosh, PhD, Khyati Kothari, MD, Francesca-Fang Liao, PhD, Amanda Linz, MD, F. Matthew Mihelic, MD, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, Lawrence Pfeffer, PhD, Crystal Pourciau, MD, Phyllis Richey, PhD, Reese Scroggs, PhD, Burt Sharp, MD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Evan Ward, DHSc, PA-C, Joe Willmitch, MPAS, PA-C, Thad Wilson, PhD, Tracy McClinton, DNP, AGACNP-BC, APRN, HGET-C, EBP-C

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

Matthew Ennis, PhD, James Haynes, MD,

**Approval of minutes**

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

One clerical change was made at the outset of the meeting: Dr. Haynes is dean at UTHSC Chattanooga, rather than Knoxville.

**Business**

Pres. Richey updated the DFAC on the recent, small change to the ByLaws, which involved removing one clause from a previously-approved bylaw change. It was approved by a vote of 246 to 12. The Qualtrics Mailer Distribution system was used, to distribute the ballot to all faculty on all campuses via a new and more complete listserv created by Stephanie Cage, in the Dean's office.

Dr. Verne was unable to join the meeting, hence Dr. Ennis spoke on his behalf to update various chair searches. For the Medical Education chair, Dr. Verne is negotiating with one of the 3 finalists. For Pathology, 4 finalists have visited the campus. We have contracted a search firm for the Pediatrics chair, but that effort is very early in the process. Dr. McClinton, Faculty Senate president, shared that Chancellor Buckley plans to hold an in-person Research Town Hall on Friday, March 7, and that the Chancellor will send a UTHSC-wide email shortly.

Several DFAC members expressed concern about the short notice. Dr. Richey noted that this date coincides with the Preventive Medicine department's retreat and, as the Town Hall is in person, no PrevMed person would be able to attend – although this department does a large amount of research and the purpose of the retreat is to discuss the department's research. Another DFAC member noted that the Institutional BioSafety Committee/IBC meeting also coincides with this date, hence may make it difficult/unlikely for this second research-focused group of people to attend such a meeting. It is likely that others who focus on research may also be unable to attend. Dr. McClinton volunteered to inquire further with the Chancellor regarding this issue.

Further discussion concerned the observation that indirect funding, and its loss, will likely not immediately affect researchers as much as the overall administration for UTHSC. Indirect funds, it was noted, "keep the lights on," maintain core facilities, and serve many other important support purposes. The question was raised, regarding where exactly do indirect funds go, in UTHSC's budget, and how can faculty secure more information about these expenditures. It was suggested that Michael Epps, Interim Associate Dean of Finance/ Associate Vice Chancellor Financial Strategy, be invited to the April meeting, to describe the CoM's budget and discuss how it may be affected by a major reduction in the indirect funding associated with DHHS research grants.

Pres. Richey noted that the last meeting of the Research Committee was in January. They are continuing to work on a clinician-scientist proposal. Discussion suggested that the need for this initiative is as clear today, as it was when initially proposed several years ago.

For the Policy Committee, Dr. Shephard noted that DFAC is the "voice of the faculty". The meeting on Wednesday Feb. 26 included both newer and older members. The committee discussed concerns that had been expressed regarding peer review of teaching. The committee found that the language of the applicable bylaw does permit both in- and out-of-department peer reviewers, but suggested that it may be useful to emphasize this in communications with faculty. A member of CAPT, Dr. Terry Cooper, observed that in that committee, peer reviews of teaching mostly arrive as "As" and some "Bs," hence raising the question whether these are accurate appraisals of teaching ability, or whether we are "living in Lake Wogebon" (where everyone is "above average"). It is not clear whether, or precisely what, the problem is, nor is it clear what any sort of solution might look like, if in fact the evaluation does not accurately measure teaching quality. Measuring/evaluating teaching is difficult at best. Much work went into developing the metric, and the task remains difficult. Dr. Cooper noted that the requirement to undertake peer evaluation of teaching comes from the Board of Trustees. He further observed that mentoring may be more readily and effectively undertaken, than measuring, and that there may be many ways to present material to students. Per further discussion, another dimension might concern what students think about their teaching, and how well it prepares them for STEP exams, clinical work, and the like. Additional comments suggested that some peer reviewers simply may not be familiar with the substance and content of the material whose teaching they are evaluating, and that subjectivity, content and context can present significant obstacles for adequate evaluation. Dr. Haynes noted that, at the Chattanooga campus, they have also faced challenges. The person doing the evaluating need not necessarily know the content of what is taught, whether in classroom or in clinic, in order to have a sense of whether the teaching is reaching the trainee. Hence at Chattanooga, a key requirement is someone from the same or higher rank.

Dr. Shephard then described the second issue the committee focused on, which concerns potential changes to DFAC structure, such as term limits. She noted that even in the committee's meeting, it became evident both that the value of newer members is important, while longer-term members also bring important value. At this time, DFAC bylaws identify three officers: president, president-elect, and secretary. The question has arisen whether past president should also be an officer, as beyond an *ex officio* member. Ensuing DFAC discussion noted that one purpose of permitting the past president to stay

on as an *ex officio* member, is so that this person need not be completely gone once his or her term has concluded. The president, it was suggested, is a liaison between the DFAC and the dean – which raises the question whether or what purpose might be served, to make the past president an officer, rather than simply remaining as an *ex officio* member – ie, what could that person do as an officer, that could not be done as a member. A different observation was that past presidents on occasion have acted as a quasi-officer, and in recent meetings between Dean candidates and faculty leadership (both DFAC and Senate) included the past presidents as well as president, president-elect and secretary. Another observation was that continued participation of past officers can lend continuity for the DFAC as well as mentorship for new officers. A regular, eg, monthly, meeting among DFAC officers would be helpful, it was suggested. Dr. Shephard observed that continuing conversations will be important.

Dr. Kothari was then invited to provide an update regarding the FDEC/Faculty Development, Engagement and Communication committee. A listserv has been developed, to enhance communication among faculty. Future discussion will concern faculty development and mentoring, onboarding of new faculty, and additional issues.

Pres. Richey brought one brief item forward. A DFAC member from a surgery department has inquired whether perhaps DFAC might meet at 4pm rather than 12n, given that surgeons are often in ORs during the noon hour. Although such a change would not happen this year, the question can be raised for the upcoming year. She suggested that a poll might be conducted.

Dr. McClinton, president of the Faculty Senate, updated DFAC to indicate that during the meeting she had called the Chancellor to inform him of the discussion earlier during this meeting. It is possible that a new date will be chosen, for the Research Town Hall.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the committee will be held on April 7, 2025, at 12:00n CT / 1pm ET by Zoom and in person in room 502, 910 Madison building.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:03p PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD  
Secretary

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