

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

August 7, 2023

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Thad Wilson, at 12:03 PM on August 7, 2023, in person and on the Zoom online platform.

Attendance

The following members were present:

Kevin Beier, MD, EM, Mark Bugnitz, MD, Mace Coday, PhD, Terry Cooper, PhD, Denis DiAngelo, PhD, Jay Fowke, PhD, MPH, MS, Bruce L. Keisling, PhD, FAAIDD, Francesca-Fang Liao, PhD, Erica Mitchell, MD, MEd SE, FACS, DFSVS, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, Lawrence Pfeffer, PhD, Reese Scroggs, PhD, Burt Sharp, MD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Joe Willmitch, MPAS, PA-C, Thad Wilson, PhD, Nikki Zite, MD, Paul J Koltnow, MS, MSPAS, PA-C, James Haynes, MD, Phyllis Richey, PhD

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

Peter Buckley, MD, Nicholas Verne, MD, Myra Sullivan, Andrea Malkin, JD, Alicia Diaz-Thomas, MD

Approval of minutes

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

Business

Pres. Wilson invited Chancellor Buckley and Interim Dean Vern to offer some remarks, as DFAC resumes for the academic year.

Last Wednesday, August 2, it was announced that Dr. Nick Verne would assume the position of Interim Dean of the College of Medicine. Chancellor Buckley noted that the average time for a dean in a medical school is about 6 years, hence the current change of administration is not out of step with this average. The Faculty Senate was contacted last week as well as other members of the CoM administration, as were medical students. Dr. Buckley focused on the reasons for selecting Dr. Verne as the Interim Executive Dean. He is a renowned GI physician who also has a lengthy record of successful research and grants. He is additionally level-headed, personable, collaborative and highly regarded well beyond UTHSC. Dr. Buckley thus indicated it was important to identify someone who had all these qualities, and is committed to the CoM of UTHSC.

Dr. Verne was invited to offer his thoughts. He has been here 4 years as chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, as well as senior chair of statewide operations. The immediate focus, not surprisingly, will be the upcoming LCME visit in October. Thusfar, the signs are very positive, including developments in relationships with hospital partners across the city.

Alicia Diaz-Thomas, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, indicated that we are hosting 3 candidates for the Chair of Neurology, as well as candidates for the Education Department.

Andrea Malkin, CoM Chief of Staff, has been in this position a bit over a year. She and Dr. Verne have been meeting with students in all 4 classes. They are also meeting with staff, assistant deans and associate deans. She added that she and the administration look forward to continuing collaboration with DFAC on various matters, including the strategic plan. That said, instead of attempting to finalize the Strategic Plan by October, the focus is now on the LCME and its October visit. The submission is due on August 18, followed by mock interviews and a host of other preparatory activities prior to the October survey visit.

Dr. Buckley commented on the search for a permanent dean. Already we have two applications. Currently in the US, 29 dean positions are open. Nevertheless, right now is not the right time to initiate a formal search, given the need to finalize LCME first, which will not be complete until February, 2024.

Erika Mitchell, MD, spoke about Regional One Healthcare. She indicated that interest remains in its becoming an academic hospital, as well as continuing robust relationships with other area hospitals.

Dr. Buckley said that, last Friday in Nashville, UT Pres. Randy Boyd discussed legislative goals for the coming year. Pres. Boyd informed the group that ROH will be on UT's list of priorities. Moreover, it is at least possible that the Governor will place healthcare on his own list of high priorities.

A question was raised regarding UT's priorities for research. Dr. Buckley said that there are 3 outstanding candidates for VC of Research. The recruitment of that person is a major step, as well as finances and cores. What's missing at this point is an overall strategy. UT CoM did produce its own Strategic Plan for research, although its priorities needed perhaps a bit more clarity.

Dr. Verne indicated that we will need to figure out our priorities, including to encourage more physician scientists. We need to identify our strengths and promote them and provide protected time for researchers, including junior faculty. Dr. Pfeffer noted that DFAC's Research Committee produced, a few years ago, a proposal for mentoring junior faculty. The proposal seemed to gather dust, and has not been implemented thusfar. Dr. Buckley indicated that the document had found its way to his office and is under serious consideration. Pres. Wilson will (re)send it to Drs. Buckley and Verne. It was noted that one major issue concerns how the money flows, structurally. Dr. Buckley said that this year, indirect monies to the colleges have been increased. Those are 'holding efforts', to evolve as new leadership emerges.

A question arose regarding appointment letters that went out to members of some departments, particularly basic science. Dr. Diaz-Thomas indicated that some of its contents are specifically relevant to LCME, namely, those parts in the letter emphasizing medical education. LCME has expressed an interest that reappointment letters be done annually. Nothing has changed, she said; the letter simply refers back to faculty members' initial letter of appointment. DFAC members added that many of the faculty who received these letters were quite concerned that perhaps this letter superseded UTHSC's earlier commitments to the faculty member. In light of that concern, a future communication will be written, to allay faculty concerns.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on September 11, 2023, 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 12:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD
Secretary