

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for March 19, 2026

Hybrid Meeting (SU 109 and Zoom Conferencing Software), 3:15 pm

Members in Attendance: Deborah Amend, Ali Balapour, Eric Barker, Ada Cenkci, Whitney Darnell, Gina Fieler, Jaesook Gilbert, Allyson Graf, Patrick Hare, Erin Kelley, Rachelle Janning, Jang-Chul Kim, Julie Mader-Meersman, Makoto Nakamura, Joe Nolan, Michael Providenti, Tamara O'Callaghan, Kathleen Quinn, Holly Riffe (Chair), Kurt Sander, David Tataw, Jessica Taylor, Monica Wakefield, Maggie Whitson, Matt Zacate

Guests in Attendance: Provost Diana McGill, Amanda Andrews, Janel Bloch, Nycole Brundidge, Faculty Senate President Jacqueline Emerine, Grant Garber, Grace Hiles, Suk-hee Kim, Alar Lipping, Danielle McDonald, Steve Slone, Emily, Karen Tapp, Caroline Macke

Members Not in Attendance: Jered Moses, Dee Mornah, Ihab Saad

1. Call to Order, Adoption of the Agenda
 - The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm.
 - The agenda was adopted as distributed.
2. Adoption of the minutes from the February 5 meeting.
 - The minutes for 2/19/26 were adopted as distributed.
3. Chair's Report and Announcements
 - The chair opened a discussion of the Board meeting.
 - It was mentioned that the KY Senate version of the budget doesn't at the moment look to be the worst case.
4. Old Business
 - Cats (Kurt Sander)
 - Background: There are 5 feral cats that live outside Landrum. A month ago, the University decided to evict the cats. There was a complaint that allergens were getting into the HVAC system. Animal control was going to be called but faculty, students, and staff rallied to the cats. This created some bad PR for the University. Talks with HR have resulted in a student organization that will be charged with the care of the cats. There will be rules regarding the care of the cats which should result in a welcoming space for people and the cats.
 - The messaging from the university was very cold. Could this positive ending have been reached without the media and 4000 signatures? We should look internally to see if things like this could be handled better in the future.

- Faculty and students have reported health issues such as allergies while in Landrum over the years. It was suggested the issues are due to the building itself, not the cats.
- It was commented that when the campus became a no-smoking campus, smokers congregated where the cats are now. This smoke came into the building. At the time, smoking violations were reported to the University, administrators were consulted, and faculty were told the no-smoking policy could not be enforced. The smoking stopped when the cats were settled in the space.
- Administrators who said they were only now learning about the cats have not walked the campus to Landrum where they would have seen the cat condos.
- In the early 2000s, Landrum had a mice problem. Mice are not a problem now with that there are cats at Landrum.
- People like animals. Taking action against animals is bad PR. Before animal control was to be called, the UL listed cat condos were unplugged on a night where the temperature was near 0°F.
- BOR meeting March 4, 2026
 - There was a question about the reference in the Board meeting about faculty working on a non-reappointment notification date for 9 months. Was that misspoken? The Provost responded that it is not known where that came from. The Provost had shared with the Board a list of meetings starting in January 2026 in which this was discussed.
 - It was commented that the total disdain for faculty was disheartening. Faculty Senate President, Faculty Regent, and PCC Chair expressed to the Provost concerns about what was said. The Provost will discuss this with the University President.
 - It was noted that the current chair of the Board has one more meeting as chair.
 - If the faculty were to make a statement, what would be the goal? Standing up for colleagues? To explain shared governance (which includes having a measured and fair discussion in which perspectives are heard)?
 - There was concern about the Board suggesting that they would just change the Faculty Handbook if there were a disagreement with faculty.
 - The Board's action was interpreted by some faculty as "shut up" and "you are not appreciated" and the result of this is morale being destroyed.
 - There is concern that the Board Chair frames this as "us versus them" whereas the faculty want to work with administrators and the Board to find solutions.
 - The Provost presented alternative Handbook language for faculty to discuss. In short, assistant teaching faculty would be notified every year on May 1 and associate teaching faculty would be notified on December

15. The proposal was shared late and PCC members should share this with their clinical, teaching, and professor of practice (CTP) colleagues.
- The proposal is slightly complicated only to ensure that CTP colleagues are included equally. That will go to the Faculty Handbook Committee to refine.
 - There also needs to be a discussion about the 2–3-year contracts which have not been implemented. 2–3-year contracts had been removed from an earlier draft for budget flexibility reasons. However, 2–3-year contracts are in the current draft.
 - The Provost reported that the President was supportive of 2-3-year contracts at the associate and full level depending on the needs of the program. However, there would need to be a process. Longer contracts would not be automatic.
 - It was suggested to edit the new language as follows: “...~~and in some cases,~~ appointments of 2-3 years may be possible...”
 - It was remarked by a committee member that this feels like a reasonable proposed compromise. For associate and full teaching faculty, the dates are in alignment with the desire for earlier notification dates.
 - The Provost will revise the proposal and reshare with the PCC.
 - Currently the Faculty Handbook has a promotion pathway for teaching faculty but not clinical faculty or professors of practice -- that needs to be addressed.
 - Many faculty members are unsure of their titles and aren't sure where their positions are addressed in the Handbook. Some still say “lecturer.” Some departments have clinical, teaching, and professors of practice all in one. The deans decide which category of faculty they are hiring.
 - The title professor of practice was created because potential job applicants didn't want to be called lecturers. Now that we use the teaching professor title, could we stop using professor of practice? Response: No, professors of practice have more practitioner experience rather than an expected terminal degree.
 - What is the difference between professors of practice and clinical faculty? Could clinical faculty become professors of practice so there would only be two categories: teaching faculty and professors of practice? This discussion tangent can continue discussion at a later date.
 - There was a comment about the final paragraph on page one about promotion. It was noted that this paragraph still needs work.
 - PCC members: Take this information back to your departments when the updated draft is shared:
 1. Dates: new hires notified of potential non-reappointment on May 1; associate and full CTP faculty notified December 15.

2. Contracts: 2-3-year appointments. Promotion process for CTP faculty. Any appointment more than one year needs a process and it cannot be automatic.
 3. Professors of practice versus clinical faculty. The suggestion is that the term “clinical” faculty may not be used and should be subsumed under Professor of Practice. (it was unclear to any PCC member or guest if this term is being used)
 4. Titles: what do CTP faculty want to be called? Would the university be served by having two types of non-tenure track faculty, professors of practice and teaching faculty?
- Timeline: The goal is to have the Handbook language to the board in June. It will be a discussion item in Senate 3/30, vote 4/27 or 5/8. PCC discussion or vote on 4/2 or 4/16.
- Discussion Item: **Free Expression Policy (Grant Garber)**
 - This policy is still in draft form and not yet out of committee.
 - The goal is to have this policy to the Board for approval at the June 10 meeting.
 - This policy on the March 30 Faculty Senate agenda.
 - Concern was raised about the definition of “faculty” on page 1 of the draft (from the draft: “faculty refers to both the University employees with faculty rank and to other University employees without faculty rank while they engage in institutional instructional and research functions”). Question: why can’t the term be “University employees”? A: Because not all University employees have academic freedom and engage in functions that require academic freedom. Response: There needs to be another term used. Suggestions: “people covered by academic freedom,” “University employees with academic freedom protection.”
 - The idea is to cover individuals who have an expertise, but are not in an academic unit, who are then invited into a classroom. There are staff and advisors who teach courses. However, “faculty and staff” is too broad a designation.
 - Suggestion to make a statement that “academic freedom applies to people who are involved in the following activities....” This suggestion is a possible solution.
 - In the draft policy, sections “VII. Academic Freedom” and “VIII. Rights and Responsibilities of University Employees” do not need to be in this policy. They are optional.
 - The University’s statement of academic freedom in the Faculty Handbook was described as a “statement of what academic freedom is not.” This policy could be a place to have a more robust statement or it could be in a different policy.
 - Regarding section “VIII. Rights and Responsibilities of University Employees,” we have First Amendment rights but, as public employees,

there are limits on those rights during the workday. Public employees cannot engage in political activity while at work. Also, you cannot use the University platform to express opinions different than what the University would expect.

- Governance groups are approved by the board to meet and advocate on behalf of staff. While officers of Staff Congress may say things that are averse to what the institution itself is saying, it is important to have that role as a part of the shared governance conversation.
- In sum, if you are doing your job, you are protected.
- The rules in the policy do not address how the University uses its own spaces. The policy is generally concerned with how students and sometimes outsiders use these spaces. The University may reserve resources and channels (e.g., digital signage) for its own use in colleges and departments.

5. New Business

- TEEC update to 1.1 will be discussed in the next meeting. This policy is to ensure that we do not name AI as a professor of record.
 - The issue of faculty using AI for grading is not in this policy. That will be a separate discussion.
- Question about the University not renewing its institutional membership with Quality Matters. Faculty have received messages saying they are no longer qualified to do course reviews or be a master reviewer. There was a request that in the future, the University notify faculty before such actions are taken. Some faculty were in the middle of working on a project when the change happened.
 - This will be addressed in the next Provost's message.

6. Announcements

- None at this time.

7. Adjournment (4:41pm)

Submitted,

M. Providenti, Secretary