

## **Faculty Senate President's Welcome to new UTK Faculty - August 9, 2021**

Louis Gross, Chancellor's Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Mathematics

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I welcome you to your new adventure here in Knoxville and wish you all the best in this transition. The Faculty Senate is the representative organization of faculty with responsibility for oversight of all curricular matters and which provides faculty input to shared governance. Shared governance of UT is the joint responsibility of faculty, administrations, and the Board of Trustees to govern the campus and System. The Senate has over 100 members who represent faculty in areas such as athletics, research, IT, teaching, curricular policy and benefits.

While each of you will face many challenges in your new positions, be assured that the current faculty are here to assist you as best we can to make your way through the shoals of an academic career. You will find that the conflicting demands on your time you previously experienced have likely become more complex. Many others before you have appropriately dealt with the multitasking demanded of faculty in dealing with teaching, scholarship and service. Each of you had a variety of challenges in getting to this stage, and I expect that your experiences will serve you in good stead as you continue on your paths. However I can't resist this opportunity to pass along some potentially useful advice to assist you. I taught a graduate course last year on Careers in Academia: How to Enhance your Success (details are on my website) so here are four points I included:

1. Be prepared to work very hard. You are each very good or else you wouldn't be here, having successfully negotiated the rigors of a graduate degree and the associated post-doctoral or other advanced experience needed to be given a faculty position here. This was no small task - you should each feel proud of your accomplishments. You will find however that relying on your native intelligence or creative skills are not enough to excel here - you really do need to work harder than you have before. This may well mean devoting many more hours (hard as it may be to believe) to your efforts than you have been used to doing. Plan on it.

2. Have something outside of your scholarship and teaching that you really enjoy doing and pursue it. Don't spend all your time in the lab, studio, field or classroom. Take the opportunity to expand your interests or build your expertise. This might be music, dance, art, poetry, birdwatching, beekeeping - whatever takes you away from your other responsibilities here and broadens your outlook. A consistent theme I find among my successful colleagues is their passion for their jobs and their passion for something outside their jobs. Find something at which you can excel and pursue it. There are hosts of opportunities available to you on-campus and off to learn about the community of which UTK is a part: go to hear Kelle Jolly, meet Mo at King Tut's, hike to Spence Field, contra-dance at the Laurel Theatre, eat a ramp. You will be better for these experiences and UT will be a more vitally-connected part of our community as well.

3. Don't be shy about asking for advise or help. Many people are here to assist you, either formally through a part of UT, or informally over your favorite beverage. If you aren't sure, ask.

Learn to consider your options - don't limit yourself. This applies whether you are considering where to submit your next paper or grant proposal, what dentist to use, or where to find some really good felafel.

4. Treat students, staff and your colleagues with kindness and respect. It has been a very difficult past year and a half year for all of us - please remember this in your interactions. The academic admission requirements here have been rising steadily, so don't be hesitant to set high standards, but be certain you clearly inform your students about your expectations and establish procedures to assist students to meet them. There are many outstanding teachers and mentors to learn from here.

Finally, have fun and don't take too seriously anything your colleagues, any administrator or a Faculty Senate President says.