Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, welcome to a new academic year. For the benefit of those of you who have recently joined us, I should mention that the Faculty Senate is the primary means by which faculty participate in the governance of the University as a whole. The Senate consists of faculty elected from all colleges, schools, and libraries and meets as a kind of legislative body monthly during the academic year. The day-to-day work of the Senate, much of which involves consultation with the Provost and other administrative officers on matters of academic and institutional importance, is performed by the Senate’s Executive Committee and by six standing committees operating under the direction of the Executive Committee. The monthly meetings of the Senate are open to all faculty, and I invite and encourage each of you to attend. Our first meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 6th, at 3:30 p.m., in HSC Rooms 112-113, Doisy Learning Resource Center, School of Medicine.

The Executive Committee and Senate standing committees have had a busy summer. We have been consulted and have played a role in a wide variety of University actions and policy developments. On some of those matters, the University has made noteworthy achievements, and the Senate takes some satisfaction from its involvement. On other matters, problems have surfaced or expected progress has not occurred, but we are hopeful that our efforts ultimately will be successful. And, of course, we have been involved with many matters that have to do with the ongoing operation of the University. The most important summer developments are mentioned below, and some of them will be taken up at the September 6th Senate meeting.

2005 Revision to the Faculty Manual
As you know, the Faculty Manual not only constitutes one of the documents establishing the structure of the University but it also sets out terms and conditions of employment that are incorporated by reference in each of our contracts of employment. You might also recall a notification that at our April meeting the Faculty Senate approved a comprehensive revision of the existing 1994 Manual (as amended) and that we were hopeful that the University Board of Trustees would give the required approval to the revised Manual at its May meeting. As it turned out, the Board did not consider the revision. This has been one of those disappointments. I can assure you, however, that the Executive Committee and I have made every effort to facilitate progress on the Manual. And though time is again short, we have reason to believe that the Senate’s Manual Subcommittee will meet with the Provost and with the Office of General Counsel during this next week in an effort to fashion a document that can be put to the Senate at the September 6th meeting and presented to the Board of Trustees later in the month.

All faculty should understand, therefore, that, unless and until both the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees approve a revision, the operative document is the 1994 Faculty Manual (as amended), which can be found on the Provost’s website. HERE

Revised Appropriate Use Policy
As you may have learned from Newslink, the University adopted a revised Information Technology Appropriate Use Policy this past summer, and the new policy became effective on July 1st. The new AUP is a great improvement over the earlier version. And while I think it’s fair to say that the main impetus for amending the AUP came from the Faculty Senate, the effort would not have been successful without the cooperation and collaboration of leaders from the Office of Information Technology and from the General Counsel’s Office. Like its predecessor, the new AUP is designed to ensure that the information technology infrastructure “promotes the basic mission and purpose of the University in teaching, learning, research, patient care, and administration” and it provides the means by which the University can protect
itself against unlawful and improper uses of the ITS system, but it also recognizes and safeguards the legitimate privacy interests of its users. Among its many changes, the new AUP clarifies some of the proscriptions on use of the ITS system and eliminates several over-broad and unnecessary proscriptions; it eliminates a statement that users have no expectation of privacy and provides for University access without consent of the user only under certain defined circumstances; and it makes plain that the AUP does not purport to answer questions having to do with the ownership of data files or other components of the ITS system.

Because the reach of the AUP is wide and because its rules and procedures are many, I encourage you to take a look at the document. It can be found on the Provost's website. HERE

Compensation and Benefits
You should have noticed some good news on your most recent pay stubs. First and foremost, as of July 1st, the University contribution to the retirement benefit has been increased to 10% of gross income. The 10% contribution level has been a University and Faculty Senate goal for some time, and its realization is a major accomplishment. You might also have noticed that health insurance premiums for the next year have been held in check for the two HMO plans. Credit for this accomplishment should be given to Human Resources, its Benefits Department, and to the faculty/staff advisory committee that has devoted a great deal of time and energy to health insurance matters. Unfortunately, the HealthLink Open Access III plan (the non-HMO plan) has experienced escalating costs for out-of-town medical services, and those of you enrolled in that plan will have noticed substantial premium increases. Finally, on the good news side, the Benefits Department has again been able to hold down employee costs for life and disability insurance.

And you will also have noticed some not so good news on your pay stubs. For all of us who park on University lots or in University garages, parking fees have been increased substantially. We note in this regard that such fees have been held constant for at least three years, and we assume that costs of providing parking have increased. I should also mention in this connection that the University’s ticketing and towing policy has been reformed, as a consequence in part of intervention by the Faculty Senate. The new ticketing and towing policy can be found HERE. On another topic, many of you should also be aware that, as of July 1st, fees associated with tuition remission for employees and dependents have been increased. The new fee schedule, which can be found HERE, effects substantial fee increases in cases of tuition remission for dependents who are not Pell-eligible (from $50 per course to $40 per credit hour). The Faculty Senate was consulted about tuition remission fee increases last spring and actively participated in deliberations during April and May. I should mention that the initially proposed fee increase was substantially reduced in consequence of those discussions, and, in particular, the tuition remission fee for Pell-eligible dependents was kept to $20 per credit hour. I should also mention that, in the course of these discussions, the University committed to making every effort to double the size of the Tuition Exchange Program over the next several years.

Personnel Issues
As provided in the Faculty Manual, the Faculty Senate, primarily through its Executive Committee and its Professional Relations Committee, has been extensively engaged over the summer with several serious personnel matters involving faculty. However, because the protections and procedures of the Faculty Manual extend only to those with faculty status, the Senate has neither the authority nor the competence to become actively involved in personnel decisions respecting individual University administrators or staff. This is not to say that the Senate does not monitor such actions with an eye towards their effects on the performance of faculty responsibilities and on the overall well being of the University.

University Committee Appointments
An important responsibility of the Faculty Senate is to recommend faculty members to serve on many University-level committees and boards. As part of its ordinary activities, the Executive Committee has this past summer recommended faculty members to serve on search committees for the University
Librarian and for the Vice President for Development and University Relations. We have nearly completed the process of recommending faculty to serve on Board of Trustees committees dealing with Academic Affairs, Buildings and Grounds, Clinical Affairs/UMG, Development and University Relations, Finance, Human Resources, Information and Technology Development, Investment, Student Development, and Mission and Ministry. Additionally, we have either recommended or are in the process of recommending faculty to serve on the Arena Steering Committee, the University Recognition Committee, the University News Advisory Board; and we have appointed or are in the process of appointing faculty to serve on the Parking Committee, the Great Issues Committee, the Athletic Advisory Committee, and the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee.

As we enter this new academic year, we are aware of some important challenges and opportunities confronting the University and the Faculty Senate, and we know there will be others. For each of us in the Senate, I can assure you that we will exercise the privilege and responsibility of acting on your behalf to the best of our abilities.

Respectfully submitted,

John Griesbach, Faculty Senate President