**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

JCK 880, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Attending** **Senators**: Gwynne Ellen Ash, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Janet Bezner, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Vince Luizzi, Benjamin Martin, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley.

**Guests**: Denise Trauth (president), Gene Bourgeois (provost), Debbie Thorne (associate provost), Eric Algoe (vice president, finance and support services) Stephanie Towery (library), Taylor Acee, Gail Dickinson, Yasmine Beale-Rosano-Rivaya, Brenda Scheuermann, T. Edwin Chow, David Nolan, Jose Carlos de la Puente, Valarie Fleming, Judy Oskam, Daniel Carter, Catherine Jaffe, Russ Lang, Shannon Duffy (senate fellow), Katherine Ledbetter-Cho, Louie Dean Valencia, Geneva Gano, Karen Sigler, Anadelia Romo, Joaquin Rivaya-Martinez, Luz A. Murillo, Katie Salzmann, Amy Schwarz, Patrick Smith, Minda Lopez, Ellen Tillman, Peter Dedek, Carol Delaney, Scott Pope, Jessica Pliley, Lucia Summers, Maneka Brooks, Reem Muharib, Tom Alter, Antonio Gragera, Dwonna Goldstone

Meeting called to order at 3:01 pm by Senate Chair Janet Bezner.

**President's Academic Advisory Group (PAAG)**

The Faculty Senate provided an article to PAAG regarding analysis of sewage outflow as an indicator of COVID and asked PAAG if this type of system would be feasible to use at Texas State. Mr. Algoe summarized a study related to testing sewage outflow as an indicator of COVID-19 presence in a community and whether similar testing would be useful for a university setting. Mr. Algoe communicated that he consulted with Dr. Carranco and other health professionals to guide his conclusion that the science is ahead of the public health response as there is not a clear indication of what to do with the data. This is in part because of the nature of the novel coronavirus; some fully recovered individuals continue to shed the viral RNA in their waste, people shed different quantities of the virus, etc. Although sewage outflow has been studied at the municipal level to determine prevalence in a community and focus where to possibly open testing centers, he was not sure how to implement this at a university. For example, if sewage outflow for a specific dorm indicated people were infected with the novel coronavirus, the university does not have the capacity to test everyone in that residence hall, in part because public health officials will not allow tests on asymptomatic people. Mr. Algoe concluded by suggesting that once the science and the application of testing sewage outflow dovetail, he foresees potentially putting this into practice.

Mr. Algoe discussed several measures the university is taking to mitigate COIVD-19 spread on the San Marcos and Round Rock campuses including:

**Personal Protective Equipment for Faculty and Staff.** The university is in the process of acquiring several hundred thousand masks. Several different types of masks will be available including N95, cloth, clear, etc.

**Sanitizing stations.** The university will place approximately 250 hand sanitizer dispensing stations across campus in high traffic areas such as lobbies and central offices.

**Disinfecting bottles and refill stations.** The university is in the process of ordering 50 thousand plastic spray bottles to hold a fragrance-free, 80% alcohol content disinfecting solution. The spray bottles will be available so that everyone has hand sanitizer on them at all times. Each bottle will hold enough sanitizer for 3-4 days of use. Twenty-five refill stations will be placed throughout campus.

**Virex misting.** Classrooms will be treated nightly with a Virex misting procedure. Mr. Algoe emphasized that the Virex solution has been proven to kill viruses on surfaces for up to 30 days. Lobbies, shared furniture, library study areas, residence hall common areas, etc. will likely be treated on a weekly basis. Virex misting will not occur in dorm rooms.

**HVAC systems.** Mr. Algoe addressed that there have been a lot of questions about ventilation and HVAC systems, particularly the age, filtration capacity, and overall condition of units across campus. He explained the balance between maximizing fresh air intake with humidity and recommended that overall, it is best to have a lower air flow volume so the virus is not suspended in the air for too long.

A senator asked how many HVAC systems have been certified and tested and what buildings/rooms has the university focused on at this point. The senator also asked if Mr. Algoe will publish a list of buildings that have been certified. Mr. Algoe responded that there is not a published list of building with certified HVAC systems. The university does not have the capacity to look at individual rooms so the plan is to inspect each system for each building. Mr. Algoe noted that there is a tremendous variety of systems across campus and acknowledged that some are antiquated so they are examining how to bring those systems up to standard. He said they have a report that shows the age of the systems, but suggested it is better to talk about how some are older and others newer. Very few of the older systems are the original systems.

A senator communicated concerns about aerosolization of the virus and reports that it can remain suspended in the air for up to three hours. Mr. Algoe responded that whether it is aerosolized or not, wearing a mask is the best form of protection. If the virus is aerosolized, HVAC filtration is not effective due to the filter capability of the systems on campus. They can filter droplets, but not aerosols. Mr. Algoe said the university is looking at installing UV light treatments near every teaching podium on campus. A senator asked a follow-up question about what type of UV cleaners will be used and if they are proven to be effective. Mr. Algoe said they were still assessing their options. A guest asked if the UV devices will be installed by the start of the Fall 2020 semester and Mr. Algoe stated that they would be in place by the start of the semester. There were additional concerns raised by guests about teaching methods, lecture podiums, and the space covered by the UV device. Mr. Algoe said it’s not possible to cover the entire room but that we’re trying to cover as large an area as feasibly possible. A senator suggested that Mr. Algoe communicate to faculty that the safest area in a classroom is near the podium.

**General cleaning practices.** Mr. Algoe emphasized that the university is focused on more frequent cleaning as opposed to deep cleaning. The more frequent cleaning protocols will use the Virex solution.

**General COVID-19 Concerns**

The Senate Chair asked the PAAG to address the concern that enrollment is more important than safety. Dr. Trauth responded by emphasizing that the return to campus, as outlined in the Roadmap to Return, is not a return to what campus looked like pre-pandemic. Campus will look different in terms of facilities, cleaning protocols, and instruction. Classroom capacity will be limited to 50% occupancy on any given day and that everyone is required to wear face coverings. Dr. Trauth explained that campuses will have cases, but that the procedures outlined in the Roadmap to Return are designed to lessen the spread as much as possible. Dr. Trauth said that suggesting enrollment is more important than safety seems to disregard all of the steps that the university has taken to ensure safety. The administration still anticipates a drop in enrollment: although the current numbers do not reflect a drop, they still expect lower enrollment for the Fall 2020 semester.

Dr. Bourgeois reviewed the different planning scenarios and said that he anticipates 35-40% of Fall courses will be online. Of the remaining 60-65% of on-campus courses, 80% will be considered “little Hybrid” or little-h courses. Little-h courses are the result of maintaining 50% capacity for classrooms and the need to rotate students that physically attend class. Students that do not physically attend class will have the course material available to them online. He acknowledged that six feet distancing will not be possible in all classrooms and that is why the university is mandating face coverings in classrooms. Dr. Bourgeois asked faculty to consider Zooming their class meetings synchronously as well as offering a more flexible attendance policy. He also explained that face-to-face teaching does not necessarily mean teaching in person every day. For most undergraduate classes, the little-h delivery method will be in place to ensure 50% occupancy in classrooms.

Dr. Bourgeois also explained that as more workplace accommodations and modifications are approved, more large classrooms will be made available. He urged faculty to make their course delivery choice by July 15, 2020 so students know what type of class they are taking and how much it will cost. Dr. Bourgeois encouraged people teaching in large lecture halls to make work modification requests.

The Senate Chair asked if the university has surveyed faculty or students. Dr. Bourgeois responded that the university has surveyed neither faculty nor continuing students. They have informally surveyed freshmen though Enrollment Management and are waiting to see what the incoming freshmen do once faculty finalize their course delivery preference. He emphasized again that choice is given to faculty and students regarding course delivery preference and for faculty to submit their request for work modification to their department chair by July 15.

The Senate Chair inquired about CDC-based workplace modifications and requests for modifications that do not meet the CDC guidelines. Dr. Bourgeois explained that faculty who request an additional workplace modification outside of CDC guidelines need to submit that request to their department Chair and the Chair will consider the type of class, best instructional methods, and licensure requirements before approving the request. A senator followed up asking for clarification about whether delivery method is a faculty member’s choice or their Chair’s choice and why additional workplace modifications are inconsistent across colleges. Dr. Bourgeois explained that course delivery method is the faculty member’s choice with the approval of their Chair. The Council of Academic Deans decided to not provide or establish a blanket policy for additional workplace modifications because much like faculty workload and tenure policies, different programs have varying needs and expectations. Each college has established a policy to guide these decisions.

A senator followed up with an inquiry about why course delivery preference is not truly faculty choice and asked for Dr. Bourgeois to provide his perspective on the perceived danger about letting faculty choose. Dr. Bourgeois expressed that his concern is that students will not get what they signed up for and again encouraged faculty to submit their requests to teach online or hybrid if they want to. He reiterated that they anticipate up to 40% of courses will be offered online.

A senator asked if a cost-benefit analysis has been conducted by the university administration and whether the full costs of reopening had been considered. And if such an analysis has been completed, what the outcomes were. Dr. Trauth responded that the decision to reopen was never about a cost benefit analysis. The plan was always to return, knowing that COVID-19 would still be circulating in the community. The actions the university has taken are to work within the limitations presented by the virus and to plan the return based on scenarios so that we can come back to campus as safely as possible. She emphasized that they never analyzed what the cost was of traditional vs. remote instruction but noted that the spring transition to online was very expensive and a lot of cash reserves were used. Dr. Trauth acknowledged that if the university went back to fully online instruction and moved people out of the dorms, then those actions would have a large financial impact based on the way that accounting occurs and how fees are generated. She acknowledged again that there will be positive cases within the campus community and at some point the costs of reopening or staying open may outweigh safety.

A senator expressed concerns that COVID-19 disproportionately affects people of color. The senator asked whether the university plans to allocate resources to these at-risk groups, especially considering that our student population is largely Hispanic. Dr. Bourgeois explained that there should be enough course delivery options available so that students have the options to choose a delivery method that meets their needs. Students have been encouraged to work with the advisors to that they can make those important choices and that overall, the university is trying to balance student desires to engage in activities and overall safety.

A senator asked about student fees for the Fall semester and how they relate to course delivery method. Dr. Bourgeois explained that all students who take a face-to-face class will be charged fees (~$375), even if they only have one credit of face-to-face class. Little-h hybrid classes are technically face-to-face, so they will not be assessed the $50 per credit hour fee that online and Hybrid classes have. However, if a student takes a mix of face-to-face and online or Hybrid classes, they will be charged both in-person fees and electronic course fees.

A senator asked about ADA applications and expressed concern that the Office of Compliance has no record of their documents. They were concerned that this may have happened to other faculty and staff. Dr. Bourgeois said that they’ll look into the problem.

A senator asked why messaging from the administration that online teaching is a less favorable delivery method is being communicated now but in the past online course delivery was strongly encouraged. Dr. Trauth explained that the core mission at Texas State is face-to-face course delivery and that faculty do a wonderful job. She acknowledged that there is a role for online course delivery, but ultimately, the need for face-to-face is necessary for some student populations and that is why face-to-face is the university’s primary coal. Dr. Bourgeois added that in the past, online delivery was encouraged for some graduate programs but at present, the university is focusing on the need for face-to-face delivery for undergraduates (primarily freshmen, sophomores, and juniors).

A senator asked under what scenario will Texas State not reopen for the Fall semester and what entity would alert the administration to not reopen. Dr. Trauth explained that it is the decision of the Departments of Public Health in both Hays and Williamson counties as well as in consultation with Dr. Carranco or in the worst-case scenario, the governor announces a mandatory shelter-in-place order. Dr. Trauth also explained there are several other factors that affect the decision to close campus including incidence rates and hospitalizations. Additionally, the university has the capability to quarantine freshmen who have COVID-19 by moving them to Bobcat Village, which has been designated as the campus quarantine housing, but if that facility is overwhelmed, then that may be a reason to close campus. There are several indicators that need to be considered and the situation is being monitored continuously.

A senator asked if Travis or Bexar counties are issued an order to shelter-in-place whether faculty, staff, or students would be required to go to campus. Dr. Bourgeois said yes they are required to go to campus because Texas State University is considered to be an essential business.

A senator asked why there was not representation from the larger San Marcos community on any of the pandemic workgroups. Dr. Trauth explained that the university’s primary focus is on the Texas State community. However, Dr. Lisa Lloyd and Mr. Algoe have maintained open communication with the City of San Marcos (COSM) City Manager as well as other city staff. Dr. Trauth used the example of closing Sewell Park and working with the COSM to encourage closing city parks in an effort to minimize COVID 19 spread. Additionally, Dr. Carranco works closely with the Hays County epidemiologist.

A guest expressed concerns from San Marcos community members about bringing thirty thousand students back to San Marcos for the Fall semester. Dr. Trauth acknowledged that the guest’s point demonstrates how complex the situation is and that it indicates the university needs to work closely with students to make sure they are not part of the problem. The university will aim to keep some facilities closed and continue to work with the COSM to work toward the same goal.

A senator asked what role the UPD is going to take regarding planning and strategic preparation given the social climate of the past two months. Dr. Trauth explained that a great deal of work is being done and the university is anticipating changes within the UPD. In July and August, there will be three town hall meetings to identify and work on action items on which UPD can focus. Dr. Trauth also described establishment of a demonstration response team. Staff in Student Affairs and the Office of Diversity have received de-escalation training to help minimize negative outcomes from on-campus demonstrations. Dr. Bourgeois mentioned possibly adding faculty to the de-escalation teams.

A senator asked the PAAG to comment on the international student situation related to the new rules published by the Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Trauth explained that two universities filed suit on the morning of July 8 and acknowledged that the outcome of the suit will affect all universities. She noted that even if there is an injunction, it does not provide certainty. Rosario Davis has distributed a Q&A for international students to consult and that administrators are working to ensure that face-to-face or little-h hybrid courses will be offered to international students even if the bulk of classes move to online.

A senator asked what, if any, disciplinary procedures are in place for faculty that refuse to wear a face covering. Dr. Bourgeois explained there is not a current policy in place for disciplining faculty that do not wear masks but that a committee will be created to recommend a disciplinary process and associated consequences. Faculty Senate has been asked to identify a faculty member to serve on this committee. Staff currently have a progressive discipline process that is specified by Human Resources.

Dr. Trauth ended the COVID-19 related discussion by emphasizing that the situation is complex and that not everyone is going to agree with the decisions that are being made. An enormous amount of time, energy, thought, and research has gone in to making decisions. She said that the goal is to do what is best for the Texas State community and that the Cabinet has had several listening sessions about current crises, including the pandemic and social justice climate. They are trying their best to find solutions to imperfect situations.

**Diversity Training for Faculty**

Dr. Trauth discussed that we have a lot of training opportunities available, but none of them are mandatory for faculty and staff. The university is at a point where diversity may need to be mandatory because people are in very different places regarding training, understanding, acknowledgement of social issues. The university community needs to explore whether mandatory training is something the university wants to pursue. Dr. Trauth thought the Faculty Senate was a good starting point for this conversation. Dr. Trauth cited concerns raised in listening sessions that training on implicit bias is needed and asked for senate input on how to get the process moving forward.

Senators offered several suggestions including modeling diversity training after Allies training, offering different levels of training, and various modalities. The Faculty Senate agreed to move forward by submitting committee member and Chair recommendations to the Provost.

**Research Enhancement Program (REP) Modifications**

Senators approved two motions:

1. Adding Professors of Practice to the list of faculty eligible to submit REP proposals.
2. Modifications to the College of Liberal Arts REP proposal review form.

Dr. Agwuele (Chair of the UREC) and senators discussed issues related to faculty whose research project have been delayed by the pandemic. Dr. Agwuele also communicated to the senate that there are funds available for REP for FY21, but future funding is dependent on outcomes of the upcoming state legislative session.

**Faculty Letter Submitted to Continuity of Education Workgroup**

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Senators discussed endorsing a letter circulated to faculty in late May, early June 2020 that expressed faculty concerns about health and safety related to the university’s plan to move forward with face-to-face instruction for Summer II and Fall semesters. The discussion included concerns that as of July 8, 2020, the letter may be considered outdated since several of the items of concern have been addressed in the Roadmap to Return. Senators agreed that having a better understanding of faculty concerns is critical. Senators discussed surveying faculty and asking faculty to draft a new letter with current, overarching concerns. Senators passed a motion to “form a workgroup to create a survey or solicit narratives from faculty to gather concerns and perceptions related to university operations since the Roadmap to Return has been published.” Senators Ashe, Blasingame, Davenport, and Mendez volunteered to serve on the workgroup. The workgroup plans to have a draft survey for senate approval by early next week and to share the results with the senate at its next meeting. Senators suggested that it be recommended to Dr. Cavitt and Dean Golato that all students, including graduate students and graduate teaching assistants be surveyed.

**Next Senate Meeting**

July 22, 2020 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Approval of Minutes**

June 17, 2020 minutes were approved by senators.

Meeting adjourned at 6:27 pm

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen