

Faculty Senate Minutes, Wednesday, November 7, 2018

JCK 880, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Attending Senators: Augustine Agwuele, Janet Bezner, Natalie Ceballos, Michel Conroy, Lynn Ledbetter, Vince Luizzi, Ben Martin, David Nolan, Michael Supancic, Diego Vacaflor, Alex White

Guests: Gene Bourgeois, Selene Hinojosa, Malarie Ohrabka, Debbie Thorne, Denise Trauth

Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Senate Chair Alex White

President's Academic Advisory Group: Senators asked questions about the policy review process and infrastructure. President Trauth, Provost Bourgeois, and Associate Provost Thorne answered these questions and provided a brief election update.

- **Policy Review Process:** Reviewing policy is one of the most important functions of the faculty senate. It is a function that we take seriously. In Senator White's first year as chair, the faculty senate reviewed over 125 policies. As much as possible we try to give a thorough review, including checking clarity of language, spelling and hyperlinks. Two recent changes have made the process easier and more transparent: the creation of the searchable website for policies and the revision of the "Policies on Policies," UPPS 01.01.01 and AA/PPS 01.01.01. However, the senate continues to have concerns about the review process. First, the time given to the senate to review policies is often short, less than 10 days. Second, in cases where the senate provides substantive suggestions, it is not clear that those concerns are addressed or even read. Third, and most importantly, the current schedule for reviewing policies is based on a review cycle for each policy. This cycle depends on when the policy happened to have been created or last reviewed. This may not be the best way to address policies. We could instead review policies in bundles, so related policies are reviewed at the same time. For example, for the last 2 years the entire campus has been discussing issues related to inclusion, civil discourse, and free speech. The existing university policies were not up to the challenge. We would argue it makes sense to review policies that deal with these important issues in a bundle. Policy reviews could then be thoughtful and thorough. This is only one example of a possible bundle.
 - Dr. Thorne reported that the timeline for senate review of policies was shortened from 14 days to 10 days to accommodate the upcoming Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation review. Provost Bourgeois suggested that the senate's concerns about the 10-day turnaround could be addressed through revision of the faculty senate's operating procedures. Dr. Thorne noted that there is some flexibility in terms of the policy review due dates.
 - President Trauth reported that some bundling of policies goes on behind the scenes whenever it is feasible to do so. Workload is an issue, as senior reviewers are assigned a large number of policies. Provost Bourgeois indicated that they would examine the flow of this process and make changes if needed.
 - President Trauth explained that policy review comments made by the faculty senate and staff council are accepted, or rejected by the senior reviewers; however, at present, only administrators at the Vice President level and above have access to the documents that show these outcomes. President Trauth indicated that they would create a feedback loop through which the faculty senate and staff council would be able to view the senior reviewers' final edits to the policy documents.

- **Infrastructure:** University enrollment and the number of faculty have grown rapidly over the last 15 years. In addition, the university has become more complicated, adding programs, expanding the Round Rock campus, adding Star Park, etc. It is clear to faculty that this expansion is part of a series of strategic plans to lead us through Emerging Research status to Research University Fund eligibility. However, faculty have expressed concerns about the ability of the university infrastructure to keep up with these goals. By infrastructure, we envision something larger than, but including, physical structures. It is not clear how the infrastructure needs are considered as the number of programs expand. Examples of concern include *student support* like the Counseling Center, *staff support* for important functions like the IRB and PCRs, *tech support* for communication between Round Rock and San Marcos, and everyone's favorite – *parking*. What process does the university use to assess the infrastructure needs, especially, since new program proposals only address direct needs of the programs (e.g. departmental faculty and staff)?
 - President Trauth explained that in times of flat enrollment and no budget growth, the administration uses various strategies to meet university needs. One strategy is to examine the various divisions of the university and to determine where reorganization might increase efficiency while still providing growing services. Provost Bourgeois noted that recent changes to the staff group budget item has provided Vice Presidents with a more realistic look at their divisions, enabling them to identify high priority targets for the limited resources that are available. The University Police Department, the Counseling Center, and virtual connections between Round Rock and San Marcos campuses were discussed as areas of concern.
 - Senator Agwuele noted that campus atmosphere is another aspect of infrastructure, and that existing policies and procedures have not been adequate to deal with the increasing number of negative incidents on our campus. As we move toward R1 status, diversity on our campus will continue to increase as more international students and faculty will be attracted to our campus. Senator Agwuele asked what was being done to update our policies and procedures to anticipate these changes and to make sure that people feel included. President Trauth stated that the administration's response would vary depending on the issue of concern. For example, Special Assistant to the President, Dr. Lisa Lloyd, will examine issues related to the relocation of health-related programs to the Round Rock campus. The Council on Inclusive Excellence will address concerns related to diversity and inclusion. Dr. Walter Horton (Associate Vice President of Research and Federal Regulations) will work on improvements to the Institutional Review Board, and the Associate Vice President for International Affairs will put plans in place to anticipate the needs of international students.
 - Senator Supancic relayed concerns about the small number of staff working in some offices at JCK. Provost Bourgeois described how the new approach to the staff group budget item would allow him to work with the Deans and Associate Vice Presidents to determine the most efficient use of those funds to reauthorize, or newly authorize, staff positions.
 - Senators inquired about strategies that might allow the university to be more proactive than reactive in addressing infrastructure problems. President Trauth noted that staff in leadership positions routinely attend professional conferences to learn about upcoming changes in regulations, as well as cutting-edge response strategies.
 - Senator Bezner asked about the process used to identify academic programs that should be phased out. President Trauth explained that, in addition to recommendations by the Texas Higher

Education Coordinating Board, the university conducts internal academic program reviews, which identify low producing programs that might benefit from reorganization.

- In response to a question from Senator Nolan, President Trauth and Provost Bourgeois described the university's strategic planning processes, which project 6 to 10 years into the future depending on the level of the plan. Department-level, mid-plan reviews, which typically occur in year 3 of a 6-year strategic plan, are a key point at which faculty may attempt to elevate new issues to the higher-level strategic plans (e.g., college- or Provost-level plans). These mid-point reviews will provide an opportunity to respond to changes in the campus environment.
- **Election Update:** President Trauth and Provost Bourgeois provided a brief election update. At the next PAAG meeting, President Trauth will speak in greater depth about our legislative agenda.

Senate Response to AAUP Report on St. Edward's University: A recent AAUP report on St. Edward's University described violations of due process in the firing of several faculty members. Senator Nolan presented a draft statement from our faculty senate, which supports the victims of violations of due process and endorses the AAUP's statements on academic freedom and shared governance. Senator White will distribute a revised version of the statement to senators via email, along with a deadline for additional comments. The final statement will be posted on the faculty senate website, highlighted in the senate bulletin, and shared with the AAUP.

Faculty Concerns: Senator White relayed a number of concerns received by email or through the faculty senate website.

- **Record Retention Policy:** A faculty member inquired about the possibility of shortening the length of time that we are required to keep records. Senator White responded to the concerned faculty member and noted that our university policy already describes the shortest retention period allowed by law.
- **Salary:** There were three concerns related to salary: 1) the gap between males and females, 2) salary compression, and 3) no (or low) merit increases. Senator White reported that the last comparison of salary between males and females at Texas State occurred 15 years ago and showed no significant differences. This was shared with the concerned faculty member. Senators White and Vacaflares discussed plans to examine recent data to see if there is currently a sex gap in salary at Texas State. Regarding salary compression and no (or low) merit increases, senators noted that these topics were discussed at a recent PAAG meeting. The senate will continue to make a case for merit increases and equity adjustments.
- **Political Activities Email:** A faculty member voiced a first amendment concern about the mail sent from the Texas State System office reminding us not to use university resources (including emails) for political activities. Senator White responded, noting that the language of the email does not differ from state law: <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/GV/htm/GV.556.htm>.

Minutes from the October 24th senate meeting were approved, and the minutes from October 31st were approved with minor changes.

6:03 pm Adjournment by Chair Alex White

Minutes submitted by Natalie Ceballos, Secretary