**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Attending Senators:** Gwynne Ellen Ash, Stacey Bender, Janet Bezner, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Vincent Luizzi, Benjamin Martin, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Guests:** Noel Anthony Fuller, Eugene Bourgeois (Provost), Gene Brenek, Mary Brennan, Natalie Ceballos, William Chittenden, Ricardo Delgado Ahumada (University Star), Shannon Duffy, Carla Ellard, Kym Fox, Lisa Francis, David Gibbs, Michel Haigh, Nicole Hengst, Kristopher Infante, Ramces Luna, Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), David Nolan, Judy Oskam, Joaquin Palacios, Scott Pope (Library), Aimee Roundtree, Chris Russian, Joni S J Charles, Christine Sellers, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne, Erik Timmerman, Denise Trauth (President), Ginger Williams

Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Senate Chair Bezner

**President’s Academic Advisory Group**

**Update on tenure and promotion cycle**

Dr. Bourgeois provided results of the 2019/2020 T&P cycle:

* Thirty-five of 36 applicants who applied for promotion to Professor were approved. One applicant was denied at the college-level.
* One faculty member applied and was promoted to Clinical Professor.
* Thirty of 31 applicants who applied for tenure and promotion were approved. One person, applying for early tenure was denied at the department level but was held harmless.
* All five applicants who applied for tenure only were approved.

President Trauth emphasized she was impressed by each applicant’s credentials.

**Trump Executive Order on Combatting Race and Sex Stereotyping**

President Trauth addressed concerns and reactions to her email announcing a pause in diversity training at the university. The Cabinet is working with legal counsel to quickly work out a path to get back to diversity training and the university is not backing off their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Trauth explained that Dr. Silva is developing two processes to determine whether content violates the EO; an interim process for people who plan to do diversity training in the near future, and a longer process that examines how training materials will be reviewed to be in compliance with the EO. President Trauth explained that the EO is very clear that it does not apply to academic instruction. When asked if the EO would impact D&I training activities, Dr. Trauth suggested there is a way to teach D&I without specifically calling it D&I and that the EO warrants a new way of approaching the training material without watering it down. Dr. Bourgeois explained that the Faculty Toolkit will need to be reviewed for divisive language. The university is trying to ensure compliance so that federally funded student aid and research are not negatively affected.

**Consideration of cancelling spring break 2021**

President Trauth explained that the idea of cancelling spring break was a topic discussed in higher education news and that Texas State needed to have conversations about that possibility. Dr. Bourgeois explained that cancelling spring break, and not Thanksgiving break, was a possibility because the Fall schedule was already in place by Spring 2020. However, the university is strongly encouraging students to not travel to visit family or have large family gatherings during Thanksgiving break. Asked whether moving classes online for the week after Thanksgiving break and for finals was an option, Dr. Bourgeois indicated that many faculty have already worked out attendance options with their students and can continue to do so after Thanksgiving break.

Senators provided feedback about cancelling spring break that included faculty and staff experiencing mental and physical exhaustion/burnout because they have worked nonstop since spring break 2020 and through the summer. Additional concerns included the extra burden on faculty, staff, and researchers with K-12 students at home, particularly if K-12 schools do not cancel their spring break. A senator suggested moving to remote instruction for two weeks following spring break. Senators were asked to provide Senator Ledbetter with feedback that she could bring to the Continuity of Education workgroup.

Dr. Trauth acknowledged that faculty and staff burnout is real and goes back to the stress of not knowing when the pandemic will end and expressed understanding that people are exhausted and stressed.

**Summer 2021 budget**

Dr. Bourgeois explained that the combined summer and administrative budget faculty are paid from for additional work performed outside their contracted 9-month appointments was permanently reduced by 15.6%. Moving forward, colleges will be provided with a lump sum and deans will be tasked with how to distribute the funds among departments for instructional and administrative work for Summer 2021. A senator asked if an administrative role in the summer could not be funded, whether the work will be left undone. Dr. Bourgeois suggested the summer administrative work could be wrapped into service or the compensation adjusted to a stipend payment instead of a salary percentage or effort-based scheme to make the work fit within the budget.

A senator asked if the Athletics budget was also reduced by 10%. President Trauth said that Athletics took a 5% cut from the legislature and that she thinks they also had a 10% budget reduction but could not confirm without seeing the budget again. Dr. Bourgeois was not sure if the total percent reduction for the Athletics budget was directly related to fewer students paying fees associated with in-person instruction or whether Athletics included the lost revenue from student fees in their budget reductions.

In response to a question about how summer budget cuts will affect our ability to offer summer courses, Dr. Trauth said if there is high enrollment then they will fund those sections. Dr. Bourgeois explained that departments will need to scrutinize their summer course offerings including reviewing the need to offer duplicate sections of the same course and elective courses.

A senator asked for clarification that the permanent 15.6% reduction was in fact not a salary reduction and whether any salaries have been reduced on campus. Dr. Bourgeois explained that the cuts were not salary reductions and that chairs, deans, and directors will need to figure out how to allocate funds for their summer budgets. The senator followed up with concerns that many faculty on 9-month contracts perform significant administrative duties in the summer. Additionally, those roles are often filled by NLF and/or the lowest paid faculty at the university. In general, many faculty are angry about taking pay cuts for work performed in the summer while no other administrators’ salaries have been reduced. Another senator followed up to clarify that reductions in salaries/pay cuts have been felt at the lowest levels, while the highest paid administrators have not had to bear the same burden. Dr. Trauth explained that it was not an equivalent comparison since faculty are appointed on 9-month contracts while administrators are appointed to 12-month contracts. The senator asked if faculty are going to be paid to do the work asked of them and Dr. Trauth suggested that chairs may have to absorb more work. The senator pointed out that at some universities, the highest paid administrators made a demonstrated commitment to the community by taking cuts to their own salaries. Dr. Bourgeois explained that faculty who work in the summer are not technically taking a salary cut because they are appointed to 9-month contracts and any additional work in the summer is outside of that appointment.

A senator requested that if faculty who are used to the salary associated with their summer workload are not going to be paid the same in Summer 2021, then they should be told as soon as possible so they can make other plans. Another senator expressed concern about potentially losing high quality coordinators at the graduate and undergraduate levels and that there is a lot of work behind the scenes such that recruitment, retention, and curriculum activities will likely suffer as a result of the permanent cuts.

**Update on the COVID testing kiosk**

Dr. Trauth reported that Curative performed 1,074 PCR tests last week and only 18 were positive for a positivity rate of approximately 1.7%. The university hopes to have testing for the Round Rock campus soon. Dr. Bourgeois said that at some point the cases will be added to the COVID-19 Roadmap. Dr. Trauth said the plan is to have Curative continue testing on campus through the end of the semester, but it is dependent on Hays County officials. A senator asked again to include the total number of tests administered reported on the Dashboard. Dr. Bourgeois said they plan on having that information posted to the Dashboard soon.

**December commencement**

President Trauth explained she has heard from many students who want an in-person commencement and the Commencement Workgroup was charged to come up with a proposal. Dr. Trauth asked senators to voice their concerns about in-person commencement. Senators concerns and suggestions included:

* Spectators are wildcards and the administration should consider a live ceremony for students but not spectators.
* Limit spectators at ceremonies to 2-3 per graduate.
* Risks to faculty, staff, and participants. Even with the best efforts, people will still cluster and we cannot control it.
* If the ceremony does not have a have processional and limits guests, will that reduce the student experience?
* Costs associated with an in-person commencement, particularly considering budget reductions.

A senator on the Commencement Workgroup pointed out that planning commencement ceremonies held in Bobcat Stadium is not a futile exercise because at the current pace of growth, Strahan Coliseum will not be a sustainable venue in the future.

**Discussion of NLF Career Path proposal**

Senators discussed new language inserted into the NLF Career Path proposal. Dr. Thorne inserted “…peer-reviewed contributions that enhance knowledge in their specific academic discipline, or more generally, in the scholarship of teaching and learning”. Many senators disagreed with this language and would prefer more explicit language for what constitutes research activity requirements for promotion. Some senators also pointed out that research professors do not have to teach or perform service, so why should instructional professors have to perform research?

Senators heard information and viewpoints about salary increases for promotion and whether the increase should be a percentage of salary or a specific dollar amount. Senator Ledbetter will bring the senate feedback to the NLF Committee next week and consider revisions to the draft policy.

**Policy review**

UPPS 04.04.35 Professional Development Educational Opportunities, due October 12 (Senator Ash)

**Approval of minutes**

Senators approved the minutes for the September 30, 2020 meeting.

**Executive Session**

Senators voted to approve the recommendations of the Piper Professor Selection Committee

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 pm

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen