**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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

**Guests:** Stella Silva, Aimee Roundtree, Chris Russian, Christine Sellers, Joni S J Charles, Judy Oskam, Karen Sigler, Ricardo Delgado Ahumada (University Star), Scott Pope (Library), Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), Cody Lee DeSalvo, KeAirra Haynes

Meeting called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Senate Chair Bezner

**Institutional Inclusive Excellence for Faculty and Staff**Dr. Stella Silva provided an update on the current organizational structure for Institutional Inclusive Excellence for faculty and staff within the Office of Equity and Inclusion and provided contact information for specific services and the personnel that provide the services. She provided a summary of the major goals achieved in FY2020 including social media branding, support for executive searches, deployment of a customer service survey, and development of new marketing materials and websites. Future plans include expanding the team’s capacity to include support for new initiatives in Institutional Inclusive Excellence, developing their team to move towards full life cycle recruitment for staff positions, affirmative action planning, and inclusion and retention program planning. The overarching goal is to ensure that Texas State is an equitable and inclusive workplace. Dr. Silva provided synopses of the job posting process, recommendation for hiring, networking and hiring events, recruitment strategy consultations and training, as well as the Affirmative Action Plan and how hiring will be analyzed to determine where the university is at, where the university needs to be, and steps to move forward.

Dr. Silva provided context for the reorganization and specifically explained that the talent acquisition team used to be in Human Resources but could better serve the university community by being housed within the Office of Equity and Inclusion. A senator asked if faculty search committees were aware of the talent acquisition services provided by the office. Dr. Silva explained that the service has been available for a while and is currently in place for people to use, and they want to provide the opportunity for people to ask for help with the hiring process. The senator suggested all search chairs have a meeting with a talent acquisition manager prior to moving through the hiring process. Another senator inquired about units including a diversity statement as part of the application packets.

A senator asked Dr. Silva to expand on the retention efforts/activities the office has promoted. Dr. Silva explained that there are various recognition opportunities including faculty and staff awards and provided suggestions such as paid time off, recognizing work-life balance and cultural identity, as means to promote employee retention. The office is looking into and seeking feedback/suggestions about retention programs of interest to faculty and staff in addition to using exit interviews to solicit feedback from departing employees. A senator suggested that communication can be improved significantly across campus to facilitate retention.

A senator suggested that giving staff the opportunity to provide performance evaluations of their supervisors could improve employee morale and retention as well as identify problems with communication between supervisors and employees. Dr. Silva explained the challenges associated with staff evaluating their supervisors by noting situations where units have very few employees, lack of confidentiality, and potential retaliatory responses by supervisors. She noted that while supervisors cannot legally violate policy, there is nothing illegal about “being a jerk”. Dr. Silva indicated she was willing to investigate what other institutions are doing with staff/supervisor evaluations and could perform benchmarking to determine how the university may incorporate staff evaluations of supervisors in the future.

A senator asked about marginalized/poorly compensated employees and the possibility to pay them more. Dr. Silva explained that the pay schedule is approved by the state Comptroller of Public Accounts, so the university is limited in terms of their autonomy for paying employees. Dr. Silva offered other options for compensation such as paid days off and other affirmation gestures to make faculty and staff feel appreciated.

**COVID Vaccine Workgroup Meeting Update**Senator Blasingame provided an update from the COVID Vaccine Workgroup. The workgroup includes a diverse representation of stakeholders throughout the university. There are six main vaccines they are tracking, with vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna presently being the most advanced. Senator Blasingame explained the process the university must go through to apply to be a vaccine distributor and the different stages of vaccination events, where colleges and universities are listed in the second tier of vaccination priority. The workgroup is preparing for how many vaccinations will need to be provided based on survey responses. At present, the university anticipates a 50% vaccination rate on campus.

Senator Blasingame also explained the need for cold storage and the relatively small footprint of vaccine storage and freezers required. Freezers are currently available through COSE (Chemistry department). He explained that vaccine shipments are delivered 5,000 at a time and they anticipate needing 50,000 doses. The workgroup is currently working on the complex logistics associated with vaccine distribution. Senator Blasingame noted that Texas State is working on its own and not working with the county or state.

A senator asked if the federal government was going to provide software for tracking vaccinations. Senator Blasingame explained that to the best of his knowledge, the federal government did not have a plan for that and that IT professionals at Texas State would develop the software.

Senators asked if family members will be provided the opportunity to be vaccinated and if the workgroup has discussed the potential for a problems associated with the university switching teaching modality (e.g., returning to all face-to-face instruction) mid-spring semester. Senator Blasingame will take those questions back to the workgroup.

**Discussion of adding an autumn break to the academic calendar** –

Cody DeSalvo and KeAirra Haynes from Student Government talked with the senate about a student government proposal to add a 2-3 day break after the 39th consecutive class day in the fall. In the spring, there are 39 consecutive class days, but in the fall, there are 54 consecutive class days before a break. They have been surveying different groups to explain the proposal and to solicit feedback. The asked for feedback from the senate and whether the senate would be supportive of their proposal.

A senator explained there may be pushback on a 2-3 day break because like Thanksgiving break, students might stretch it to an entire week. They suggested an alternative of starting the semester early and ending before Thanksgiving break. Another senator explained that other universities such as University of North Carolina Greensboro already implement a Fall Break. Another senator explained that many departments have classes with multiple sections with course material and delivery that must be synced and that adding an additional break negatively affects multiple section synchronization. Another senator suggested making Thanksgiving break last an entire week. Mr. DeSalvo explained that the current academic calendars are locked for the next two years and that student government would be working to refine and review their proposal based on feedback before the new calendars are set.

**Consideration of resolution to endorse TRIO program**
Senator Luizzi provided an overview of the TRIO-McNair Program, which is a mentoring program for promising disadvantaged undergraduate students to prepare them for acceptance and success in doctoral programs. Senator Luizzi suggested that the ability of the university to be accepted into the program would be easier if the faculty senate were willing to endorse the initiative and asking the broader faculty if they would be willing to be mentors. Senator Bezner suggested Mr. Ray Cordero, Senior Director for TRIO Programs, could come to a senate meeting to explain the application process. Senators agreed to invite Mr. Cordero to a future meeting.

**PAAG Agenda**Senators discussed potential agenda items for the upcoming PAAG meeting on Wednesday, December 2, 2020.

**Assignment of Policies**AA PPS 04.01.25 Academic Program Coordination, pen and ink changes, due November 30, 2020 (Senator Blasingame).

**Approval of minutes**
Senators approved the minutes for the November 4, 2020 and November 11, 2020 meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen