Faculty Senate Minutes

Wednesday, November 11, 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, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Guests:** Scott Pope (Library) Shannon Duffy, Karen Sigler, David Gibbs, Judy Oskam, Aimee Roundtree, Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), Joni S J Charles, Kiana Burks (University Star), Carlos Abreu Mendoza, Christine Sellers

Meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Senate Chair Bezner

**PAAG Meeting Debrief**Senators discussed the PAAG meeting held on Wednesday, November 11, 2020. The conversations included thoughts about the university’s required versus optional metrics to attain R1 status, concerns about requiring staff to work during in-person commencement in December, and whether a decision has been made about the option to toll the tenure clock a third time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Chair Bezner is going to ask Staff Council if they are taking any action about the requirement for specific staff to work the in-person commencement. Additionally, a senator asked Senate Chair Bezner to contact Dr. Thorne to revise the AAPPS with a pen and ink change if the decision to allow a third toll of the tenure clock is approved.

**Discussion of potential resolution regarding Spring Break in collaboration with Student Government**Senator Bezner reported that she had not heard back from the student government senator about participating in a joint resolution.

Senator Ledbetter reported that the Continuity of Education workgroup was not in favor of cancelling Spring Break and that the workgroup would make that recommendation to the President’s Cabinet.

A senator requested that if there is a decision to cancel spring break, then faculty should have a say in how that is handled (e.g., how ‘break’ days are distributed throughout the semester).

**Verifying faculty voters for election in spring**Valerie Anderson notified senators that faculty voter rolls will be distributed to senators and liaisons for verification. Senators need to respond by the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester with verified lists.

**Update from Council on Inclusive Excellence**Senator Martin provided an update on the restorative justice initiative facilitated by the Council on Inclusive Excellence. The council has been working with Life Anew Restorative Justice to work to identify cohorts within the university that offer a diverse cross-section of students, faculty, and staff. Senator Martin described three planned sessions of three hours each for members from individual cohorts to define values and agreements by which to operate, prepare expectations for integrated cohort sessions, and coproduce equitable processes for the university. Life Anew will generate reports of what comes out of the cohort sessions, facilitate sessions, and analyze integrated restorative justice session outputs. The overall goal is to make restorative justice conversations and action an ongoing and lasting process where cohort groups can continue to meet and talk, so ongoing issues can continue to be discussed among groups.

Senator Martin also provided an update on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force activities. In short, the task force’s time has been dominated by inventorying existing training and evaluating whether specific trainings should be continued in the future. The task force has also undertaken benchmarking of other universities to assess how they manage diversity and equity training. Senator Martin explained that the university established a diversity task force in 2000 and at that time they recommended diversifying faculty, recruiting, and requiring diversity training. The recommendation for required diversity training was blocked at the cabinet level, in part because of the lack of support from the faculty senate at the time. Presently, required training does not appear to be a concern because current faculty engagement and participation is much stronger. Senator Martin encouraged the faculty senate to throw their weight behind this effort.

Senators provided several suggestions and questions including evaluating the overlap among trainings offered through the Center for Diversity, surveying academic units to determine who has already created training materials, and considering alternative language in lieu of ‘mandatory’. Additionally, a senator pointed out that some faculty of color have serious concerns about the potential pressure placed on students of color; where the students feel they are obligated to share their stories of discrimination, harassment, etc. Senator Martin will ask the Council on Inclusive Excellence if they have fielded these concerns.

**Discussion of Senators serving as mace bearers at December commencement**Senators agreed to have Senate Chair Bezner communicate that faculty senate will not bear the mace at any of the December in-person commencement ceremonies.

**Decision to hire Beto O’Rourke in Political Science to teach a class**Senators discussed a concern submitted by a faculty member about the university’s decision to hire Beto O’Rourke to teach a political science class in the Spring 2021 semester. The faculty member had expressed concerns about Mr. O’Rourke’s lack of academic credentials, the polarized political climate, and concerns about losing donors. Most senators agreed that faculty should trust the Political Science department to have thoroughly thought out those concerns prior to hiring Mr. O’Rourke. Senators contributed that UT hired Matthew McConaughey and Kendra Scott to teach courses, that in many government positions experience is credited in lieu of years of education, and that learning from people with first-hand experience in the field is a valued opportunity.

Dr. Aimee Roundtree, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts, explained that the Cabinet already considered concerns and approved the hire. Moreover, all frustrated donors and parents have, at present, been responded to. Dr. Roundtree also pointed out that the Political Science department has had courses taught by appointees of Presidents Bush and Trump and that if any politician is interested in teaching a class at Texas State, they should reach out and inquire about doing so.

**Assignment of Policies**AA PPS 01.02.01 Academic Administrative Units, due November 26, 2020 (Senator Supancic)   
AA PPS 01.02.21 Faculty Senate Chair – (Senators Ledbetter and Jensen)

**Executive Session**Senators approved a motion to forward ranked Faculty Development Leave applications to the Provost by November 23, 2020.

Meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen