**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**January 26, 2022**

**4-6 p.m.**

**Attending senators:** Taylor Acee, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Danette Myers, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Attending guests:** Sarah Angulo (Senate Fellow), Laura Ellis-Lai, Michelle Fissel, Regina Jillapalli, Judy Oskam, Karen Sigler, Theo Wright (University Star)

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m.

**Texas State University System Rules and Regulations Review – Senator Ledbetter**

The [TSUS Rules and Regulations](https://www.tsus.edu/offices/general-counsel.html) are up for review. There has been a request for feedback by February 7. Senators were asked to read the rules and regulations and provide feedback to Senator Ledbetter in the coming days. Chapter Five, in particular, deals with Component Personnel issues like tenure and grievance procedures. Senate feedback will go to the President’s Cabinet for consideration of whether or not to take to the Board of Regents meeting in May.

A senator asked if the TSUS Rules and Regulations are truly open for discussion. Senator Ledbetter said she was unsure if the Senate had any influence to change anything, but she did recommend the Senate still review the rules and regulations and send feedback to the President’s Cabinet. The senator said at first glance showed portions that apply to many issues discussed at Senate. Senator Ledbetter said it’s good to have a working knowledge of the system rules that apply to faculty matters.

Senator Ledbetter also provided an update on the proposed cyberharassment policy at the university level. Current thinking is it will be included into current policies already in place. The Senate will be advised when there is a revised recommendation.

**Representative to Texas Council of Faculty Senates – Senator Ledbetter**

The Texas Council of Faculty Senates announced the meeting had been pushed to April 8 and 9 in person. Further discussion of Senate representation will be held at a later meeting.

**PAAG Questions – Senator Ledbetter**

President Trauth and PAAG will join the Senate meeting on February 2. Senator Ledbetter asked for topic suggestions for the discussion.

A senator said the Senate should ask about the university’s recent purchase of a new house for the President for $2.9 million. According to news reports, the property was listed around $1.2 million and valued at less than $875,000.

A senator asked if the Senate should ask about progress with the search for a new President. Senator Ledbetter said there is a shortened list of candidates that will be pared down even further for upcoming Zoom interviews. The final round of in-person interviews is expected to happen before Spring Break.

A senator asked about the merit pool and the decision by the university to not ask for a tuition increase. The senator also suggested asking about the decision to reverse course and not make the online component of diversity and inclusion training mandatory for faculty and staff.

A senator suggested asking the Provost about faculty developmental leave and whether every applicant should receive funding. This is on the agenda later today for Senate discussion.

A senator raised a concern from one of his faculty colleagues about increased research requirements **without** a reduction in teaching load. The faculty member was concerned about lack of salary increases while the university continues to hire administrators who do not teach or do research.

A senator suggested asking about how student evaluations will be weighted in faculty reviews this year. She thinks this could provide an opportunity for Senators to talk with their colleges about not weighing student evaluations as heavily at this time. A fellow senator said her college is weighing student evaluations as either responsible or non-responsible. Dr. Judy Oskam, the director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication was asked to comment, and she said SJMC uses student evaluation comments as opportunities to help address issues like classroom management instead of relying purely on evaluation numbers. Another senator said his college has senior faculty mentors for junior faculty members, which helps address some issues that come up in student evaluations.

A senator suggested asking about the return to face-to-face learning. Senator Ledbetter reiterated messaging related to Bobcat Trace, masking and testing as keys to remaining in person. The same senator also asked about the status of faculty salary equity adjustments.

A senator raised a suggestion from the chat to ask about the status of electronic course fees being used for faculty salaries and how this limits strategic ability to use these funds. Senator Ledbetter believes this issue will be brought up at an upcoming CAD meeting, so it could be a topic for the March PAAG meeting. Another senator said she’s heard complaints from students about the cost of the electronic course fees, and her department is losing students to other universities with lower fees. She wants to know what Texas State plans to do to make online learning more affordable for students instead of charging higher costs for online classes.

A senator asked about previous discussion of differential tuition to generate additional funds. She wanted to know if that was ever put into place. Another senator said he remembered hearing credits would cost more in McCoy and the College of Science and Engineering. A senator in the College of Science and Engineering confirmed that is in place.

A senator asked about whether fellow senators are members of their College Councils and regularly attend meetings. Senators Davenport and Myers said they are both members of theirs and attend weekly meetings. Senator Davenport said she finds the meetings incredibly useful. She gets to represent faculty and, likewise, gets suggestions for topics of discussion at Senate. She wished it was in place in all colleges. Senator Myers agreed. She’s required to attend hers and provide a report from the Senate. A senator said he receives brief minutes from College Council meetings in his college, but he believes that Senate representation is a good idea. Senator Ledbetter said it may be worthwhile to suggest this with college deans. Senator Davenport said this should be approached at the joint meeting of CAD, Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate on April 5.

Senators agreed to ask PAAG about diversity training, the future of salary equity adjustments and electronic course fees.

**Faculty Development Leave Application Process – Senator Ledbetter**

The Senate then discussed the application process regarding faculty development leave. Right now, the Senate scores each application and has a thorough discussion of each application, but all who apply get approved if there is enough money to do so.

A senator asked if all who apply for FDL should get it. If someone isn’t awarded, could the Senate help guide them to improve their application for the next year? She also suggested changing the rubric to rate applications as Exceptional, Acceptable or Unacceptable. She believes that would simplify the process and provide a foundation for denying applications that are unacceptable.

A senator questioned the purpose of rating and discussing all applications when it has no bearing on the final decision. He also suggested asking Dr. Thorne about the possibility of moving money around to provide for more supplemental funding for exceptional applications and making the application process more competitive for the others. Another senator said he believes the Senate’s critiques of the applications still carry value and accountability.

A senator said he doesn’t feel this should be a highly competitive process, but he said applications should meet a minimum standard to be awarded. He seconded the previous suggestion of rating applications ats acceptable or not.

A senator asked if an FDL application has ever been denied. Senator Ledbetter said there has been one denied or withdrawn because it was submitted before the applicant was eligible. The Senate would need to defend why an application was denied.

A senator suggested additional financial incentive to increase the viability of some applications so that top applications get more than lower-ranked applications. He also suggested the Senate look more critically at post-award reporting applicants are required to do. These reports show what the applicants accomplished as part of previous FDL awards – and it allows the Senate to see if applicants did what they said they were going to do.

A senator said she sees value in ranking applications, but she would support a change in the rating categories. She also questioned the usefulness of the Senate’s group discussions of applications since this leads to advocating for colleagues and subjectivity.

A senator raised the point that the policy says an applicant can be denied for FDL. She again advocated for a better ranking system. The Senate’s administrative assistant cautioned senators that any major change to the process would have to go through policy review by mid-summer before the call is put out for applications.

A senator said it seems like the changes being discussed could be rolled into the current policy. The Senate would just be applying a standard to the rubric, noting there are usually only 2-3 applications that raise concern. Another senator said despite having a minimum score required to fund FDL applications, the Senate culture is to award all of them. The debate is whether that’s the right thing to do.

A senator said he fears a cycle where there is a reduced allocation for funding to account for the number of applicants who do rise to the occasion. He said the Senate should fund as many qualified applications as possible. He said the Senate would need to be accountable as evaluators for its decisions.

Senator Ledbetter asked for feedback related to Senate group discussions as part of the application review process.

A senator said he found the discussions helpful to hear what others thought of the applications.

A senator said he has not found the group discussions valuable since he has only changed a handful of scores over the years following the discussion.

A senator agreed that she has never changed scores following the discussion, but she suggested the Senate meet to discuss the rubric and process before scoring applications. She then wanted to see how her ratings compared to the thoughts of everyone else.

A senator said she appreciated the discussions because it helped her as a new senator learn how to rate applications more effectively.

A senator said the group discussions are pointless if the Senate is going to continue to award all applications. He said the Senate needs to decide if it will use the standards already in place to evaluate applications and evaluate the applications that don’t reach the level expected for funding. He said group discussions would be needed if the Senate does decide to deny funding for some applicants.

Senator Ledbetter suggested talking to Dr. Thorne to get a better idea of where funding comes from and how administration views denying funding for some applications. A senator asked for caution in how this discussion is raised so that funding for this isn’t decreased for any reason.

**Policy Reviews**

Two policies require Senate review.

UPPS 03.02.05: Higher Education Funds (HEF), due February 7 – Senator Mendez

UPPS 02.02.07: Researcher Conflicts of Interest in Research and Sponsored Program Activities, due February 7 – Senator Dedek

Minutes from the January 19 meeting were approved.

The Senate then went into Executive Session to discuss recommendations for three faculty members to the Ombudsperson search committee.

The meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.