**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**February 9, 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, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Roque Mendez, Danette Myers, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Attending guests:** Sarah Angulo (Senate Fellow), Brianna Benitez (University Star), Carole Clerie, Bobby Mason, Karen Sigler, Bill Stone

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

**Retirement and Benefits Committee Report – Bill Stone, Chair**

The Retirement and Benefits Committee received a request to discuss software access for retired faculty and librarian/curators. A handful of retirees asked to receive support for all or at least part of the annual fee that retirees must now pay to access the Microsoft 365 suite needed to conduct joint projects with current active faculty. Examples of such projects would include service on thesis and dissertation committees, participation in scholarly activities and joint publication with current faculty. An informal survey indicated that this concern existed among retired faculty in most of the other colleges, as well.

Stone met with ITAC officials concerning this request, but they stated that solving the software access problem was a university policy problem – not a technical problem that they could resolve. Thirty days after retirement, a faculty member’s software reverts to a limited functionality “free version” unless the retiree purchases a one-year extension for approximately $95.

The Retirement and Benefits Committee asked the Senate to consider asking for a modification of UPPS 04.04.53 to address this issue, allowing for schools/departments to cover a one year-extension of Microsoft 365 software for retirees taking part in these activities.

A senator asked if there was a way to have these retired faculty still listed as active graduate faculty members. He also wanted to know if it would actually cost the university to cover these licenses. Stone said it is a fee that would have to be covered. Stone said the proposal to attach this to the individual schools is that the chair or director would be the one who knows if there is a legitimate need for that retiree to have access. Stone said he didn’t expect the Grad College to cover this cost, so it would likely need to come from the schools/departments.

A senator asked for clarification that this wouldn’t just apply to graduate projects. Stone said it would apply to any retiree with a legitimate need for this software.

A senator asked if this was specific to Microsoft or if it’s going to be a problem with future updates for other software faculty members frequently use for research and collaboration. Stone said it’s mainly a Microsoft problem right now. Stone said ITAC should be able to say which software will expire, but he expects other software companies to follow Microsoft’s lead with this licensing fee.

A senator asked if the retired faculty could be listed as unpaid faculty in the university’s system to get around this issue. Stone said a PCR like that could create problems in the system and with retirement. Stone believes their request to have schools/departments cover this need is the simplest solution.

A senator asked if the computers retired faculty use for these projects could be in the university’s name, instead. Stone said everything is attached to the faculty member’s user ID, so that’s not an option.

A senator asked how many requests like this the committee has received so far. Stone said they’ve received five complaints so far, but he said he talked to others who have stopped collaboration efforts with the university because of this.

A senator said it seems like this is an issue that should go through ITAC, where the retired faculty member applies for it and is approved by the school or department. Stone agreed in principle, but he said ITAC doesn’t agree. Stone said he also asked ITAC if a lesser version of the 365 suite could be made available for $35, and ITAC said this version doesn’t meet its security threshold. The senator said the Senate should ask President Trauth to encourage ITAC to find a solution at the university level rather than burdening schools and departments with this task.

A senator asked if teaching per course would be enough to still get access to the software. Stone said faculty teaching per course still have a PCR and still have full access to the software. The problem is when faculty have no contract operation with the university.

The Senate agreed to bring this issue to President Trauth at the next PAAG meeting.

**Full Senate with Dr. Sirry Alang – Senator Ledbetter**

The Full Senate will meet with Dr. Sirry Alang on Wednesday, February 16 from 4-5:30 p.m. This will be a facilitated discussion with Institutional Inclusive Excellence Staff, Faculty of Color and the Full Senate about strategies to address racism in an academic community. Alang will also take part in a presentation and Q&A the day before, which is also open to faculty senators from across the state. Right now, more than 100 people have registered for the Tuesday session.

Senator Jensen announced the Nontenure Line Faculty Appreciation Reception will be held Thursday, April 7 from 4-6 p.m. at the Witliff Collections in Alkek Library.

**University Training Courses – Carole Clerie, Assistant Vice President Human Resources, and**

**Bobby Mason, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Compliance and Chief Compliance Officer**

Mason said the university has previously lacked systems to effectively deliver and track course completion, particularly with three courses that are required of all employees under policy or law. There were also concerns about outdated and unappealing content in the trainings. Over the course of the past year, HR has implemented its new learning management system to now deliver and track training. HR also contracted with EVERFI to get course content material. On January 31, Texas State rolled out the Preventing Harassment and Discrimination course. Nearly 1,000 people have taken it since its launch, and the feedback has been largely positive. This course material is now accessible under ADA requirements. A new version of the Ethics and Compliance course, which is a TSUS requirement of all employees every two years, will likely be rolled out in April. The third required course for employees every year is an Information Security course. The university is currently working with EVERFI to develop this course. Mason said the new Diversity and Inclusion course is also part of this mix and will be launched soon. He asked the Senate for any feedback regarding training material or requirements.

A senator asked when the diversity training will be released. Mason said it could be as early as the end of February. Once the content is received from EVERFI, the university then customizes it. Mason believes the Council of Inclusive Excellence is currently in the process of reviewing the course.

A senator asked if EVERFI is a database of courses. Mason said EVERFI has been a leader in workplace course material for higher education. Courses will be designed specifically for undergrad students, grad students, managers and non-managers. Mason said these new courses should be better content than old PowerPoints that made up the previous courses. The senator said she has taken the new training and appreciated the different scenarios and how they were acted out.

Senator Ledbetter introduced Clerie since this was her first visit with the Senate. She was hired nearly a year ago, and Senator Ledbetter asked her to go over initiatives her office is working on. Clerie said one of the biggest projects was launching the new learning management system in October, and she hopes the partnership with EVERYFI will make the trainings more engaging and less dry. Clerie is also looking at SAP and having conversations with ITAC to enhance SAP and a timeline on replacing SAP. Her office also started a soft launch of a partnership with a new, third-party employment verification system. This will help with turnaround time with loan applications for homes, vehicles, etc. That will see a full launch soon. Clerie said they’re also changing the HR communication strategy. Instead of brochure or booklet type material, communication now features quick reads with links for more information. Looking forward, a leadership development program for faculty and staff is currently in the works. HR is also holding Staff Development Day conference in May.

Senator Ledbetter asked Clerie about concerns with staff retention. Clerie said salary is not always the answer. She said people chose to stay at a job because of the whole experience. She said treating staff with respect and making sure they know they are appreciated is a good first step. Clerie said there are significant financial challenges in the job market right now, with double-digit percentage increases in salary in the marketplace. The university competes locally when filling staff positions. HR is working with hiring managers to make sure salaries are competitive and recently partnered with a company to produce survey data for market comparisons. Clerie is also about to lead a 30-person work group to look into benefit packages and consistent practices regarding issues like remote work. She said there is no one thing that will help retention. It’s going to take the entire university to work together to tackle the problem. She said recent efforts lead to adjustments for five or six key positions. She believes the message is being heard by hiring managers – particularly when it’s backed up by good data.

A senator asked about the previous issue of retired faculty losing access to Microsoft 365 software. He wanted to know if there was a minimal way of contacting retired professors as advisors or something similar to get around this issue. Clerie said, from a TSUS standpoint, there is a way to have a person get the level of access they need as a non-paid entity. They currently use this method to give employee IDs and network access to temp workers. However, the budget aspect of this problem is another issue that would have to addressed separately.

**Summative Reviews – Senator McClellan**

Senator McClellan asked a question about the approval process of surveys in the summative review process for deans. These reviews require surveys of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community stakeholders. Senator McClellan said Institution Review wants to handle faculty surveys, but they are unable to turn them around in a quick enough timeframe. The Senate’s administrative assistant is working on an email to address this issue. Senator Ledbetter said this issue of clarity with the summative review process, in general, should also be added to the next PAAG agenda.

**Academic Governance Committee – Senator Wesley**

The Academic Governance Committee’s mission and function is to monitor and study the systems of departmental and college academic governance, including PPSs and other rules for conducting university business that impact faculty. As part of their 2021-22 charge from Faculty Senate, the AGC is collecting governance policies and systems from department chairs and program directors. The AGC has drafted a letter to send to chairs and directors, asking them to share their department or program’s governance policy if one has been established. The committee hopes this is a positive push to perhaps revive governance policies that may no longer be enforced or help departments establish a governance policy. Senator Wesley requested feedback from the Senate on the proposed letter before the AGC considers its approval and distribution.

A senator said he hopes this will improve transparency and create a library of documents across campus to serve as a starting point for departments that don’t currently have a governance policy.

**Various Updates – Senator Ledbetter**

Senator Ledbetter shared an update from the Academic Freedom Committee regarding the proposed cyberharrassment policy. Feedback from a variety of different constituents found this should first be addressed in existing policies and then, perhaps, moved to a standalone policy. The committee is drafting its thoughts for the Senate to consider.

Senator Ledbetter provided an update on the search to replace President Trauth. Initial interviews will be conducted via Zoom in late February. In-person interviews will be held right before Spring Break. The search committee is hoping to announce a sole finalist by April.

Senator Ledbetter also announced Senate meetings will soon go back to in-person. A Zoom link will be made available for those who either can’t attend or don’t feel comfortable attending.

Minutes for the February 2 meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.