**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

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

**Guests**: Eric Algoe, Sarah Angulo, Amy Benton, Gene Bourgeois, Lauren Dungan, Leslie Green, Stephanie Larrison, Judy Oskam, Sandy Pantlik, Scott Pope, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne, Erik Timmerman, Stephanie Towery, Denise Trauth, Margaret Vaverek, Madelyn Weirich (University Star), Ginger Williams

Meeting began at 4:00 pm

**Presidential Academic Advisory Group (PAAG)**

The senate asked for an update regarding merit raises. The university will be awarding a 3% merit-based bonus in fall, 2022. This will be a one-time award with payment spread over the year. Payments are intended to be spread on a monthly basis, but restrictions may require them to be paid in installments. New revenue will be required to make this bonus permanent, potentially through enrollment increases.

The senate inquired about potential equity raises for faculty, considering the rapidly increasing cost of living. The president emphasized that the income base must be raised to support increased salaries. The fall enrollment looks promising, especially in newly implemented programs such as civil and mechanical engineering. National Research University Fund (NRUF) eligibility will open additional funding sources that will likely be distributed broadly across the university. When a merit pool is available, divisions may petition to use merit funds for equity/salary adjustments. Discussions about this would occur at the Dean and Cabinet level.

The university is working to resolve salary disparities, beginning with staff positions that have the highest turnover. Turnover is currently highest among the following staff positions: security guards, dispatchers, police officers, residence hall directors, grounds workers, and academic advisors. The high rate of turnover is attributed to a gap between salaries at Texas State University and market rates. These positions have so many unfilled positions that the university has accrued reserves that will be diverted to increase the current salaries to fill some of the open positions. For example, advisor I salaries are being increased from $35k to $41.2k. In some cases, positions are being eliminated to allow for higher wages. For example, over the past 3-4 years there have had no fewer than six vacancies in the grounds team (and as high as ten unfilled positions). Therefore, two positions are being eliminated in order to more fairly pay the current workers and attract new workers.

Following the recommendations of a Task Force in 2020-2021, the senate and the cabinet endorsed the implementation of required DEIA training for all faculty and staff. However, faculty leaders on campus (particularly directors and chairs) questioned the enforceability of such training. It was never questioned whether this was right or wrong, but that there is no legal basis for such training in contrast to other required trainings. Following the rollout of the Everfi online DEIA course in the next couple of weeks, a process will be in place to provide more extensive opportunities for development. A senator asked how other universities in Texas such as UTSA were able to require participation in DEIA training. The president guessed that required participation at these institutions was not enforced, which seemed disingenuous to her. The new Vice President of Institutional Inclusive Excellence will be the leader in newly implemented programs. It is expected that initiatives will be included in the next strategic plan.

The university will be closing February 3-4 due to inclement weather. Eric Algoe described the process by which the university made this decision. Decisions are made by the emergency operations team. The emergency operations team has 37 members spanning every area of the university. The team has been meeting throughout the week including briefings from the national weather service. The team discusses potential impacts that closures may have on upcoming events. The university has made many preparations for the winter storm. For example, sand has been distributed across campus for spreading, especially around residence halls. ‘Critical staff’ including dining hall workers, grounds keepers, and police officers will be staying overnight on campus to ensure that they are available when needed. The university does not anticipate problems as extensive as those encountered last year. For example, frozen pipes are unlikely both because the temperatures aren’t expected to be as cold, and because updates have been made to mechanical systems to prevent failure. A senator asked about whether assistance would be provided to students living in Bobcat Village. Food and water will be available to these students who need it.

**PAAG Debrief**

Senators reiterated the problems with merit increases that are below the rate of inflation. The announcement regarding the merit bonus was considered ambiguous, and it wasn’t clear what was meant by the claim that one-time bonuses were part of the university’s “long standing practice of distributing non-recurring bonuses based on merit”. There is a concern that this message implies that future merit cycles will be provided as bonus and not salary increases.

We need to include other staff positions in consideration of salary inequity, including office administrative staff.

The change to the implementation of DEIA training seemed to be a step backwards. This potentially damages some of the progress that was being made through the restorative justice process.

The senate reviewed the upcoming bulletin.

Senators volunteered to sign up for lunch meetings with the Vice President for Institutional Inclusive Excellence candidates.

**Policy Reviews**

AAPPS 04.01.40, Faculty Workload, due Feb 23 (Senator Ojede)

AAPPS 02.02.31, Student-Funded Tutoring, due Feb 23 (Senator Davenport)

AAPPS 03.01.22, Program Income on Sponsored Programs, due Feb 18 (Senator Wesley)

AAPPS 03.01.05, Fee for Service, due Feb 25 (Senator Jensen)

UPPS 02.02.07, Conflict of Interest in Research will be additionally reviewed Senators Acee and Ojede

The senate approved the January 26, 2022 minutes

Meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin