**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Janet Bezner, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Vincent Luizzi, Benjamin Martin, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Guests**: Angela Ausbrooks, Lisa Baumgartner, Gene Bourgeois (Provost), Jenny Buschhorn, William Chittenden, Joanna Collins, Ricardo Delgado (University Star), Valarie Fleming, Kym Fox, William Kelemen, Jennifer Lamm, Sarah Maines, Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), Dwonna Naomi Goldstone, Judy Oskam, Sean Patrick Roche, Scott Pope (Library), Teya Rosenberg, Aimee Roundtree, Joni S J Charles, Jennifer Scharlach, Christine Sellers, Tammy Sharp, Karen Sigler, Stella Silva, Debbie Thorne, Erik Timmerman, Denise Trauth (President), Alex White

**President’s Academic Advisory Group (PAAG)**

**Incentives for vaccines**  
The senate asked for PAAG’s thoughts on whether Texas State might provide incentives for students to get vaccinated before the Fall semester and whether there were any conditions under which the university would or could require the COVID-19 vaccine. President Trauth explained that no organization that receives money from the State of Texas can require a vaccine as a condition for a benefit or to withhold a benefit. As such, incentives are not an option, however, a campaign aimed toward students emphasizing the benefits of getting vaccinated is the best route. She explained that misinformation on social media is a major concern and that educating students about what students do not have to do if they are vaccinated (e.g., quarantine, isolation, contact tracing, etc.) is a primary goal.   
  
A senator asked if pending state legislation regarding vaccinations could be advocated for by the university. Dr. Trauth explained that as a state agency, the university cannot take a position. President Trauth encouraged faculty who are comfortable talking with students about COVID-19 to emphasize to them the benefits of getting vaccinated.

**M&O sweep**The senate asked for PAAG’s thoughts about the short- and long-term implications of deans and chairs managing budgets. Dr. Bourgeois provided a brief history of M&O accounting related to course fees in the 1990s and the switch to designated tuition in the mid-2000s. Since there were historical inequities built into M&O budgets, a formula was created to redistribute funds. This year, the Provost developed a plan to examine M&O and take 50% of the existing balance to redistribute to large projects (e.g., high performance computing and seed money for Big Idea projects) and as such he asked deans to have chairs demonstrate that they have plans and prioritized spending. After pushback from deans and chairs, the Provost decided that deans, chairs, and faculty need to discuss, within their college, how money should be spent based on their operating budgets. Moving forward, any funds that end up at the Provost’s office will fund university-level initiatives and if a dean needs contingency funds to do things within their college, then that needs to occur at the college level.

A senator noted that faculty need to pay more attention to budgets and be more involved in the budget process. The Provost agreed and made a point that faculty need to let their chair/director and dean know what to budget for. Colleges and departments now need to manage their own carry forward to ensure funding is there when they need it.

A senator asked if inequities are evenly distributed across colleges and if it is possible that some colleges may not be able to cover costs. Dr. Bourgeois reminded senators of the permanent budget reduction and that layered into the 2021 fiscal budget are decisions that reflect those budget reductions. In short, yes, there may be some inequities but if the Provost’s office notices problems, then they may become involved and discuss with deans how funds can be moved to address those inequities.

A senator asked if the formula to allocate funding was public. The Provost said it is and he will make it available. Dr. Thorne explained that they have not run the formula in a few years because there has not been growth, but they are considering rerunning it for 2014-2019 and 2015-2020 (the formula considers the last five years of department expenditures).   
  
A senator asked the Provost if he thought that Dr. Chittenden’s (Presidential Fellow) project aimed at giving information to chairs and deans about how their enterprise impacts the greater university and Dr. Bourgeois’ decision to decentralize money management intersected. Dr. Bourgeois explained that if deans and chairs had information like a profit/loss statement then they would be able to see which departments/colleges make money and who does not. President Trauth explained that while that information is very useful, the university has an integrated approach to funding academic programs and that they recognized at the outset that some opportunities are available to some programs and not others, but that all programs at the university are important. Dr. Chittenden describe his Presidential Fellow project, which is a tool for chairs to examine their summer budgets and make strategic decisions based on historic data so within-program comparisons can be made.

A senator asked if there was any way to factor into budgets how people are managing their physical resources (lights, energy, temperature, paper, etc.)? President Trauth explained that Texas State does not operate that way and that perhaps as we come back to face-to-face that we need to have a discussion of these issues. The Provost explained that the university does not individually meter areas so it not possible to determine which units are using exact amounts of electricity.

**Program Coordinator summer salaries**

The senate asked for clarification about how program coordinators will be paid in the summer, how the amounts were determined, and if payments are a percentage of workload effort or salary. Dr. Thorne explained that the Provost’s office had a greater budget reduction than individual academic units and that the Provost decided to maintain staffing levels for critical student support on campus. In that light, and in keeping with the plan of decentralizing budget management and in the spirit of increased shared governance, the budget for the summer was allocated to the academic colleges and deans and college councils went through the process of how academic program coordinators would be compensated. As a result, academic program coordinators will now be paid based on a flat rate structure. The complexity behind paying academic program coordinators a flat rate is that the university is still accountable to the State of Texas to report faculty workload. Academic program coordinator service counts within a service/administrative category and the Provost’s office needed to determine how to operationalize a flat-rate structure and determine percent workload. Academic program coordinators are now going to be paid like per-course faculty, at 20% workload and the rate is independent of salary. However, now that the SACS review is complete, there is a plan to review the workload system to facilitate workload reporting that is not fixed to 20 and 25% increments. The Dr. Thorne encouraged discussion and feedback about the current 20% workload allocation.   
  
A senator asked for clarification about how coordinator percentages may affect summer salary rates for faculty and the potential misalignment with salaried employees? Dr. Thorne explained they are open to discussion about workload allocation and suggested having a longer conversation about it outside of a senate meeting. A senator stated that workload percentage should match workload and asked if data have been collected or if a pilot study could be initiated to determine how much time program coordinators actually spend managing their programs. Dr. Bourgeois said that is a larger conversation because it is very complicated given the complexity of the problem. Dr. Thorne encouraged program coordinators to have discussions with their deans.

**Spring commencement**

The senate requested information about the decision to move graduation ceremonies inside in the event of inclement weather and the decision to make graduation optional for faculty and staff whose primary responsibility does not include graduation. President Trauth explained that the Commencement Workgroup provided input regarding staffing needs and roles but were not involved in the decision regarding inclement weather. That Cabinet-level decision was made not through the lens of COVID-19, but as a contingency in case all the ceremonies would have been cancelled because of rain.

**Faculty and staff morale recommendations**

The senate asked for PAAG’s thoughts on the morale recommendations the senate provided them. President Trauth thanked the senate for the feedback and for identifying priority items to improve morale. She conveyed that they are scheduling on campus celebratory events in June and July to coincide with people returning to campus. The university is planning on having the LBJ picnic and celebrating 2020 and 2021 personnel through a series of events. She explained that making the 3% bonus permanent is dependent on enrollment. Mr. Algoe is looking at options for an improved faculty and staff dining area. Additionally, President Trauth and Dr. Bourgeois discussed consideration of having faculty provide COVID-19 impact statements.

**Fall 2021 planning**

The senate asked about the contingency plans in the case of a COVID-19 outbreak in the fall. President Trauth explained that she cannot answer all of the questions and that the fall semester is four months away. The Cabinet will start putting together an agenda for fall the week of May 10, 2021. Additionally, they will have town halls to communicate decisions and update the Road Map to Return website. At present, the plan is that the Fall 21 will look like Fall 19. The Provost explained that, if necessary, they will likely reconvene workgroups. A senator asked what opportunities faculty will have to provide input to the workgroups. The Provost explained that faculty will have better representation on the Continuity of Education workgroup.

President Trauth thanked everyone for the work they did throughout the past academic year.

**Faculty and chair hiring practices**:

Dr. Stella Silva, Dr. Debbie Thorne, and Ms. Tammy Sharp joined the senate meeting to discuss the faculty and chair hiring process. Dr. Silva explained the university’s position on confidentiality for hiring practices. She referenced PPS 04.01.01 and explained that there are no federal or state laws that address confidentiality. As such, based on national best practices, Texas State made a business decision to maintain applicant confidentiality. She stated that since it is a PPS, if anyone wants changes made, they need to go through the Provost’s office. At present the policy states that no one may share confidential information about candidates (phone number, email, DOB, etc.). From a DEIA perspective, since there are no federal or state standards, the university follows best practices outlined by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). If a university chooses to not embrace their guidelines, then CUPA-HR recommends that the university clearly state that a candidate’s application materials will not remain confidential. However, by eliminating confidentiality in the application process, women and other underrepresented groups are disproportionately negatively affected. Dr. Silva cautioned against removing confidentiality from the application process. At present, if someone outside of the hiring process wants information about a candidate, they can file a Freedom of Information Act request to the university.

A senator asked for clarification about who is part of the hiring process and at what point can the personnel committee be involved in the hiring process? Dr. Thorne explained that the PPS states that the personnel committee provides a recommendation to the Dean about faculty hiring. The senator pointed out that if there is going to be a procedure that everyone should follow, then the PPS needs to make sense, that participants in the hiring process should be clearly defined, and that faculty involved in the process understand confidentiality expectations.

Dr. Silva addressed perceptions that the faculty hiring process had recently changed and stated that the policy has in fact not changed. A senator explained that some of the confusion has been complicated by differences in the PPS for general faculty versus chair/director hiring and that there is a great need to clarify what information can and cannot be shared with faculty. Specifically, the senator also brought up limitations about reporting candidate pool size and characteristics. Dr. Silva explained that chair and director hiring had more limitations than general faculty hiring according to general counsel. The senator asked if a search committee could share with a personnel committee or larger faculty body the general characteristics of an applicant pool for a general faculty hire. Dr. Silva responded that sharing that information is a slippery slope because no one can be certain what information is actually being shared and that confidentiality may be compromised. She reiterated that the way the PPS is written, no information may be shared and that changes to the policy need to be brought up with the Provost’s office.

A senator asked how best practices that are referred to were determined (i.e., were they data-driven) and that the best practices we are hearing about are not aligned with what is in the Faculty Toolkit. Dr. Silva explained that we are in a transition period, that the toolkit will be implemented in the fall, and that additional recommendations for what to include in the toolkit are welcome.

Dr. Thorne brought the conversation back to what information may be shared with faculty and when the information could be shared. She cautioned that if candidate materials are being shared prior to the final stage, then confidentiality may be compromised. Moreover, the PPS was reviewed (including by Faculty Senate) and approved in 2020 and none of the concerns she is hearing were brought up in the review. A senator communicated that recent communication from the Provost’s office had a different tone and emphasis on confidentiality that many faculty had not heard before. Dr. Thorne recognized that in the past, departments have had varying levels of engagement in faculty hiring, and that the discussion with senators had illuminated some of the inconsistencies between department hiring processes. For departments that had shared candidate information prior to the final interview pool, the policy would likely appear to have changed for them.

Dr. Silva explained that shared governance may not apply to faculty hiring and that she will obtain more information from general counsel and follow up with the senate. Dr. Thorne emphasized that shared governance is based on trust and encouraged faculty to be optimistic that trust may be improved when faculty return to campus in the fall. A senator commented that shared governance and trust in search committees could be strengthened if faculty were asked for their input on who should serve on search committees.

**Faculty Senate Transition**

Senators bade farewell to Senator Vince Luizzi from Liberal Arts and thanked him for the past six years of senate service. Senator Peter Dedek from Liberal Arts was welcomed to his three-year term.

Senators elected officers for the 2021-2022 academic year. Senators Bezner and Ledbetter were reelected to serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Senators Blasingame and Martin were elected to share the role of senate Secretary.

Senators set the summer meeting dates for June 16 and July 21, 2021. Summer meetings will be held from 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

**Policy Review**

UPPS 04.04.03 Staff Employment, due May 12, 2021 (Senator Supancic)

UPPS 01.04.32 University Records Management, due May 14, 2021 (Senator Ledbetter)

UPPS 04.04.06 Outside Employment and Activities, due May 17. (Senator McClellan)

AAPPS 04.02.02, Faculty Development Leave, due May 26. (Senator Dedek)

AAPPS 03.01.12, Faculty Incentive Compensation for Externally-Funded Sponsored Programs, due May 25 (Senator Acee)

**Adoption of Minutes**

Senators voted to adopt the minutes of the April 28, 2021 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen