**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2022**

**4-6 p.m.**

**Attending senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Roque Mendez, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Alex White

**Attending guests:** Lisa Ancelet, Jesse Backstrom, Elizabeth Bishop, Karen Sigler

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

**Discussion of Expressive Activities Proposed Policy**

The Division of Student Affairs is in the process of condensing and combining overlapping policies, and one of these topics is expressive activities on campus – people who come to be in the free speech area of the Quad, etc. The proposal is currently being looked at by counsel, but Student Affairs wants feedback from the Senate, as well.

A senator said she saw no red flags in the proposal and suggested sending it to the Academic Freedom Committee as quickly as possible for their own review.

A senator asked which specific policies they are proposing to integrate with these changes. Senator Ledbetter said she would ask David Byrd, the associate vice president of Student Affairs, for clarification on this.

A senator had a concern about Section 6.05F, regarding what activities are restricted. He wants further clarification of what substantial disorder means in this policy.

The Senate will discuss again after receiving clarification on these questions and concerns.

**Discussion of Texas Workforce Commission Post-Audit Recommendations**

Assistant Provost Brooks had previously discussed best practice recommendations resulting from a Texas Workforce Commission audit. One of the TWC recommendations was to add a Faculty Disciplinary Policy. The Senate had many concerns, and Brooks took those concerns to the Council of Chairs, as well. To help address some of the Senate’s concerns, Brooks provided a redacted document detailing Texas State’s response to the audit.

A senator said he’s concerned that the process is penalty-oriented without a true procedure or program for chairs or directors to work from in terms of keeping track of whether faculty are keeping up with policies and procedures.

A senator said she saw three things that concerned her where the university replied that it was working on modifying policy or creating a new policy – the Faculty Disciplinary Policy, religious accommodations and pregnancy accommodations. She hopes the university will consult with the Senate on these changes or new policies. She wants the Senate to ask for a plan or timeline with these changes. Senator Ledbetter said this could be a question for the next PAAG meeting.

A senator said the Faculty Disciplinary Policy was originally met with positivity when presented at the Council of Chairs. After they saw the proposed wording, they changed their opinion. However, they did express interest in some sort of policy to encourage tenured faculty, in particular, to turn things in on time.

A senator asked about Section 3 of the document, regarding staff policy. He said the staff firing process is brutal since it can be done with no warning and no explanation. The audit said this leaves the university open to lawsuits, and he believes it’s just wrong, in general. Instead of modeling faculty policy after this staff policy, he wants to see it go in the other direction.

A senator said he would support the development of a sound and reasonable disciplinary policy, but it must be fleshed out in terms of consequences of the administrator terminating or punishing the faculty or staff member.

A senator said if this is going to be part of a PAAG discussion, it should be focused on when the Senate should be engaged in discussion on this policy. Another senator said the Senate should be involved from the beginning in a policy like this. Senator Supancic volunteered to represent Senate in those discussions with administration.

**Faculty Handbook Recommendations**

The Staff Handbook has been eliminated in favor of a website, and Associate Provost Thorne asked the Senate if it is in favor of moving to a web-based Faculty Handbook. The chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee, Dr. Michel Haigh, said the committee strongly suggested the handbook not be a pdf. Instead, they suggested an interactive website that includes brief introductions and links to policies. The handbook was put into a flip book, of sorts, for the SACS accreditation review. Senator Ledbetter asked for feedback on how the Faculty Handbook should be housed and what it should look like.

A senator said she is in favor of an online, curated handbook.

A senator asked who in the Provost’s Office would be responsible for updating the handbook and keeping it current. He also wants to know how often it will be updated. Finally, he wants to hear from Thorne about what other institutions in the system do with their handbooks. Senator Ledbetter said she raised that question at the System Council of Faculty Senates, and the answers were across the board.

A senator said the virtual binder used during hiring is good and contains a lot of the stuff the Faculty Handbook is supposed to include. He likes this better than the new Staff Handbook – and believes it can be fleshed out to become the Faculty Handbook.

A senator said she served on the committee in the past and believes this will require someone keeping it up to date all the time and periodic overviews. Senator Ledbetter said Thorne volunteered that her office would maintain the handbook.

A senator said the current handbook has some useful information that helps show the big picture of the university. He wants to see that carry over to the new format.

A senator said he doesn’t believe the handbook should link to every policy. Instead, he believes it should focus on a few major topics that are highlighted in the Faculty Handbook.

Senator Ledbetter is going to get clarification on a few of these items and report back to the Senate.

**Around the Table and Preliminary Discussion of PAAG Topics**

Senator Ledbetter opened the floor to discussion of any topic and a preliminary discussion of topics for the next PAAG meeting on December 7.

A senator said he wants to ask PAAG what made University Police certain the bomb threat was not credible before buildings were even cleared and searched. Chief Carmichael volunteered to come speak to Senate on January 25, and the senator said he would likely be the right person to discuss this with. Another senator said UPD is in the process of trying to add a bomb-sniffing canine to its staff.

A senator said he was concerned that no notification was sent out regarding earthquake tremors felt in McCoy Hall and wanted to know why other buildings were not evacuated.

A senator said his department and college are struggling to hire per-course lecturers. He wants the Senate to continue pushing PAAG about salary for per-course faculty. Another senator said his department hires at market rate for a per-course faculty member, and he wanted to know if the department or college in question is setting its rates too low if it is struggling to find people to hire.

A senator asked if the Senate has heard back about workload releases for Senate officers. Thorne said she is willing to consider this idea if the Senate recommends it.

A senator said she heard of a new proposal going to the Board of Regents for a tuition and fee increase of 15% for master’s students. Neither the provost nor the dean of The Graduate College was consulted about this proposal. It was proposed as a way to pay for tuition scholarships for grad students with assistantships in certain grad programs. She’s concerned this will impact some colleges much worse than others. Another senator said this sounds like a terrible idea, and he said the Senate should be vocal about opposing this. Another senator said this will penalize the 47% of grad students who are not on assistantships – since they will not get any benefit from this $500 a semester fee increase. Another senator said this goes against a previous proposal to lower graduate tuition to a per-cost level and then offer scholarships for that cost. Another senator said this sounds counterproductive if the goal is to attract more graduate students. Another senator said she is concerned about what this will mean for professional, non-thesis grad students who do not get assistantships. She wants the Senate to ask the president about his decision-making process in a situation like this. Another senator said the math on this proposal appears to be a 9% increase – not 15%. Another senator suggested contacting the dean of The Graduate College to discuss this. This issue will also be added to the PAAG agenda.

A senator said he wants to continue raising concerns about a university environmental policy proposal or idea. He wants to do research first before it’s brought up to PAAG again.

A senator asked about the number of student credit hours faculty are responsible for and how to make this more equitable. Another senator recalled talk about giving more workload credit for bigger classes, but nothing has come from that. Another senator said there is a policy on workload, but she still feels this isn’t equitable and there are dramatic differences between colleagues. She said this could be something for the Senate’s salary subcommittee to take up.

Senator Davenport provided an update from the salary subcommittee. It has met three times so far and has several key points it’s working on.

* Putting together the last 10 years of salary data and merit raises compared to CUPA medians
* Comparing faculty and administrative salaries in relation to CUPA medians
* Looking into how much the administration has grown
* Examining median housing and rental costs over the past 10 years
* Talking about how to measure salary inversion and compression
* Building a cost-of-living analysis for San Marcos and Round Rock
* Collecting personal narratives (100+ so far) from faculty about how salary issues have affected them

A senator suggested asking PAAG for an update on their own salary equity study that is being done and the salary equity process, in general. The senator also said the provost sent out a survey regarding the Nontenure Line Faculty Title Series, which is the first time the administration has acknowledged this to the faculty and the first time it has been announced outside of meetings. Senators were reminded to encourage lecturers and senior lecturers to fill out the survey.

Minutes from the November 9 meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.