**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

JCK 880 and Zoom Meeting, 4:00-6:00 pm

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

**Guests:** Lisa Ancelet, Amy Benton, Elizabeth Bishop, Gene Bourgeois, Matthew Brooks, Kelly Damphousse, Laura Ellis-Lai, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne

The meeting began at 4:02 pm

**President’s Academic Advisory Group**

**Enrollment**

The senate asked about our enrollment growth plans in light of a recent announcement by the Provost that the university may grow more quickly than previously planned. The President reiterated that we are tuition dependent since state funding does not adequately support our operation. Texas State has decided to not increase tuition this year because we already have higher tuition/fees than many peers (for example, Texas Tech is less expensive). We are considering holding tuition flat over a relatively long time and we may market this. This leaves enrollment increase as the main tool to raise revenue for our many plans.

We have not set a specific goal of student enrollments, but have 8000 new students as a working model. We need a target value to work from, since financial aid models operate on target class size and are used to optimize funding for students who are likely to be retained. Eric Algoe previously calculated that we need to grow by 1-2% per year to reach budget neutrality, but his calculations were based on overall enrollment increase, not just freshman class size.

The overall enrollment peaked in 2016 at 38,808. In fall 2022 we are at 38,262, down about 600 students. The Freshman class increased from 5700 to 7600 over this time period. The difference can be explained by looking at other patterns of enrollment. Postbaccalaureate enrollment decreased from a high of 815 students in 2011 to 400. Transfer enrollment is down from 3800 students in 2015 to 2700. Masters enrollment is down from 4016 students in 2010 to 3351. Of these, transfer enrollments are the most problematic. Now many students earn dual credit in high school, so they skip the transfer stage. We are shoring up relationships with two-year colleges, but we are unlikely to restore this population to 2015 levels. The combined effects mean that we need to increase the freshman class size significantly to compensate.

New residence halls will be needed to accommodate growing freshmen classes. The university will have 900 new beds in Fall 2023, and 900 additional new beds are planned for the year after that. We may waive housing requirements using procedures similar to other universities. This must be done with caution since we want to make sure that students are successful. An additional consideration is staffing of advisors and other support staff. We are already understaffed for the students we have now. The standard workload for advisors is one advisor for 300 students with some advisors serving more than 600 students.

A senator asked if transfer enrollments may be tied to cycles in the economy. When the job market is strong, there tends to be a shift away from college enrollment. However, the trend in decreasing enrollment goes back 12-15 years, and is correlated with the increase in dual enrollment. Many students can even earn an associates degree in high school.

Another senator asked if students with dual credit alter enrollment patterns, especially in general education courses. Many ‘freshmen’ enroll in sophomore and junior level classes, but their level of preparation may not reflect this. Many students who enter with college credit are enrolling in developmental classes because they are not truly college ready. Anecdotally, many students choose to not test out of college courses because they do not feel prepared. There is good evidence that dual credit courses have a detrimental impact on student success in college. Often, advising is not consistent with ours. Students are not prepared for an upper-level class and tend to be poorly prepared even for freshman level classes.

The growth is not equal in all departments. Some are growing quickly while others are shrinking. This forces difficult decisions to be made. Generally, departments in decline will not have positions replaced to allow increases in departments that are growing. This strategy is also influenced by the relative starting student/faculty ratios.

The senate asked what changes will be made to recruitment strategies to fuel the growth. This year 34,000 students applied and 24,000 were accepted. Our ‘yield’ of 7600 freshmen is historically low (about 30%, down from approximately 40% previously). Faculty can make a difference by making a connection with prospective students at Bobcat Days and other recruiting events. We are up 50% in applications year to date, which implies that we may have a large overall applicant pool to draw on.

A senator expressed concern that we focused on growth without building the staff and infrastructure to support the increase. The Student Success Commission is looking for pain points to prioritize spending of money.

**Environmental Concerns**

The senate asked how we can leverage our environmental assets including the Meadows Center to drive enrollment. We need to sell San Marcos as a whole, including natural resources.

Many students are highly motivated by sustainability issues. It was noted that there is a sustainability degree program proposed for strategic plan which is looking for partners from different colleges to make the program multidisciplinary.

There are two main bodies working on sustainability issues. The Office of Sustainability started in 2018, initiated through action by the faculty senate. The senate-run Environment and Sustainability Committee has also been historically active, but in recent years it has transformed into an awards committee. There was some redundancy between the faculty committee and the Office of Sustainability. It now seems that the Office of Sustainability is working proactively.

Senators expressed that we can do more by reducing plastic waste, increasing composting, native planting, and bringing back to life the Environmental Committee. The master plan includes LEEDS certification, but this is typically not done due to budget considerations. Some aesthetics decisions are counter to sustainability, for example, the color of our roofs. We are perfectly positioned to be a center of sustainability -- we just need to lean into this and market it.

To follow up on this, the senate will consider inviting Jim Vullrath to a future meeting.

**PAAG Debrief**

Several noted that based on the answers, the administration does not appear to understand what sustainability is. It is a frame of mind, like accessibility. Small actions can be taken, but without an overall plan, it won’t be meaningful. The senate is considering inviting an external guest to provide perspective. One possibility is to write a proposal for a university lecturer who has been involved in a sustainability transformation. The Environment and Sustainability Committee could also be charged to look at best practices and make recommendations. The senate will revisit this topic at an upcoming meeting.

The discussion about enrollment and funding emphasized the fact that low support from the state and the university’s low endowment portfolio hurts us and makes us pass costs to students. We need to improve fund raising. The incoming Vice President for University Advancement has many good ideas, and relevant experience. A good approach will be to broaden the idea of who is involved in fund raising, providing a more personal touch.

The November 2 minutes were approved by vote.

The senate entered executive session to discuss Faculty Development Leave applications.

The meeting adjourned at 5:53 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin