**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**June 22, 2022**

**3-5 p.m.**

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

**Attending guests:** Valerie Fleming, Karen Sigler, Nicole Wesley

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m.

**Academic Governance Committee Report**

Former senator Nicole Wesley, the outgoing chair of the Academic Governance Committee, updated senators on the committee’s 2021-22 charge of collecting governance policies within departments and schools. Late in the fall semester, the committee worked on its first draft of a letter asking departments and schools to provide their policies, and they also met with Beth Wuest, the associate vice president for institutional effectiveness, who was also working on a similar charge at the college level. During the spring semester, the committee finalized the letter and presented it to the Senate. Once sent, the letter received mixed responses, including refusals and apprehension. Committee members reached out to their own departments to explain what they were looking for and hoping to achieve. Around this time, Wesley and Senator Ledbetter met again with Wuest, who had put together a College Policy Task Force, which was working with deans and associate deans on cleaning up policies and creating a repository to house those policies. The task force was also charged with moving into departmental and school policies in the fall. The committee was happy that policies are going to be looked at and updated, but it was sad to not contribute.

Moving forward, the committee unanimously agreed that its charge should come from the Senate and be relatable to whatever the vision is for that academic year. The committee also agreed that one of its members should be a liaison or a member of the College Policy Task Force.

A senator asked if the College Policy Task Force has faculty representation. Wesley said it is primarily made up of Associate Provost Debbie Thorne, Wuest, deans and associate deans. She was unfamiliar with many names on the list but did not recognize any faculty members.

A senator recommended the Senate invite Thorne to speak about the College Policy Task Force and use it to make policies more available to the university community.

**Personnel Committee Guidelines**

The latest version of personnel committee guideline revisions was generated by a subcommittee of the Council of Chairs. It allows for nontenure representation on personnel committees, which was a recommendation of the Senate.

A senator said she likes much of what this subcommittee proposed, including that the PC policy should be approved by the department at large instead of the current PC in a department deciding who should make up the PC. Her only objection was Part B3, which detailed the minimum requirements to be on a PC. The subcommittee changed the Senate recommendation of two years of service to having taught eight sections of courses at the college or university level. This means nontenure faculty who teach a 4/4 will be eligible to serve much faster than incoming tenure track faculty. She suggested the Senate strike this one recommendation and go back to two years of service time in a full-time role. Another senator said this is carryover language from a previous policy that describes PC voting privileges, and the eight-course requirement is cumulative from other universities besides Texas State. Another senator said this language was previously included to prevent research faculty from reviewing teaching faculty. The original senator still has concerns for tenure-track faculty who come to Texas State without ever being the instructor of record somewhere. Another senator said there are some faculty who come here and oversee 20 labs, so they would be instantly eligible after one semester. He doesn’t understand the purpose of this language and believes the university is in a different place than it was when that language was originally written. He believes the policy should state that anyone deemed as an eligible voter by university policy should be eligible to be on the PC. Another senator said a tenure-track hire wouldn’t be on the PC until they are tenured anyway, so they would likely have taught eight classes by that point. She supports a year or two of wait time, however, she believes the eight-section minimum is arbitrary given the different teaching load expectations in different departments. Another senator said it’s unclear if the point in question only applies to nontenure faculty or faculty at large.

A senator said his PC handles hiring and promotion, and other decisions involve the whole department. He asked if this is redefining what the PC does. Another senator said he believes this is an opening of the door for individual departments and schools to develop their own personnel policy and guidelines if they don’t exceed the general viewpoint of the university or the Provost’s Office. He said the importance is to create local control in departments and schools and have PCs that are more inclusive. Another senator said some PCs may stay exactly as they are, but others may be interested to include nontenure or tenure track faculty. Another senator said a key part of this entire process was to keep calling these “guidelines” and not to dictate across the university how a department should run its PC. Another senator said he agrees with this concern and believes hiring should be lumped in with promotion where you should exceed the rank of the position being hired to vote on that recommendation.

A senator said his school recently hired three new tenure-track positions. The entire faculty voted whether a candidate was acceptable or unacceptable, and then the PC held a second vote to determine if an offer would be extended. He said this allowed all faculty to be involved in the decision-making process of hiring new faculty.

A senator said he has concerns about tenure track or nontenure faculty speaking up during contentious hiring decisions and discussions because of fear of retribution.

A senator said he’s unsure if the PC votes on new hires in his department. Another senator said this goes to Associate Provost Thorne’s worry that departments are doing their own thing and not following policy. University policy says the department chair’s recommendation, the PC’s recommendation and the search committee’s recommendation all go forward separately.

Associate Provost Thorne has asked for feedback before this revision continues to be considered.

**Appointment of Ombudspersons**

There will now be two ombudspersons – Colleen Myles, an associate professor in geography, and Todd Jewell, a professor in economics.

A senator shared an update from the committee to select the new ombudspersons. Myles and Jewell were the two applicants for the position. Both candidates were deemed acceptable, but the committee was split on its preference between the two. The committee decided to forward both names to President Trauth and Associate Provost Thorne to consider both candidates equally. The chair of the committee then proposed a two-ombudsperson model like the University of Nebraska.

A senator asked for clarification if both ombudspersons would be full-time in the position or if one would handle the fall semester and the other handle the spring semester. Scheduling and implementation were handled at the administration level and not from the committee. The Senate is going to ask for further clarification.

**Faculty Development Leave**

During the spring semester, several senators raised issues with the time-consuming evaluation process of Faculty Development Leave applications. Since every application typically gets funded, there were questions of whether the scoring process was useful or even needed in the first place.

There is a certain pool of money earmarked for FDL and the state caps the fraction of faculty who can be on leave at one time. The number of applications has always been less than the state maximum, meaning all applications typically get approved. A senator said he enjoys reviewing the applications to see what faculty outside of his department are doing, and he wonders about the statement it sends for the Senate to reduce its oversight into these applications.

A senator said it’s key to accurately determine the Senate’s role in this process. Is the Senate approving applications as yes or no – or is the Senate grading each application? Senate gradings rubrics are not used when applications go forward for supplemental funding, which is handled by a separate committee. He said the vast majority, if not all, of applications are approved, so the Senate should have discussions over applications with concerns and then provide meaningful feedback to those applicants. He compared this process to the REP applications and funding requests/recommendations from various committees where the Senate either approves or disapproves.

A senator said FDL is a perk of being a faculty member, and getting a semester off to do research, apply for grants or revamp teaching materials should be automatic. She suggested the Senate more closely scrutinize applications that are asking for supplemental funding. Currently, only three senators are included in the supplemental funding decisions, and she wants the entire Senate included in that. She also raised a concern that nontenure line faculty have an outdated, fixed pot of money available for workload release program, and she wants this program’s funding to be closer to the FDL application process.

A senator said we should not spend so much time ranking applications that are likely all going to be approved. She suggested a system of recognizing the standout applications and flagging applications that are lacking, particularly if the applicant received leave before and did not submit their post-leave report.

A senator suggested ranking each FDL application as exceptional, acceptable or unacceptable. Those with unacceptable applications can then be revisited if there isn’t enough funding for everyone.

A senator asked for clarification on how the nontenure line faculty workload release program applications work. The NLF leave application is different since it is a more competitive process with more applicants than funding allows for.

A senator said he approves of changing the ranking process to either acceptable/unacceptable or exceptional/acceptable/unacceptable. Applications with lower rankings would need to be revisited on a case-by-case basis.

A senator said the bigger issue with the process in the spring was taking most of a Senate meeting to discuss the applications, which seemed like a waste of time and effort when all were going to be approved.

A senator pushed back on making radical changes to the process because it might impact the quality of applications if a ranking rubric is eliminated. Another senator said the Senate would still maintain expectations and use a rubric to help reach acceptable/unacceptable decisions.

Discussion will be resumed at the July Senate meeting.

**Other Items**

A senator raised concerns from a colleague about door locks in classrooms and being able to lock the room from the inside. The senator said while the threat might be rare, this would go a long way to help faculty feel safer. A senator shared an update from the Security and Personal Safety Committee, which is chaired by the new police chief. The chief is working with Emergency Management on campus to install security locks on the inside of first-call classrooms and faculty offices. The senator said he asked the police chief to carefully instruct faculty on the purpose of the locks – they are not to keep out students who are late to class. Students have filed complaints with the Provost’s Office over faculty lockouts in the past.

A senator raised a concern over the domain name switch from txstate.edu to txst.edu and whether this cost money.

A senator raised a concern from a colleague about the lack of pay raises and wanted this added to the first PAAG meeting with the new president.

A senator welcomed Senator Perez to the Senate, who replaced former Senator Wesley.

**Executive Session**

The Senate went into Executive Session to approve committee membership recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Dale Blasingame.