**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2022**

**4-6 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:** Lisa Ancelet, Amy Benton, Janet Bezner, Lynn Bostwick, Gene Bourgeois (Provost), Matt Brooks (Assistant Provost), Kelly Damphousse (President), Mark Lester, Zengara Loper-Van Loan, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m.

**President’s Academic Advisory Group – Kelly Damphousse, President**

The first item on the PAAG agenda was an update on the university’s funding request to the state legislature. President Damphousse recently spoke with legislative staffers and asked for five different pots of money that totaled $77 million, including money for the ALERRT program, the Texas School Safety Center and an enhancement of the forensics science program. Those three requests all revolved around the school shooting in Uvalde earlier this year. Another request was for funding of a Student Success Center, which will be created whether the state provides funding or not. The biggest request was $50 million split over two years in equity, since Texas State is one of the lowest funded universities of this size and scope. Damphousse believes the $25 million a year would get the university up to the middle of the pack. He is confident the first three requests will get approved, but he’s not sure about the Student Success Center request. He had no idea how the equity request was received since it was heard by staff members. The next time he meets with them, decision makers will be in the room. Damphousse said there are two positives related to this. One is the state has a $20-$25 billion surplus right now, and he believes this is the time to make a request like Texas State did. The second positive is once these one-time appropriation requests are approved, they tend to be sticky and become annual. To illustrate how important the $25 million would be, Damphousse said it would erase the $10 million budget deficit for new scholarships and would allow him to address faculty and staff salary problems. Damphousse said he believes legislators are starting to make a connection between the high cost of tuition and funding cuts from the state. Provost Bourgeois said some universities in the Texas State University System received equity funding in the last legislative session, and they were able to cut tuition because of it.

Next on the PAAG agenda was the Senate’s petition for per-course faculty to be included in bonus pools. Damphousse said they did consider giving a bonus to every employee at the university – full-time, part-time, student workers and graduate assistants – and it would have cost nearly $7 million to do so. They then began running the numbers to see what number was realistic and eventually landed on full-time, benefits-eligible employees, which cost $5 million – and the university was already at a $10 million budget deficit. He said adding people to the bonus pool would mean going deeper into a deficit, so he made the decision to give the bonus to full-time employees while wishing he could do more. A senator said per-course faculty are terribly underpaid and interface with students so much, which is why the Senate brought this petition. Damphousse said he isn’t saying no to the idea, but he believes there is a limit to what you can do with a budget deficit. A senator said this is demoralizing for per-course faculty at a time when the university can find funds to hire two administrators in the Office of Sponsored Projects. The provost said indirect cost – or IDC – funds were used to create those positions. Damphousse said there is another conversation to be had on this topic, which is addressing the pay of per-course faculty. The provost said per-course faculty rates are a little more flexible and priced locally within each department or program. Damphousse said he is more concerned about per-course faculty who teach courses at different institutions and are trying to make a living from it. He hopes to promote eventually hiring some of these per-course faculty members to become full-time members of the university. A senator said he has been involved in hiring per-course faculty and was embarrassed to tell them what they will be paid. Damphousse said he wants to look bigger picture than bonuses and determine what fair compensation is for per-course faculty. The provost said his wish would be to pay them the equivalent of 1/8th of a typical nontenure line faculty salary in that unit to teach one course.

The third item on the PAAG agenda was a discussion of plans for the Round Rock campus. Damphousse said he has made a commitment to visit the Round Rock campus once a month and to help integrate Round Rock into the university’s culture. He recently held a luncheon there where 400 people attended. A senator who teaches in Round Rock said students have told him they have trouble making friends on the Round Rock campus, but he thought the luncheon was a huge success and made students feel like they were on a college campus. Damphousse said he’s heard from students that it is expensive to live in Round Rock and hard to find apartments. There also is no dining hall on the Round Rock campus. He thinks the university should look into building mixed-use housing there that could be used by faculty, staff and students. The master plan was to build more buildings and someday build residence halls. The university is now thinking of flipping that to have a residence hall with a cafeteria be next in line. Damphousse said there are also opportunities to engage the local community and local industry in Round Rock. He also said there is an onus on the San Marcos campus to not forget about Round Rock. Damphousse said there have also been discussions about renaming Round Rock to be the Life Sciences Campus or Health Sciences Center. A senator asked about the possibility of having a charter bus with reliable Wi-Fi to run between San Marcos and Round Rock for faculty and students. The provost said there were busses to Austin in the past, and there were several issues – the biggest being the number of busses and drivers needed to deal with traffic. The senator clarified she was asking about routes from campus to campus, not to Austin. Damphousse said he could see something like that working and there may even be federal funding to help pay for something like this. He said he will discuss this with Eric Algoe, the vice president for finance and support services.

The final agenda item was about faculty representation on the president’s commissions and task forces. The Senate noticed faculty membership on the two commissions and two task force committees is sparse and that nontenure line faculty are not represented at all. Damphousse said it is his expectation that these groups will meet a lot, and he felt it would be difficult for faculty to do so. He said the group members will not be decision makers – they will instead be conduits through which recommendations come to the president from faculty, staff and students – and they will hold hearing sessions to do so. The provost said there will also be open surveys to gather data from the university community. A senator said he is concerned about impression management and faculty being able to have a seat on these committees. The president said he will go back and look at the composition of the committees. Another senator said it would be nice to have at least one tenure/tenure-line faculty member and one nontenure line faculty member on each committee. Damphousse said he was concerned about burden, since these committees will involve heavy responsibilities. The senator said she knows of faculty who are looking for service opportunities. The previous senator said more staff should be involved on these committees, as well. The president said this conversation is a fair critique and something he will look into. The president also said he is holding off a bit to form the Round Rock task force until someone is put into a leadership position there that is not the dean of Health Professions.

**Texas Workforce Commission Audit - Matt Brooks, Assistant Provost**

There were a few issues related to faculty raised in the university’s recent Texas Workforce Commission audit. The issues were identified as best practices that the university is looking to implement. One is around a faculty disciplinary statement, which the university is looking into drafting. The other is centered around annual faculty evaluations, which will start soon - so Matt Brooks brought the issue to the Senate for feedback.

The following is specific wording from the TWC audit:

*“Texas State’s policies do not require that faculty receive a rating for their compliance with policies, procedures, and work rules as part of their performance evaluation but should as a best practice. Doing so better facilities the documentation of disciplinary issues throughout the year that may not rise to the level of a written warning and clearly identify faculty who are disqualified from merit payment/promotions based on performance and/or conduct.”*

Since the university now uses Faculty Qualifications for all 50% FTE or higher faculty annual reviews, the discussion has been around adding a statement to the annual review process in Faculty Qualifications. Brooks presented the Senate with the following draft statement:

*Faculty member 1) maintains awareness of and adheres to applicable federal and state laws and all university, college, and academic unit policies and procedures, 2) participates in and completes all required training by assigned deadlines, 3) cooperates with and responds in a timely manner to any issues or requirements, 4) takes responsibility and accountability for purposeful or unintentional violations of any procedures or deadlines, and 5) promotes a culture of compliant and ethical behavior.*

Topics that could be included in this section would be submitting annual review material on time and submitting HB2504 syllabi on time, for example. The proposed statement would be added to the academic leader’s portion of the annual review, and it would require the leader to choose yes or no. If the answer is no, an explanation would be required.

A senator said any decision should be postponed and not happen immediately. He was concerned with the burden put on chairs and directors in terms of documenting these items.

A senator asked if there is an idea of how many schools and departments already do something like this. Brooks said there are different procedures in the different departments across campus. He would prefer something more uniform.

A senator asked if there is an actual problem with this issue or if it’s just being implemented because of the Texas Workforce Commission’s critique. Brooks said there have been issues related to faculty conduct, so something definitive in writing is needed to hold faculty accountable if they fail to comply with certain policies and procedures. It doesn’t have to be on the annual review, however.

A senator said he has faced this problem many times while serving on his personnel committee. He was concerned with adding administrative burden, however. He also wanted to know what the ramifications of a faculty member who receives a “no” rating on this issue. Brooks said he doesn’t yet have data from chairs and directors on their thoughts about this proposal.

A senator said this does seem burdensome and questioned how a department chair would know if a faculty member maintained awareness of and adheres to applicable laws and policies, for instance. She’s concerned that chairs and directors will just check yes under assumptions. Brooks said substantial conduct issues would be handled through another process. This would just be a place to document if someone had to be asked five times to submit materials, for example. The senator said this frightens here based on the political talk in Texas about removing tenure. She feels this is the first step in doing something like that. She was also concerned someone may not receive merit because of this. Brooks said merit would be the recommendation of the PC and the chair. The senator said, if it moved forward, she would like to see language to specify how this proposal would affect merit or qualification. Another senator said this would raise equity issues if some faculty do not receive merit for this while others are not being docked for the same issues.

A senator said the proposal creates the potential for a toxic and divisive process – particularly in trying to get this approved in time for the next round of faculty reviews.

A senator said his concern is that chairs will click “yes” unless they remember something. This would require them to document everything carefully or there’s potential for bias.

A senator said his department used to have a collegiality clause, which he said turned very nasty and was impossible to gauge objectively. He supported the earlier recommendation of postponing this decision. He also supports that faculty need to turn things in on time and take care of things, but he worried about coupling this with a disciplinary policy.

A senator said Council of Chairs will be the key audience for this discussion.

A senator said, if it’s moved ahead with, the proposal should be modified to only include things that are measurable.

A senator said he is concerned about the Texas Workforce Commission answering to the governor’s office, since they are appointed by the governor.

A senator said there may be a way to accomplish this without it being publicly documented.

A senator said his department asks faculty to fill out this information in their annual review submission, and many of these items are ways to earn extra merit points. While that method is incentive in nature, he believes this proposal is too disciplinary in nature.

Brooks said there appeared to be clear consensus that the Senate is not supportive of implementing this now and, if it is implemented, it needs to be significantly reevaluated as to what would or would not be included in the process. Brooks planned to next take this to the Council of Chairs for more feedback.

**Chair Review Assignments**

Volunteers were needed to fulfill the Senate’s role in chair and director reviews. The following senators will serve in a neutral, third-party role of collecting faculty feedback on chairs and directors up for review and sending the feedback to the deans.

Ben Martin – Andrew Behnke, director of School of Family & Consumer Sciences

Stacey Bender – Angela Ausbrooks, director of School of Social Work

Rachel Davenport – Enrique Becerra, chair of Department of Marketing

Alex White – Victoria Smith, chair of Department of English

Taylor Acee – Bill Brittain, chair of Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Adetty Perez de Miles – Hongchi Shi, chair of Department of Computer Science

Michael Supancic – James Wilde, chair of Department of Engineering Technology

Andrew Ojede – Susan Morey, chair of Department of Mathematics

A senator raised a concern that her department never heard the results of any feedback collected during this process when her chair was up for review and asked if senators should attend the meeting where results are released. That is not in the current policy, although some senators have asked to attend that meeting. The Senate may consider whether that policy needs to be revised.

**Other Business**

The Nontenure Line Faculty Appreciation Reception was Thursday, October 6 from 4-6 p.m. at the Wittliff Collections.

The Senate needs to complete the list of liaisons for 2022-2023. Senator Irani said he would assist with this in the College of Health Professions, which still needs representation. The Senate will meet with liaisons on October 26. Senator Ledbetter encouraged senators to think of topics to discuss with them.

Minutes from the September 28 meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.