**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**September 21, 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, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Alex White

**Attending guests:** Lisa Ancelet, Josh Arguelles, Joanna Ellis, Colleen Myles (Ombudsperson), Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler, Rose Trevino

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

**Discussion with Faculty Ombudsperson – Colleen Myles**

The university has implemented a new, pilot program of two ombudspersons for faculty issues and concerns. Colleen Myles and Todd Jewell are the newly appointed ombudspersons, and Myles joined the Senate to discuss how the pilot program is going so far.

Myles said she and Jewell have been working together in this new role since June. They were busier than expected in the summer with about a dozen faculty members reaching out to them. They’ve heard from half a dozen faculty members since the start of the semester. She believes an email from the university played a role in alerting faculty of this resource. She and Jewell have divided duties of the position. They’ve also been invited to serve on university committees in their role as ombudspersons. They also have a Faculty Development Let’s Do Lunch session on October 7. They’ve also met with the student and staff ombudspersons on campus.

A senator asked about the grievance policy. Myles said there is now an email address that goes to both, and she and Jewell can sort out who would be best to handle that situation. A faculty member can also email either one directly if they wish. Regarding grievances, there is a time limit in which to seek remediation, but a faculty member pointed out there is no similar guideline from the university side. The ombudspersons had a meeting with Associate Provost Thorne, who agreed that didn’t sound fair, but she needed to see if there were TSUS policies in play there. She’s currently looking into that. All sides also discussed when the 30-day time period begins in the grievance process.

A senator raised the point that once a grievance is filed, the ombudspersons are no longer a resource or avenue for them at that point, which needs to be better communicated to faculty. Myles said there has been one person so far who filed a grievance before contacting them.

Myles said she also wants to educate faculty members about the email process. Some are vague in emails, while others are very detailed. She wants faculty to know that anything said in email can be part of a discoverable record if anything gets elevated to a legal level. She wants a disclaimer added to the website explaining this.

Myles explained the general process involving the ombudspersons. Myles said it will vary quite a bit based on who is contacting them and why, but it usually starts with an email about a general issue. Myles or Jewell will then have a phone call, in-person meeting or Zoom meeting with the complainant. A good portion of discussions involve faculty members wanting to talk about a situation or something bothering them and learning if it’s something that rises to the level of a grievance. Discussions range from 15-45 minutes, typically. Myles or Jewell will go over a range of options for the faculty member. In one case, Jewell met with both the person who contacted them and the person they had an issue with. It’s not mediation, but Myles said it’s more like conversation facilitation.

A senator asked if there’s any sense of the types of issues being raised. Myles said they’ve been contacted about everything including personal conflicts or issues related to salary and discipline. Myles said it will take time to have better data.

Myles and Jewell are both attending formal mediation training before the end of the year. The ombudspersons don’t handle mediation – but getting trained will help better facilitate conversations they have.

Another thing on the agenda of Myles and Jewell is to contact the University of Nebraska, which has a similar, two-person ombudsperson role. They’re waiting to reach out until they have more time in this new role, which will lead to more informed questions and conversation.

A senator asked about a specific scenario where a faculty member has received a formal grievance about them, which means the recipient of the complaint is no longer allowed to meet with the ombudspersons. He finds this problematic because the only other resource is to go outside of the university and hire a private attorney. Myles said that would be correct if a formal grievance has been filed and an investigation opened. He suggested Myles ask the University of Nebraska ombudspersons if they’ve ever had a situation like this – and how they handled it. Myles said she will discuss this with Jewell and feels like it would be an appropriate question for the University of Nebraska.

**Wellness Programming – Rose Trevino, Work Life Coordinator, and Josh Arguelles, Human Resources Assistant and WellCats Instructor**

Arguelles and Trevino joined the Senate to discuss programming available to faculty members and staff. WellCats is the free, employee wellness program at the university. An employee does need to register. After registration, an employee can sign up for classes like group exercise sessions, kickboxing and weightlifting. There are also educational classes like immune health. There are also proactive nutrition classes like hands-on cooking lessons and health behavior change coaching. WellCats also has a limited number of $25 discounts for memberships to the Student Rec Center. There is also an upcoming Mental Health Day 5K on campus scheduled for Monday, October 10 at 6 p.m. There are also volunteer opportunities available with the 5K. In addition, Bobcat Balance is the work-life and employee assistance program, including free and confidential counseling.

**Request for Deans to Complete CREC Membership Lists**

The Senate was asked to spread the word for colleges to complete the membership list for the committee that reviews REP applications. In the past, there have been issues with some members not attending meetings.

**Discussion of Standing Rules**

The Senate then had a discussion of adapting the standing rules regarding the FDL review process. Current standing rules state each application will be reviewed by a subgroup of at least seven senators. A senator has suggested changing this to at least three senators. Another senator suggested removing a section of the standing rules that says the Senate will meet to discuss applications in a closed meeting. Another senator said the Senate should still meet quickly to discuss the rankings and see if any concerns are raised. Another senator said the wording could be changed to “may meet,” to reserve that possibility. The Senate voted to approve changing the subgroup minimum to three senators and add the word “may” about holding a closed meeting to discuss applications.

**Faculty Development Leave Groups**

In the past, subgroups to review FDL applications included Applied Arts, Liberal Arts and Education in one group, with Business, Fine Arts and Communication, Science and Engineering, and Health Professions in another group. The Senate will see how many applications are received and divide the applications into new groups to make it equitable for all senators.

**Committee Nominations**

The Senate needs representatives to serve on two committees: The Mariel M. Muir Excellence in Mentoring Awards Selection Committee and a search committee to find the next assistant vice president and director for International Affairs.

**Discussion of Proposed Change to Dean’s Summative Review Chair Process**

The Senate raised a concern to Associate Provost Thorne about the dean summative review process. Currently, a senator chairs each dean’s summative review. The suggested revision, which retains the Senate’s role in appointing the summative review committee chair, is below:

*02.02 a. The summative review will be based upon a written comprehensive evaluation of the academic dean’s performance to be completed by a review committee composed of:*

*1) a tenured faculty member with the rank of professor member of the Faculty Senate from outside the college, appointed by the Faculty Senate who will serve as chair (non-voting) of the committee;*

*2) each chair or director from each department or school within the college;*

*3) a faculty member from each department or school within the college elected by departmental faculty; and*

*4) one Texas State academic dean appointed by the provost and VPAA.*

A senator said someone from the Provost’s Office should chair dean summative review committees instead of a faculty member.

Another senator agreed, saying deans chair the review process for chairs and directors because they are their supervisors. She believes the same should happen here, where the provost, associate provost or assistant provost chairs the dean review process. She doesn’t believe moving it to a tenured faculty member or senator will help standardize the process because it’s still a huge amount of work. She wants the Senate to remain involved in the review process – but more like the chair/director review process, where a senator serves as an impartial party.

A senator who previously served as chair of a dean summative review committee agreed, saying it’s very stressful for someone who is not used to doing that level of administrative work.

Another senator agreed, questioning how he can accurately evaluate a dean when he doesn’t fully understand the scope of their job. He believes the review process should lie with the person who supervises the person.

A senator asked if the policy has always stipulated that the tenured faculty member is at the rank of professor. Senator Ledbetter said that was language added by Associate Provost Thorne.

A senator moved to send a suggestion to Associate Provost Thorne that a supervisor should chair any dean summative review committee to ensure standardization and appropriate chain of command – with the Senate maintaining some sort of involvement in the process. The Senate approved this motion. Senator Ledbetter will now take it to Associate Provost Thorne.

**Other Business**

Minutes from the September 14 meeting were approved.

Senators were reminded about the upcoming Nontenure Line Faculty Reception on October 6. Invitations were sent to faculty via email.

Senators were asked for an early discussion of questions for the next PAAG meeting. A senator suggested a discussion of the Round Rock campus – particularly bus service between that campus and the San Marcos campus to support faculty teaching on both campuses. Another senator asked about questions not addressed during the last PAAG meeting, which included post-award support and custodial issues. A senator suggested asking about the president’s testimony before the state legislature. Another senator agreed on asking about Round Rock and said the Senate should push about establishing a true campus there. Another senator said his department and another on campus agreed to support students who are working in tech in north Austin, but the classes at the Round Rock campus are having trouble making. He wants to know if Round Rock is going to just a Health Professions campus or if the university is going to serve other audiences there.

A senator shared communication received from a staff member, thanking the Senate for addressing staff issues at the university.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.