**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

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

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, 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

**Guests:** Augustine Agwuele, Lisa Ancelet, Jesse Backstrom, Elizabeth Bishop, Mary Brennan, David Byrd, Mary Ellen Cavitt, Joanna Ellis, Laura Ellis-Lai, Tao Hou, James Keefe, Francis Mendez, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler, Nancy Wilson

The meeting began at 4:00 pm

**Commission on Student Success – Mary Ellen Cavitt and David Byrd**

David Byrd updated the senate on the status of the commission. This is a longstanding effort to achieve “85 by 25”. The commission meets every week for two hours. An initial report by the commission will be submitted on January 9.

The commission is looking at disparities among different subpopulations, for example the performance of first-generation students or historically marginalized populations in comparison with other groups. Furthermore, the commission is examining 4-6 year graduation rates, and transfer student graduation rates. The ultimate goal of the commission is to make recommendations to build a culture of success and to help set students up for success after graduation.

There remain a number of questions to be answered. For example, what are causes of attrition, what is working, what needs to be changed? The answers must include the roles of both faculty and the students that we enroll.

This is not the first effort by the university in recent years. The Student Success Executive Committee chaired by Mary Ellen Cavitt has been active along with many subcommittees. Outcomes from these groups will be incorporated into the commission’s recommendations. Members have asked for a chance to talk to each other, and they will collectively meet in early spring. Low hanging fruit will be enacted quickly, and larger initiatives will be resourced out.

Faculty have an important perspective and their input is critical for the commission’s success. Students are also involved in a number of ways. A subcommittee is gathering input on student experiences and engagement, and most importantly what resources they utilize. A campus climate survey will be rolled out to assist with this as well.

A student success center is planned, at this time it is not clear what form it will take. David mentioned that he has started three such centers over his career. The process starts with understanding what students will actually use. One possibility is a hub of activity where a student may work with an intervention specialist who will decide what a student needs to be successful. For example, a student may need emergency funding to allow time for study outside of a busy work schedule or specific tutoring to address missing skills. This will essentially work like a student 911 line that will connect a student with the help that they need. The commission is benchmarking now by visiting or inviting members from other universities with existing centers.

A senator asked about the success rate for students earning college credit in high school. The commission has analyzed some data regarding this. 44% of 1st year students enter with dual credit hours, averaging 9 hours/student with some students entering with 60+ hours. Many students are misadvised by 2-year colleges and earn credit that they cannot use in their degree program. There is concern that students entering as advanced students are not properly prepared for the college experience. Another senator noted that developmental education class enrollments are growing rapidly, and asked how this pattern intersects with other data. This topic is being discussed at this Friday’s meeting. One cause is that the assessment tool changed, which increased the number of students in developmental courses (especially math).

Another senator noted that a large number of students even at the sophomore level seem unaware of basic university functions like the university calendar. They questioned whether this was a result of students transferring in and missing out on orientation. A readiness survey is planned to establish what students lack when they arrive.

A senator asked if there are plans to reduce class sizes to improve success. Developmental education courses are generally small(er), but it is difficult to offer enough sections. The proposal will likely fund additional instructors to keep (some) section sizes small.

Other possible ideas being floated include: a 1st generation student office, a student data warehouse, a student onboarding center, a probation recovery center, and an improved early warning system. Mobile ‘go units’ have also been proven to be successful, serving as a pre-TSI recruiting and advising tool at high school campuses.

**Executive Session**

The senate briefly entered executive session to review the recommendations of Augustine Agwuele (REP committee chair). The recommendations were endorsed.

**Presidential Academic Advisory Group (PAAG) Ideas**

The senate discussed possible topics for the upcoming PAAG meeting.

* Changes to graduate tuition: The senate would like to better understand the increases in graduate fees and tuition in light of the university’s plan to hold tuition flat. The senate requests an abbreviated version of the plan to reserve time for discussion. Several questions were proposed related to this topic. Why was the dean of the graduate college not consulted? How is this change connected to tuition waivers for some graduate students? Why was this change made so quickly?
* Equity salary study update: What is the status of the equity study? There is a rumor is that this will be enacted in the spring.
* Update on the Texas Workforce Commission recommendations: Three issues were found as deficient: religious accommodations, pregnancy accommodations, and a faculty disciplinary policy. What actions are being taken? The senate is interested in helping to work on these issues.
* PCR’s continue to be a major issue for managers. What can be done to reduce the workload?

**Minutes**

TheNovember 16 minutes were approved by vote.

**Executive Session**

The senate re-entered executive session to discuss the Nontenure Line Faculty Workload Release Program recommendations. The recommendations were endorsed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin