**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

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, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Michael Supancic, Alex White

**Guests:** Lisa Ancelet, Jesse Backstrom, Kevin Jenkins, Aimee Roundtree, Marc Turner

The meeting started at 4:02 pm

**Marc Turner, AVP for Institutional Research**

The senate is interested in identifying trends in the number of administrative appointments over time.  The data available through Institutional Research (IR) is difficult to parse.  Marc was invited to help the senate understand why this is the case, and what kind of data may be used to investigate this question.

Marc gave a brief presentation summarizing trends in employment across the university.  The university currently has 8047 employees across 208 organizational units.  Some employees have split appointments by serving in multiple positions.  The trend has been a steady increase, but there was a decrease in employees in 2019 and 2020 reaching a minimum of 7252 employees in 2020.  This decrease began just before the COVID pandemic and it was amplified by budget shortfalls.

In order to track changes in administrative positions, we need to define what that means.  Are we interested in *positions* or *employees*? A single employee may occupy several part time positions.  The senate recommended that instead we focus on administrative full-time equivalents (FTE).

Next, we must define what we mean by ‘administrative positions’.  There are seven ways to classify positions, but not all of these are actively updated in university files.  EEOC includes an ‘administrative’ category, but it can be overly broad.  The systems are independent and it is difficult to cross-reference job titles with employment categories.   After discussion, it was suggested that this study focus on Associate Vice President and higher level positions.

A senator explained the reason for this investigation.  Over the past 10 years, student enrollment is up about 11.5%.  From the data publicly available, it appears that the number of administrative positions increased by 38% over this period (but this value could be erroneous due to the complexities described above).  Over this same period, the number of staff positions (filled or unfilled) is only up about 9%.  Dean positions tend to be stable; it is likely that much of the movement would be outside of academic affairs.  There has been a notable increase in ‘split appointments’ in which faculty conduct some level of administrative work.

Mark will return on April 19 to present the results of this study to the senate.

A senator asked for an update on revising the annual surveys of chairs, deans, and upper administrators.  The current survey was written in Pearl in the 90’s.  The main benefit of this software is security.  Faculty responses cannot be tied to individual respondents, even by IR staff.  There would be advantages in moving to a system like Qualtrics, but restricting access to data is more challenging.

**Senate election update**

The Chair asked whether the senate should post the results of elections, for example the percentage of votes won by each candidate.  Currently we do not share election results; we only announce the winner.  Some senators thought that posting the results could potentially weaken the ability of a senator to speak for their constituents, especially if it was a close election.  Posting results could also be embarrassing for the losing candidate in a runoff.  After discussion, the consensus by the senate was to not publicly post the election count data, but the results could be shared by request.

The senate continues to consider changing its bylaws to require candidates to offer their consent to run for election. This would require an amendment through a full faculty vote, which is a major hurdle.  An alternate approach was proposed:  senators/liaisons could inform their departments about the election and encourage them to respond if they do not want to appear on the ballot.  Senators agreed that this is the best approach for now.

**Debrief from Joint Meeting of Faculty Senate, Academic Affairs Council, and Council of Chairs**

Restrictions are being proposed regarding technology and information security.  Government office guidance is currently vague on this issue and universities making decisions on their own.  TikTok is already banned on campus, but there are many other technologies and products that are problematic.  If foreign-made chips are suspect, this leads to questions about wearable technology and/or medical devices.  Drones are another potential issue.  A senator inquired about whether drones are currently restricted.  Drones can be used for now, but some vendors should be avoided.

The group discussed the current status of incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the hiring process.  Currently we can’t ask for a ‘diversity statement’ and there can be no metric related to this on the hiring matrix.  We can ask questions related to a candidate’s *experience*, but not their *viewpoint/belief*.

A question was raised regarding staffing concerns and our continuing challenging in hiring and retaining staff due to low wages.  Eric Algoe explained that many financial decisions hinge on the potential for a Texas University Fund to be approved by the state legislature.  If this approved by May 29, it would then need to be approved by ballot in November.  The delay is also affecting the scheduled equity adjustments.  These may be announced early in the summer.

A senator lamented that this approach does not help staff in the short term.  The administration is attempting to send the message that staff should hang on, and that something good is on the way.  The reality is that many of the wages we offer (even for more senior positions like Administrative Assistant II) are not living wages in this area.

**Round Rock Update**

There remains a lot of confusion about the short-term and long-term plans for the Round Rock Campus.  Janet Bezner is the new Vice President responsible for the campus.  500 additional students are expected in the fall, with enrollment increasing to 10,000 by 2027-2028 to 10,000.

There seems to be little coordination so far regarding the vision for what courses should be offered.  Departments who are expanding are adding courses without a clear plan and without knowing what kinds of students (majors) are going to be taking their courses.  There is optimism that planning will improve now that a very capable VP has been declared.

**President’s Academic Advisory Group (PAAG) Topics**

A senator asked for an update on the nontenure line faculty (NLF) career path.  Departments are already independently working on internal policies.  Many NLF are frustrated with this process since they don’t know what is needed.  Will a charge be sent to chairs/directors to work on policy?  Ideally this would include which documents are needed and what should be developed at the departmental level.

In response to this question, another senator explained that the title series is on track.  The NLF promotion policy will be finalized ‘soon’.  It is currently unclear whether the senate will review the policy prior to its release.  The main difference between this policy and the tenure policy will be that the 5th year review may not be compulsory (nonpunitive).  Department committees working now are working ahead of schedule.  Another point for departments to consider is that promotion policies for NLF should not look like tenure line policies.  Some policies being proposed are out of alignment with the workload of NLF.  NLF should be involved in the development of policy.  This senator recommended this as a good PAAG topic to provide a transparent public discussion on the ongoing process.

A senator inquired about the progress of policies developed by the senate.  The Personnel Committee guidelines policy is under development.  The faculty senate workload policy is also in process.

A senator suggested that we ask the president an open- ended question about what the senate could offer that would be helpful.  This may be a good wrap-up discussion at the end of the semester.

After discussion, the three topics selected for PAAG will be:

* Personnel committee policy update
* NLF career path instructions
* Update on senate workload policy

The March 22 minutes were approved by vote

The meeting ended at 6:10

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin