**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**
**March 22, 2023**

**4-6 p.m.**

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

**Attending guests:** Lisa Ancelet, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler, Lois Stickley, Renee Wendel

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Personnel Committee Guidelines Update**

Associate Provost Thorne has begun drafting an Academic Affairs policy regarding personnel committees. This way the information is not housed in the tenure and promotion policy. Thorne said each department or school will have discretion on the composition of its PC.

A senator mentioned the Senate and other groups had originally started working on PC updates as a policy and were told by the provost to not make a policy – to make it a set of guidelines, instead. She asked if the Senate’s guidelines would be used to make this policy. Senator Ledbetter said she believes the approved guidelines will be part of the policy. The senator asked if there was a sense of when this policy would be ready, but it’s unclear at the moment.

**Student Membership on Committees**

The Senate recently discussed student membership on committees. The Dean of Students suggested a faculty member nominate a student for a committee and then the Dean of Students could take it to Associated Student Government to see if it endorses the nomination or if it has someone else to put forward.

**Faculty Development Leave Wording**

The Senate has regularly discussed wording used about Faculty Development Leave. There is frequently confusion over who is eligible. The policy states FDL policy is for tenured faculty – but what about someone applying for FDL while their tenure application is still under review? There is no guarantee of tenure, but the hope is they will earn it. By the time tenure is approved by the Board of Regents, the timing gets tricky. The Senate has previously talked about changing the wording on the FDL website to say the faculty member must be tenured by the time leave begins, but it was not voted on. The Senate approved this change in wording.

**Salary Study Request for Proposals**

The university issued an RFP for a compensation consultant to produce a salary study. They’ve asked for a senator to serve on the RFP committee. Senator Bender volunteered to serve.

**Suggestion to Change Faculty Constitution Regarding Elections**

The Faculty Constitution says faculty are on the ballot for Senate elections unless they ask for their name to be removed. There has been a suggestion to make this process opt-in, instead, where faculty members are only on the ballot if they ask to be included.

A senator said he would be in favor of this, but he could see a situation where no one opts in to being a candidate. Another senator said this is likely why the process was set up as “opt-out” instead of “opt-in.” Another senator suggested wording that if there are no candidates, the current senator and liaisons should seek out candidates from their college. Another senator suggested having chairs nominate candidates in this scenario.

A senator said his faculty is also confused by the mandatory runoff election process. He asked if the process could be changed to avoid having to vote twice. Another senator said the initial vote is usually very spread out and the winning candidate might have only a handful of votes. Another senator said that situation might be helped by having fewer candidates.

Any change to the constitution would require a referendum vote, which means at least 40% of all eligible, voting faculty would take part in the vote and at least 60% of those who vote approved of the change. A senator said this would require a campaign to get faculty to vote.

**Discussion of Concerns from Full Senate Meeting**

The Senate recently met with its liaisons to discuss concerns and topics from their schools and departments.

Staffing concerns and competitive salaries were near the top of the list, and this has been sent forward as the Senate’s main topic for the full meeting of the Senate, Council of Chairs and Academic Affairs Council next week.

A senator said bloating of top administration came up as a concern during the full Senate meeting. The Senate’s salary subcommittee noticed, from the limited data they could get, that the level of administrators at the level of dean or higher increased by more than 30% in the past 10 years. Enrollment only increased by less than 12% and staffing by 9% during that time frame. She suggested reaching out to the Office of Institutional Research to get better data regarding this because the data available for administrators is poor and inconsistent. Another senator said there appears to be a disconnect on the definition of staffing. He feels the administration might consider staffing as new assistant directors instead of office staffing and custodians. He wanted to know the cutoff for when someone is considered support staff or administrative staff. Another senator agreed that Institutional Research needs to come to Senate to help clarify. A senator agreed to contact Institutional Research to ask for this.

A senator said analyses in the past have generated needs, but the response is always there’s no money to fix the need. He suggested the Senate analyze new spending in the budget to think about how that represents the university’s priorities. Another senator said he believes the university is chasing R1 metrics with spending to fund STEM PhD programs and reorganizing divisions.

**Legislative Update**

The Texas Senate has introduced three bills related to higher education topics, including elimination of tenure and DEI hiring practices. One of the Senate bills would eliminate tenure for anyone who isn’t tenured by September 1, 2023. However, no member of the Texas House of Representatives proposed a companion bill by the filing deadline. The Speaker of the House has also come out against the plan to end tenure. Regardless of the DEI bill’s future, state agencies (including public universities) are still under the governor’s executive order against using DEI considerations when hiring.

A senator said, regardless of what happens with this bill on tenure, there will be a push to put more teeth into the post-tenure review process. He believes the Senate should begin looking for good ideas and/or strategies for this.

**Other Business**

Minutes from the March 8 meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.