

Liberal Arts Council

Zoom Meeting

7 October 2020

Presiding: Dean Mary Brennan

Present: Council members: Manda Anderson, Susan Day (recording), Beth Erhart, Ken Grasso, Craig Hanks, Lucy Harney, Paul Hart, Jeff Helgeson, Bill Kelemen, Yongmei Lu, John Mckiernan-Gonzalez, Gloria Martinez, Aimee Roundtree, Chad Smith, Vicki Smith

Guests: Natalie Ceballos, Toni Watt

Absent: no one

The minutes of 16 September 2020 minutes were approved without dissension on a motion by Dr. Grasso and a second by Dr. C. Smith.

Dean Brennan announced April 10 as the date for the DAAA, with a silent auction related to COLA activities, to be held at the same time.

The first event of the Salon Series, which features Cyrus Cassells, will be held October 8, 2020. The October 29 Salon will feature Joe Laycock and Natasha Mickles, focusing on their book, *Gods and Monsters*. Chairs were asked to consider faculty who can contribute to an intellectual Salon discussion through their recent scholarship.

CAD Update

Dean Brennan provided the Affordable Learning Materials Initiative report to LAC members. This administration champions cutting costs for students to increase the likelihood of their success. The Registrar will create a web page featuring low-cost textbooks in the near future.

Dean Brennan noted that the new Coordinating Board commissioner is said not to be supportive of fields of study and is suspending the creation of new fields of study for now. Clarification of this decision, and its import, will come in the future.

Dean Brennan noted that emails were sent to most departments about their leave reporting. Any department having 50 percent or less of their faculty reporting no sick leave received the email. Departments received a template for creating policies, and were asked to provide their policies. Dean Brennan noted that an idea like “We are supportive of reporting sick leave. Here is our process for doing that” should suffice.

Dean Brennan noted that temporary fund requests templates that were submitted earlier in the year by chairs and directors will be returned for their reconsideration.

Dean Brennan reported her continued concern that some faculty will be anticipating administrative salaries that will be unavailable next summer. Summer salaries for faculty and administrative salaries will come from a lump sum provided to each college. Summer budgets will come out in December or January. Chairs were encouraged to reflect on the difficult decisions about activities associated with administrative positions that will not be funded and to begin to consider what they will do in light of enrollment demands. Dr. Helgeson noted that “Summer budgets come from one fund center, with approximately \$8 million going to instruction (from which there will be a 10% cut) and \$2 million (facing a 40% cut) to administrative compensation ([T]his does not include chair, director, dean salaries; this is about summer administrative duties for 9-month faculty.) Overall, there has been a 15.5% reduction of the summer 2021 budget, bringing it down to around \$8 million.” Dean Brennan emphasized that faculty should not work if they are not getting paid. The amount of UCF money available is unclear; the amount of available funds for summer budgets is also unclear. Chairs pointed out that planning is difficult in this kind of situation.

Dean Brennan circulated enrollment figures provided at the University Leadership Assembly meeting. The COLA fall enrollment drop of more than 10,000 SCH was around 8% of our total SCH. Dean Brennan noted that high school dual credit and anti-liberal arts sentiment both work against students taking our classes. The number of COLA minors is, however, relatively high, and minors take our classes, may become majors, and can carry positive messages about our classes. Associate Dean Roundtree supported the idea of inter-disciplinary ideas. Dean Brennan indicated the new Business Dean is interested in interdisciplinary degrees.

Dean Brennan discussed the budget provided by President Trauth at the University Leadership

Assembly meeting. Money will not be returned to the departments this fall. Associate Dean Roundtree noted that the budget is a projected budget. Dean Brennan encouraged chairs to examine the budget. Dean Brennan will ask for an explanation of the budget shortfall.

President Trauth’s Statement on President Trump’s Executive Order re diversity training was explained in the University Leadership Assembly meeting. The diversity training task force will move forward, but because Texas State has a large number of federally-funded students, Dr. Trauth issued the statement to protect our funding. An announcement at the end of the week will provide more context. Associate Dean Roundtree noted there will be an examination of divisive language on the Texas State website, and that she is working with Dr. Silva to support diversity programming. Threats to academic freedom are of greatest concern to faculty. Dean Brennan will remind Provost Bourgeois of this issue.

Around the Screen

Dr. Chad Smith indicated that the Continuity of Education Committee is discussing whether to have a 2021 spring break. The concern is that such a break will allow students to leave campus and return with COVID, thereby increasing the rate of illness on campus.

Associate Dean Rountree thanked chairs for encouraging faculty to apply for NEH grants. Dean Brennan thanked Dr. Roundtree for her work with ACLA applications. Dr. Roundtree applauded the Department of World Languages receiving a \$7,500 award from the BBVA Foundation to partner with Texas State's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to enhance Spanish-language communications with local small businesses and start-ups.

Dr. Kelemen noted that a graduate student filed dual employment report, and asked how he should deal with the issue. Dean Brennan said to talk to Tammy Sharp.

Associate Dean Day noted that all chairs have not submitted their assessment reports.

Dr. Hart asked how large the university's endowment is and what the rate of return is.

The meeting ended at 3:45 p.m.