

## **Liberal Arts Council**

### **Zoom Meeting**

**21 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, Gloria Martinez, John Mckiernan-Gonzalez, Aimee Roundtree, Chad Smith, Vicki Smith

Guests: Natalie Ceballos, Toni Watt

Absent: no one

The minutes of 7 September 2020 minutes were approved without dissension, pending typo and omission corrections, on a motion by Dr. Grasso and a second by Dr. Roundtree.

The first Salon with Cyrus Cassels was a success, who has been nominated to be the Poet Laureate of Texas, with more than 50 participants. Joe Laycock and Natasha Mikles will offer the second Salon, focusing on their book, *Gods and Monsters*. Rachel Romero and Deborah Harris discussing Gracious Spaces, will be the third Salon.

Cuts to summer budget last summer and next summer are the result of the administrative decisions to deduct money from administrative budgets instead of instructional budgets.

Concerns about tenure were voiced at a lunch with Dean Brennan. The concerns are from tenure-track faculty who are coming up in three to five years because they are concerned, in part, with impact of Covid on their research agendas. Their concern is not next year, but three years from now. Dean Brennan has drafted a message to Personnel Committees that will convey her promise that Personnel committees should remember the hardships that faculty members are facing. Dr. Lu noted that most faculty are affected by merit raise concerns will exist as well. And, in addition, Covid-19 presents possibilities in research also. Dr. Roundtree noted that faculty are concerned about how excellence in teaching will be defined by Personnel Committees. Dr. Martinez raised the possibility that faculty health may be an issue as well. Dean Brennan noted that tolling the tenure clock would be allowed without prejudice, but that faculty were not really seeking that outcome. Their concern was, in part, that having to change the research focus would be penalized. Dean Brennan noted that periods of fewer publications because of research shifts should be remembered as a response to Covid. She emphasized that her goal was for Personnel Committees not to forget how careers are being impacted by this period of Covid. Dean Brennan will circulate her letter to PCs for comment.

The administration is introducing The Evaluation Kit program that coordinates with CANVAS and will

allow on-line course evaluation. Whitten Smart will demonstrate this program at the next Council of Chairs. Much of what happens in the future will be routed through Canvas, according to Dean Brennan.

Twenty-five hundred students have been admitted for fall 2021. Graduate school admissions for 2021 are positive; a graduate advisor handbook is being created in the Graduate College.

The current Covid positivity rate for Texas State is 1.6% (of 1200 tests). Guidelines for students to remain healthy over the breaks are being created by Student Health. Study Abroad is cancelled for the spring; no decisions have been made for summer. International students are being encouraged to take at least one face-to-face class. Face-to-face graduation ceremonies are being planned for December, but 80% of faculty and staff indicated a reluctance to attend. Event staff may be hired.

Dean Brennan announced that temporary budgets received today by chairs and directors should be examined and completed. Areas in yellow must be updated. She asked that they follow directions and work with Jamie Donaldson to complete the task.

A Gary Ray spreadsheet showing the enrollment differences between summers 2019 and 2020 will be forwarded to chairs and directors so that they can make decisions about how to maintain and increase enrollment for summer 2021. Dean Brennan noted that summer administrative positions have to be discussed now; she does not want administrative position reductions to be a surprise.

Classes with healthy enrollments may expect to add sections of the course, although class enrollment may have to be higher than normal. A distinction was made between writing intensive and writing composition classes, with the former typically having higher class caps.

A discussion about summer salaries and seniority revealed that summer salaries are determined by department policy. Summer salary numbers may be available in December.

Dr. Roundtree announced that five faculty have applied for the NEH (from English, Anthropology, Philosophy, World Languages and Literature) professorship. She asked for nominations for outside reviewers. The Andrew Carnegie Fellow application deadline is the end of this week. She asked chairs to ask up-and-coming or already-arrived faculty to apply; these faculty may be eligible for other award programs, even if they do not fit the Carnegie guidelines.

Dr. Trauth has stopped diversity training because of a Trump decision, but Dr. Scott Bowman and Dr. Stella Silva are available to answer search committee questions. Dean Brennan is on the election committee task force. The Hays County Registrar is overwhelmed by the number of students who registered. Students can ask for a LIMITED **ballot** before election day if they tried to register but do not show on the registration list. She will send an email with additional information.

Dr. Lu asked about summer budget cuts. A 10% budget cut does not mean that a faculty member will have his or salary cut by 10%. It means that fewer classes may be taught or summer administration positions will be available because of a 10% reduction in department allocations.

Dr. Chad Smith asked whether registration system changes that led to error messages during student attempts to enroll had been discussed. Dean Brennan indicated that the administration was unaware of and surprised by the problems. Ms. Anderson noted that because advisors cannot see students' screens, advisors cannot resolve student problems. The new system is problematic because there are too many steps required to add courses.

Dr. Roundtree asked whether faculty participation at graduation will be required. Dean Brennan said faculty will not be required to participate. Final decisions about graduation have not been made.

Dr. Martinez reminded chairs and directors to ask faculty to join the Women's Studies discussion group, using the link provided in her email.

The meeting ended at 3:11.