Faculty Senate

Minutes

September 6, 2023

4:00 – 6:00 pm

JCK 880

**Members Present:** Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, William Chittenden, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Dave Donelly, Farzan Irani, Jennifer Jensen, William Kelemen, Lynn Ledbetter, Jo Beth Oestreich, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Michael Supancic and Alex White.

Guests: Kelly Damphousse, Eric Algoe, Eugene Bourgeois, Debbie Thorne, Matthew Brooks, Angela Ausbrooks, Jason Coates, Madan Dey, Shannon Duffy, Laura Ellis-Lai, Lauren Goodley, Candace Hastings, Deborah Howard, Katie Kapurch, James Keefe, Scott Kruse, Eric Leake, Doug Morrish, Russell Moses, Piyush Shroff, Karen Sigler, Lois Stickley, Bob Vásquez, and Kelly Visnak.

**Chair Ledbetter opened the meeting at 4:00 pm**.

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

Before addressing the agenda items for today, President Damphousse thanked the faculty for their hard work and time dedicated this past summer to develop the 11 PhD program proposals. Additional thanks were extended to Senator Supancic for his many contributions to the program proposal work. The President stated all eleven doctoral program proposals were sent through to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and is hopeful they will be approved. The university is investing $26 million to support the proposed programs. These 11 programs are a good start to our continuing efforts to add more PhD programs. We need to add more humanity PhDs and have more comprehensive offerings. The President said they have approved the next tranche (four or five) PhD programs. President Damphousse concluded his remarks reiterating his thanks to all faculty on the program proposal work completed this past summer. He said he has invited the Commissioner for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to visit our campus in October to speak to our faculty, meet with our deans, see our programs, and visit our facilities.

The first agenda item for PAAG was an update on issues with PCRs and Keys.

Vice President of Finance & Support Services Eric Algoe **said last spring a work group was formed to address the onboarding process. This summer, the work group completed their report and made several recommendations. A few of the recommendations were implemented over the course of this summer. The first recommendation implemented this past June and July was to join forces between the PCR processing groups that were part of faculty and academic resources and human resources. There are six people now in this working group. Training will be provided to assist this new group to facilitate an efficient onboarding experience. Another change implemented this summer was building a new application process which allows new hires to get a net ID before completing the PCR process. This new application process enables new hires to get a key for their office, purchase a parking permit, and gain access to other resources without being held up in the system due to a backlog or missing paperwork. These are a few improvements made in response to the recommendations, but more needs to be done and bigger changes will occur next summer and fall. Currently, there are 1700 PCRs in the system waiting to be processed (15% lower than last year at this time). There are currently 553 individuals waiting for a key to be processed (10% fewer than last year at this time).**

**A Senator said the PCR process for graduate students has been a problem. The concern is a new PCR must be initiated every time there is a change in title. Algoe agreed and said one urgent change regarding this concern is to create a better process to hire and onboard our graduate students. Graduate students are a large part of new hires and PCR requests (20% of the PCRs in the queue today are graduate students). Other issues needing to be addressed with our graduate student hires are to: create policies and procedures for hiring graduate students; invite graduate students to employee orientations; discuss available benefits if applicable; address the 60-day waiting period; provide a better system to indicate where a hold up is occurring in the system; and overall improvement of the PCR process. The administration plans to have corrective measures in place by next fall.**

The second part of the first agenda item concerns keys. Based upon recommendations, we need to distribute permissions more effectively and increase the number of key boxes on campus. To address these issues, administration made a few improvements this acquired software that will now be implemented. This software allows certain staff on campus the ability to manage their own keys. The same system manages card swipes and physical keys. For card swipe management, a designated person would manage access to rooms, offices, labs, and would no longer need to go through Ingress Management Services. For physical keys, key boxes similar to vending machines will be distributed around campus. Ten have already been installed and there are plans to add 20 to 30 more. Once permission has been given to get a key, a member will swipe their ID card and the box will dispense the requested key. The big challenge which will take some time is to identify which staff will have authority over which doors in which buildings. With regards to our key shop, there has been an increase to six employees (from only two previously) and three additional key machines for a total of five.

The second agenda item was the Nontenure Line Faculty new title series. Each department and school have been charged with creating a document outlining initial appointment of NLF to the new title series which is due this December. However, university policy covering NLF promotion review, as well as a possible template and or list of items that needs to be included or considered has not been disseminated for this process to occur. Associate Provost Debbie Thorne said the university policy will be submitted to the PPS review system on September 15, 2023. Full review will take around two weeks and the PPS will then be published. Shortly after, a follow-up policy covering NLF promotion will undergo review and then publication. Academic units are to then write a set of guidelines that will become policy on how they will recognize the faculty coming in at the three ranks: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor of instruction. The academic units will provide more detail in terms of what qualifies the faculty member to earn their new rank. Near the end of March 2024, current Lecturers and Senior Lecturers will have the option to pursue this instructional faculty title series or not. The President’s Cabinet has allocated $1,000,000 for the new instructional title series. Based on surveys, Thorne estimates about 350 faculty members could request appointments at the Professor or Associate Professor rank when this series goes into effect. Funding for these new ranks is in addition to the cost of living and merit pay increases. It has been recommended that faculty receive a 7% promotion increase as they are promoted to each new level.

A Senator asked how this NLF title series will be communicated to the general faculty. The Associate Provost stated she and other cabinet members will be attending the council of chairs and directors in October and will re-communicate this information at this meeting. The provost stated he would send out an email to all faculty related to this title series. A Senator stated there were a few things needed to help the various committees in creating their guidelines, including the over-arching university policy covering the NLF title series, the university policy covering NLF promotion review, and a possible template and/or a list of items that should be included or considered. The Associate Provost stated they would share these items by email in October. December 2023 is currently a flexible timeline for academic units to complete and submit their guidelines. A senator also requested that it be reiterated to Chairs and Directors that NLF should be part of the process to develop initial appointment and promotion guidelines, and that these new documents should reflect the unique nature of instructional faculty and not mimic tenure requirements. The Associate Provost agreed.

On a separate item, a Senator asked if explicit instructions could be sent out to faculty to encourage conservation efforts across campus by turning off lights, equipment, etc.

A Senator asked if there is a policy related to graduate student sick leave. The affected students are graduate students who are graduate assistants with a GA title that are salaried. Thorne replied that supervisors can work with them to make arrangements to cover their work responsibilities on a case-by-case basis.

The Associate Provost said the human resources consultant report was received and recommended changes to our compensation system for faculty and staff based on the $1.75 million salary adjustment. There are more than 200 faculty members eligible for this adjustment. In a few days a list will go out to deans and chairs/directors indicating who is eligible and ask for suggested adjustments for each faculty member based on factors such as experience, past performance and merit. Affected faculty and staff will see adjustments in their October 2023 paycheck.

**Debrief:**

Senators stated that better communication needs to occur between upper administration and faculty. We will continue to check on PCRs, keys and salary adjustments. There is great support for the NLF title series but there is a concern that there is a lack of plans to generate and communicate the guidelines and timelines for the new title series across the university.

**AAPPS 04.01.32 Management and Funding of Faculty Fellowships**. This early policy review is posted in Teams for Senators to share suggestions to the policy using track changes.

**MOTION** to approve the August 30, 2023 Minutes. **PASSED**.

**Executive Session.** Senators discussed the following items:

Committee appointments

**Meeting adjourned by Chair Ledbetter at 6:03 pm**

Respectfully submitted,

JB Oestreich, Secretary