Faculty Senate Meeting

Minutes

October 11, 2023

JCK 880

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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

**Members Absent:** Peter Dedek and Farzan Irani.

**Guests:** Matt Brooks, Nabila Cook, Kelly Damphousse, Taylor Glover, Lauren Goodley, Deborah Howard, Lauren Ibarra, Scott Kruse, Catherine Messinger, Greg Moses, David Nolan, Camrie Pipper, Alana Rosenwasser, Aimee Roundtree, Piyush Shroff, Karen Sigler, Thilla Sivakumaran, Benji Smith, Lois Stickley, Debbie Thorne and Fereshteh Zihagh.

**The meeting was opened by Chair Ledbetter at 4:00 p.m.**

**President’s Academic Advisory Group (PAAG).** The first agenda item was to address the recent article published in the *University Star* regarding the 2023 Annual Security Fire and Safety Report. The article highlighted a concerning increase in reported crimes such as rapes, hate crimes, assaults, and burglaries on campus over the past three years.

The President acknowledged that any crime committed on campus is unacceptable and that the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and the entire campus community is a top priority. The increase in reported crimes in 2020-2022 compared to the zero reported offenses between 2016-2018 in similar categories may reflect an improvement in the university's reporting practices complying with the Clery Act.

However, the President emphasized that the increased numbers of assaults, hate crimes, and burglaries require immediate attention. The President stated he is working closely with the University Police Department’s (UPD) Chief of Police Matt Carmichael to create a strong reporting culture; provide training with students on safety including bystander behavior training; and work to hire more police officers. Additionally, the UPD is engaged in community policing efforts offering self-defense training classes for student groups; working with the student government in implementing the safe-ride program; supporting the blue light system; and utilizing the monitoring system of cameras placed throughout the campus. The President met with the *University Star* to provide context to how data is collected through crime reports. If multiple individuals report a crime, it will be logged as multiple offenses even though it may have been a single incident. A Senator noted that the safety concerns raised in the article impact the perception of campus safety for students, parents, and the community. The university encourages reporting of any crime and will continue to maintain a safe environment for all current and future TXST students, faculty, staff, and greater community members.

The second item for PAAG was to discuss if reorganizations within the university have been completed including the reorganization of Enrollment Management, Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and University Registrar to TXST Global. The President stated there has been a tremendous amount of work completed over the past fifteen months related to the reorganization and consolidation of departments within the university. The President also stated the university needs to increase sustainable revenue. To accomplish this, TXST needs to enroll more students. The strategic creation of TXST Global aimed to increase online and international student enrollment and revenue growth. In line with this objective, Thilla Sivakumaran was hired to be the VP for TXST Global (formerly VP for enrollment management) to expand online and international student enrollment and it made sense to move student enrollment under his operational responsibility. Dr. Julie Lessiter was hired as the inaugural VP for the Round Rock campus (VPRRC) to increase enrollment at the RR location. The President stated the provost maintains oversight over all operations and academics, so given Sivakumaran’s expertise, it made sense to shift Financial Aid, Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and University Registrar under TXST Global.

A Senator asked how the university would expand dining hall options with the expected on-campus growth. The President announced that the university will be constructing two new residence halls designed to accommodate 2,000 students. Each hall will have 1,000 beds, and the first hall is expected to open in the fall of 2024, while the second hall will open in the fall of 2025. One of the residence halls will include a dining hall.

The last discussion item from President Damphousse concerned the external human resources consultant’s salary study report. A chart was created to show where faculty and staff fall above or below the median salary. The next step is to get the people further away from the median closer to the median. The university spent $17 million this year on new staff and faculty positions and moved the minimum salary of staff to $30,000 a year. A new faculty title series will be in place in the fall of 2024 and the university is building money to support this new series. The consultant’s contract is for five years and will provide yearly assessments of salary data. A Senator shared that some faculty thought they would receive an adjustment this year but did not. Associate Provost Thorne advised faculty to contact their department Chair if they were expecting additional salary adjustments in their October pay.

The next item on the agenda was to prepare for the upcoming Faculty Senate and Liaisons Meeting, which will be conducted over Zoom on October 18, 2023**.** Chair Ledbetter reached out to the Faculty Senate liaisons via email, encouraging them to bring any concerns their faculty may have to the upcoming meeting. Members will be split into small breakout groups to discuss concerns and reconvene in the last half hour to bring forward any issues discussed. A Senator encouraged sharing positive changes faculty have experienced too.

**Texas Council of Faculty Senates Update**. Faculty Senates presented their university's Round Up Report during a recent meeting held in San Antonio, Texas on September 29-30, 2023. Our report includes enrollment numbers, composition of the Faculty Senate, meeting frequency, and issues related to Senate Bill (SB)17 and SB18. During the meeting, the two SBs were the primary topic of discussion. Three key takeaways from the meeting: 1) Faculty should create post-tenure policies. 2) Difficulty recruiting faculty to serve. 3) Misinformation about the SBs.

**MOTION** to approve October 4, 2023, minutes. **PASSED**

The Senate moved into an Executive Session to discuss the Piper Professor Committee’s recommendations.

**MOTION** The recommendations made by the Piper Professor Committee were endorsed by the Faculty Senate. **PASSED**.

Chair Ledbetter adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.