Faculty Senate Meeting

Minutes

November 1, 2023

JCK 880

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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

**Guests**: Eric Algoe, Amy Benton, Janet Bezner, Eugene Bourgeois, Matt Brooks, Natalie Ceballos, Stacey Cropley, Kelly Damphousse, Kimberlee Davis, Laura Ellis-Lai, Lauren Goodley, Deborah Howard, Kevin Jetton, Scott Kruse, Stephanie Larrison, Matt McAllister, Russell Moses, Paivi Rentz, John Root, Aimee Roundtree, Arlene Salazar, Piyush Shroff, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne, Margaret Vaverek,

**Chair Ledbetter opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m**.

President Damphousse provided a few announcements before discussing topics for today’s meeting. A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported the American Council on Education (ACE) has revised the metrics for colleges achieving Research 1 (R1) status. The new methodology release will be effective in 2025. The simplified method will give “colleges that spend at least $50 million in research and development and award 70 or more research doctorate degrees” the ability to attain R1 status. The President stated that TXST should reach these new metrics by 2027. He also stated we are in the middle of early voting and gathering good information from alumni, staff, etc. about Proposition 5, The Texas University Fund (TUF) which would create a new endowment for ‘emerging’ research (public) universities to enhance research opportunities. The university is hopeful this proposition will pass by Texas voters.

**President’s Academic Advisory Group**. During the meeting, the first item on the agenda was to discuss the newly proposed budget model. President Damphousse shared that the new model is enrollment-driven. Moreover, there are no plans to eliminate any programs if revenue is not made. Eric Algoe, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), stated that the new model to be used is Responsibility Centered Management (RCM). This model replaces the incremental budget that has been in place at TXST since 1968. It promotes fiscal responsibility at the unit level, providing better data, more control, and flexibility over resource decisions. More information about RCM will be shared in the future from the administration.

A Senator inquired about the plan for shared governance in this process. Algoe responded that it is not yet finalized, and a committee comprised of chairs, deans, directors, and technical experts with budget experience will be created to provide guidance. We need a Standing Committee, i.e., a permanent budget committee to meet annually and review budget data, making necessary adjustments to the process.

A Senator asked if there is an expectation for deans to be more involved in fundraising to generate new funding. Provost Bourgeois stated this had already begun. The Senator asked how staff would be involved in this process. Algoe stated there will be staff representation on the Standing Committee. Shared governance includes faculty, staff, students, and administration. The Standing Committee will be faculty-heavy.

Provost Bourgeois emphasized that decisions on budgets would be driven by a variety of factors, including general education, tenure, graduate assistants, workload mapping, strategic initiatives, and building funding for future growth.

Associate Provost Thorne stated about six or seven years ago the provost’s office implemented a series of academic metrics that were key drivers of revenue in any department. The two levers were **curriculum** (how complex/number of electives) and **student enrollment** (class sizes/assessment) which are within faculty control. The new model has not been built yet, but it is important to ensure the curriculum in the various disciplines stays relevant and current, and to share why our disciplines are important with the coordinating board. We want to use our marketing skills to keep students interested and thriving in our academic programs.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss short and long-term plans to better support faculty in achieving the university's goals. The President stated that our enrollment has not increased and there are fewer students today than we had almost eight years ago. The university is supporting faculty by spending $60 million in the run to R1 (stipends, new PhD programs, etc.). We increased staff salaries and added 100 staff members in the past two years, we are back to pre-COVID staffing. If proposition 5 regarding TUF passes, it will provide 22.3 million dollars toward supporting faculty and staff researchers.

A Senator asked how the university will ensure sufficient tenure-track faculty for the new doctoral programs and also have the technical staff to maintain equipment for many of these research programs. The President stated the original proposal was $86 million for the doctoral programs; however, most programs will begin with smaller graduate students and hiring of faculty and staff will occur over time.

A Senator shared that five of seven colleges from the Full Senate Faculty and Liaison meeting last week stated they were doing more with less. There is a concern the administration is not made aware of certain needs and there is a request to improve the flow of communication to faculty and staff. The President is open to knowing what specific resources or issues that faculty need. When requests are made, the administration will try to figure out how to fulfill the request or find a resolution to the problem.

The last PAAG topic was about the ratio of tenure track and tenured faculty to non-tenure line faculty (NLF) at TXST. The President pointed out that the NLF at our university teach more classes than the tenure-line faculty. Provost Bourgeois provided data indicating that only 44% of faculty at TXST are tenure track or tenured, which he compared to other universities such as UT Arlington (44%), UT Dallas (46%), UT El Paso (44%) and UTSA (56%). He also mentioned that other universities tend to have more graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) than TXST, which lowers their number of NLF and thus increases their percentage of tenured faculty. Bourgeois will share more detailed data on this topic with the Faculty Senate.

**BookSmart Survey Results and Impressions**. Eric Algoe, the CFO, and John R. Root, the Executive Director of Auxiliary Services, were present. A Senator presented the results from surveys completed by faculty and students regarding Follett’s BookSmart program. These surveys revealed that faculty members had more concerns than students. Additionally, the communication regarding BookSmart rollout was not effective. Both students and faculty had concerns about the program's cost and the ability to opt out of it. Moreover, they were worried about the choice between digital and hard copies of the text. The survey data correlated with comments made at the beginning of the semester by numerous faculty.

Algoe stated that the digital rollout was unsuccessful. There needs to be a clear and easy way to communicate the proposal that was adopted. This semester served as a monetary litmus test.

A Senator inquired about the opt-out process for students. Algoe responded that although at least twenty emails were sent to students, the process was flawed and needs to be improved.

A Senator questioned why the university didn't pilot the rollout of the new process during the summer instead of launching it in the fall. Algoe responded with three points: 1. The system had already been piloted for the past three years. 2. A pilot was not feasible as creating two billing systems would have been costly and there was a need for a performance metric to determine how to use it. 3. The focus now is to determine whether to continue with the system and how to address the issues. The ultimate goal is to reduce the cost of books.

A Senator asked about the nature of the contract and if TXST is committed to sticking with this program or leaving it. Algoe stated that the campus bookstore is already in the fifth year of a ten-year contract with TXST. Booksmart is on a one-year contract. A Senator stated it would be helpful to know how much money BookSmart saved students as opposed to the previously adopted system.

During the Senate meeting, several questions were raised regarding communication from Follet and material adoptions. The Senators enquired whether Follet could send an email to faculty members to confirm which materials had been adopted. They also requested that if new editions of materials were available, Follet should inform faculty members so they could determine if the new edition would suffice for that semester. The Senators asked Follet to investigate the electronic trail to determine if an adoption process had been changed or not completed. Finally, a Senator inquired whether Follet could supply three of the most popular books used in similar courses at other institutions.

The agenda proceeded with a brief discussion about PAAG. There are continued concerns regarding the development of online programs and changes to tenure track lines in the new program proposals.

**MOTION** to approve the October 25, 2023 Minutes. **PASSED**.

Chair Ledbetter announced the updated dates and times for the provost candidate meetings (November 6, 10, and 15) have been posted on Teams. The next Faculty Senate meeting, scheduled for November 8, 2023, will be held on Zoom.

**Chair Ledbetter adjourned the meeting at 5:58 p.m.**