Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

January 31, 2024

4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

JCK 880

Members Present: Vaughn Baltzly, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Dave Donnelly, Farzan Irani, William Kelemen, Lynn Ledbetter, Jo Beth Oestreich, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Michael Supancic and Alex White.

Members Absent: Rebecca Bell-Metereau, William Chittenden

Guests: Alicia Barthel, Blake Bissing, Katie Bonner, David Bush, Carole Clerie, Stacey Dropley, Lauren Goodley, Matthew Hall, Scott Kruse, Piyush Shroff, Lois Stickley, Shelly Wernette and Fereshteh Zihagh.

Chair Ledbetter opened the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

**Continued Discussion of Initial Assessment of IT Assets, Contracts, Staff and**

**Spending by Matt Hall**, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief

Information Officer (VPIT/CIO). Hall stated he is in the ongoing IT assessment process.

The focus is on two dimensions: the IT electronic infrastructure and the mission-facing component. The mission-facing aspect centers around student success, including housing operations and EAB deployment initiatives. The Run to R1 involves supporting the Ph.D. growth and addressing roadblocks in the research discovery process, with a current emphasis on improving the procurement process.

Faculty success is being defined through discussions with deans, chairs, and the

Faculty Senate. The Texas State brand acceleration involves preparing infrastructure for events like the presidential debate. Enrollment expansion and preparing for fall and mini-semesters are also key considerations.

The assessment includes analyzing the capacity of the existing IT staff (303 on campus) and identifying skills gaps, focusing on data management and data science. A review of 18,000 personal computing devices on campus reveal a need for a rational approach to equipment replacement.

A software application inventory is being conducted, categorizing over 700 applications based on their contributions to learning, teaching, and resource management. The

assessment also covers the ERP systems, student systems, identity management, and

a shift to the cloud.

Operational financial transparency and an engagement survey for IT personnel are priorities. Tactical solutions, such as a texting platform and email marketing, are being explored. The assessment identifies issues like graduate students’ VPN access and aims to address administrative burdens, particularly in procurement cycle time reduction. Hall stated that these are issues he has discovered in the past 30 work days of his tenure at TXST.

Several Senators expressed gratitude for the prompt delivery of the CoPilot license and have been actively participating in the program.

Hall highlighted a structured approach involving three phases: assessment, consideration of structural or operational changes, and alignment of investments with defined goals. The primary focus is on collectively understanding and defining student success, such as securing employment, graduating debt-free within a specified timeframe, and identifying the necessary investments to align, amplify, or create initiatives supporting those goals. A Senator stated that goals related to student success should include faculty and staff success. Senators can reach out to Hall through Teams for additional information or questions. Hall has an open invitation to come and visit Faculty Senate.

The next several agenda items were presented by **Carole Clerie, Associate Vice President of Human Resources (HR), and HR team members Blake Bissing, Manager of Compensation; Alicia Barthel, Executive Director of Talent Strategy; and Katie Bonner, Manager, HRIS**.

**Employee Emergency Loan Program.** Clerie discussed an interest-free loan program for employees and other initiatives. The loan is up to $1,000, renews with repayments, and has two repayment options: payroll deduction and touch net site. Clerie and her team shared several other programs now organized under HR.

**The Volunteer Program & Minors training**. Clerie announced a revamp to the registration process to collect volunteer information, perform background checks, and ensure proper training. The training is scheduled for March 15th, 2024, and will utilize the People Admin system. A Senator asked if the K-12 program needs to follow the same system. In response, Clerie clarified that the policy defines volunteers as non-TXST affiliates.

**Compensation study**. Bissing presented a report comparing staff and faculty salaries at TXST with those of 130 universities. The report found that an additional $600K for staff and $1.2M for faculty would be required to enhance competitiveness. 96% of positions were at the median rate, while 205 staff and 370 faculty were below the minimum salary. The cabinet will decide whether to implement the proposed salary structure, which costs $1.8M, before the upcoming fiscal year. A Senator asked if there was a comparison to CUPA data. Bissing stated there was no comparison done with CUPA.

**Position Level Job Descriptions**. Clerie pointed out that only 20% of job descriptions are available. HR is testing a workflow in the People Admin system to manage position-level job descriptions. A Senator expressed concern about 80% of jobs without a description. Clerie explained the need for a centralized system. A Senator asked how evaluations had been completed on employees with no job description. Additionally, Biggins added that job evaluations usually rolled over from year to year.

**Onboarding.** HR has taken over the New Faculty Orientation (NFO). The transition to handling NFO began in June/July of 2023, with a small cohort in the spring. The goal is to offer a unique experience, combining the traditional orientation elements with cultural education, i.e., tours, exposing faculty to different departments. HR and the graduate college are developing a Canvas course to improve the orientation of graduate assistants, including insurance options and next steps.

**PCR Processing Transition.** Bonnerreported that the Faculty and Academic Resources (FAR) and HR processors have merged to handle Personnel Change Requests (PCRs). This team of eight employees will maintain and improve the current processes, ensuring compliance, especially for international employees. The long-term plan is integrating systems to automate data extraction and request initiation. Regarding international employment, the HR department has taken over responsibilities from TXST Global, dealing with Visas and related benefits. HR is collaborating with external attorneys for non-J-1 visa types. The team plans to integrate workflows for early visa identification and smoother processes.

**Background Check Bill Back Process**. Clerie reported that Eric Algoe, CFO, has agreed that starting March 1, 2024, the billing process for non-campus, non-auxiliary, and non-grant-funded positions will cease, with most state-funded positions covered as institutional expenses.

**Retired Faculty and Staff Association** **(RFSA).** RFSA has moved to HR management. A member of the benefits team will work with them to enhance support and engagement. The university can offer standalone benefits not covered by the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS). Voya will be launched in the fall to provide benefits similar to Aflac. Individuals can review and decide whether to participate in the new benefits package alongside existing ERS benefits.

**Optional Retirement Plan (ORP)**. Clerie discussed the challenges of managing twelve retirement plan providers and the fiduciary compliance issues they bring. The goal is to comply with Texas law, requiring four plan offerings. All Texas State University Systems (TSUS) CFOs will vote on selected plans in the fall, resulting in a pared-down list of vendors. Communication will be provided before any changes are made, giving participants time to decide.

Barthel reported on **HR exploratory Items,** beginning with the **PeopleAdmin Audit**. An issue related to staff positions is that the checkbox in PeopleAdmin to request a live posting after audit approval needs to be fixed. To make the process more efficient, they are improving the integration within PeopleAdmin by initiating the posting directly to Talent Acquisition after completing the audit. This will reduce redundant approvals and streamline the process.

**Faculty Digital Offer Letter.** HR is exploring possibly introducing digital offer letters for faculty positions within the PeopleAdmin workflow. The team is actively engaging in conversations on how to enhance the hiring process for faculty members.

**Hiring Matrix Replacement**. Barthel discussed successful beta testing in two departments. The process includes creating job posting questions, scoring applicants, and using PeopleAdmin for evaluation and documentation. There is a potential integration for contacting references through email. The aim is to streamline talent acquisition and enhance hiring efficiency.

Clerie discussed several additional HR programs, beginning with the **Childcare Expansion Feasibility Study**. A study conducted by a consulting firm revealed that San Marcos has a scarcity of childcare providers, whereas Round Rock has no shortage of childcare facilities. The institution aims to improve childcare facilities for faculty, staff, and students and address the lack of eldercare facilities. While Clerie did not rule out the possibility of having a future childcare facility at the Round Rock campus, creating one is not a priority now. A Senator raised concerns about the lack of resources, including childcare, for the Round Rock campus faculty and inquired about plans to address these issues.

**Compliance Training Vendor**. The vendor contract ends soon, and HR is exploring new options. The platform stays the same, but the content will come from a new vendor for compliance training.

**Engagement Opportunities**.   
A **Teams** site was created in the fall for administrative support. There are 189 members.

**Talent Development** will hold a trivia event on February 20 at Pluckers.

**Benefits**: ERS will hold an in-person workshop during the week of February 12th, with a potentially available virtual option.

**Well-being events**: January: Get Fit Texas Challenge; February: Heart Health Awareness events; March: Blender Bike; April: Drum Circle; and May: Staff Appreciation Week.

## The next agenda item was an update from Vice Chair Davenport regarding the Faculty Service Awards AA/PPS No. 02.04.01 and Years of Service Awards and Retired Faculty and Staff Events UPPS No. 04.04.54 from the Nontenure Line Faculty Committee (NLFC). The proposal is to change the policies to have the years of service count from the first hire date even if part-time rather than only counting time since the full-time, benefits eligible hire date. During the President's Cabinet meeting on May 1, 2023, Vice Chair Davenport noted that CFO Eric Algoe had proposed this already and it was approved by the cabinet, but the policies still need to be updated. Vice Chair Davenport will keep an eye on any changes made to the policies and inform the Faculty Senate accordingly. Chair Ledbetter will investigate why this change has yet to be implemented. During a discussion, a Senator raised concerns about potential confusion with the Faculty Title Series. Vice Chair Davenport explained a similar retirement-related problem but clarified that the NLFC understood the difference between years of service and retirement eligibility and that there are ways to clarify that years of service is separate from years toward retirement or promotion.

During the meeting, it was announced that the next full Faculty Senate meeting will take place on February 28, 2024, and will be conducted via Zoom. Chair Ledbetter will send a letter to all the liaisons, requesting them to visit their constituencies and gather concerns or praises from their colleagues. One of the Senators suggested that the liaisons should also inquire about the communication and planning for the new Faculty of Instruction policy in their respective departments. Several Senators agreed on this suggestion, which will be sent to the liaisons. The only action item for the full meeting with liaisons will be the approval of the minutes from the previous Faculty Senate meeting held on February 21, 2024.

The next agenda item was information about **the Committee Preferences Survey and upcoming elections.** Senators are encouraged to inform faculty that this survey is only for committee preferences, not Senator elections. The survey will close on February 9, 2024. Seven vacancies will be filled for the upcoming Faculty Senate elections. Faculty Senators are reminded to share with colleagues to either ‘opt-in’ (with no survey response) or ‘opt-out’ (by responding to the survey) of consideration as a Faculty Senate candidate. Questions regarding any surveys should be directed to GG Mortenson.

The next agenda item concerned an update on the **Faculty Development Leave** (FDL) Policy. Chair Ledbetter stated there is a pen and ink change to this policy. A Senator can apply while a Senator for an FDL that will take place after their Senatorial term is complete.

**MOTION** to approve January 24, 2024, Minutes. **PASSED**.

Chair Ledbetter Adjourned the meeting at 5:44 p.m.

The next Faculty Senate Meeting is February 7, 2024.