Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

**February 21, 2024**

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

JCK 880

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

**Guests**: Elizabeth Bishop, Matt Brooks, Stacey Cropley, Shannon Duffy, Lauren Goodley, Samantha Krause, Scott Kruse, July Oskam, Michael Preston, Aimee Roundtree, Arlene Salazar, Piyush Shroff and Lois Stickley.

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

The first item on the agenda was a continued discussion of the Faculty Conduct Policy with Matt Brooks, Vice Provost. This discourse was prompted by a recent audit completed by the Texas Workforce Commission, which is required every five years, and Brooks explained that the audit provides must-have and best-practice recommendations. With the help of the Faculty Senate (FS), the provost's office aims to create a Faculty Conduct Policy, as TXST is one of the few universities lacking such a policy; however, TXST does have a staff disciplinary policy. Texas Women's University (TWU) is one of several institutions that TXST can use to benchmark the creation of our policy. Brooks asked if the FS would want to be the owner or co-owner of this policy. A Senator commented if the policy has any punitive actions, it is the responsibility of the provost’s office to handle such decisions. Brooks requested the FS aid in identifying members to serve on a faculty conduct policy committee. The FS would contribute to drafting the policy but would not own it. Brooks prefers a small working group for this committee. The FS suggested a few Senators to serve on the committee and recommended Brooks, include a faculty member from the Academic Governance Committee and individuals from the Council of Chairs. Brooks commented that TXST Legal Counsel advised using this policy to address issues that would not be in the performance improvement of teaching, service, and research reviews. The policy should indicate progressive disciplinary actions outside of a performance improvement plan and or issues related to teaching, service, and research. A Senator asked if all components across the university must complete the three mandatory trainings for the Annual Review. Brooks answered, “Yes.” A Senator asked if a faculty member had not completed the mandatory training, would there be any consequences to the faculty member. Brooks explained the faculty member would be certified as not completing the training and would not be merit eligible. A Senator asked if this data was audited. Brooks stated it is not necessarily audited, but it is verified. Brooks has been gathering policies from other universities to use as a benchmark in creating a TXST faculty conduct policy. A Senator inquired about the existence of an administrative conduct policy. Brooks explained that although many administrators are classified as staff and could fall under the staff conduct policy, there is currently no policy for individuals who serve as administrators and faculty members. Brooks will consider this idea. A Senator asked how many public institutions have an existing Faculty Conduct Policy. Brooks stated most public universities in Texas have some conduct or disciplinary policy above and beyond the Tenure and Promotion Review for improvement. A Senator asked if Brooks could elaborate on the Board of Regents agenda regarding three changes to the rules concerning in-person teaching, posting of office hours, and campus engagement. Brooks explained that initial discussions addressed actions that could be done if there is a failure to comply as part of the conduct policy. Brooks will organize the working group with FS members and other suggested individuals to develop a first draft of this policy.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation on **EAB Navigate by Michael Preston, Associate Vice President for Student Success.** Preston provided a brief background of his experience before working at TXST. Preston is responsiblefor rolling out EAB. EAB is an enterprise-level student success tool used by numerous universities and colleges, including many in Texas. EAB facilitates federating services focused on student success, developing predictive analytics models, and building a database for better decision-making. With a growing student population facing various challenges such as depression, work commitments, and learning loss, EAB helps consolidate information to support faculty and advisors in addressing student needs comprehensively. Additionally, EAB aims to increase efficiency by analyzing data to improve graduation rates and reduce the time to earn a degree, thus saving students money. Given the rising costs of higher education, there is a demand for more efficient pathways to graduation. EAB's features include a single sign-on system and workflow solutions for advisors communicating with faculty and other support services, ensuring a holistic approach to student success. The platform allows students to seek assistance directly for their specific needs. Integrated analytics enable targeted communication with students, improving efficiency by focusing on those who require additional support. The platform also features dashboards for faculty and advisors to monitor student progress and issue alerts for intervention when necessary. The main goals are to optimize advisor-student interactions, prioritize support for at-risk students, and streamline communication across campus. Information sharing is conducted within privacy guidelines, allowing collaboration across different support services, such as financial aid, to address student needs effectively. Another objective is to work with new students and transfers during orientation and have them download the app. The implementation timeline for the project involves piloting in April, focusing on data reconfiguration and integration with existing systems like Banner and Canvas. Communication with students will begin leading to a campus-wide launch in May, coinciding with a Student Success Symposium on May 14. The finalization phase includes discussions with EAB staff to incorporate best practices. Adoption will occur gradually, starting with advisor-student communication in Phase One, followed by the involvement of other departments like housing and the Dean of Students Office. Phase Two will focus on faculty engagement and interdepartmental collaboration. A Senator encouraged Preston to communicate effectively with faculty and staff as this program is implemented. A Senator asked how the pilot would be implemented. The initial pilot program will involve volunteers from first-year students and advising centers. Advisors in each center will participate, along with a large group of student volunteers who will use a mobile app for real-time data exchange regarding advising or other student-related matters. The program aims to ensure effective communication between students and advisors. Data validation has been ongoing to ensure the reliability of the system. Focus groups will be conducted with students and advisors to assess the program’s functionality. After a month of testing, if everything appears to be working well, the program will launch in the summer, initially involving advising centers and advisors, with plans to expand gradually. The timeline for communication about the launch is aimed at April-May to avoid surprising anyone. Phase Three of the project involves integrating additional applications and databases, such as Degree Works and Canvas, to enhance the data's robustness and strengthen the predictive capabilities. A Senator asked about the minimal expectation of faculty engagement in this program. If the faculty member has an advising role, you are encouraged to use EAB and encourage faculty to engage with this tool. A Senator asked if the program worked with graduate advising. Preston explained the functionality is the same because it is all banner data. The goal is to have all academic planning pathways loaded for undergraduate and graduate programs. A Senator asked if faculty would have access to degree audits. Preston said, “Yes.” Another Senator asked if faculty would have unrestricted access to degree audits. Preston stated this privilege could be turned on and off and may be a topic to address in the future. A Senator asked if faculty would have access to advising notes. Preston stated, “Yes.” A Senator asked who is providing tech support for EAB. DSS Technological Services has its own technical team that will also work with ITAC. Student Services has hired an app administrator to oversee the data migration and maintain the APP’s integrity to ensure everything is working. A Senator noting issues with retention rates asked what the incentive is to have conversations with the students if they leave the university. EAB could provide an early alert function and encourage a conversation with the student early on, which may result in the student choosing to stay if they think they will succeed after completing this meeting. A Senator asked if EAB could assist with transfer students. Preston said the EAB Transfer will be part of onboarding and handled by the Academic Success Transfer Center.

The next item was an **update on the BOSS Scholarship question**. The question was whether due dates could be included in BOSS for recommendation letter submissions. The Chair spoke with Ray Gonzales, Systems Support Analyst from the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, and explained BOSS could not add due dates at this time but would keep looking into incorporating this function at a later date.

Chair Ledbetter reported that the Academic Affairs Council (AAC) has moved the deadline for student scholarship acceptance from May 1 to June 1, 2024. A small committee will be formed by AAC to improve the accuracy and efficiency of processing PCRs for the fall. There was a discussion to move the pay period to August 1 rather than August 15 or September 1, 2024. There are issues related to this change in payments, i.e., benefits and who will pay for this change.

**MOTION** to approve the February 14, 2024, Minutes. **PASSED**.

The Faculty Senate moved into an executive session to discuss the Academic Freedom Committee, Faculty Conduct Policy, the Survey/Ballot report, and questions for the President's Academic Advisory Group (PAAG).

**MOTION** to endorse a faculty representative to Chair the Academic Freedom Committee. **PASSED**.

**MOTION** to endorse three faculty Senators to serve on the Faculty Conduct Policy Committee. **PASSED**.

**Chair Ledbetter adjourned the meeting at 6:11 p.m.**

The next Faculty Senate meeting is with PAAG on February 28, 2024.