Faculty Senate Minutes

February 28, 2024

JCK 880

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

**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**: Pranesh Aswath, Matt Brooks, President Kelly Damphousse, Debbie Thorne, Mary Brennan, Susannah Broyles, David Coleman, Nabila Cook, Stacey Cropley, Shannon Duffy, Carla Ellard, Lauren Goodley, Matthew Greengold, Misty Hopper, Somaly Kim Wu, Samantha Krause, Scott Kruse, Stephanie Larrison, KeriAnne Moon, Doug Morrish, Russell Moses, Justin Randolph, Andrew Rechnitz, Aimee Roundtree, Arlene Salazar, Piyush Shroff, Karen Sigler, Lois Stickley, Stephanie Towery, Kelly Visnak, Laura Waugh, Renee Wendel, Jess Williams and Williams Family.

**Chair Ledbetter opened the meeting with the President’s Advisory Group (PAAG) at 4:00 p.m.**

The first item on the agenda was **President Damphousse’s response** to questions sent by the Faculty Senate for today’s PAAG meeting. The first response by the President related to the $1 million allocated for the Faculty of Instruction salary adjustments this year and whether the amount was sufficient to cover appropriate raises for those who qualify to convert to associate or full levels. *Will more money be allocated to the conversion to ensure appropriate raises? Has the new Texas University Fund (TUF) allowed shifting money to help boost the pool available for conversions?*  The President said he would add funds to cover the conversions if necessary. However, if the amount of funding is too large, it may require two years to allocate the funding for the series. Pranesh Aswath, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs said he would seek data from peer institutions for benchmarks to consider appropriate and fair salary adjustments. A Senator noted this had been a long process and pay benchmarking had been completed. A Senator expressed concern that Associate and Full Professor of Instruction raises were not fully funded. A Senator said that salary increases were designated at a 7% increase for the Associate and 14% for the Full Professor promotion and asked if these percentages would be applied to the new Faculty of Instruction appointments for Nontenure Line Faculty (NLF). The provost was considering whether a fixed rate was more equitable than a percentage change in salary. A Senator asked if the NLF would be informed of the salary increase before opting into this series scheduled for April 19, 2024. The provost stated this information was not known at this time. Senior Vice Provost Thorne said the opt-in date was flexible. A Senator stated it is critical to understand the pay, and changing the opt-in date would be a helpful option until funding and policy information has been completed. Thorne will send a draft policy for units regarding eligibility, etc. A sub-question asked whether TUF money could help fund the new Faculty of Instruction Appointments. President Damphousse said the funding for TUF was approved during the last election and was designated for this fiscal year. However, TXST has not yet received the funding, which is expected to be around $23 million and may be obtained in March or April. If the funding is not received this fiscal year, it will be shifted to next year's budget. The money was dedicated to research and considered fungible. A Senator asked a related question based on concerns from university faculty concerning the administration dipping into the university reserves a lot to pay for activities, promotions, and reorganizations, i.e., the upcoming Presidential Debate, estimated to cost $5 million. Additionally, the Senator asked how the reserves would be replenished. The Senator asked if Eric Algoe, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), would compile a detailed cost budget to see how university funds had been allocated since January 2024. The President said this would be done, and he would have Algoe provide the information to the Faculty Senate. The President stated we have reserves to spend and was told to spend these funds by the Regents and the Texas State University System (TSUS). Reserve funds were used to acquire new student success technology. The President explained that TXST has three funding sources: private giving, tuition, and state funding. This year, the university received Hazelwood reimbursement of more than $18 million, which will go back into reserves and online programming. A Senator shared the concern of not knowing how the reserves were being spent and that they appeared to be spent without any plan, which impacts the morale of the faculty. The President stated the university saw an increase this semester of 6% in credit hours, which is all tuition and fees not planned for in the budget. There was a 2% increase in our headcount, especially with our new freshmen, transfer students, and doctoral students (111 more than a year ago) this year. President Damphousse hoped faculty who received a 5% raise and the pay increase for our lowest paid staff to $30,000 would provide good faith initiatives to show support for faculty and staff across the university.

The second question for PAAG focused on the turnover in the library. *Why is there continuing attrition, and is it still primarily non-librarian staff, or are we also losing professional librarian positions? Are there plans to fill the vacant positions? What is being done to ensure library employees are supported and retained and their expertise is appropriately allocated and utilized? What is being done to prevent significantly increased workloads for the remaining library employees? Specifically, regarding attrition, what are the plans to ensure that the library and its services grow and change with the university to provide the services required of an R1 institution?*The President asked Algoe to compare the library's turnover with that of other units; his assessment was not much different than the average loss of other university-wide staff in the past three years. A Senator stated a few years ago that there were over 120 library employees, but currently around 70. The Senator said we were losing staff; how would fewer employees in the library handle services without taking on too much workload? The Senator noted librarians were reshuffled to different areas outside their expertise and were concerned for the librarian staff. The provost provided a rationale for a few changes to the library staff numbers, including the Wittliff Collection no longer reporting to the library but reporting to the provost. Additionally, one-third of the staff retired in the past three years. The provost stated he would work with Kelly Visnak, Vice Provost and University Librarian, to understand staff and faculty needs. The provost said that libraries at Texas State and most institutions have traditionally served as repositories of books and services. However, their mission has evolved. Nowadays, libraries actively contribute to **student success** by repurposing some areas. Staff members, including those from student success backgrounds, were adapting to these changes. Despite this shift, services for faculty remain a priority. Ensuring faculty have access to research search services, journals, and critical resources is crucial for research productivity. A Senator asked why the Wittliff Collection was no longer a part of the library. The provost stated it was a museum; few museums report to the library administrator. A Senator asked what happened to the 50 positions that were lost. Visnak shared that around August 2021, the university had a budget cut, and the library lost about twenty positions. There were about 106 staff at this time, down from 2019 of 123 staff. As new workflows were introduced, fewer staff were needed, and the library shifted from acquisitions to access. A Senator stated that if the library needs support or a bigger budget, this may be an area where the Faculty Senate could advocate on the library’s behalf. The Senator noted the Faculty Senate has a long history with the library. The Faculty Senate helped to create a career path for librarians, and a library representative serves on the Faculty Senate. A Senator commented that many people from the local community, as well as Austin and San Antonio, want to come to the Wittliff Collection, but it is inaccessible. It is difficult to get to, and there is no parking, especially during the day. The President dreams of building a campus museum where students could visit the Wittliff Collection and the art, currently stored in another facility.

Another question from the Faculty Senate was *about AA/PPS No. 04.02.12: When will the pen & ink change to include the Vice Provost and University Librarian be finalized so the survey can be developed and distributed?*A Senator asked if a perception survey would be created for the Vice Provost and University Librarian. Thorne stated there were no survey mechanisms for staff reports. A Senator asked how staff voices were heard and valued if they did not have a mechanism to provide feedback to their supervisors. This question will be addressed at a future date.

The President responded to the final question. *Regarding the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA),* w*hat measures can we take to prevent long-term budget issues like those experienced during COVID-19?* The President discussed that universities nationwide were experiencing challenges, particularly regarding financial aid processing through FAFSA. Due to delays in receiving information, universities would be unable to inform students of their aid packages in a timely manner. Despite this, enrollment numbers at TXST revealed a positive outlook, with a projected increase in applications compared to the previous year. However, there’s concern about competition from community colleges, especially with their free tuition options. The focus would be communicating with prospective students and ensuring close contact once information becomes available. While retention of current students seems promising, the lack of information hampers aid package distribution, a challenge shared by all universities. Communication and adjustments would be critical strategies amidst uncertainties surrounding enrollment and budget impacts. A Senator heard that there was hope for a future freshmen class of 10,000 students. The President stated TXST would target growth at the Round Rock campus, online, and the San Marcos campus. The President mentioned an upcoming announcement of the “Bats to Cats” program, where students could easily transfer to San Marcos from Austin Community College (ACC). Additionally, President Damphousse said the Round Rock campus would offer fourteen-degree programs in the fall, anticipating prospective students would attend from the Hutto, Taylor, and greater Austin area. The President said 669 international freshmen students applied to attend TXST. The President concluded his remarks by stating that the previous Bobcat Day was a huge success. Additionally, the President shared that TXST, was considering conducting future events differently by focusing on admitted students and arranging a separate day for other interested individuals to learn about the university.

The next agenda item was the **PAAG debrief**. A senator was pleased to hear that full funding for the Faculty of Instruction title series would be made available. Additionally, Thorne agreed to postpone the opt-in date for the new title series, if necessary, until relevant information could be communicated. A Senator said she was worried about the library staff but was pleased the new provost was considering the issue. A Senator said it would be helpful to encourage the library staff to communicate any concerns they have with the Staff Council. A Senator highlighted challenges like parking and space limitations at TXST. The Chair mentioned a campus-wide committee focusing on traffic and accessibility, emphasizing the importance of future planning. Concerns were raised about program availability at the Round Rock (RR) campus, with limited course offerings compared to the San Marcos campus. The RR campus needs advisors and added infrastructure. The RR campus lacks space to house faculty offices and additional classrooms for programs moving to this site. Minimal food options for faculty and students at RR, space allocation, expanding the library, and the need for student lounge areas were identified as additional concerns related to the campus.

The next agenda item was the **University Lecturers Committee Report from Chair Kristy Daniel.** Daniel reported the University Lecturers Series Committee received twenty-two proposals this year. Two proposals were returned without review for missing the deadline and Request for Proposal guidelines. The committee ranked twenty proposals across eight academic units using the scoring rubric and recommended nine proposals from six academic units for funding consideration by the faculty senate, totaling $21,141. Daniel reported the committee would like to revisit the proposal and rubric this spring. Daniel said student participation on the committee was challenging. This year, the student representative did not participate in the review of the proposals. A Senator suggested the committee contact the Graduate College and the Honor Code Committee for prospective student members.

The Chair reminded everyone the **Full Senate with Liaisons meeting is scheduled for March 6** via Zoom only. The format will be like last semester, where breakout rooms will be created and led by Senators from each college. Senators will gather concerns and questions to report back to the full Senate.

The next agenda item was the **Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS) Report.** The Chair

explained that Faculty Senates from across the state and university systems shared their

positive and challenging experiences at the meeting. Each Chair or President wrote an

extensive report but was given a three-minute opportunity to highlight some concerns and

address how their university responded to SB17 and SB18. Some American Association of

University Professors (AAUP) members participated in the meeting and encouraged faculty

to consider joining this organization. Chair Ledbetter shared that TXST was in a good position,

and had not encountered many of the issues shared by other universities. A Senator asked if

any private institutions attended the meeting. The Chair said Baylor University was represented

at the meeting.

**MOTION** to Approve the February 21, 2024, meetingminutes. **PASSED**.

**The Faculty Senate moved into Executive Session** to discuss the recommendations for

proposals selected by the University Lecture Committee.

**MOTION** to endorse the proposal recommendations reviewed by the University Lecture Committee**. PASSED.**

**Chair Ledbetter adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.**

The full Faculty Senate with Liaisons meeting will be held via Zoom only on March 6, 2024.