Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

March 6, 2024

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

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

Member Absent: Rachel Davenport

**Guests**: Moonis Ali, Bahram Asiabanpour, Amy Benton, Elisabeth Bishop, Ann Burnette, Stacey Cropley, Kimberlee Davis, Corey Fox, Lauren Goodley, Luis Intersimone, Kevin Jetton, Samantha Krause, Danette Myers, Rachel Romero, Robert Rutledge, Arlene Salazar, Piyush Shroff, Reagan Sims, In Hyouk Song, Lois Strickley, Toni Watt and Fereshteh Zihagh.

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

Chair Ledbetter commenced the joint meeting of the Faculty Senate and Liaisons representing departments that do not have a Senator. Before beginning introductions, the Chair reminded everyone that the Faculty Senate Fellow Piyush Shroff sent out an AI survey for faculty to complete. Following introductions of the Faculty Senators and the Liaisons, the faculty members were divided into Zoom breakout rooms by college, where they could share good news and concerns from their respective units. This meeting will provide an opportunity to collect information, create actionable items, and look for solutions for the remainder of the year.

The next agenda item was a report by each college to the full Senate sharing what was discussed in the breakout rooms.

The first College to report was the **College of Liberal Arts**. The highlights included the Department of Sociology's excitement about their new hires. The Department of Geography and Environmental Studies will host the Regional Conference of the Southwest Chapter Association of American Geographers. Concerns identified include the misalignment of goals and resources for recruiting Ph.D. graduate students and the lack of new faculty lines to offer these students in the university’s run to R1. There were concerns related to hiring and recruiting candidates. The English department hopes the provost will keep newly vacated faculty lines. Two offers could have been made in the past, but only one was made this year. The Office of Disability Services seems understaffed to help faculty with the increase in students needing support, and the testing website was deemed not user-friendly. There is a request for more transparency on the Research Enhancement Program (REP) process, the rubric, and how REPs are scored. It was not known that every department had a representative on this committee. It was encouraged for future meetings with Liaisons to provide a brief summation of actions the Faculty Senate took based on concerns gathered at the beginning of each meeting. The Chair encouraged everyone to check the weekly Faculty Senate agendas and attend Faculty Senate meetings to keep connected on addressed issues.

The next report was from the **College of Health Professions** with representation from Physical Therapy, Communication Disorders, Health Information Management, and Nursing departments. Common concerns related to funding and reimbursements for required certifications, licensures, scholarship and continuing education for faculty to remain current and eligible to teach in these departments. Some of these required certification costs exceed more than $3,000. Limited departmental budgets require faculty to use their own funds for their continuing education requirements. Other identified concerns relate to interim chairs in some departments, failed searches, and the uncertainty of the future and the direction of some departments. These issues connect to faculty turnover due to the anxiety of the future, concerns about managing the higher workload, and proposed continued growth in their programs. Another issue related to the twelve-month programs running full time and operating on 9-month contracts continues to be problematic for faculty with multiple contracts for the year. The Round Rock (RR) campus is concerned about growth and the lack of infrastructure to accommodate growth goals. It is unclear where support will come from to address the growth of physical spaces for students and faculty offices projected for the new programs at their campus. Highlights included Physical Therapy was awarded by their accrediting body to increase their class size from 44 to 48 students, and Nursing stated their Collegiate Nursing Education Accreditation visit went very well.

The Chair noted that Julie Lessiter, Vice President of RR, will be asked to speak to the Faculty Senate to share the campus's growth plans.

The next report was from the **College of Education**. The first concern related to the new Faculty of Instruction Appointment policy and the lack of information on how salaries will be adjusted at the Associate or Full Professor level, either at a flat rate or a percentage. The next concern related to the REP. Some faculty were concerned about how the REPs were reviewed and scored and whether data were available to indicate junior versus full faculty awards. The last concern related to the new Optional Retirement Program (ORP) for faculty. There has been minimal information shared about this, and faculty desire to learn more about their retirement options from Texas State.

The Chair stated the REP was designed to help new faculty to jumpstart their research. A Senator shared that the Division of Research hosts a helpful website related to REPs. Michael Blanda, Assistant Vice President of Research and Sponsored Programs, conducts a yearly workshop on how to complete a REP. The University Research Enhancement Committee (UREC) comprises representatives from each college. Also, each college has its own Research and Enhancement Committee (REC), composed of representatives from each department. Rubrics for each college REC vary across campus. Funding for REPs depends on funding requested by colleges. The Senator shared that there used to be a place on the rubric for bonus points for first-time applications from junior faculty, but this option has been removed.

The next college to report was **McCoy College of Business**. The first concern discussed was that new online programs lacked clarity on where resources would come from to support them. Another issue discussed was the lack of guidance on policy related to post-tenure review. This also relates to the new Faculty of Instruction policy. There continues to be a lack of guidance on the new policy and a lack of clear expectations for the appointment levels. There was uncertainty about how the Nontenure Line Faculty (NLF) would participate in personnel committees and decisions related to NLF reviews. Additionally, there has been insufficient information on how salary adjustments will be made for the new Faculty of Instruction policy.

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the President's Academic Advisory Group (PAAG) with the Faculty Senate in April will discuss shared governance. The group will also address faculty evaluation policies and NLF's inclusion on personnel committees.

The next report was from **the College of Science and Engineering**. One issue addressed was salary compensation for the new teaching lines and the difficulty for Engineering to fill the Faculty of Instruction lines due to the competitive work and pay opportunities outside of university employment. One highlight noted included the strong shared governance within units. Still, there were concerns about the lack of guidance and information regarding resources similar to those McCoy College of Business shared. Some departments felt the new Ph.D. and online programs were asked to be created rather than created by the faculty. President Damphousse recently visited Collin College, a two-year institution outside of Dallas, and agreed that TXST would partner with them to provide engineering and science degrees. It is uncertain how this administrative decision impacts accreditation, and there was zero communication with the faculty regarding this decision. The lack of shared governance related to this issue was alarming, and there was a huge concern about how this decision would impact the affected units. This group noted there has been no information from the administration regarding the College of Science and Engineering separation and how resources for this separation will be addressed, and it was unclear where funding will come from to handle anticipated growth in these units. Highlights included the future implementation of the new Faculty of Instruction opportunity for NLF. The Computer Science Ph.D. program is doing well, and the Math department received positive comments about its proposed Ph.D. program.

The Chair noted that Collin College represents how new ideas are agreed upon but not discussed with the faculty. A Senator shared that Jeff Housman, Assistant Vice Provost, Curriculum and Academic Programs, said five different units were involved in this program and will offer courses, but he was unclear on the overall long-term plans. This was an opportunity for President Damphousse to get the TXST name out.

The next report was fromthe **College of Fine Arts & Communication**: One highlight included their liaison serves on the Presidential Debate Committee. One concern discussed was TXST’s run to R1 and the upper administration’s encouragement for online teaching. Still, there was a lack of information on how such a teaching process would preserve the content and quality of instruction. The Chairs in this college met with Tilla Sivakumaran, Vice President of TXST Global, to propose a new master’s program to be completed in thirty hours, six less than the current requirement for other master’s programs in this college. There was concern that this program could discourage students from attending on-campus programs. The new Faculty of Instruction policy was still being reviewed, and there were many questions related to this policy and other issues addressed from other college breakout sessions.

The next report was fromthe **McCoy College of Business**: There were three major areas of concern. The first related to the new online programs from the summer proposal process and the lack of clarity and resources to support the programs. It was not clear how funding would be distributed. The proposal process was not transparent. The second issue regarded the policy for the new post-tenure review and the lack of guidance on this policy. The third issue related to the Faculty of Instruction policy and the lack of clarity on college expectations related to this policy. No information related to salary and review expectations was provided to affected faculty.

The Chair shared that the instructional faculty appointments will be on the PAAG agenda, which covers shared governance. Questions remain about this policy's status and how NLF would be included on personnel committees.

The next report was from the **College of Applied Arts**. The Senator shared that the Instructional Technology Assistance Center (ITAC) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) offices across campus were understaffed and under-resourced. Additionally, ITAC no longer provides weekend support. Faculty noted there was no communication related to this change in support. Another concern noted was that there was no onboarding for doctoral students. Custodial staff outsourcing to a private company continues to be an issue. Many faculty vacuum their own office. There were issues related to the reorganization of the library, and it was noted that the Wittliff Collection Director now reports to the provost. Other issues discussed included concerns for financial support for international students, barriers to employment, and the ability to enroll in STEM programs. Furthermore, there has been no word or communication from the new provost. There has been no communication from the administration about the reorganization of Applied Arts. A report on the reorganization was submitted in November 2023, and the administration has not responded. The lack of communication impacts faculty morale. A few highlights include the Criminology’s master’s program, which has seen growth and has more candidates than doctoral students. The faculty continue to be productive in their scholarships and securing grants. The Department of Agricultural Sciences was doing well.

The Chair appreciated the information about what was happening around campus. It was concerning that ITAC no longer provided service on the weekends.

**MOTION** to approve the February 28, 2024, Minutes. **PASSED**.

The next agenda item addressed how to handle the upcoming Solar Eclipse. The Chair shared that UTSA would suspend classes from noon to 2:00 p.m. on April 8. The President’s Cabinet asked the Faculty Senate how to respond to the Solar Eclipse. The Faculty Senate agreed this was an instructor choice and should be supported by the provost and academic affairs. There needs to be an efficient and timely response to the plan for this day and future events. The Faculty Senate will encourage the administration to collaborate with the City of San Marcos about their plans for this day. The administration should ensure the safety of our campus and support faculty in how they determine to conduct their class on this day. This event provides an opportunity to practice handling special events in light of the upcoming Presidential Debate planned for September this year.

The last agenda item was a volunteer from the Faculty Senate to serve on the search committee for a new Associate Vice President, Human Resources position. A Senator volunteered to serve on this committee.

The Chair reminded everyone that the next meeting of the Faculty Senate would be March 20. Vice Chair Davenport will lead the meeting. The meeting will address shared governance. There will be a discussion about the call for Faculty Senate Fellows, perhaps focusing the research on best practices with student evaluations, including the Faculty of Instruction Appointments and how they will be evaluated. Senators were encouraged to craft PAAG questions and post them in Teams. The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) will be on tap for the March 27 Faculty Senate meeting, and PAAG was scheduled for April 3.

**Chair Ledbetter adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.**