

Meeting: Faculty Senate
 Date: October 5, 2021
 Time: 2:00 p.m.
 Location: Video Conference via Zoom
 Adjournment: 4:04 p.m.

**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
 October 2021**

Present: Andrea Williams, Andrew Baker, Bahar Modir, Benton Pierce, Brock Johnson, Christian Hemplemann, Hongmei Jia, Jane Kosarek, Jason Davis, Johanna Delgado-Acevedo, Joshua Ege, Julia Ballenger (President), Kathryn Dixon, Marta Mercado-Sierra, Michael Oldham, Michael Ponton, Omar Elariss, Robert Williams, Robert Rodriguez, Samantha Klassen (Secretary), Sandy Hayes, Stephen Starnes, Tina Greaves Lancaster, Yasemin Atinc, and Zachary Palmer

Guests Present: Dr. John Humphreys, Ms. Arlana Martin, Dr. Joyce Miller, and Dr. Jennifer Schroeder

Not present: Ava Munoz, Michael Ponton, Thomas Boucher

Summary of Discussion	Decision/Action
<p>September Faculty Senate Meeting minutes: Senator Davis motioned to approve the September minutes, and Senator Ege seconded the motion. September meeting minutes were approved.</p>	<p>The September minutes were approved.</p>
<p>Guests: <i>Provost Dr. John Humphreys</i> <i>COVID-19 Campus Response and Tenure/Promotion Policy Update</i> Provost Humphreys discussed the university’s COVID-19 numbers and stated he was “pleased” and only aware of 10 students and 5 faculty/staff who were in isolation. He stated the numbers looked “really good” and that the university was continuing to monitor COVID outbreaks through on-campus testing. He stated that Derek Preas would be conducting surveillance testing 2-3 more times with different groups on campus over the course of the Fall 2021 semester.</p> <p>Dr. Humphreys reminded faculty that they could take whatever safety precautions they deemed necessary (personal mask-wearing and social distancing). He stated faculty could encourage but could not mandate students to wear masks due to Texas state law. Dr. Humphreys also indicated that all faculty must attend scheduled in-person meetings and campus events that are required as part of the faculty member’s job duties. Senator Atinc asked what types of safety precautions were taken for faculty at college-specific events. Dr. Humphreys reminded the Senate that the university could not mandate mask usage but would encourage social distancing.</p> <p>Senator Palmer asked about the COVID numbers reported through the Healthy Lions portal and expressed concern about their accuracy. He had many students identifying as COVID positive and was concerned they were not reporting this to the university. Dr. Humphreys indicated the numbers would never be perfect as it required people to self-report into</p>	

EOC, but that he is “reasonably confident” and trusts that the vast majority of people who should be self-reporting do submit to EOC. Dr. Humphreys stated we are “trending down” on COVID numbers, and Senator Pierce asked how our testing numbers compared with other universities. Dr. Humphreys indicated he could get that information from our sister universities in the A&M system. Senator Palmer also conjectured that our positivity rate could be lower than expected simply because so many students on campus were sick with COVID last year.

Regarding Procedure *12.07.99.R0.01* (Full Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty; discussed at the September meeting), Dr. Humphreys indicated the policy was hung up in Compliance. It was discussed at Dean’s Council that morning, and edits were proposed to the policy, would be finalized at the next Council meeting. After it received revision from Dr. Dobbs at the next Dean’s Council, it would then be sent to President’s Council for Dr. Rudin’s consideration.

Ms. Arlana Martin, Budget Analyst in Financial Services

Ms. Martin shared a brief presentation with Senate regarding our University budget and provided a report about CARES/HERF funding. She stated that our ten-year enrollment trend is up, and the university is planning for a significant increase in enrollment by Fall 2024, particularly with the opening of our Dallas campus. Our total FY 2022 Proposed Revenue Budget, linked closely to semester credit hours (SCH), indicates that this year’s **revenue budget** is \$224 million, whereas the current **expense budget** is \$218 million.

Ms. Martin discussed the use of Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) funds from the federal government through the CARES Act. Funds were used for numerous goods and services, such as grants to students, classroom technology upgrades, paying off past-due student balances, and Wi-Fi enhancements, and internet hot spots. Several senators shared locations around campus with various technological issues that needed to be fixed (e.g., weak internet connections, non-working projectors, issues logging into computers, etc.). Ms. Martin stated she was unsure if there were remaining HEERF funds that could be used to address these technology issues, but that she would check and get back with us.

Dr. Joyce Miller, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Dr. Miller introduced herself as the chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. She stated that she was appointed in April to this position and has visited with the Dean’s Council, the colleges, and other important stakeholders. She is on schedule to visit with the student governance and staff council. She noted that the committee was presently seeking additional members.

Dr. Miller discussed current DEI initiatives at TAMUC from multiple colleges and specific departments and highlighted several initiatives, such as the Cultural Competence Certificate available through the College of Innovation and Design.

Dr. Miller stated that DEI is working on an agenda with faculty, staff, and students, as every member of the university has a responsibility to work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. She presented an extensive list of ideas that department heads, individual faculty members, staff members, and student organizations could employ. Dr. Miller also reminded the Faculty Senate about the Junior Faculty Awards scheduled later that evening.

Dr. Jennifer Schroeder, Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr. Schroeder discussed graduate student enrollment and presented 20th class day data for local students (excluding online enrollment) along with headcount percent changes since 2017. She indicated that in Fall 2016, we had our highest enrollment at the graduate level and that the university's numbers have been dropping steadily since that time, beyond a slight recovery in Fall 2020.

Looking at the worst metric, Dr. Schroeder indicated that the university is losing about 20% of graduate students, and at best, is losing 14% of graduate students within one semester. She indicated that our enrollment numbers are concerning and indicative of a university-wide retention issue. However, she noted that we need to understand persistence rates from other regional universities to evaluate this in context.

Senator Pierce connected this to a concern discussed at the Chancellor's meeting in September. He stated that part of the decline could be related to a decline in international students who were unable to continue their education due to COVID-related policies. Dr. Schroeder stated that there was a previous decline in international student applicants and enrollment, but as of the Fall 2021 semester, international applications were up. She noted that most international graduate students were in COSE and COB, which had both seen steady declines in enrollment.

Dr. Schroeder stated that Institutional Effectiveness collected data from students who dropped out between semesters, and many reasons for the lack of retention include personal/familial and financial concerns. She also noted that while some students do not return due to instructional quality, this is not a particularly high percentage. Dr. Schroeder expressed concern about the university's attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion factors and a lack of support for students who are "under-resourced." Senator Delgado-Acevedo asked how faculty might be compensated for supporting graduate students, as they had limited time for mentoring graduate students, especially those who are completing theses. Dr. Schroeder stated she was not aware of any resources but did realize that many departments were understaffed.

Senator Williams indicated that some concerns with graduate student retention rates were due to issues with assistantships. Dr. Schroeder agreed that we either needed more funding for assistantships or to reduce the number of GAs hired so they could be paid a living wage. Senator Rodriguez from Political Science stated that their department has not had paid TAs or RAs in years, contributing to difficulties recruiting students. Senator Oldham also mentioned that many students are in positions where they must seek unpaid internship positions, which further

contributes to financial strain.

Senator Palmer recommended that the Faculty Senate bring this information to individual departments and create specific game plans for graduate student recruitment and retention. Senator Delgado-Acevedo recommended concentrating on current graduate students rather than recruitment until the issues discussed today had been resolved. Senator Pierce expressed concern that university leadership did not understand the significant resources required to run successful graduate programs. President Ballenger endorsed continued consideration of this issue and encouraged data collection within individual departments.

Reports from Committees:

- **The Scheduling and Facilities:** Senator Greaves Lancaster – stated that right now, the Faculty Senate website is up to date as with agendas and minutes, but Faculty Senate pictures needed to be updated along with information on committee chairs and membership lists.
- **Awards Committee:** Senator Jia had no report, but notified the Senate that she had sent out the announcement for the Piper Professor Award.
- **Academic Life:** Nothing to report
- **Academic Practice:** Nothing to report
- **Budget:** Nothing to report
- **Curriculum:** Nothing to report
- **Organization of the Senate:** Nothing to report

Unfinished Business

Chancellor Sharp – Increasing Graduate School Enrollment (Senator Palmer) – covered by Dr. Schroeder and Dr. Palmer in Guest meeting.

Tenure and Promotion Policy (Pending; 12.07.99.R0.01) – addressed by Provost Humphreys in Guest meeting.

NCAA Division I – Faculty Senate statement (Senator Oldham) – Senator Oldham shared the Faculty Senate’s statement of support. President Ballenger called for comments.

Senator Williams questioned why the Senate was being asked to make a statement of support after university leadership had already decided to pursue the partnership. President Ballenger stated that the majority of Senators had endorsed the partnership during the emergency meeting, noting that the will of the senators reflected the need to craft the statement. Senator Williams stated he had a dissenting opinion about this

Dr. Ballenger will send Senate body information to Dr. Greaves Lancaster.

Dr. Ballenger will contact Paul Bryan to discuss the Senate webpage.

Dr. Palmer recommended that the Faculty Senate consider putting an ad hoc university committee together to address this issue.

and expressed that opinion to Dr. Humphreys. President Ballenger asked if we needed to take it to a vote, and Senator Williams stated he was not opposed to his fellow senators who supported it, but was opposed to the administration for coming up with the idea in the first place. Senator Ege reminded the Senate that they had already voted on this at the emergency meeting. Senator Pierce stated it was fine for people to be opposed to it, but that in his opinion, it was not the kind of issue that Faculty Senate needed to take up, as “these decisions are being made way above our paygrade.” President Ballenger stated that the benefits of this partnership would outweigh the risks.

New Business

Data Collection re: Graduate Enrollment (Senator Palmer) – discussed during the Guest portion of the meeting.

Posthumous Award - BS in Criminal Justice for Senior Officer Randolph to “Randy” Boyd.

Senator Williams moved that Faculty Senate support the awarding of the degree, and Senator Greaves Lancaster seconded it. It passed by unanimous vote.

Tenure and Promotion Procedures (Associate to Full Professor) – Senator Pierce.

Senator Pierce expressed concern about a policy whereby associate professors vote to promote a colleague to full professorship and sought the perspectives of other senators about this practice. Senator Williams stated this has not been the case in the past and asked when it had been changed. President. Senator Davis asked what Senator Pierce’s experience had been in this process, and Senator Ege asked how this would be handled if there were no full professors in the department to decide. Dr. Ballenger stated we would keep this item on the agenda, and she would talk with Dr. Humphreys about it as well, and we would put it back on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting

Faculty Senate Website

Senator Greaves Lancaster asked for suggestions from Faculty Senate for the website but noted that we could not make changes until the website transitioned over to the new version.

President Ballenger called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Williams moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Pierce seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 pm.