

**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Texas A&M University-Commerce
May 3, 2022**

Time beginning and ending: 2:04-3:50 (approximate)

Present: Hongmei Jia, Brooke Clemmons, Joshua Ege, Stephen Starnes, Omar El Ariss, Samantha Klassen (Secretary), Kathryn Dixon, Julia Ballenger (President), Jason Davis, Michael Oldham, Michael Ponton, Tina Cancaster, Emily Newman, Sandy Hayes, Yasemin Atinc (incoming President), Brandon Randolph-Seng, Brock Johnson, Benton Pierce, Marta Mercado-Sierra, Zachary Palmer, Thomas Boucher, Jane Kosarek, Brooke Clemmons, Ozum Yeziltas (replaces Robert Rodriguez), Andrea Williams

Not Present: Johanna Delgado-Avecedo, Christian Hemplemann

Guests Present

- a. Dr. Humphreys and Dr. Archie – Course Evaluations
- b. Dr. Archie, Billie Abell, and Allison Brown – Letter of Support to Trans Community
- c. Darnisha Hines – Trio Student Support Services
- d. Dr. Dobbs and Ms. Bonds – Huron Strategic Enrollment Plan

Approval of Minutes – April 5, 2022 : Dr. Klassen, outgoing Senate secretary, presented the minutes. Dr. Ballenger wished to add an item (for Unfinished Business) regarding the Chancellor’s comments on declining graduate enrollment. The motion to approved was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

a. Drs. Humphreys and Archie: Course Evaluations

Dr. Ballenger cites the non-necessity of a Senate special meeting for this discussion. Dr. Humphreys began remarks by apologizing that he had to reject a nominee potentially selected for a Senate Faculty Award, and affirmed that he never undertook such action in the past. The reason is at this point confidential because of the sensitivity of information involved, Humphreys stated, and it “shouldn’t be the norm going forward” because of reputational risk among parties involved.

Dr. Archie: Assistance sought from faculty senate members for the assessment of course evaluations, needs a “three legged stool” to start off the process, meaning related discussions would take into consideration three elements; part faculty evaluations, part course evaluations, and part “reconstituting” within the framework of institutional learning processes. Learning curves for potentially involved faculty members necessitates a degree of training and affirms that they are trained appropriately. Dr. Humphreys added that the two of them met with Drs. Schrader and Dr.

Villanueva-Russell to get faculty to work with them in developing new course evaluations for the university. The current evaluation questions are based on older QEP standards, which necessitates the need for discussion.

It is important for the Faculty Senate to be part of such discussion, Dr. Archie reiterated. He thanked the Senate for engaging in the discussion today, and explained his prior roles in faculty support. Such support requires a reconstitution of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning – Drs. Archie and Humphreys are working with Dr. Kuracina (Dean, College of Humanities, Social Science, and Arts), Dr. Schrader, and Dr. Villanueva-Russell, along with Dr. Miller, to get a proposal to the provost’s office for consideration. Dr. Archie solicited feedback and asked if meetings were recorded. Dr. Ballenger said they were not due to prior issues of concern. Dr. Archie reiterated his role and purpose in working with students, faculty, commenting on the university as “impressively diverse.” Other duties include collaborating with SACC in similar efforts and with community partners such as the city mayor and local law enforcement. His support for faculty includes tools to work with students in the classroom. Dr. Humphreys wants to make sure faculty engages with students, realizing that evaluations can have “bias built into them” (providing his own example of being “loud”), and that some others of diverse backgrounds might get lower evaluations if they taught in the same manner. Senator Palmer volunteered to serve on the evaluations committee proposed by Drs. Humphreys and Archie.

Dr. Atinc reiterated the need for a face-to-face committee and reliable data in revising student evaluations. She suggested use of a recent Senate-produced survey, of which President Rudin requested a review.

b. Dr. Archie, Billie Abell, and Allison Brown – Letter of Support to Transgendered Community

Dr. Archie sought a Senate vote on the draft of an email stating the university’s support of the transgendered community, and introduced Dr. Emily Newman, who proposed Senate faculty members also seek support of the statement from respective departments and other campus associations to which they belong. Dr. Archie said the statement expresses what it means for the university to be an inclusive organization. He also stated that the email simply reaffirms what the System’s position is, and what the university’s position “has always been.” Dr. Newman stated that Dr. Kuracina, Dean of the College of Humanities, Social Science, and Arts, also supports the statement. Dr. Atinc asked who is receiving the statement, whether it is the community, the governor, or other entities. She suggested leaving the governor out of that particular correspondence. Dr. Archie said we are collectively also acknowledging the cultural relevance at this moment for this particular group. “We want to make sure that these

documents align with who we say we are.” Senator Ponton suggested the removal of words that indicated “privileging,” to which Senator Oldham agreed. Senator Davis suggested that that statement make no mention of recent events pertaining to the LGBTQ community.

c. Darnisha Hines – TRIO Student Support Services

Darnisha Hines, Director of Student Support Services, wishes that more students should be aware of TRIO, and provided a brief history of the program, which originated as a War on Poverty program of the Lyndon Johnson presidential administration. TRIO programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Education. They includes the Upward Bound and Ronald McNair programs, a retention staff, and it offered assistance to students for COVID-related hardships, and tutoring in various subjects, all to steering students toward graduation. TRIO offers many other services as well, Ms. Hines stated. Dr. Ponton asked if the programs were for graduates as well. They are only for undergraduates, Ms. Hines said. Dr. Ballenger asked for a unified statement regarding TRIO programs listed on course syllabi. Ms. Hines offered to craft such a statement.

d. Dr. Dobbs and Ms. Bonds – Huron Strategic Enrollment Plan

Nechell Bonds plans a third town hall meeting on the plan. The strategic enrollment team had been working for about seven months with Huron and Associates to create the plan. It began at the start of the pandemic. The process includes analytics, focus groups, and benchmark research. Huron “identified some areas where we might consider doing some deeper studies” to manage decreasing enrollment. Twelve different core-themes areas were identified. A 50-page summary of the accompanying report is available on the TAMU-C web site. “We need students to be part of this project” Ms. Bonds said. Dr. Ballenger asked for faculty to see the report and work on action items relating to the plan.

e. Committee Reports

- Academic Life – Senator Ponton stated he was charged to look over full report of cultural competency survey of faculty.
- Academic Practice – Senator Starnes: Nothing to report.
- Admission and Retention of Students – Senator Clemmons: Committee work will be prepared in time for a vote when the incoming Senate convenes in the fall of 2022.
- Budget – Senator Delgado-Acevedo: Not present.
- Curriculum – Senator Pierce: Nothing to report.
- Faculty Awards – Senator Jia: Nothing further to report.

- Organization of the Senate – Senator Palmer made minor edits to the Constitution after committee work. He asked if the athletics director was also a faculty senator, or if the position should be incorporated into the Senate. He added that the draft was ready for general review and/or for a vote. Dr. Ballenger said to distribute the draft to the senators and have the senate review it “paragraph by paragraph,” and provide for ample time to perform the review. Dr. Ballenger suggested distribution by June. This action was approved unanimously by the Senate.
- Scheduling and Facilities – Senator Lancaster: Nothing to report.

f. Unfinished Business

- a. Academic Life (Senator Ponton) – The completed Faculty Cultural Competency Survey Summary Findings and Recommendations committee report: The committee recommends sending/presenting to the Vice President for Inclusion (1). Provide virtual training on diversity and inclusion for one and a half hours, once per year – although not “cold, impersonal” TrainTraQ trainings. Faculty would also need to attend one cultural event and one webinar per year. (videos are available at the Center for Teaching with Technology) Faculty Findings. About 100 faculty members responded to the survey distributed by the committee. Dr. Atinc asked if these finding could be incorporated into work on revised faculty evaluations.

Dr. Ponton noted that almost a third of faculty respondents to the survey favored these findings being incorporated into the evaluations process. Dr. Ballenger stated that the report could be forwarded to the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion for review, and asked for a preliminary, unofficial vote approving of the report and to forward it to Dr. Archie upon its final completion.

- b. Dr. Newman asked for a final vote on the statement of transgender support. Dr. Archie reminded Senators that this is not a personal statement. Dr. Atinc expressed support for the statement. From Dr. Mercado: The statement should be explicit that it refers to support and not non-discrimination. Explicit in the statement clarify not (non-discrimination), and that the statement in any email be sent to all head of departments. Dr. Ponton asked about the timeline for receiving the statement and responding. Dr. Newman

reminded Senators that all entities, including campus organizations, have a stake in the issue of support for the transgendered community. All parts of the statement are available in in different forms throughout the TAMUC System web networks, according to Dr. Archie.

Dr. Ballenger directed to the Senate to put the matter to a vote. Via Google docs, the vote in support of and in agreement with the statement of support was unanimous. Dr. Newman planned to send out the statement.

g. New Business

a. Texas Council of Faculty Senates State Meeting Update – Senate President-Elect Dr. Yasemin Atinc

Senate presidents gave reports on enrollment and current administrative search. She said there were lots of provost searches being conducted. There was much discussion about Lt. Governor Dan Patrick’s advocacy in abolishing tenure as currently utilized. The TAMU system has not put forth a statement in reaction. Some senate presidents advised against any reaction at this time, or that the impending elections require that no reaction is undertaken. Others state that the issue is not going away regardless of inaction. The Executive Council voted to approve creation of a moderately worded resolution in reaction to the statements by the lieutenant governor. Dr. Atinc noted the strong online statement made by UT-Arlington.

b. Senator Andrea Williams agreed to be part of Dr. Archie’s evaluation committee, along with Senator Zak Palmer representing the Faculty Senate.

c. Dr. Newman noted a general concern for campus safety issues, and the poor use of lighting on campus. (She recalled having a bad fall causing injury her first semester on campus, and no one else was in her immediate vicinity - or being accosted by a student in a nearly deserted building.) Dr. Newman recalled how another faculty member was told to “get a gun” as a solution to safety issues. Dr. Ballenger directed the Senate to have it placed for discussion on the agenda for the Executive Council. Dr. Mercado reiterated the issue of poor lighting on campus.

d. Dr. Atinc as new incoming president is introduced. The Senate unanimously elected Dr. Moreno as Senate Secretary. He further stated that the History department unanimously voted his continuing as a Senator.

h. Adjournment: Moved and seconded. Approved unanimously.