

Faculty Senate Minutes
Wednesday, February 7, 2018
JCK 880, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Attending

Senators: Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Janet Bezner, Elizabeth Bishop, Scott Bowman, Natalie Ceballos, Michel Conroy, Jesse Gainer, Dana Garcia, Ted Hindson (for Vince Luizzi), Ting Liu, Benjamin Martin, David Nolan, Shane Smith, Diego Vacaflores, Alex White.

Guests: Denise Trauth (President); Gene Bourgeois (Provost); Debbie Thorne (Associate Provost); Mr. Kenneth Pierce (vice president for Information Technology); Michael Supancic (Chair, University Curriculum Committee); Micky Autrey (Curriculum Services); Selene Hinojosa (Library); Sandra Sadek (*University Star*).

Meeting called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Senate Chair White

Presidents Academic Advisory Group (PAAG)

Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs

President Trauth discussed the Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs hearing, held on Wednesday, January 31, in the LBJ Student Center ballroom regarding free speech on college campuses in Texas. (<https://star.txstate.edu/2018/02/01/texas-senate-state-affairs-committee-holds-free-speech-hearing-in-lbj/>).

- President Trauth was invited to present and spoke about the University's commitment to freedom of expression and the protection of popular and unpopular speech.
- Approximately 30% of the presenters were Texas State students who addressed issues regarding recent incidents on campus.
- Hearing may be a preparation for future state legislative sessions, in particular, on a possible statute concerning a heckler's veto of conversation (shouting down a public speaker). The president stated that a number of states are looking into these types of statutes. There is no policy at Texas State concerning this issue, but there is a safety plan to deal with such situations.
- Testimony was presented to the committee concerning the requirement to have a faculty or staff advisor for student groups on some campuses, in response to the suggestion that this could prohibit groups from forming. The president replied that this is not an issue at Texas State.
- President Trauth stated that it was a very successful hearing and the committee commended the University's advance preparation for the event.

The senate discussed the following issues with the president:

- Would it be productive to create a code of conduct policy that covers issues discussed by the senate committee?
 - The Texas A&M University conduct policy was discussed.
 - The provost discussed the guidelines that the current philosophy dialogue series has in place as a model for balanced speech on campus.

- Approaches should be faculty driven according to the provost.
- There was discussion of professional development and training for faculty as well as graduate instructional assistants and teaching assistants when teaching and discussing difficult subjects. The provost will investigate including graduate students in any training.

Current issues on campus

President Trauth discussed the recent student protests concerning the current student government president. Much of the protests are connected to the *University Star* article from last year. The president stated that it was important that she, the provost, and cabinet keep a distance from the *University Star* as they did not want to create a chilling effect on the student newspaper. The president stated that protecting the *University Star* is very important to her and to the university, and that they must remain independent. She also respects the student government constitution and leaves it up to students to take care of the situation concerning the possible impeachment of the current student president. There was discussion of these issues and the president's response to them. There was a question concerning tracking of third-party comments concerning the university and whether we track and monitor them. The provost will ask University Marketing if there is a process in place to track third-party comments concerning the university.

Texas System meeting update (Senator White)

The chair reviewed the recent meeting with senate representatives from the Texas State University System Schools and the Texas State University System (TSUS) office in Austin on Feb 2, 2018.

- Concerns with evaluation of administrators on system campuses. Texas State already accomplishes this through the annual faculty perception surveys.
- Discussion of the level of financial contributions to the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) by TSUS schools and the disparity with grandfathered faculty and with universities in other states that have higher contribution levels. Provost Bourgeois commented on previous discussions and reductions by the state.
- Senators from other schools in the system discussed looking at the productivity and budget for administrative staff versus faculty and academic affairs.
- State financing is not going to change any time soon. No Hazelwood relief for universities is in sight. Future state funding is concentrating on K-12 education and Hurricane Harvey relief.
- New TSUS offices are now in the historic O. Henry building in downtown Austin at 601 Colorado Street.

NCAA faculty representative

Dr. Paul Gowens, professor in the Department of Finance and Economics and current NCAA faculty representative, is retiring. President Trauth has asked Dr. Vicki Brittain, professor in the Department of Political Science and current special assistant to the president, to fill this position and she has accepted.

Salary compression

The president and provost discussed the issue of salary compression. President Trauth stated that these are serious concerns and it is very difficult to deal with due to limited resources. She understands that salary compression is worse in some departments than others and for those who have been here the longest. The provost stated that this issue—as well as merit, graduate student stipends, and other salary matters—are discussed and weighed in on by the various deans. Merit usually wins out. When salary compression issues for faculty are brought to the provost they are dealt with on an individual basis.

Learning Management System (LMS)

At a recent Council of Academic Deans (CAD) meeting the provost discussed the new LMS process to replace TRACS. Conversations turned on project management and the fact that Sakai is more than just an instructor/class system. Deans expressed these concerns, as well as training, timing of the changeover, possible vendor, etc. Mr. Kenneth Pierce, vice president for Information Technology, discussed the process with the senate:

- He addressed the need for a new LMS.
- He stated that the faculty survey showed satisfaction with the current system (TRACS/Sakai). The Faculty Senate has not seen the results of the survey.
- There are three major LMS companies: Canvas, Blackboard and Desire to Learn.
- Support is waning for Sakai from publishers and other third party vendors because it's used by only a handful of higher education institutions. ITS wants to include more features and options not currently available on Sakai.
- The LMS committee may not want to go forward with a change from Sakai to a new system, but we need to have the conversation.
- Request for proposals (RFP) discussion with the committee would not have changed the outcome of the RFP bidders.
- Outcomes will align with involvement from faculty.
- The university is still in the early stages of a long process.

The senate asked Mr. Pierce questions regarding the following:

- The RFP process bypassed the LMS committee and the senate. He explained that this was a planned process not intended to bypass anyone. He stated that feedback would not have affected the process since the three major providers are the only vendors who could meet the requirements of the RFP.
- Project sites are an important part of the process in identifying a new LMS.
- Concerning input from the senate, he stated that after vendor demonstrations and testing in March would be a good time to discuss outcomes and receive comments.
- Concerning the process with vendors, he said that the best value is what we look for, not least cost.
- Senate expressed importance of faculty participation and buy-in.

Curriculum Committee report (Dr. Michael Supancic, Chair of UCC)

Dr. Supancic shared the recent work accomplished by the University Curriculum Committee.

- There have been two meetings concerning course proposals using the new Curriculum Information Management (CIM) system.
- There were 665 courses in the system in 2017 and 763 in 2018.
 - 2017: Added 153; deleted 107; changed 405; total of 665.

- 2018: Added 307; deleted 200; changed 256; total of 763.
- Work coming up in the committee is very heavy with multiple proposals. The new CIM system helps in the proposal process.
- Senate asked about a drop down menu of Bloom's Taxonomy terms for the CIM system when writing proposals, but the fact that Bloom's Taxonomy is copyrighted prevents our use of such a menu.

Council of Chairs update (Senator White)

- The senate chair has been invited back to the council.
- The chair discussed changing the PPS for the Council and our standing rules to formalize a relationship between the two bodies.
- The chair will draft a change to the senate standing rules for the vice chair of the CoC to be a liaison to the faculty senate and for the senate to attend CoC meetings.

PAAG debrief

- Discussion of Mr. Pierce's LMS presentation:
 - The process must be transparent to create buy-in and acceptance by faculty.
 - The chair said Mr. Solis will attend the senate once a month and update members on information technology issues.
- Given the issue of salary compression, Senator Bishop has investigated benefits provided to faculty in other states. She gathered information about tuition remission for dependents of faculty. She wants permission to survey housing costs as well. Senate approved.
- Increased higher education funding is not coming from the state legislature any time soon. Senate will look at comparable institutions used for salary data, how Texas State compares, and the formula used for comparison.

Policy reviews

- UPPS No. 04.04.39 Consensual Relationships: Senators Ceballos and White
- UPPS No. 07.07.01 Satisfactory Academic Progress for Undergraduate Students on Financial Aid: Senators Conroy and Smith

Approval of Minutes

Minutes will be distributed via e-mail for changes and approval.

Meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Minutes submitted by David Nolan