**Faculty Senate Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 6, 2021**

**Zoom Meeting, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Danette Myers, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic

**Guests:** Sarah Angulo (Senate Fellow), Janet Bezner, Gene Bourgeois, Timia Cobb (Star Reporter), William DeSoto, Kym Fox, Jennifer Lamm, Judy Oskam, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler (Library), Debbie Thorne, Denise Trauth

Meeting began at 4:00 pm

**President’s Academic Advisory Group (PAAG)**

**Faculty Salaries**

The faculty senate asked the president to discuss cost of living, merit, and equity raises. President Trauth repeated that faculty salaries are the highest priority for the administration. Our budget is tied to enrollment, and it was noted that our enrollment is essentially flat. Therefore, there is no additional income for a raise. For a 3% raise, it would require $6 million in new funds. The two-step process used last year is being considered for the current year. This would begin as a 3% one-year bonus, and the university would work to make this a permanent increase. Such permanent salary increases would be based on targeted enrollment increases. For example, we are targeting higher transfer enrollments from Austin Community College, which are currently much lower than normal.

Senator Ledbetter explained that while salaries for incoming faculty have been near the CUPA standard for their positions, longer serving faculty have fallen well below this average. Dr. Bourgeois claimed that in many areas, faculty salaries are at or above CUPA, but he acknowledged that there are some areas that are deficient. The way to address this would be for academic affairs to recommend to the cabinet that a portion of the merit pool should be set aside for equity adjustments. Again, such increases would need to be funded by additional income. One source of new income is the creation of new programs. President Trauth noted that in our last strategic planning cycle we created 19 new programs that have required investment in new faculty. We are approaching the end of this cycle, and it is unlikely that such a large investment will be made in the next strategic planning cycle.

A senator asked how other universities handle budgets when they have flat enrollments. In short, the university would need to reallocate funds. This has been done only modestly at Texas State University, and mainly only within colleges. President Trauth clarified that even under flat enrollment conditions it is possible to increase income by increasing enrollment in programs that are better funded by the state funding formula, such as graduate programs or engineering programs.

A senator noted that growth along the I-35 corridor has been rapid, resulting in higher costs of living. This has also been coupled with incoming salary negotiations, resulting in additional salary compression. Dr. Bourgeois explained that negotiations are typically limited to within approximately 5% of the CUPA median with some consideration for years in rank. The salaries for incoming faculty have increased more in the past few years resulting in additional salary compression. Dr. Thorne explained that cost of living has only been invoked in a couple of cases out of 50+ recent hires. The viewpoint of the administration is that cost of living has not been a major factor.

A senator asked if the university tracks salaries in relationship to CUPA averages across disciplines and ranks. The provost responded that yes, an analysis is done annually. The report includes a great deal of data, including the number of faculty at rank, mean and median salaries, and direct comparison to CUPA salaries for each position. The administration is aware that some positions are as low as 70-80% of CUPA, but many others are at or above CUPA. CIP codes are needed for new programs and positions to ensure that accurate comparisons are made. The recent analysis data may be shared with faculty senate upon request.

Texas State is underfunded by state subsidies due to a number of factors, and the administration recognizes that faculty are paid lower than our peers. President Trauth stated that raising faculty salaries should continue to be prioritized in the next strategic plan.

**Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning starts in January 2022, beginning with a mission review. The university evaluates trends in our environment and key stakeholders. The cabinet reviews incoming information in the summer to construct a statement for review by the Board of Regents. The strategic plan will be developed beginning in fall 2022 in a top-down/bottom-up approach.

A question was asked about new faculty lines in the coming cycle. In the previous cycle, new lines were largely tied to new programs. Since fewer new programs are expected in the coming cycle, more new lines may be approved in existing programs. No new Ph.D. programs were advanced in the past cycle, but these programs are needed to progress to National Research University status. High research expenditures from new programs are an important product of new programs. New Ph.D. programs are typically expensive, so these need to be selected carefully. The B.S. mechanical engineering program was advanced ahead of two new prioritized Ph.D. programs because it was expected to be revenue positive within five years (+$3-5 million). A senator asked whether current programs were being jeopardized by focusing on new programs. President Trauth assured the senate that our current programs would continue to be adequately funded.

A senator noted that potentially robust programs in non-STEM fields will be left out if new programs are created specifically to increase formula funding. President Trauth clarified that a complete research university has an array of programs, including many that are not likely to yield high revenue. The recent decisions made to develop revenue positive programs were based on the current financial climate, and they do not reflect a philosophical shift at the university.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Initiatives**

A search committee training course was developed by Scott Bowman with help from many others as a Canvas course. It has been thoroughly reviewed, and it is now complete. The training is innovative and it encourages users to think about what they can do better. It will be launched by an announcement by the Provost in the near future. The training takes 1-1.5 hours

Recommendations were made to the President’s Cabinet in May by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training Task force to require training for all faculty and staff. A workgroup was organized in the summer to develop a plan. The university is partnering with Everfi, a company offering online DEIA training. Everfi was then acquired by Vector Solutions. This increased the number of potential training offerings, but due to reorganization, this company is not yet ready to roll out the training modules. In addition, there are a number of questions that remain. For example, would a faculty member that goes through the search committee training also be required to participate in the online. January is a target date for a soft launch of the new training program.

**Interaction between Texas State University and the Board of Regents**

The senate asked how the interests of Texas State University are promoted at the system level, in the context of shared governance. President Trauth responded that one of the primary jobs of the president is to work with the system through the Chancellor. For example, the university wanted to incentivize vaccinations. Since there was some question regarding whether this was banned by an executive order, this required a decision by the general counsel, which reports to the system. The initial decision by the counsel was that we could not incentivize, but the university kept pushing for approval. Ultimately, this effort was successful, and an incentive was created. In most cases, we make progress, but it may take more time than we would like. Texas State typically leads the way in developing new policies and procedures in the system. Tolling the tenure clock is another example; Texas State developed a policy on this, and the system ultimately applied this to all of the universities in the system.

**Tenure and Promotion Review**

President Trauth emphasized that the candidates for tenure and promotion were exceptional, and no cases forwarded from the colleges were overturned. President Trauth and Dr. Bourgeois presented specific examples of exceptional cases. External reviewers are amazed at the level of productivity of our faculty despite our high workloads.

**PAAG Debrief**

* The analysis of CUPA data presented by Dr. Bourgeois was presented in terms of the mean rather than the median. This averages in a few very highly paid faculty members that make the salary data appear better than if median values are used, as the senate has reviewed previously.
* There is a false dichotomy presented regarding equity raises. Funds must be devoted to this, but this does not necessarily need to be pulled directly away from merit adjustments. If faculty salaries are a priority, funds may be funneled to initiatives as needed. Senate is considering creative ways to address this beyond the merit pool.
* Multiple senators were unsatisfied by the response to our question about addressing cost of living increases. The cost of living increase is far higher than 3% per year. The question was raised about whether CUPA salaries mirror increasing costs of living over time. Tying even minimal salary raises to increased enrollment is not sustainable.
* A senator reminded the group that required DEIA trainings should not only be based on an online option. It is important to continue to promote the other recommendations by the task force, including department level discussions.
* There remain concerns about the approval of expensive new programs outside of the College of Science and Engineering.

**Mandatory COVID vaccinations**

This item has been tabled, and it will be returned to the agenda on October 16.

**Faculty Development Leave**

A canvas site has been created, and it is being populated with applications. Senators will divide into two groups to review a total of 59 applicants within their groups:

Group A: Applied Arts, Education, and Liberal Arts

Group B: Business, Fine Arts &Communication, and Science and Engineering

Faculty Senate will review FDL applications on November 10.

**Bulletin Items**

The bulletin will highlight the following:

* Research Enhancement Program deadline is Tuesday, October 13
* Upcoming events are advertised through the ‘Academic Freedom Corner’
* The Academic Computing Committee is calling for proposals this week
* The fall meeting for the full senate on October 20
* The University Lecturer’s Series spring proposals are due October 29

**Policy Reviews**

[UPPS 04.04.40](https://canvas.txstate.edu/files/204091435/download?download_frd=1) Disciplining and Terminating Staff Employees: pen and ink changes, due October 8 (Senator Dedek)

[UPPS 02.02.01](https://canvas.txstate.edu/files/204002027/download?download_frd=1) Applying for Sponsored Programs: full review, due October 11 (Senator Ojede)

**Minutes**

The September 29, 2021 minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

**Other items**

* Senators are encouraged to help senate liaisons understand their role. A senator recommended that we provide a forum at our upcoming meeting for liaisons to speak openly. Senators from each college will send a more personalized message to their liaisons to encourage their participation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:02 pm

Minutes were submitted by Ben Martin