**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

JCK 880 and Zoom Meeting, 4:00-6:00 pm

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Peter Dedek, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Roque Mendez, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Michael Supancic, Alex White

**Guests:** Michael Abel, Lisa Ancelet, Valerie Anderson, Angela Ausbrooks, Amy Benton, Eugene Bourgeouis, Joanna Collins, Christina Conlee, Craig Damin, Kelly Damphousse, Doug Dorst, David Gibbs, Kyong Hee Chee, James Keefe, Samantha Krause, Yanan Li, Omar Lopez, Francis Mendez, Brandon Radoman-Shaw, Rosie Ray, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne, Angela Vanden Broek, Margaret Vaverek

The meeting started at 4:01 pm

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

**Graduate Fee Increase**

The senate inquired about the recently announced increase to graduate fees. President Damphousse explained that these fees had been planned for more than a year, but the plan was postponed due to the governor’s order to cease all tuition increases.

The senate asked how this fee increase was related to tuition waivers for graduate students. The graduate fees enter the university budget as a whole and are not specifically directed to any one initiative. Tuition waivers will be implemented in Fall 2023 for students in three Ph.D. programs that are most likely to expand. These programs were recommended by the Run to R1 commission because they may support additional students with short graduation rates (approximately 3 years). Ultimately, the goal is to have a waiver program that supports as many doctoral students (and later master’s students) as possible. It is worth noting that professional programs typically don’t offer tuition waivers. In addition to tuition waivers, $200,000 has been set aside to assist graduate students on a case-by-case basis.

A senator asked whether the waivers would apply only to students on graduate assistantships. The concern is that this puts the burden on students who are already paying. The provost answered that this is the current model, but it is just the first step towards a permanent solution. It is not atypical to have only some students supported, and assistantships have always been competitive in some programs. Ultimately, we hope to gain appropriations from the state to allow us to expand without relying on student tuition and fees to fund initiatives.

Another senator asked why graduate tuition/fees were increased while undergraduate tuition/fees have been frozen. This is especially concerning since graduate students often have higher debt burdens and are difficult to recruit. The provost explained that undergraduates are extremely price sensitive, and the university has calculated that it would lose money if tuition and fees were further increased. The provost stated that our graduate tuition rate is currently competitive with other institutions, so there is room for it to go up. A senator asked about details regarding graduate tuition costs at other institutions. Dean Golato attempted to model this, but it proved difficult since other institutions have multiple price points for different degree programs.

The university has not yet explained the change to current students, but the fee increase is posted on our website. Texas State University does not usually make announcements to students regarding tuition/fee increases. However, senators explained that students are already aware of this change and rumors are circulating about it. The president stated that he is not opposed to making such an announcement and has done so at previous appointments.

A senator asked about the process by which new graduate programs are selected. The senator expressed concern that some programs may be rushed through and will not take advantage of the support network (such as the proposal writing group) that the university has built to ensure that these programs are successful. The provost explained that the university has had excellent success with the existing process and that the process will continue to be followed. Programs continue to be selected based on the strategic plan. The programs most likely to be approved are those that have been percolating at the department level and can be elevated with minimal cost. A senator asked for clarification about how a new program makes it to the top of the list, explaining that their department has had a proposal in their strategic plan for several cycles without success. The provost answered that their office takes into account the college level priorities and couples these with university priorities to determine which programs will move forward. Another senator asked if the starting point for a new program is a market analysis. This is the way that the system operated for the past 20 years, but things have changed at the coordinating board level over the past 2-3 years. Now the board also takes into account what programs are a good fit for the mission of the organization (while meeting a market need). A senator asked about the process for adding a concentration to an existing graduate program. The provost answered that this is a different process, requiring only internal deliberation. This is desirable since it can be a less expensive and faster way to generate new graduate students.

**Equity study**

The senate asked for an update regarding the salary equity study being undertaken. The provost’s office has completed an extensive analysis that benchmarked the salary of all faculty against CUPA for their discipline/rank. The office now has data on which faculty are below CUPA, but they do not have a full understanding regarding why this occurred on a case-by-case basis. They are now in the process of determining how much funding can be allocated toward market/equity salary review process. The funding will be derived from electronic course fees (ECF) by moving salaries of faculty primarily teaching online to this funding source, freeing funds from the general salary pool to be reallocated for market/equity. Funds will be distributed to departments for allocation. The amount of funds for a given department will be based on that department’s need (from faculty below CUPA), and pools of funds will be tied to rank. For example, funds designated for lecturers may not be redistributed to tenure line faculty. Ultimately, recommendations will be made by PC’s, Chairs/directors, and Deans regarding exactly how funds should be distributed. The launch date is March, 2023 to coincide with the current merit cycle, and raises will appear in Fall, 2023. The provost emphasized that there won’t be enough to bring everyone to 100%, and the process is not designed to address compression issues writ large. The funds will be limited to bringing faculty as a whole to a certain CUPA level.

During the discussion, the president mentioned a new initiative to provide a 25% tuition discount to dependents of faculty. This initiative is a product of the faculty/staff morale committee. The committee also made other recommendations that are being considered, such as remote work flexibility, altering the pay plan from monthly to biweekly, including wellness benefits, and addressing parking costs (especially at Round Rock).

**Texas Workforce Commission:**

The associate provost briefly summarized the status of the university’s response to the Texas Workforce Commission’s recommendations. A faculty conduct policy will be developed by a small committee that includes senate representatives. The policy will be modeled after similar policies from other universities.

Pregnancy and religious accommodations have already been edited into existing policies for faculty, staff, and student employees (in their employee role). The policies are currently going through the review process.

**PAAG Debrief**

Senators thought that the impact of the fee increase on graduate students was downplayed. Many faculty are very upset about the increase, and morale for graduate recruiting is low. Students right now have high financial burdens, and our reputation may suffer. Rumors are spreading and students feel like they are paying for students in other programs. The email announcing the change as ‘tuition equity’ seemed disingenuous. Clear messaging is crucial on this matter.

Senators would also like to have good data on how our graduate tuition rates compare to peer institutions. The question about how the upper administration prioritizes new programs was not really answered. It seems that ultimately the provost makes the decision.

**Other Items**:

Senators and liaisons were asked to review the voter eligibility lists.

The November 30 minutes were approved by vote.

The meeting ended at 5:28

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin