**Faculty Senate Minutes**

**Wednesday, July 21, 2021**

**3:00 pm – 5:00 pm, JCK 880 and Zoom**

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

**Guests**: Sarah Angulo, Angela Ausbrooks, Jen Beck, Timia Cobb (Star Reporter), J.D. Jamieson, Dave Donnelly, Mary Ellen Cavitt, Kym Fox, Susan Morey, Christine Norton, Judy Oskam, Scott Pope (Library), Sean Patrick Roche, Aimee Roundtree, Christine Sellers

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 pm

**Student Retention Workgroup Report: Grades, Intervention, and Retention (Dr. Jennifer Beck, Dr. Mary Ellen Cavitt, Dr. Susan Morey)**

The Student Retention Workgroup was originally organized when student retention dropped by 2% in 2018. Projects organized by workgroup include academic probation outreach, expansion of Living Learning Communities, and creating a faculty institute for student success. General education courses are the starting point for this study since many freshmen enroll in these courses.

Course data from Institutional Research is useful for departments to track trends in course performance. The workgroup suggests that faculty be charged with designing their own interventions for improving underperforming courses with support.

After challenging courses are identified, faculty may wish to discuss data review of successes, re-examine prerequisites or test scores as a reliable measure of success, and assess the needs of students. Interventions may potentially include promotion of existing resources or the acquirement of new resources through grant or other funding. This process can inform campus initiatives for student support, such as supplemental instruction.

A senator raised the point that a similar initiative was undertaken as part of the freshman experience several years ago. This initiative is currently under review by the Vice President for Student Affairs. Another senator inquired about the target for improvement, and the workgroup responded that improvement itself is the target. The workgroup was questioned about whether there is evidence that changes to the level of preparation of incoming students over time because of adjustments to the educational system has impacted college readiness. Pretests are perhaps more useful than GPA for estimating incoming students’ skills.

**Personnel Committee Guidelines**

Updates to the personnel committee (PC) guidelines resulting from a meeting with Dr. Thorne were presented. Curriculum was added to PC functions, and the requirements for personnel committee composition and the mechanism for selecting a chair were clarified.

The need for PC input on curriculum was questioned; it was suggested that a better approach is to have program-oriented curriculum committees review the curriculum. The senate will recommend that curriculum be removed from PC functions in the final draft. As written, non-tenure line faculty may serve on the PC in accordance with college/departmental policy, but staff are forbidden from serving (even staff who are also tenured). The senate discussed whether staff should be allowed to serve on the PC by departmental approval and determined that this change should be carefully evaluated before it is recommended. The definition of chair/director was discussed, especially as it related to academic programs (not schools or departments). The commonly accepted language (department chair/school director) omits programs, which sometimes function as departments with independent PC’s. This language will be made consistent throughout the document and aligned with other policies.

**Teaching Faculty Appointments Policy (Senator Ledbetter)**

The policy was updated by incorporating changes from the June senate meeting. The most substantive change was the inclusion of service as a potential criterion for promotion (alongside scholarly activity). The next step is to send this draft back to Dr. Thorne for review, followed by presentation to Council of Academic Deans (CAD). A senator questioned whether or how this policy may apply to practice/clinical faculty. This policy is designed for instructional faculty (lecturers/senior lecturers) and other policies are already in place for program/clinical faculty. A senator noted that the document references ‘scholarly research/creative work’, but this wording appears to indicate that only research is scholarly. A senator suggested that a better wording would be ‘scholarly research and creative activities’, which better describes the equal importance of these roles. The language will be made consistent throughout this policy and it will later be aligned with other PPS language.

**CUPA Salary Data for Administrators and Faculty**

The summary data was reviewed, which shows that faculty make 80-87% of the CUPA average, while the Vice Presidents and President make close to 96-101% of the CUPA average. The cost of living was analyzed, and the cost of living in San Marcos is higher than in the locations used for the CUPA average so this exacerbates the problem with salaries at Texas State University. A senator inquired about the standard deviation of the CUPA salary data but the senate currently doesn’t have access to this information. An inquiry will be initiated. Concerns about salary compression were raised again. The senate discussed how to best use this data. Ideas for actionable plans are being collected for discussion at an upcoming meeting.

**Vaccine Task Force Update (Senator Blasingame)**

The vaccine task force met on July 21. Much has changed over the past month, with positive cases trending rapidly upwards. The university will clearly communicate that while vaccines are not 100% foolproof, they are the best protection that we have, and they are relatively effective against variants as well. Breakthrough cases are relatively rare and are typically mild in severity. An update from Dr. Carranco is coming soon. Unvaccinated faculty/staff may be recommended to be tested before coming to campus. Faculty should provide accurate information to students, paying attention to what we are permitted to say. Dr. Carranco is concerned that strict attendance policies reduce reporting and quarantine compliance, so guidance on this issue is expected.

**Other Items**

Sarah Angulo was introduced as the new Faculty Senate Fellow.

The senate retreat is being planned on Monday, August 16 from 9 am – 12 pm at the Freeman Ranch.

The Tenure Track Faculty orientation breakfast is August 18 at 8:00 am and senators volunteered to attend.

The senate extended its partnership with the Nontenure Line Faculty (NLF) Committee and Faculty Development to continue to offer Bookcats, the book club for NLF. This initiative is coordinated by Dr. Candace Hastings

The June 16, 2021 minutes were approved.

Meeting adjourned at 5:13 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin