**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**September 15, 2021**

**4:00-6:00 pm**

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

**Attending guests:** Sarah Angulo, Timia Cobb, Mark Lester, Judy Oskam, Floyd Quinn, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne (Associate Provost)

Meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

**Committee Charges – Senator Ledbetter**

Discussion of committee charge updates continued from the previous Senate meeting. Some committees have requested updated charges.

Senator Ledbetter suggested the Environment and Sustainability Committee’s charge could be influenced by Tina Cade’s research conducted as Senate Fellow and the upcoming strategic plan.

* A senator suggested we ask committee members for guidance on any proposed changes. Senator Ledbetter is going to reach out to the committee to check its focus in relation to the next strategic plan.
* Senator Ledbetter also said some curriculum issues could be added to this committee’s charge.

As far as the Faculty Handbook Committee, Senator Ledbetter said this group is more of a watchdog to make sure the Faculty Handbook is kept updated with policy changes.

* A senator suggested disbanding this committee. However, the committee has said it wants to continue working. Senator Ledbetter said she agreed this is a committee that could be disbanded in the future – but, for now, it should probably continue with its current charge.

The Suspension Appeals Committee has asked for information about the suspension and appeal processes to be housed on the Faculty Senate website, but it’s unclear what the committee is asking to be included. Senator Ledbetter said she’s unsure why this type of information would be on the Senate website.

* A senator said having information on suspensions and appeals is important, but a better home would be on the Dean of Students website.
* A senator said this committee is a last-chance appeal for students who have already gone through a process with the dean of their individual College.

Senator Ledbetter asked for other committees that may need some attention. She mentioned the University Lecturers Committee, which sometimes has money left over. She asked if there were thoughts on doing this process differently. It’s unclear if money will be rolled over, so Senator Ledbetter said it may be a good idea for a second round of proposals to award the remaining amount of money.

* A senator asked if the Academic Standards Committee has submitted a recent report. He suggested this committee could be one that is disbanded. Senator Ledbetter will reach out to the committee to see what work is being done.

**Update on Faculty/Department Chair/Dean Hiring Policies – Dr. Debbie Thorne**

An analysis was conducted to compare discrepancies of two hiring policies: AA/PPS 04.01.01 Faculty Hiring and AA/PPS 04.01.04 Dean and Chair Hiring. Thorne asked a staff member connected to hiring to review both policies line by line. Thorne said some differences are inconsequential to an earlier discussion with the Senate about this issue.

The main differences between the policies include:

* When and what materials could be shared outside the search committee: The university sticks with the HR practice of keeping names, cover letters and applications confidential to the search committee until finalists are named and become public. Thorne said the search committee is entrusted to represent the interest of the College, unit or department and body that is hiring for the position. This makes the selection of search committee members incredibly important. Thorne said part of that trust means, from the candidate’s perspective, that the application materials won’t be disclosed unnecessarily or outside of the search process until finalists are announced. This often applies to contacting references, as well.
  + A senator said the explanation is reasonable, but the Senate was hearing different stories, such as search committees not being able to share general information like number of applicants. Thorne said she and Dr. Stella Silva differ here. Silva does not believe the number of applicants, for instance, should be shared. Thorne does not see a problem with that information – but she suggested a broad phrasing with no specifics about the pool of candidates. Any specific information about the pool could impact the integrity of the search and cause candidates to question the process. Thorne also brought up the option of having the search committee chairperson be the sole spokesperson for the committee – especially in high-stake searches. What material is provided after finalists are announced is up to the individual search committee. This will usually include cover letter and vita. This information is what helps people who are not on the search committee take part in the public phase of the hiring process.
  + A senator asked about the inconsistencies between the dean/chair policy and faculty hiring policy regarding confidentiality. Thorne said she has noted this difference after the review. She said her goal is to create parallelism with these policies. The senator also suggested changing the dean/chair policy to include that the provost and associate provost (in addition to the search committee chair) are responsible for how confidentiality is maintained and operated within those searches. Thorne agreed that more specificity in these policies is important.
  + A senator said she knows of a department who may have included its personnel committee more in the search committee process than is allowed in the policy. She suggested the PC could help narrow down the list of qualified candidates when search committees are not in agreement on finalists. Thorne said that opens the door to confidentiality problems. Another senator suggested chairs could play a role here in determining proper personalities are put on the search committee. Thorne said she would need to think about the original senator’s idea, since it reveals information earlier in the process. She also doesn’t know how often a search committee doesn’t agree on which candidates to bring to campus. Thorne said these responsibilities should likely fall on the shoulders of the search committee chairperson. Another senator suggested, in times of disagreement, to bring more candidates to campus or expand the search committee to reach agreement.
* Whether the job posting and required/preferred qualifications are vetted by departmental faculty or developed by the search committee more independently
  + A senator suggested flipping the order of two portions (05.01 and 05.02) of the faculty hiring policy. He wants the departmental PC to be notified of a posting before it goes public.
* Who/what groups are on the list of those who should meet with on-campus candidates
  + A senator said there is no mention of this in the faculty hiring policy. It’s only in the dean/chair hiring policy.
* How or whether to obtain formal or informal input on candidates brought to campus: Thorne prefers formal input on candidates. This is typically handled by surveys. She’s unsure how informal input would transpire, but the word “informal” makes it appear people could be left out of the process.
  + A senator said this should be changed to say only formal input will be solicited. Another senator agreed, saying surveys should be sent to colleagues who took part in interviews or presentations. The senator said this portion needs to also be added to the faculty hiring policy since it only currently appears in the chair/dean hiring policy. Another senator asked about hallway meeting discussions and not being able to unhear these informal conversations, but Thorne said her best practice is to encourage those colleagues to fill out the official survey.
  + A senator asked about the possibility of disclosing responses to common questions asked to the finalists. Thorne said this could present difficulties. She said it’s possible to release the common questions being asked of each candidate, but her hunch is the search committee has the most independence and power in this situation. Allowing others to make independent judgments based on public presentations and discussions from finalists is her preferred method. She said releasing responses could also affect confidentiality.
  + A senator brought up defining the role of the PC in the hiring process, asking if a ranking from the PC is common. Thorne said she hasn’t heard of that being the case. Another senator said her department provides their findings to the PC, which holds a yes/no vote to uphold the search committee rankings.
* From whom/what group does a chair/director solicit advice regarding a faculty search committee’s recommendation: Thorne reiterated formal input from others and leaving this flexible are keys.

**Faculty Senate meeting with Presidential Search Committee** **– Senator Ledbetter**

A portion of the September 22 Faculty Senate meeting will consist of a face-to-face meeting with Dr. John Hayek, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the Texas State University System, and consultants from the Russell Reynolds search firm about the search for a new university president. This will not be accessible via Zoom because of online security and confidentiality reasons. The committee is seeking the Senate’s feedback on what to look for in the search.

* A senator asked about the possibility to include Senate liaisons in this meeting. Senator Ledbetter said the invitation only included senators, but she said it seems okay to solicit feedback on questions to ask from faculty members. Senator Ledbetter will draft an invitation to solicit feedback from liaisons. She will also ask Senator Jensen to talk with the Nontenure Line Faculty Committee for feedback.

**Assign Senators to attend Texas Council of Faculty Senates/Texas State University System virtual meetings – Senator Ledbetter**

There are virtual meetings of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates on October 15 and 16. No agenda has been presented yet. These meetings consist of representation from faculty senates across the state of Texas. Senator Ledbetter asked for volunteers to attend. Senators Bell-Metereau, Ledbetter and Supancic will attend. This is in combination with the meeting of the Texas State University System on October 15.

**Policy Reviews** **– Senator Ledbetter**

Three university policies were assigned:

* AAPPS 02.03.10, Instructional Contact Time and Academic Credit, minor update, due October 4 (Senator Martin)
* UPPS 06.05.05 Official Social Media Accounts, due September 22 (Senator Blasingame)
* UPPS 01.04.27 Intellectual Property, due September 24 (Senator Bender)

Minutes from the September 8 meeting were approved.

The Senate went into executive session to discuss a faculty representative on the Assistant Provost Search Committee. Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd from the Department of Organization, Workforce and Leadership Studies was approved as the Senate recommendation. The Senate also approved Arlene Salazar to replace Jessica McLean as library representative to the University Curriculum Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.