**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, October 12, 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, Farzan Irani, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Ben Martin, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Adetty Pérez de Miles, Michael Supancic, Alex White

**Guests:** Lisa Ancelet, John Angulo, Elizabeth Bishop, Regina Jillapalli, Omar Lopez, Ken Pierce, Benjamin Rogers, Aimee Roundtree, Christine Sellers, Karen Sigler, InHyouk Song

The meeting began at 4:03 pm

**Council of Chairs Update (Oct. 7) – Alex White**

The Council of Chairs discussed the Personnel Committee policy. The Council voted to include the senate revision.  However, there was a long discussion about the opening line that specified that "colleges and/or departments/schools should have a Personnel Committee Policy".  Some chairs did not want to develop a new policy so they voted to reword this along the lines of, "If a department chooses to develop a PC policy it should ..." A senator asked about who would decide whether or not a PC policy would be developed. Would this be decided by the department as a whole, the chair, the PC, or some combination? There is a concern that some departments could be disenfranchised, which was the whole purpose of developing the guidelines.

Assistant Provost Matt Brooks discussed the ongoing equity salary study.  They have determined the cost of moving all faculty up to 85%, 90%, 92% and 95% of CUPA.  To reach 95%, it would take approximately 5.7 million dollars.  The administration is assessing how much it can afford to spend on equity.  The money will likely be divvied out to departments based on average need, and chairs will be given guidelines on how to allocate it.  The rules will require that a portion of the salary is given to the lowest paid faculty (e.g. Lecturers/Senior Lecturers).  Nothing has been determined, but the hope is that we will know more by Early Spring.

Matt Brooks communicated the Faculty Senate’s objections to the recommendation proposed by the Texas Workforce Commission to implement a new check box in the annual review process. The chairs were at first receptive to the idea of holding faculty accountable for following policy and making deadlines.  They changed their view when Matt Brooks read them the statement about following the law and establishing a culture of policy compliance.  Chairs were rightly concerned that they would be held liable for affirming behaviors they have no way of observing.  There was a suggestion that instead, faculty should self-indicate that they are compliant by checking a box.  This will be revisited when the faculty conduct policy is discussed.

**IT Discussion – Kenneth Pierce, VPIT and CIO, Benjamin Rogers, ITAC**

A faculty member proposed that the senate inquire about a major change to how computers are distributed. The proposal is to remove the computer systems from most classrooms, and instead issue laptops to every instructor. Ken Pierce described the current status of computer systems. There are currently 295 computers in classrooms. It is difficult to assess how many laptops are distributed to faculty. 550 computers are deployed through ITAC, and many more are purchased through departments. There will not clearly be a cost savings associated with this plan as it was proposed.

ITAC is concerned that it may be more difficult to support laptops compared to standardized in-room computers. Several members of the faculty senate expressed their opposition to the proposal. For example, adjunct faculty and student instructors may not have access to university-supplied computers, which would put this burden onto departments to manage.

A senator asked a question related to ITAC support. An instructor was having problems with room technology during a lecture and asked a colleague to call ITAC while they continued teaching. ITAC support would not help because they were not contacted by the instructor having the problem. This is not standard procedure, and any faculty member should be able to support others in this manner. ITAC should also be able to enter a room during class as long as the maintenance issue is minor.

Another senator expressed concern about system outages, including most recently the Step Up for State campaign. This particular issue was an unusual event caused by a miscommunication between different departments regarding an update. The registration system is also a major problem. This is an ongoing issue for many universities due to the way that the Banner system handles user sessions. Sessions do not automatically close when a user exits the window, and sessions build up until the system crashes. The problem is well known, and the vendor has not fixed the issue. Splitting students into smaller groups helps. The university is looking for a long term solution to this problem, but currently there is no way to fix it outside of manually closing open sessions that have timed out.

A senator asked about why software and hardware purchasing takes so long compared to other purchases. Three months of delay are not uncommon, and this impacts teaching and research. It can be also difficult to get a response to inquiries about the status of a request. Ken Pierce explained that the problems result from state law, and every institution in Texas is facing the same issues. The university is required by law to carefully review each request, and it is difficult to stay in compliance with a small staff (ITAC currently has seven staff members assigned to review purchases). The staff processes approximately 10 requests/day, which is far more than expected. The process can be tracked online by users through their ticket number. This is likely to get worse, since new code was introduced in the last legislative session. Now, TexRep must certify every acquisition in the state, an extremely lengthy process. Noncompliant vendors have been given a temporary waiver, but these are set to expire. It is unclear how this will affect upcoming purchases, but it may no longer be possible to purchase from vendors who are unable or unwilling to go through the certification process.

**Update on Texas Council of Faculty Senates (Oct. 8) – Ben Martin**

The main session was a discussion about ongoing attacks on academic freedom and tenure by the Texas legislature. A panel of presenters representing faculty advocacy groups gave a synopsis of historical legislative actions and how damage was mitigated through lobbying efforts. Sometimes issues stem from a misunderstanding of tenure and the importance of academic freedom. The panel gave advice regarding how faculty in their role as citizens (not university representatives) can meet with their representatives. They emphasized that such meetings must be done during free time, and that university resources should not be used to plan or conduct the meetings. A handout should be prepared that clearly summarizes the main points. It is likely that initial meetings will be with staff members, and that these meetings can be very productive. A number of organizations are active in protecting the rights of faculty, including the Texas Association of College Teachers (TACT), Texas Faculty Association (TFA), and the American Association of College Professors (AAUP).

Senators in attendance presented a summary of their university’s status and the ongoing actions of their faculty senate during the “faculty senate roundup”. Across the state, enrollments are recovering, but slowly. Transfer enrollments were especially impacted, and these have not yet recovered. Several universities have been developing or revising post-tenure review policies. It wasn’t clear why this is being done now, or who is driving these changes. Low salaries, especially in light of high inflation, dominated concerns.

**Commission Members**

The senate was asked to consider candidates to join the presidential commissions/task forces. The senate developed a ranked list of candidates for the Administrative Burdens Task Force and the Commission for Student Success.

**Other Items**

* Senators are invited to attend listening sessions for the Director of Criminal Justice over the next couple of weeks. Meeting dates and times have been shared over email.
* Topics for discussion at the Senate Liaison meeting on October 26 need to be developed. Senators are asked to suggest ideas prior to the next meeting.

**Minutes:** The senate will vote to approve the October 5 minutes by email.

**Executive Session:** The senate entered executive session to discuss the Piper Committee Report.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin