**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes  
November 10, 2021**

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

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

**Attending guests:** Eric Algoe (VP for Finance and Support Services), Sarah Angulo (Senate Fellow), Gene Bourgeois (Provost), Leslie Green, Cynthia Hernandez (VP for Student Affairs), Regina Jillapalli, Judy Oskam, Aimee Roundtree, Karen Sigler, Denise Trauth (President), Debbie Thorne (Associate Provost), Theo Wright (University Star)

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

**President’s Academic Advisory Group** – Senator Ledbetter

The major topic of discussion for today’s PAAG meeting is campus safety, after a recent security situation on campus and concerns raised by Senate liaisons.

President Trauth said campus safety is a complex, but important, topic. Texas State is a large university in terms of people and physical size.

Eric Algoe started the discussion with a brief presentation on safety at the university. The ecosystem of safety committees starts with the University Safety Committee. There are three committees under that: Security and Personal Safety Committee, Environmental Health and Safety Committee and Research Safety Committee. All are active. (The IT Council is tangentially related to safety, as well.) There are then nine committees under those core three committees, including IRB. Algoe said safety can always be improved. He went over recent improvements to safety, including an additional 200 lights across campus at a cost of $2.2 million, an audit of campus emergency phones, replacing first-call classroom door locks with manual locks at a cost of $800,000 and adding swipe card access for the primary exterior doors of all major academic buildings. The university will next begin removing physical keys for these doors from distribution. There is also a comprehensive review now underway of the 900+ cameras on the San Marcos campus.

From an emergency planning and management perspective, there is a new storm-hardened Emergency Operations Center that will open in January 2022. Three emergency management exercises were held in the previous year. The university published its first comprehensive Multi-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan in 2021. Administration is also currently revising COOP (continuity of operations) planning and Building Safety Coordinator Programs.

With regards to UPD, two finalists have been brought to campus for interviews for the position of police chief. Both have experience at major, R1 institutions. The university rolled out a cadet training reimbursement program for receiving training with a focus on diversity. In addition, the university increased walking, ATV and bike patrols and joined the Hays County Joint Emergency Communications Center.

One of the concerns raised by Senate liaisons was whether Texas State follows ALERRT (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) Center procedures regarding campus security. Old posters related to emergency procedures in classrooms displayed K-12 standards and, since 2017, have been replaced with ALERRT standards of Avoid, Deny, Defend. In addition to a leadership role in the event of an active attacker, this is the faculty’s role in a campus security situation – to avoid, deny and defend. The campus safety/emergency procedures page on the Texas State website provides training on topics like active shooter scenarios. Each scenario contains videos co-produced by the ALERRT Center.

Cynthia Hernandez then discussed the Student Behavior Assessment Team, which provides consultation to administration, faculty and staff who are concerned about a student’s behavior that appears to be potentially dangerous. Each member of the team can act in the authority that they bring to the group. Algoe added that the Counseling Center also provides training and help for students who are struggling.

The university has also added some technological advancements regarding safety. Right now, emergency notification messages from the university are opt-in, but the university is examining a switch of these to opt-out, meaning they would reach more people in a timelier fashion. The Bobcat Guardian app allows anyone to create a virtual safety network of friends and family who can check in on them during requested times. The Transportation Services app allows for real-time bus tracking. The TapRide app is available to request rides from Night Cat and Safe Ride services. The university also recently implemented the New World Computer Aided Dispatch system. Over the past 12 months, the university’s 911 system has physically moved to the Hays County Emergency Operations Center, and this switch to the New World Computer Aided Dispatch means the university is also using the same software as the county and city. The university is also on the same radio channels as city and council emergency personnel.

Regarding communication messages related to life-safety situations, University Police send those without review or delay. Less-than-life threatening emergencies come from University Communications with a goal of getting the message sent in less than 20 minutes. Cabinet and University Communications regularly conduct training on this issue and have a Rapid Response Guide that outlines all protocols on this topic. Trauth said the Rapid Response team is comprised of cabinet members, the police chief and others who are needed in emergency situations. It also contains people who are in the room, monitoring social media. This group has come together for exercises and real-life incidents. The university has a protocol that convenes the group in person or by telephone within 20 minutes. There are also redundant contact processes to alert members of an emergency. The team can also connect to external entities, such as the Austin Bomb Squad, for consultation as needed.

Provost Bourgeois said academic units and larger offices can reach out for UPD trainings or briefings of what to do during an emergency. These trainings can last anywhere from 1-3 hours. Algoe added the two most relevant trainings are Civilian Response to Active Shooter Emergencies (CRASE) and Standard Response Protocol (SRP). UPD regularly schedules trainings, but they will also hold the trainings by request. The provost also added that a SBAT member would likely be available to meet with units to discuss the team’s role in handling concerns over student behavior. Hernandez said there are discussions to restart trainings related to SBAT protocols. She also said understanding threat assessment, knowing what to look for and how to avoid misconceptions or generalizations of certain behaviors are important.

Associate Provost Thorne said the Council of Chairs could be a great place to start this discussion of threat assessment training and protocols. She said there’s a tendency to think it won’t happen to you or your department, but the first place something like this is reported or asked about is often at the department chair or school director level. Thorne said she would talk with the chair of Council of Chairs about this.

Senator Ledbetter raised a liaison concern during the most recent security issue involving the School of Art and Design. There was confusion over whether a ban from the classroom means a student is also banned from joining things like Zoom activities. Trauth said if a student has a no trespass order, they should not be in a Zoom class, either. The next step is how the university keeps that from happening. The provost said if a student is suspended, they should not be engaging with any official functions – in-person or virtual. Hernandez said it’s time to revisit the differences between interim restrictions and interim suspensions. She agreed that a student under interim suspension should not be attending in any manner.

Senator Ledbetter let PAAG know the Senate voted to support the Academic Freedom Committee in moving forward with a standalone cyber harassment policy. Any proposal would move to the associate provost as a next step. Thorne said this idea has been in discussion for more than a year. IT security will be involved in this moving forward, as well. She spoke with the chief information security officer to let him know she’d touch base with him when a draft of the proposed policy is ready.

* A senator said he feels safe on campus, but he realizes there are those who don’t. He said there are two problems: the actual safety problem and then what people hear from the university versus what they hear on social media. In this latest situation, UPD said there was no concern, but disturbing details were being shared via social media – things the university can’t share. Trauth said this is difficult territory. One of the hardest issues is being sure that information the university puts forward is verified and true. It often makes the university look slow in responding. The other side of this is deciding whether something is or isn’t a threat, which doesn’t keep people on social media from deciding whether they think something is a threat or not. Trauth said the university could send out more communication and messaging, but it’s always going to look slow and bureaucratic because of its policies. Students came to her open office hours to discuss this latest incident, and they wanted details of what happened, but she said there is a limit to the details the university can release. Algoe chimed in with a hypothetical to help explain how things happen. When the university puts out a message saying there’s no threat to campus, it sometimes bothers people who feel there is a threat. What they’re not considering is UPD may already have a police officer surveilling the person in question, confirming they may be out of town or not on campus and not a threat to anyone at that time. However, the university cannot say that in an emergency alert to the entire campus – with one reason being the person under surveillance would then know they’re under surveillance. He said there is a disconnect people feel in these situations, but there is often a real-time reason the university can only release a limited amount of detail. The provost said this is often complicated by people sharing old screenshots that are no longer relevant to the situation, with the audience thinking it is the current situation. Algoe provided a different example of a situation the university often faces. He said things that are blatantly not true are often posted on social media and quickly spread as fact. The university recently dealt with a situation like this regarding a claim of sexual assault. A parent said a student sexually assaulted another student, and it spread through a parent Facebook page. Algoe said it was 100% false, but the university is in a difficult situation to wade into this social media activity. He said it's a no-win situation because trying to correct the accusations will only likely enflame the situation. The senator said the worst outcome of this scenario is losing trust in police and the messaging. He said an after-action report following an event may help build a culture of trust. Trauth said that is something to consider.
* A senator raised concerns over having this be the topic of today’s discussion, saying this issue often causes people to lose perspective and blow things out of proportion. She asked about the possibility of sharing statistics about emergencies in relation to threats like car crashes and obesity. Trauth said it’s important that students perceive our campus as being safe, especially a residential campus, but she appreciated the perspective shared. Senator Ledbetter said it’s important for messaging to get out about trainings and the like. Another senator said statistics about emergency situations are only one side of the issue. The perception and fears of students and those on campus are something different. He recommended a more proactive approach by making Algoe’s presentation to the Senate a part of New Student Orientation, Bobcat Days and faculty/staff orientations, saying it would show the university is working hard on safety procedures and policies to keep people safe. He also said choosing the correct candidate for chief of UPD is an important part of this, as well. He wants a forward-facing chief who will help make a difference in propelling the university on both a perception and statistical basis of being a safe community. Trauth agreed and said the university has a moment right now to take advantage of the moment to do some of these things.
* A senator said she has been here 14 years and just learned today during the presentation about much of the things happening related to safety on campus. She said this information needs to be communicated to faculty, staff and students.

Minutes were approved from the meeting on November 3.

The Senate moved to executive session to discuss Faculty Developmental Leave applications.