**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Hybrid Meeting (JCK 880/Zoom), 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

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

**Guests**: Roger Abshire, Lisa Ancelet, Sarah Angulo, Brianna Benitez, Catherine Hawkins, Regina Jillapalli, Stephanie Larrison, Mark Lester, Cristian Lieneck, Arlene Salazar, Karen Sigler, Debbie Thorne, Stephanie Towery, Ginger Williams

Meeting began at 4:00 pm

**Academic Freedom Resolution**

A draft proposal in defense of tenure and academic freedom was reviewed and discussed. The senate debated its role in defending faculty interests. There was a consensus that the senate should speak out on topics that are of importance to faculty. Senators debated the form and content of the statement, and opted for a shorter, less formal statement that expressed a strong commitment to academic freedom.

The senate endorsed the following statement in defense of academic freedom and tenure:

Historically, tenure and academic freedom have gone hand in hand, with tenure being a primary means of insuring academic freedom. Tenure is integral to the purpose of higher education, providing faculty the protection and freedom to engage in research, and teach or speak on matters related to their expertise in order to help advance our knowledge on important matters, regardless of how controversial these matters might be at any given time to people across the political or ideological spectrum. The restriction or weakening of tenure at Texas universities would greatly diminish our ability to recruit and retain faculty.

Upon the recommendation of its Academic Freedom Committee, the Texas State University Faculty Senate opposes, in the strongest terms, any effort to weaken or eliminate the tenure status of faculty. Furthermore, the Faculty Senate rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter (regardless of tenure status), including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority as defined in our Faculty Handbook and university policies.

This statement will be presented in the upcoming Faculty Senate Bulletin and on the website.

**Committee Reviews – Update**

The faculty handbook committee continues to review changes to policies to ensure that the handbook is current and accurate. Other content such as the vision statement needs to be updated as part of the strategic planning process.

The Environment and Sustainability Committee will report to the senate next week regarding an update to their mission.

**Copyright Infringement: Stephanie Towery (Copyright Officer) and Debbie Thorne (Associate Provost)**

Commercial sites including Course Hero and Quizlet often post course materials that are potentially copyrighted. Faculty may request to have their materials removed from these sites. This can be overwhelming to faculty since materials are posted continuously. A senator added language to their syllabus specifically prohibiting students from posting material and while this did not eliminate the problem, it reduced the number of such postings.

Stephanie Towery recommended that all faculty put a statement in their syllabus prohibiting students from posting materials. Currently, faculty need to individually enforce the removal using the website tools. She clarified that students have the right to use and share course materials for studying. For example, students may share materials on a non-commercial site to use in a study group.

A senator asked what materials are copyrighted. The material is copyrighted once it is fixed in a tangible form. However, the copyright protects the expression of the ideas, not the facts. It can be difficult to prove who owns the structure of such things as lecture notes and outlines. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCAO) requires all sites that accept user content to provide a way for users to request that such content is removed.

Debbie Thorne emphasized that faculty should continue to emphasize course policies and the student justice process in their syllabi. Additionally, faculty should report any website that does not allow content to be removed. The use of test banks and repeated assignments increases the risk of cheating. Improved assessment design can reduce the ability for students to copy an answer.

Senators made some suggestions and comments on this topic:

* Faculty continue to have problems with students who submit papers that have been plagiarized. However, it is unclear what source(s) that students are using for this. Some example papers are posted on sites like Course Hero, but students also share their papers with each other. Turnitin will identify these copied papers if it is used regularly
* Faculty may benefit from reminders about what resources are available and what their rights are in safeguarding their course content.
* Academic honesty is currently included in new student orientation, but it may need to be updated to specifically address online postings.
* Some full textbooks are posted online, and publishers may act to protect their copyrights in these cases if they are alerted.

**Update on Outside Employment**

Debbie Thorne will review and approve outside employment, but such employment must first be approved at the chair/director and dean level. Outside employment must not interfere with a faculty member’s commitment to their role at the university or their ability to complete their work at the university. External appointments need to be pre-approved, and reporting should be done annually for ongoing commitments.

**Policy Reviews**

* UPPS 03.05.02 Use and Release of Constituent Information, full review, due March 11 (Jensen)
* UPPS 08.03.03 Campus Memorials, full review, due March 11 (Ledbetter)

**Approval of Minutes**

The senate approved the February 23, 2022 minutes by vote.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm

Minutes submitted by Ben Martin