TAMU-SA Faculty Senate

Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2013

Opening:

The regular meeting of the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Faculty Senate was called to order at 11:07 on Friday, April 5, in Room 205, Main Campus by Megan Wise de Valdez.

Present:

Megan Wise de Valdez, Brian Briantly, Jim Hackard, Kevin Kendrick (proxy for Lorrie Webb), Vicky Elias, Stefanie Wittenbach, Durant Frantzen, Dennis Elam, Mary Mayorga, Richard Green, and Carolyn Green, Brent Snow

Other attendees: Jacob Sherman

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as distributed.

Administrative Update

Dr. Snow indicated that he is pleased with the Southwest Teaching and Learning Conference happening today and the journal published along with the conference.

Office hours still under advisement. Some faculty are never in their offices. Dr. Snow is concerned about sending a message that office hours aren't important, particularly for that group that isn't here. Space is at a premium here, and he is often in the position of defending faculty offices. Some people feel that faculty could double up in offices since they're not around. The hope is that faculty will collaborate with colleagues and students and being here is a good way to facilitate that. How do we address the faculty that are affected by office hours? If there is a legitimate reason for needing shorter office hours, if it is a real challenge in terms of handling them along with everything else, then that conversation would need to happen with School Heads and Department Chairs. Purpose of office hours is to be available to students and other people. Discussion ensued, providing more feedback for Dr. Snow.

Dr. Snow received the Faculty Senate letter and indicated that it is a well-written letter and hard to argue with it. However, he is wondering what generated the letter. No department or school got an increase last year, so the library wasn't set aside or treated differently. He asked the Senate, "are you saying that all things being equal, should a library request be a priority?" Faculty responded that it's a high priority. We want to continue to build programs, so it continues to need to be a priority. There are other high priority areas, too. It doesn't come above and beyond all the time. Departments and Schools are serving themselves, but the library is serving all of the schools, so it is a

higher priority. It has to serve all of the students and schools. Important message is that the library isn't just one of those important departments, but the overriding mission of education and knowledge sets the library apart from the other things like the bursar and a food court. It's a different animal and needs a different kind of recognition and respect. There is concern that there's insensitivity to some extent to the needs of the library. It may not be clear what faculty expect and need of the library. The Library is critical from both a pedagogical and a scholarly standpoint.

A senator asked a question about how funding decisions are made regarding things like painting, signage, etc. Signage at Brooks needs to be improved, both getting to the building and within it. Dr. Snow agreed that signage there needs to be improved.

A senator asked about planning for downward expansion. Dr. Snow responded that the request went to the Legislature for funding for downward expansion. The request was for $11 million, and we are waiting to hear from Legislature in late May. If approved, 2015-2017 is the likely timeframe for downward expansion. First meeting of a small group (school heads, Bill, Megan, Holly, Dr. Snow) took place to help frame in a very general sense what downward expansion might look like, and to give Dr. Ferrier some talking points about it for her presentation for the Legislature.

A senator asked about the status of load reports because they have not yet been received by faculty, so individuals can't tell whether pay matches actual load.

Action item: Dr. Snow will investigate the status of the load reports.

Faculty Handbook

This important document has not yet been adopted for the university. Its adoption is of high importance with regard to the timing for SACS accreditation. The Senate will continue to review and update, and revisions and changes can be started immediately. The Faculty Senate should proceed with adoption of the current version. Motion made and seconded to adopt the Faculty Handbook with the understanding that we will go forward with committee to review it. Discussion: General faculty still need to review it. Communicate in such a way that faculty understand that in order to provide a handbook in time for SACS, this has been approved, but revisions will be taken into consideration immediately by the committee. The advantage is that we go from not having one to having one. The content reflects the current ways of operating. Would there be a problem with SACS if we gave provisional approval of the draft? Communicate to faculty that we plan to have feedback from faculty incorporated by a certain date so that changes don't get lost. Faculty will complain loudly that they aren't getting to approve it. It will need to be easy to suggest changes to it. The Senate will need to stick to and publicize the timeline for review and incorporation of changes. Amendment: propose that we publicize the timeline of any changes made to the handbook and adopting handbook in a dynamic form in a timeline that is communicated. Amendment passes. One abstention, one negative. Motion passes.

Action item: Mary will draft a letter for general faculty that Megan will send out on behalf of the Faculty Senate to all.

Executive Committee Update

Faculty Research funds: Dr. Ferrier has dedicated money for faculty research in increments of $3500, but if a certain project warrants more, it can be funded. Faculty Senate will develop the application process with the criteria for award of the funds. The committee to review the applications will be appointed by the Faculty Senate. This is a peer review of applications for faculty research awards. Dr. Ferrier has indicated that one criteria that must be included is that undergraduates must be involved. Funds must be awarded by September 1st.

The Director of Graduate Studies and Research should be on the committee. Research goes under the category of the research office. The Faculty Senate can set up how the process works for awarding the funds. One Senator indicated concern about it being disconnected from the Research Office. Dr. Snow said that the committee becomes the funding agency for research. One of the criteria needs to be that, if appropriate, IRB approval will need to be secured prior to applying for these funds. There are some good models for doing this at other institutions, and it would be good for the committee to review them. Dr. Ferrier wants faculty to choose faculty who receive funding. Motion made and seconded to establish a committee to draft procedures for the committee to follow. Amendment proposed to use the existing standing committee—Faculty Development and Research Committee. Amendment passes. Amendment proposed that the committee needs to also develop the criteria and make selections and that the Director of Graduate Studies and Research serves on the committee. Committee members can apply for funds. Will have to abstain during discussion of their application. Amendment passes. Motion passes. Committee members: Josie Sosa-Fey, Megan Wise de Valdez, Durant Frantzen, Richard Green.

Action Item: The committee will need to finalize committee members and prepare a timeline by May 3, 2013.

Recommendation for transfer and graduation requirements: Dr. Snow's e-mail.

Committee Reports

Election committee—no report. Committee to meet following this meeting.

Room 352 report will be given next month.

Old Business

Mary and Brian will provide a report on the Conference on Faculty Senates next month for new senators.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 12:32 by Megan Wise de Valdez. The next general meeting will be at 11 a.m. on May 3, 2013 at Brooks, room 172.

Minutes submitted by: Stefanie Wittenbach