

Faculty Senate Minutes
December 4, 2020
11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Virtual: <https://tamusa.webex.com/tamusa/j.php?MTID=m36f8aa29690c72960f45869a70eda947>

In Attendance: Joseph Simpson; Sabina de Vies; Aida Almanza; Amanda Lindner; April Najjaj; Bob Shelton; Brenda Rowe; Bryan Bayles; Chin-Yen Liu; Christina Holt; Cynthia Matson; Daniel Delgado; Deirdre McDonald; Elizabeth Howell; Eun Kwon; Francesca, Keith; Gene Morales; Ho Huynk; James Finley; John Scott; Jongil Lim; J. Zuni; Keming Li; Leonard Love; Maria; Mario Baldassari; Mariya Davis; Martha Saywell; Matthew Mangum; Md Rahman; Megan Wise de Valadez; Merritt Rehn-DeBaal; Michael O'Brian; Miguel Cervantes; Mike Spohn; Pablo Calafiore; Ray Kamps; Ray Wooten; Rebekah Piper; Robert Alonzo; Robin Kapavik; Smriti Bhatt; Tara Korzekwa; Thomas Beaumont; Tim Gritten; Veronica Valdez; Vincent Creazzo; Young Rae Kim; Katherine Bridgman; Maria Acevedo-Aquino

Meeting Called to Order: Call to Order 11:33am

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve minutes

Approve: 15

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Administrative Update:

Dr. O'Brien provided administrative updates:

- Q&A: Joe Simpson: Inquired pertaining to changes to faculty evaluations and the like. Provost: Leaving it up to the colleges to decide how this will be structured. There SRI's problems with students not able to access through Blackboard. Blackboard: There was a loss of employees but there was also a new hire. Blackboard seems out-of-date. Blackboard Alley provides alternative formats such as automatic captions. There was faculty discussion around students having problems accessing SRI's.

Dr. Teniente-Matson provided administrative updates:

- A written report was sent by Dr. Teniente-Matson. Also, Dr. Teniente-Matson highlighted Dr. Edward Westermann as the recipient of the Regents Professor Award.

- Curbside commencement is coming up. On campus COVID-19 has not yet shown a big surge from the Thanksgiving holiday. The COVID-19 dashboard provides aggregate data to show on and off campus COVID-19 cases. Currently rates are far below 1%. There was a discussion pertaining to the possibility of COVID testing of employees before returning to work on campus.
 - Joseph Simpson remarked that there seems to be a delay in getting information to faculty in reference to COVID-19 positive students. Dr. Teniente-Matson stated that there will be more rapid testing/reporting of COVID cases.
 - Joseph Simpson inquired if there are vaccination plans. Dr. O'Brien indicated that there have been no discussions yet. Dr. Teniente-Matson stated that the University System is still discovering where higher education will be situated in terms of receiving vaccinations.
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- Tim Gritten provided a library update on Elsevier. He shared a presentation on the Texas Library Coalition for United Action that is negotiating for a new contract with Elsevier regarding pricing. Pricing has substantially increased in the digital age. Elsevier is a for-profit company that has very high profit margins. It publishes more peer reviewed articles than any other company and it is still expanding. If no agreement is reached by the end of December, it may result in loss of convenience of access but not of content. Tim Gritten will provide updates when available.

Old Business

- Update on Diversity Office ad hoc committee – James Finely recently sent out an interim report. The goal is to gather ideas from campus stakeholders as to what a Diversity office should entail. There have been teach-ins, which will continue until the end of the academic year. The chair/James Finley will collaborate as a liaison with the POC office.
- Evaluation of Chairs and Deans ad hoc committee – have not heard back from all departments on who the representatives will be. Joseph Simpson requested that representatives will be identified before the end of the year. (13-person committee). Joe will draft an email that senators will send to department faculty in order to recruit committee members.
- Ray Wooten reported on Athletic Attendance and Reporting – Reviewed draft of policy.

Motion to approve processes: Leonard Love motioned, seconded by Megan Wise de Valdez

Accepted: 17

Rejected: ?

Abstained: ?

New Business

- University Ombudsman (Megan Wise de Valdez) – The suggestion is to establish one or two persons per college as ombudsperson. It was also suggested as long term goal to establish a permanent position within Academic Affairs.

Motion for action: Megan Wise de Valdez, seconded by James Finley - Motion to discuss and research different modalities for an ombudsperson at each university college.

Discussions ensued to clarify the ombudsperson's role.

Accepted: 20

Rejected: 0

Abstained: 0

- End of the year faculty evaluations: See input from Provost above. The Deans are to work with department chairs regarding faculty evaluations. There are concerns regarding SRIs; also, research efforts are negatively impacted by COVID-19 in terms of faculty evaluations.

Daniel Delgado motioned to develop a response with best practices set of guidelines and recommendations for faculty evaluations during COVID-19 by the end of December (Daniel Delgado motioned; seconded by Matthew Mangum). Establishing an ad hoc committee was also suggested.

Accepted: 19

Rejected: 0

Abstained: 0

Announcements:

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be in February (no meeting in January)

The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.