Texas A&M International University
TAMIU Faculty Senate
Friday March 3, 2023
12:00 p.m.– 2:45 p.m.
WHTC Rm. 125

I. The meeting was called to order by the Faculty Senate President, Dr. Ruby Ynalvez
   at 12:05 p.m.

II. *Roll Call:* Dr. Ruby Ynalvez, Dr. Marvin Bennett, Ms. Jeanette Hatcher,
       Dr. Li-Zheng Brooks, Dr. Seong Kwan Cho, Dr. Deepak Ganta, Dr. Ariadne Gonzalez,
       Dr. San Juanita Hernandez, Dr. Kameron Jorgensen, Dr. Kate Houston,
       Dr. Runchang Lin, Dr. Diana Linn, Dr Gilberto Martinez, Ms. Marcela Moran,
       Dr. James Norris, Dr. Lola Norris, Dr. Leonel Prieto

III. The minutes for the February 3rd Faculty Senate meeting were approved with no
     additional corrections.

IV. *Our Guest* was given the floor:

Dr. Thomas Mitchell

  Dr. Mitchell announced that Dr. Arenaz is currently in College Station for the annual meeting of the Century Council. He also informed the Senate that the Chancellor has issued a statement that no A&M university or agency will have a DEI requirement in any of its job advertisements in the hiring process and that hirings will be based solely on merit.
  Senator Ynalvez addressed Dr. Mitchell with several questions that were brought up by faculty:

1. Does TAMIU have high reliance for Adjunct Faculty?

  Response: Yes, we generally hire between 60 to 80 Adjuncts in any given year.

2. What is the typical course load for an Adjunct Faculty and how are course loads assigned?

  Response: There is no set number of hours that Adjuncts teach. It is based on the academic unit's need and the willingness and qualifications of the Adjunct. There is, however, a limit for retired teachers or administrators under TRS in that they can not teach more than 6 hours (a 50% teaching load). Any more than 50% makes them eligible to receive benefits.

3. Is there a potential that Adjuncts can get a pay increase?

  Response: The standard pay rate for an Adjunct with a masters degree is between $2,200 to $2,500 for a 3 hour course. For Adjuncts with a terminal degree it is between $2,500 to $3,000 for a 3 hour course. It can go higher than $3,000 in the case of teaching graduate or PhD courses. The money to pay Adjuncts comes from salary savings (unfilled teaching positions across the

university), which is the same pool of money that pays for overload teaching, summer school, Maymester and Wintermester teaching.

4. Why does the Prof Center have mandatory trainings in professional development for new faculty?

Response: It is only required of new faculty and it is in the offer letter that they agreed to attend the trainings for their own self-improvement. Also, it helps new faculty to bond with other new faculty which aids in the overall retention of the faculty members.

Dr. Mitchell also announced that the academic calendar for next year should be up on the university's website soon.

- New Faculty orientation is on August 16 through 18.
- Faculty/Staff Assembly is on August 21, with college meetings in the afternoon.
- The week of August 21 will be a work week for all faculty.
- There will be 2 days in the fall and in the spring for pre-commencement ceremonies after final exams are finished.
- The first day of classes is on Monday August the 28th.

V. Faculty Senate President's Updates (Senator Ynalvez):

Senator Ynalvez provided the Senate with several informational items:

- The Texas Council of Faculty Senates was held on February 24-25. Senator Ynalvez presented a report to the TCFS. Eight common themes were identified during the various participants reports:
    1. Faculty workload
    2. Top-down Institutional policies
    3. Shared governance
    4. Salary compensation
    5. Professionalism and collegiality
    6. A few universities do not have an Ombuds person
    7. Several Texas universities are also engaged in Provost searches
    8. Effects of policy changes as a result of removal of DEI.

Shared Governance and the challenges arising from the recent House bills that have been filed were the two main topics for discussion.

- Senator Ynalvez has emailed our Administrators advising them that Administrator Assessments will be coming up on either the 1st or 2nd week of March. It was requested that the time to do the assessments be extended to 2 weeks.

- Digital PPE feedback: There were numerous reports of issues with getting attachments to upload properly to the digital portfolio. It was also commented that Faculty should be

able to respond to PPE comments made by the deans and the provost.

- At the latest Decennial Leadership Meeting there was a mention about an institutional policy on faculty hiring and an institutional policy on academic freedom and whether or not TAMIU has such policies in place for the upcoming SACs Report. The Provost has reported that we have such policies in place and he will be providing the information to the Senate.

- Faculty Course Evaluations: The Senate Executives meet with Dr. Wilkinson (the VP for Institutional Effectiveness) and he would like the faculty to take the lead on course evaluations by; reaching out to collaborate with SGA on the low response rates, redesigning the evaluation instrument to be less generic and encouraging faculty to get the students more involved in participating in the evaluations.

- Fixed-term language in the Handbook: Senator Martinez suggested that the language in the Handbook should be modified to reflect the fact that when Fixed-term Faculty move to a tenure-track position it is a reclassification and not a promotion.

- Adjuncts salary and course load: see Dr. Mitchell's report.

- Provost Search Committee: Senator Ynalvez provided us with an email listing the members on this committee. It was confirmed that no information may be provided to the faculty about the candidates until the finalists are invited for an on-campus visit.

VI. Committee Reports:

A. Awards Committee:

Senator Moran reported that the electronic portfolios for the award's candidates will be placed on a Blackboard course shell for Senators to review. The Awards Committee is also in the process of recruiting faculty to help out with classroom observations for the candidates going up for the Teaching Awards. These rubrics will also be uploaded to the Blackboard shell for review. Classroom observations will be held from March 20th to April 1st.

B. Academic Oversight Committee:

Senator Gonzalez announced that the committee met in February and discussed the draft of an email to be sent to the deans asking them to consider using the mean of the median provided in faculty PPE portfolios for their faculty evaluations. The other discussion was on organizing the results obtained from the Faculty Assembly (see attachment). This report will now be forwarded to the President and the Provost for their responses.

C. Assessment Committee: no report.

D. Budget and Finance Committee:

Senator Ganta reported that he attended the University Budget and Finance Committee meeting where they were deciding how to allocate the budget for the rest of the year. They are currently waiting for the Legislature meeting and for the final number for credit hours generated before they do the initial allocation of the budget and send it out to get feedback from the various chairs and deans. Then they will meet in the summer to vote on the final budget.

E. Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty Promotion: see previous report.

F. Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee:

Senator James Norris reported that this committee met to discuss the new Artificial Intelligence writing software (ChatGPT). It is feared that some students may be using this software to do their writing assignments for them. There is software available to detect the use of AI writing, but it is beta software and not to be fully trusted yet.

G. Faculty Handbook Revision Committee: no report.

H. Technology Advisory Committee: see attached minutes.

I. University Ethics Committee:

Senator Houston reported that the committee was working on two faculty issues:

QM certification and certain qualifications that have to be met before payment is released from the university. The Committee is working with Patricia Abrego to resolve this issue. Also, there have been problems with administrators being added to faculty Blackboard course shells.

VII. New Business Items (proposals):

Senator Ynalvez opened the floor for proposals for new business items to be discussed at our next senate meeting.

- Senator Lola Norris proposed that there be spaces added to the PPE to allow faculty to respond to comments made by the dean and the provost.

- Senator Lola Norris also commented that there is a lot of very old information on the university website in the faculty profiles that does not seem to be updated by AEFIS. It was asked who can we contact to correct this?

- Senator Ynalvez proposed to discuss ideas to improve student response rates to course evaluations.

VIII. Other Business

Senator Martinez announced that this will be his last year serving on the Faculty Senate. He made a suggestion that Senator Gorbunova, who is also Fixed-Term Faculty, act as his replacement as the Senate Fixed-Term Faculty Representative.

Senator Hatcher announced that she is going to put out a call for nominations soon for the various University Committees who have positions that need to be filled.

IX. Meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

AOC Minutes

February 1, 2023

1:00 pm

KL 415

I. Mean/median/mean of the median
    a. Must draft email to send to deans requesting they take all measures into consideration when evaluating faculty. Hayley has drafted an email and sent it to Ruby for approval.
II. Faculty Assembly results
    a. Must draft report for Drs. Arenaz and Mitchell: Members will code responses and put them in categories along with appropriate quotes from the faculty assembly data. The committee will submit their reports to Hayley by February 24. Hayley will have a draft of the full report by the first week of March.
        i.   Hayley and Leonel: Intro and conclusion
        ii. Diana: Q1
        iii. Cho: Q2
        iv. Ari: Q3
III. QUESTION: WILL FINAL REPORT BY MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL FACULTY?

    a. Inclusion of Dr. Houston's committee
        i.   Kate sent her findings to Hayley, and she will include them in the final report.
IV. NEW BUSINESS
    a. We would like to request a faculty sick leave policy from HR. We will wait for Ruby to advise.

Dear Dr. Arenaz and Dr. Mitchell,

On November 9, 2022, Faculty Senate held a faculty assembly. Our goal was to get feedback from faculty on three items:

1. to share campus issues and administrative policies that positively affect faculty members' work environment and/or morale,
2. to share campus issues and administrative policies that negatively affect faculty members' work environment and/or morale,
3. to recommend ways to increase faculty members' morale

In order to maintain anonymity and ensure faculty members felt they could freely answer, we used temporary Top Hat accounts which contained no identifying information.

In addition, Senator Kate Houston collected additional information from faculty in her role as chair of the University Ethics Committee. She sent a link to faculty with which they could anonymously report any ethics related issues they were experiencing. Her invitation stated:

Please use this space to describe any issues you'd like me to present to Faculty Senate on your behalf.

Despite the difference in format and question type, results were very much the same. We have summarized the answers to each of the three statements, plus statements from Dr. Houston's query, below.

1) to share campus issues and administrative policies that positively affect faculty members' work environment and/or morale,

Themes:
1. Campus life: Number and diversity of events offered on campus. Examples included cultural events, plays, mixers, and vaccine drives.
   a. Free cultural events like the ballet company from NY
   b. On campus events with other faculty and students

2. Compensation: Merit increases, travel funds, internal grants, inflation check
   a. Inflation stipend helped
   b. Money for travel
   c. Merit-based pay"

3. Autonomy: Freedom to structure one's workday; freedom to work off campus; reduced teaching load for new faculty.
   a. I am left alone to structure my workday as I see fit

4. Unfortunately, a number of faculty also reported that nothing positively affected their work environment or morale.
   a. Nothing positive
   b. Sorry; I don't know

2)   to share campus issues and administrative policies that negatively affect faculty members' work environment and/or morale,

Themes:
1. Transparency: Lack of transparency in course scheduling, merit increases, inconsistent policies, and unclear communication.
   a. Inconsistent policies (answer depends on who you ask and who is asking
   b. Not following polices; lack of faculty input when making decisions
   c. Policies not applying equally to every faculty member in the college
   d. Administrators do not follow HR guidelines
   e. Stifling and confusing HR protocols

2. Micromanagement: Lack of autonomy
   a. A provost [who] stalks the halls to check faculty availability
   b. Micromanaging; warned not to speak to certain colleagues
   c. Micromanagement of faculty; mistrust of faculty

3. Faculty voice: Not being part of decision-making processes
   a. Not being able to vote as a department for Department Chair; chairs staying in their positions in perpetuity
   a. Lack of faculty input to make a decision
   b. Decisions being made without taking faculty into consideration
   c. Constant threats to the stability of our jobs

4. Salary
   a. I am paid 12k-15k less than professors at similar institutions in the same discipline
   b. Merit pay is subjective and based off popularity
   c. Salary increase does not match inflation rate

5. Support for faculty: Inability to easily obtain software, grants, time for course preparation, class size.
   a. Having to get through paperwork to install software on our computers slows down research productivity
   b. Having to wait until the following academic year to receive internal grant funds
   c. New faculty start only one week before students making it difficult to develop best possible course content and can lead to feeling behind and overwhelmed the entire semester
   d. High class sized (WIN)
   e. Large classes without support

6. Demands on time: Increasing service load, number of meetings
   a. Too many department meetings
   b. Very heavy service load
   c. Unrealistic teaching loads with high standards of research productivity
   d. Impossible service expectations
   e. Too much committee work; service load increasing

7. Disruptions
    a. No news/updates about disruptive building maintenance
    b. Noisy halls outside of classrooms

8. 4- day presence
    a. The 4-day presence is giving a perceived lack of faculty flexibility
    b. No 4-day presence requirement

3) to recommend ways to increase faculty members' morale

While this question received much of the same answers as the above question, we have provided more detailed responses as the issue of morale has come up in discussion multiple times this academic year.

Themes:

1. Transparency

General Comments

- Audits by people outside the System of unethical practices.
- Perhaps performance reviews of upper administration by faculty with real incentives or consequences.

a. Specific Transparency Issues
    i. Hiring practices and university and system policies
        1. I would then recommend more transparency with hiring practices. It is embarrassing that we just hired an administrator who does not have a degree in the department disciplines he will now be tasked to oversee and for which he will lead development of graduate programs.
        2. Respect faculty expertise in hiring new faculty members.
        3. Have Chair positions be elected by faculty and rotated every couple of years.
        4. No more hiring a chair from outside unless they can't fill from the inside.
        5. Follow outlined procedures/policies/practices and stop disregarding them
        6. Fair hiring practices
        7. More open communication regarding policies and changes
        8. Hiring qualified people who meet the requirements of job posting
    ii. Salary increases and merit
        1. Provide clear compensation when substituting for another faculty member
        2. Do not make arbitrary decisions about merit pay how is it determined?
        3. Clear and transparent merit increase policies

        4. More transparent with promotion and salary change
   iii. Clear and open communication
        1. More communication within the college.
        2. Foster a friendly work environment where faculty are not being threatened with penalties.
        3. Allowing faculty to be part of the decision-making process
        4. Real communication not just a list of what is happening
        5. Better communication opportunities
        6. Listen to the new hires as they come with new ideas and new knowledge
        7. Administration owning their mistakes and not using threatening language.
        8. Clear communications (coffee with the president is not enough).
        9. More transparency, or perhaps explain to faculty in more details, there are attempts for open communication, but faculty are afraid to speak up or afraid to ask questions
      10. Clearly defined roles in service committees

2. Respect and Trust
   a. Respect and trust faculty.
   b. Respect, trust
   c. Respect for faculty
   d. Being appreciated and respected.
   e. Award outstanding faculty member
   f. Show more respect to faculty
   g. That our voice be heard. if admin put as much time into gaining faculty trust and respect that they do sending emails and pushing unwritten policies on us, morale would definitely be lifted
   h. Respect of faculty

3. Fairness for all
   a. Follow the same standard for everyone.
   b. Don't reward bullying behavior.
   c. Some faculty are NOT present for weeks at time we know they live elsewhere and come to Laredo sporadically, or the admin don't care they are not present, they need to change these policies and make them more consistent
   d. Need to robustly address faculty being bullied by supervisors
   e. More travel money or the same amount for all faculty

4. Salary increases and merit pay
   a. Salary is the biggest issue.
   b. Increase salary.
   c. Increase salary and merit pay

d. Begin with a substantial pay increase to all faculty and staff--especially in how we handled the pandemic with absolutely no break.
e. Base our pay off of the national average of other regional universities, not just Southern ones.
f. Competitive salaries for all staff and faculty
g. Better designed merit policy
h. Higher salaries
i. Increase pay
j. Pay that at least keeps up with inflation rates.
k. More merit pay
l. Salary increases due to inflation

5. Provide mentorship, support
   a. More mentorship
   b. Hire more support personnel to support research infrastructure
   c. Provide research supportive environment (adequate lab space, quick ordering system, course release for external funded research) - increase research infrastructure
   d. Support conference attendance just to learn
   e. We are growing and the vision is to become a research institute, then faculty should get the same rights to deliver these expectations. BTW this is happening but slowly.
   f. Mentorship program
   g. Larger travel budgets
   h. Regular budget increases in departments
   i. More travel money or the same amount for all faculty
   j. Hire more faculty to increase the breadth of our expertise

6. Work autonomy
   a. NO 4-day presence requirement
   b. Provide administrative access to computers
   c. The CHOICE to do research as opposed to being told it's not going to be used for evaluation when you actually want to engage in it
   d. No meetings on Fridays

7. Appropriate course caps, teaching loads
   a. Cap large freshman classes.
   b. Decrease class sizes or adjust SCH for faculty based on large class sizes (80+) to compensate for teaching load
   c. Teaching loads reduced for tenure track faculty after the first year
   d. Let each program determine teaching loads based on efforts it cannot be similar for all programs.

8. Faculty opinions matter
    a. Show appreciation by taking our opinions into account.
    b. Taking into consideration our input for degree changes
    c. Allowing faculty to have input in design of spaces meant for working and teaching.

From Dr. Houston's email, the themes were as follows:

1. Opposition to four-day work week
2. Concern over the use of faculty and administration authored books.
3. Lack of support from administration in dealing with abusive students.
    a. Department heads won't stand up to students.
4. Expectations/pay for adjuncts.
    a. My department wants me to go back and regrade essays from over a year ago for some kind of assessment.
5. Lack of support for research.
    a. We do not provide basic research infrastructure. Example: LBV is out of emergency power supply.

In conclusion, major concerns for faculty are transparency, lack of communication, autonomy, and support. In addition, based on comments from Dr. Houston's survey, as well as the Academic Oversight Committee's own experiences leading up to the Faculty Assembly, there is a fear of speaking out. Faculty members fear retribution, retaliation, and loss of job if they publicly make comments about issues that concern them, hence the need for anonymous feedback. We are looking forward to your responses to the above-mentioned concerns.

Technology Advisory Committee

Minutes

February 6, 2023

2:00-3:00

KL 420

Meeting Facilitator: Dr. Hayley Kazen-present
Invitees:
San Juanita Hernandez– Faculty Senate Appointee-absent
Devang Khambhati-COAS-present
Hugo Garica-SSB-present
Cynthia Pina-COED-present
Sumalai Maroonroge-CNHS-present
Omar Ramirez-UC-present
Eva Hernandez-KL-absent
Marvin Bennett-President's Appointee-absent
Fred Juarez-Finance and Administration-absent
Tony Ramirez-IT-present
Enid Nuez-IT-present
Elizabeth Smith-Institutional Advancement-absent
Rene Prado-Student Success-present
Mike Munoa-IT; ex-officio-present

I.   Review and approval of minutes
II.   Old Business
        a. Faculty receiving old emails
        b. Issues with Wi-Fi
        c. Using outlook off campus
        d. Student access to One-Drive
III.   New Business
        a. IT presentation on A1 vs A5: Tony reported that they are working on automatically giving students A5 access when they are enrolled. Once they graduate, they will revert to A1 (basic). A5 includes Office (that can be downloaded), Teams, Bookings, OneDrive etc). A1 includes email, online version of Office and OneDrive
        b. Updated retention policy (Dr. Hood)-Mr. Munoa has discussed in previous meetings. In the future, emails will be sent to all faculty outlining the retention policy, archiving, use of the cloud, blocked email procedures, etc).
                i.   Email
                ii. Teams messages-not meant to record retention sensitive information.

    c.   Blocked emails (Dr. Hood)-faculty need to contact IT if emails are being blocked, and IT will work to mitigate the issue. Will be addressed by IT email referenced above.

    d.   Open/Free Source (Dr. Heredia)-Mr. Munoa is working to streamline the process. All free software must be vetted for security and accessibility. For example, there will now only be one form for both accessibility and security. Also, if one department has approval to use a software, other departments will also be able to use it without additional approval. IT can provide support when faculty need help with forms, but the process will be much quicker if the faculty member can gather all the information concerning the free programs. If requested programs do not meet accessibility requirements, TAMIU can get an exception but there has to be a plan in place for students who are unable to access it.

    e.   OIT clearance for programs such as jamovi (Dr. Heredia) See above

IV.   App

    a.   Approve or disapprove. Mr. Munoa mentioned TAMIU mobile is about to be retired. Possibly looking for an app to replace it. He explained the process would be for the RFP committee to decide on one vendor, and then Dr. Hong would need to "sell" the app to administration. At this point, the committee would like to hear what gaps we have and how the app will fill them as far as student engagement.

    b.   Student vote? The committee does not feel this is a good idea given that because of the RFO, we can't give full information.

V.   Open Agenda

    a.   Chat GPT: Ongoing and emerging. Turnitin is working on a tool to recognize AI.

    b.   Dr. Sue asked about Grammarly. She was given Karla's contact information as well as the ACE website information to sign up.