

Minutes of Faculty Senate 29 August 2014

Present: Ambrose, Atchison, Blanton, Branson, Browning, Crandall, De'Armond, DeOtte, Diego-Medrano, Dursun-Kilic, Fiaud, Hartin, Hindman, Klaehn, Osei-Hwere, Ottoson, Pendleton, Stuntz, and Takacs

Absent: Commissiong, Lee, and Shao

Guest: Harry Hueston

Call to Order: Ambrose called the meeting to order at 12:19 p.m. in Room 14 (Eternal Flame) of the Jack B. Kelley Student Center.

Approval of Minutes: Stuntz made a motion seconded by Fiaud to approve as written the minutes of the 1 May 2014 meeting of Faculty Senate. The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Harry Hueston, WT Ombuds Officer, said he sent letters to Ambrose and President O'Brien about making changes in the length of the Ombuds Officer's term as written in the Faculty Handbook. After the Ombuds position was approved two years ago, Hueston said he applied and was given the job. For the first 14 months, he could not go to training to be certified. After he went to training and became certified in April 2014, he said he understood the ethical requirements and critical role and complexity of the position, and made changes at WT. He posted on his Internet site his set of ethics and reports on areas on which he worked. He said he is there because of faculty and is an independent mediator of problems. Hueston said he is required to know the Faculty Handbook and TAMUS regulations; Barbara Petty knows the TAMUS policies. Hueston said a two-year term is not sufficient to develop trust with faculty and do the job as Ombuds Officer. The training conference he attended had 50 attendees, no one had a two-year term, and everyone suggested a term of five to 10 years. Hueston recommended a renewable, five-year term at WT. Fiaud asked who determines how many years for the term. Hueston said it is up to Senate. He also proposed the next person should go to training within 12 months of becoming Ombuds Officer. Hueston said there is no WT staff ombuds person and WT needs a student ombuds person. Hueston said he will request Dr. O'Brien obtain staff and student ombuds persons and put them through training. Blanton said students already have Student Affairs, Student Senate, etc. and questioned the need for a student ombuds position. Hueston said he is dealing with a problem with a student grade by a faculty member. He said he receives calls from people who think he is the student ombuds person. Stuntz asked if Hueston gets a course release for being Ombuds Officer and is concerned about a department giving time off for the position. Hueston said he is being paid for doing the job but does not receive release time. Hueston left the Senate meeting.

Ambrose told the history of the Ombuds position that began with discussion four to five years ago. Byrd pushed the position through. Faculty Senate in conjunction with Dr.

O'Brien set two, two-year terms. The term was short in case the Ombuds Officer did not do an adequate job. Initially, only Byrd and Stuntz applied for the position, Faculty Senate ranked them by preference and forwarded both names and the preference to Dr. O'Brien. However, Dr. O'Brien requested Faculty Senate submit at least three names to satisfy the requirements listed in the Ombuds description. Hueston then applied. Faculty Senate voted on Byrd, Hueston, and Stuntz, with the same preference as the first time, but Dr. O'Brien selected Hueston. Stuntz said in the beginning there was much concern that because the University President chooses the Ombuds person, the person selected might not be neutral. Atchison said if Senate were to obtain a list of good applications to pare down, it would be fair. Dursun-Kilic asked how to measure whether an ombuds person is doing a good job. Ambrose said twice a year, Hueston sends Faculty Senate officers and Dr. O'Brien a list of situations on which he has worked, but he cannot tell names. Ambrose said the report is difficult to evaluate when Senate does not know the names of faculty who had problems. Ambrose thinks it is good for the Ombuds Officer to go to training during the first semester. Stuntz proposed an incoming Ombuds Officer should train before starting. DeOtte suggested the incoming person should train with the Ombuds Officer during the Ombuds Officer's fourth year. Browning said perhaps a semester is enough for the new Ombuds Officer to work with the current Ombuds person. There might be a confidentiality issue if the Ombuds officers were to overlap terms. Klaehn suggested that after clients finish with the Ombuds Officer they should complete anonymous evaluations to give to Faculty Senate. Stuntz suggested putting an evaluation form online and comparing numbers of forms submitted with the number of faculty served. Klaehn suggested counting at the mid-term of the Ombuds Officer. Ambrose said as long as faculty complete evaluations sent to Faculty Senate, Senate will know the effectiveness of the Ombuds Officer. Browning said a mechanism is needed to ensure the Ombuds Officer is doing a good job for faculty. Crandall wondered whether a three-year term might be better. Ambrose said two, two-year terms should be adequate. Stuntz said a renewable two-year term is easier to get rid of a person not doing an adequate job. Browning suggested proposing a two-year term renewable for a total of six years. Stuntz said she does not like a lifetime appointment for a service position. Atchison said the little the change, the better, or there might be need to renegotiate the Ombuds position. Ambrose will discuss with Dr. O'Brien if he is agreeable that the two-year term might be renewed to six years total and whether faculty evaluations from clients are acceptable. Takacs asked the protocol for how the International Ombudsman Association selects ombuds persons. Stuntz proposed and Takacs and Hartin volunteered to form an ad hoc committee to check the lengths of terms and what other ombuds people do.

Old Business:

Ambrose said he, Anwar, Atchison, Chase, Stuntz, and Byrd (Chair) will meet next week to work on a proposed post-tenure review policy for WT. The Texas A&M University System requires tenured faculty be reviewed every five to six years.

New Business:

Senators wrote topics for Faculty Senate to consider working on this year. Parking probably should not be discussed because it would be a waste of time.

Proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook should be submitted to the Faculty Handbook Committee by 1 November. DeOtte said there are three ways to make changes: Deans Council and Provost, Faculty Senate to Provost to Deans Council, or the Faculty Handbook Committee. The Faculty Senate and Provost work on and send changes to the Faculty Handbook Committee. Changes suggested by the Faculty Handbook Committee are sent to the Provost and Faculty Senate that interact, and then to the President.

The ESS College needs to find replacement faculty members for the Curriculum, Honors Council, Parking, and University Library committees. COB needs a faculty member to replace Jafar on the Honors Council.

Stuntz said adjunct professors at other universities are treated badly. She said she is compiling a list of adjunct professors in WT departments.

Pendleton reminded the Senators they need to attend at least 75% of the Faculty Senate meetings.

The meeting of Faculty Senate adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie B. Pendleton".

Bonnie B. Pendleton, Secretary

These minutes were approved at the 12 September 2014 meeting of Faculty Senate.