

Minutes of Faculty Senate 20 February 2015

Present: Ambrose, Blanton, Browning, Byrd, Commissiong, Crandall, DeOtte, Diego-Medrano, Dursun-Kilic, Fiaud, Hartin, Hindman, Klaehn, Lee, Osei-Hwere, Ottoson, Pendleton, Shao, Stuntz, and Takacs

Absent: Branson and De'Armond

Guest: Lance Hadley substituting for Branson

Call to Order: President Ambrose called the meeting to order at 12:17 p.m. in Room 14 (Eternal Flame) of the Jack B. Kelley Student Center.

Approval of Minutes: Blanton made a motion seconded by Stuntz to approve as amended by Dursun-Kilic the minutes of the 6 February 2015 meeting of Faculty Senate. The motion passed unanimously by the Senators present.

Provost Shaffer said the SACs compliance report is due on 1 September. The report will have 300-400 pages with 800-900 references and require much work and effort. An off-site committee will read the report by 1 December. The goal is to have zero, the average number is 13-14, but some universities get 30-40 recommendations for improvement. WT will have a few months to correct the recommendations. An on-site committee will verify that WT has fixed the issues. Faculty qualifications are often a problem; if one faculty member has qualifications that do not match a course taught, the university is considered out of compliance. WT is making efforts to document potential issues and verify that faculty have taken courses and can teach the courses they teach. An on-site visit will be in March 2016. A final report will be issued to the commission and the outcome learned in December 2016. Blanton asked about 35% of universities being out of compliance on faculty qualifications. Shaffer said reviewing compliance reports in a short time does not allow time to thoroughly check if faculty have at least 18 graduate hours in subjects they teach. Shaffer said WT does not have unqualified faculty outright teaching, but there are not 18 graduate hours available in xylophone, for example. Shaffer said some faculty have very specific doctoral degrees. He said Texas A&M University Kingsville had 20 faculty out of compliance of which 18 were qualified but two were let go.

Shaffer said a persistence committee led by Amy Andersen is tasked with creating a success plan for student retention and graduation rates. Strategies are needed that cross all aspects of university life (residence living, athletics, etc). WT now has 65-66% of incoming freshmen persisting to return as sophomores the following fall. WT desires at least 70% freshmen-sophomore persistence that would represent 60 more students. Commissiong asked if there would be focus on faculty, which might be related to faculty/staff retention. It would be useful to have more Hispanic faculty to retain more Hispanic students. Between now and the end of March, each College is working on a

diversity and inclusion plan for faculty that will be implemented in the fall. What is now done will be audited and researched to devise a plan to move forward.

Shaffer said there are shake-ups in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. He said Chancellor Sharp wants to limit new doctoral programs to flagship or emerging research institutions. Shaffer said Sharp believed research should be focused on five or six universities in the state that are able to do research. The University of Texas System has five emerging research institutions in place but The Texas A&M University System has none now. Shaffer said Dr. Hallmark will continue to argue for Ph.D. programs like that in Systems Agriculture at WT because WT is in the center of agriculture and research already is in place.

Shaffer said the Texas Senate and House rank WT second best among all Texas A&M University System schools. Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 2 are identical this year for the first time. Commissioning asked why WT is favored. Shaffer said all WT metrics reported to the legislators are trending upward. A slight change in projecting enrollment benefited WT. Last time, WT was hurt by incorrectly estimating increase in graduate enrollment.

Shaffer said by the end of next week, the post-tenure review procedure should be in the hands of the Faculty Handbook Committee. DeOtte said he plans to soon send the policy to Dr. O'Brien.

Takacs asked WT protocol if a student has a medical issue and how attendance could affect a student's grade in class. Shaffer said if a student is gone for official university business, the faculty member is required to accommodate and allow the student to make up class work (excused absence). For a medical reason, the discretion lies with the faculty member who might allow the student to make up missed work. Shaffer said he hopes a faculty member would allow a student to take a missed exam, but there is no requirement to allow a student with a medical reason to make up work. Shaffer said Dr. Eddleman did not want extra work for her office to keep records of student absences. He said Mike Knox is working with students and contacting faculty for students missing classes. Shaffer said he did not know if some WT Colleges have policies. He said a student might appeal if a faculty member refuses to let the student make up work. Shaffer said WT Student Veterans Association requested that veterans who have appointments at the VA Hospital be officially excused as university business and not in the illness category. Fiaud asked if immigration appointments might be excused because international students do not have much choice when appointments are scheduled. Shaffer suggested considering on a case-by-case basis. DeOtte said some veterans suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and need drugs. He said student veterans cannot drop courses or take overloads and remain in veteran status. Shaffer said WT is hiring a counselor trained in post-traumatic stress disorder. He said he was asked to create a network of faculty/staff to be a resource for veterans to talk. He said many veterans are enrolled in WT online courses; WT now has 500 veterans and their dependents, which is a greater proportion than at Texas A&M University, College Station. Takacs said he taught a course with a syllabus and all tests online. A female

student told him she had a medical condition, so he advised her to go to Student Services. He said she kept up with tests, but missed most classes, so he dropped her grade by one letter. He said the Dean and Department Head sided with her and did not allow him to lower her grade for not attending class. Takacs said a lawyer implied he could not ask her to provide a note from her doctor. Shaffer said he did not think Takacs was inappropriate and would have sided with him because he listed the attendance requirement in his syllabus, but he said he did not know if the Dean and Department Head had additional information on the student. Shaffer said class attendance helps student persistence. Takacs said something needs to be done about the WT medical policy. Crandall suggested discretion should be up to the faculty member. But, Takacs said administration is not consistent. Shaffer said there needs to be oversight so a student missing one class would not fail. He said the Faculty Handbook said attendance should not be used purely as punitive; some students might earn an A without attending class. Takacs said he had a student who missed 3 weeks of class and earned 89% and a B grade, but the administrators gave the student an A. Takacs said he no longer takes attendance.

Blanton asked what to do about athletes missing many classes, ignoring e-mail messages to come for tutoring, and not earning passing grades. Shaffer recommended Blanton contact the athletic department for the student compliance liaison and coach to warn the student about losing eligibility. Blanton also said a student with physical disabilities is in her class. Shaffer said even if a student has disabilities or WT Disability Services makes recommendations, a faculty member is not required to accommodate recommendations for the student.

Browning said a student in her class was arrested for burglary but suspected also of sexual assault. A friend of the victim is in the same group in the same class. Student Affairs allowed the student back in school. The accused student sent Browning a cryptic message through WTClass and cannot come to class. Shaffer suggested telling the student he cannot come to class because it would not work being in the same class as the friend of the victim. Shaffer suggested re-forming all the groups but not telling the students why the groups were rearranged. Shaffer said anything academic is considered by Academic Affairs, and anything disciplinary is the business of Student Affairs. Browning said faculty should be alerted to felony arrests on public record. Fiaud said a victim and felon being in the same class might cause the victim to feel uncomfortable.

Stuntz said the revised instructional responsibilities section of the annual review of faculty performance was not the same as approved by Faculty Senate. Shaffer said proposed changes go through Faculty Senate and Deans Council and eventually to the Faculty Handbook Committee that ultimately sends the documents to the President. DeOtte said the Faculty Handbook Committee tried to reconcile the different versions into a single document. He said faculty could select items among examples suggested. He said the biggest changes in the form are more specific language in a few places and differences in percentages listed as ranges for the items. Klaehn asked if the Deans and Faculty Senate might have met to discuss and mesh their versions. Shaffer said

Faculty Senate meets only every other week and the Deans Council meets every week, so the process is slow. Revising the post-tenure review policy worked better because of the refined procedure. Stuntz asked why faculty were supposed to use the new form for annual evaluation of instructional responsibilities when the form was not in effect in 2014. Fiaud said she wished for better communication. Shaffer said each College could determine which form to use for 2014. Shaffer said he did not know if faculty were consulted. He said it probably would have been best to wait until next year, but changes did not seem substantial enough to harm faculty in their evaluations. Blanton asked if a department might have decided which form to use for 2014. Shaffer said the calendar year and academic year are out of sync. From conversations with Systems attorneys the Faculty Handbook in place at the beginning of academic year is the governing document, and previous versions should not be used. Shaffer said faculty should have known the new form was coming because of previous discussions. Shaffer said instructional change started because no one wanted total dependence on CIEQ scores to evaluate faculty teaching. Dursun-Kilic said the revised form puts 40% of the total score on a faculty member's expression of what he is doing, so the department head has opportunity to be biased. Shaffer said the evaluation system is always going to be subjective (perhaps biased) by as much as 80-90%. He said a department head must make decisions and judge faculty. Shaffer said WT has standards, but they take away some faculty creativity and autonomy. Faculty should monitor and discuss if a department head is biased. Dursun-Kilic said faculty in her department want to see their evaluations in advance because they do not have adequate time to review faulted items before meeting with direct supervisors. DeOtte said no time period is specified in the Faculty Handbook. Shaffer suggested not signing unless a faculty member has had adequate time to review the evaluation. Shaffer said he will discuss with the Deans. Commissioning said faculty can formally appeal within 5 days after the evaluation, but Dursun-Kilic said she wants time to review the evaluation before her appointment. Crandall asked if faculty are required to meet with the department head. Shaffer said faculty do not need to meet but do need to receive and sign the evaluation. Shaffer left.

Ambrose said the post-tenure review document finally was finished with no changes in big concepts since the previous version. DeOtte said the final document had not been viewed yet by the Faculty Handbook Committee. He said Shaffer wanted to take the document to the Deans Council. It is anticipated the final document will be available before the next meeting of the Faculty Handbook Committee.

Texas legislation on allowing firearms on campus was discussed. DeOtte moved and Diego-Medrano seconded a motion for Faculty Senate not to take a position on the political issue. Fiaud said the University of Texas took a position and Commissioning said the Texas A&M Chancellor took a position. DeOtte provided documents that faculty of the Texas A&M University System are supposed to remain neutral on political policies. DeOtte said he asked Dr. O'Brien about the WT policy and whether Faculty Senate should endorse a policy or not. He said the System attorney said Faculty Senate would not be prevented from taking issue on campus. DeOtte said Dr. O'Brien thinks the legislative bills will pass and the only outstanding issue would be which areas

of campus would be exempt from firearms. DeOtte moved and Fiaud seconded a motion to table discussion until another time when more Faculty Senators are available.

New Business:

Ambrose said packets for faculty to evaluate administrators will not be ready until 23 February. Senators should go to Ambrose's office to pick up forms for faculty in their departments. Sealed envelopes with evaluations must be returned at the 6 March meeting of Faculty Senate where the packets will be opened and then taken to Jarvis Hampton.

Stuntz asked how many other Senators were asked by WT Admissions to make recruiting calls to perspective students. Osei-Hwere said her department was. Dursun-Kilic said faculty in her department are expected to recruit students. Crandall said faculty in his department recruit students throughout the year. Stuntz said faculty in her department are not expected to call people and that calling would be sales.

Ambrose said Dr. O'Brien will attend the next meeting of Faculty Senate.

The Faculty Senate meeting was adjourned at 1:45 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 6 March 2015 meeting of Faculty Senate.