

## **Faculty Senate Minutes**

January 14, 2022

**Attended:** Ambrose, Bell, Brooks, Brown, Butler, Clark, Correa, Crosman, Denton, Fairweather-Leitch, Farren, Gill, Hoffman, Holland, Humphreys, Issa, Manfredi, Medlock, McCauley, Pinkham, Salazar, Spencer, Tarpley, Tyrer, Whaley,

**Absent:** Yarbrough

**Guest(s):** Jeff Babb

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The meeting was called to order at 12:15 pm by President Anne Medlock.

### **Visit by Dr. Terry, Executive Vice President and Provost**

Dr. Terry began his visit to the Senate by taking questions from the Senate floor.

### **Online Office Hours.**

A question was asked concerning the inconsistency across the colleges in relation to online office hours.

Dr. Terry explained that he informed the college deans of their ability to allow faculty to hold online office hours for the rest of January due to the increase in Covid across campus. Since there is little agreement on best practices, each dean will make the decision for his/her college. Deans and department heads have, however, been encouraged to work with faculty on classroom options consider numbers of infected staff, students, and faculty. Terry noted that accommodations are not solely the purview of the provost's office.

### **Early Spring Schedule**

Dr. Terry was asked about the early opening for spring semester.

Semester schedules are established well in advance and unfortunately do not always coincide with the local independent school districts. At present CISD and AISD do not coordinate their schedules. The early return made it difficult for the academic community including the early payment date of Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> for students. Future spring semesters should begin a week later as they have done in the past. The Senate's VP serves on the scheduling committee and can report to the Senate about any changes to the 2023 schedule.

### **Vaccinations and Testing of Students**

Several Senators indicated that students believed testing and vaccinations were not freely available to them or did not have accurate information. It was suggested that additional ways of reaching students and distributing information should be considered.

Terry indicated that he would contact Mike Knox, Vice President for Student Enrollment, Engagement, and Success, about finding more methods of informing students of free testing, vaccinations, and masks available to them. At present, Terry noted that 3900 N95 or equivalent masks were available. He agreed to work on methods of getting information to students by the close of business.

### **Handbook Committee on Promotion and Tenure**

Currently the Senate committee is working on improving tenure and promotion information in the faculty handbook including defining unclear terms. Senators asked whether additional action needed to be considered.

Terry suggested that the committee was “on the right track” in providing clearer explanation of the processes. He also suggested that there are a couple of problems with WT’s tenure process related to the inability of those involved to agree on the meaning of both votes given for tenure.

Using the example of a law firm, Terry noted that the first vote is to affirm that the candidate’s work meets the requirements of tenure. The second vote is to affirm the candidate’s ability to serve the best interests of the firm. However, he noted that there is wide-spread disagreement across the colleges as to the meaning of the second vote. Ideally the two votes would be used as in this example:

Vote 1 would affirm the candidate meets the requirements of the position.

Vote 2 would affirm the candidate as a long-term asset to the university.

The danger in not having consensus is the inability of the provost to accurately represent the process to the Board of Regents when requested. Terry noted that several states are doing away with tenure at public universities and that Texas may eventually follow suit although nothing is being considered at this time.

Another issue of concern is the lack of consistency across the colleges in assessing junior faculty. At present, all senior faculty should review the APS of all junior faculty within a department, meet to discuss the progress, and issue a short summary of their review to the department head prior to the department head’s review. Terry noted that if this is not being done in a department, then the process of shared governance is broken and the review process is not being done correctly.

(Babb, Brooks, Butler, Clark, Holland, Medlock, Pinkham)

After responding to questions, Dr. Terry presented information on several current issues across the university.

### **ENROLLMENTS**

Terry reported that enrollments were initially down 1.5 % but have now reached a 5% decrease. Although he noted that it's not unusual to see a small change, the change from Spring 2019 to Spring 2022 shows a reduction of over 600 students. Although he affirmed that no reductions in personnel are currently taking place, eventually continued enrollments will affect all areas of the university. The influx of federal money has bought time and presents no immediate risk of cuts to faculty/staff positions.

Terry noted that changes in recruitment and retention need to be made. For example the current transfer system is not as efficient as it might be. At times students are not getting credit for a class they've taken elsewhere and when another university accepts the credit, the student is likely to apply there. Additionally, he noted that too much marketing is aimed at donors and alumni and not at students. This past year only 70 marketing posts were recorded on Instagram which is a major information point for students. On the positive side, campus tours have revised their process and now students on tours will take part of activities in several of the colleges resulting in more interactive visits. Terry suggested that improvements now, while people are open to change, will improve our efforts and response in the future.

## **FUNDRAISING**

An announcement of an addition of \$10 million for academics is scheduled for spring or summer with a disproportionate amount allotted to the College of Education and Social Sciences for a significant advancement. The remainder will fund additional professorships in the College of Engineering and the Paul Engler College of Agriculture & Natural Sciences. Terry affirmed that fund raising for Academic Affairs is proceeding well.

## **BUDGET**

Terry reaffirmed that budget cuts have not been taken, even from colleges that are running a deficit. Spending has been cut, but that is not the same as a cut to the budget. Currently \$40 million are being spent on construction of the old education building, but that is not a choice made by WT but by the state which is providing economic stimulus money for construction only. The university will request additional stimulus money in the near future for upgrading the museum.

Terry concluded his visit at 1:15 pm.

Minutes of the November 19, 2021, meeting were approved as presented.

- Motion to approve: Humphreys
- Second: Holland
- Motion passed

## **CURRENT BUSINESS**

### **Faculty Development Leave**

An anonymous vote was taken by survey ranking the two applications submitted. The ranking being forward to administration was:

- Dr. Erick Butler
- Dr. Daniel Bloom

**Joint Student/Faculty Committee on Academic Affairs**

Tabled

**Travel Equity Committee**

Tabled

**Handbook Committee**

Tabled

**Hiring Student Workers for Grading**

Tabled

**Other New Business**

- Motion to Adjourn: Holland
- Second: Bell
- Motion: Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Pat Tyrer