

Faculty Senate Minutes

February 11, 2022

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

Absent: Manfredi

Guest(s): Jeff Babb

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

Visit by Dr. Wendler, Executive Vice President and Provost

Dr. Wendler began his visit by highlighting recent initiatives.

Educational Incentive: the education incentive benefit which created 50% off tuition has been established to benefit people who work here and their families, but will also aid in recruiting new faculty and staff to our campus.

Online Rankings: positive recognition has been received for the University's online programs. He noted that 35% of SCH were already being generated by online courses which was helpful during the past couple of years. The intention is to increase opportunities for online offerings brought on by the changing nature of student needs and changing demographics with many more working people and single-parent households.

Transfer Courses – in order to increase enrollments, there has been a drive to accept more transfer courses. This allows WT to be more competitive with other institutions which able to reduce their costs.

Educational Debt: although it has not always been popular with some, concerns about the high costs of education demands that some students attend community colleges for the first two years to reduce their expenses. An initiative to reduce textbook costs are in the early stages. Wendler pointed out that 39% of students who leave the university do so because of financial reasons. With rising costs, this reduction in students could get significantly worse within the next decade and it's important for all members of the university community to be sensitive to the high costs of education. He suggested having the Senate form a group to review possible ways to cut costs for students separate from any cost cutting associated with the university's administration or expenditures. He stated he was open to anything that reduces costs.

Dr. Wendler completed his short presentation and took questions from the Senate floor.

He was asked what percentage of transfer students complete their degrees compared to those who begin at WT.

Wendler reported that 80% of students who complete an Associates Degree with a goal to transfer to a university graduate in approximately three years—a very high percentage. Freshmen who begin at WT graduate in 5-6 years. 50% of those that start at community college don't finish and drop out. However, because the community college is far less expensive those drop-outs have not invested a lot of money and leave without significant debt. Part of the draw for people to work is the increased wages being offered. He used the example of Hobby Lobby which starts its employees at \$18/hr which is more than a 3rd grade teacher in Borger makes. Thus, market conditions make it even more difficult to stay in school.

Wendler concluded his visit at 12:35 pm.

Minutes of the January 28, 2022, meeting were approved as amended.

- Motion to approve: Brown
- Second: Farren
- Motion passed.

CURRENT BUSINESS

Joint Student/Faculty Committee on Academic Affairs

Clark noted that the committee is in the process of exchanging meeting times. The student meeting is scheduled for Feb 22nd. Medlock offered to bring N95 masks for anyone wanting to attend the meeting. The faculty committee will meet for a few minutes after the Senate meeting today.

Handbook Committee

Brooks reported that the committee has met and put their comments in a folder on WTClass. Medlock requested that Senators review the materials in preparation for discussion at the next Senate meeting.

Notes from Meeting with the Chancellor

Medlock, Pinkham, and Tyrer attended a Zoom meeting with the Chancellor along with Staff Council and reported the following:

- PPE – according to the Chancellor sufficient materials are available to faculty and staff. Those with Covid can also request monoclonal antibodies by contacting the Provost's office or contacting Nim Kidd at A&M.
- It was explained that the “trickle-down” of information doesn't work well at WT and asked for more attention given to information being shared with departments
- Alumni Scholar Program – was explained that any WT alumni is eligible to nominate a student for admission to WT. There is no scholarship associated with the nomination, but students are relieved from paying a registration fee.

- Advanced Degrees—the Chancellor promoted faculty and/or staff to complete their degrees or attain a higher degree at any of the A&M Sister Schools for no cost. Program information is available from the system office.
- - there is an alumni scholar program so they don't have to pay registration; anyone can nominate a student for the alumni scholar program—no scholarship attached but don't have to pay registration fee
- Department of Emergency Management has become a part of the A&M System so needs can be handled much more efficiently.

Third Year Review Report

Bell compiled comments received approving and disapproving of the proposed changes to the third-year review. These were disseminated to Senators with most of the passionate arguments being against changes.

Several Senators commented that they had not ever received yearly reviews from administrators or from senior faculty as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. It was noted that faculty should be given as much time as possible to improve, especially for faculty being considered for termination. Humpherys reported that the COB has a very structured review process in which mentoring time is calendared and required of all faculty. Several Senators reported that they had never received senior faculty reviews. After much discussion it appeared as if no standard was in place across the colleges for review of junior faculty. A motion was made to compile responses concerning faculty review processes in colleges and departments where possible. (Babb, Brooks, Crossman, Farren, Humpherys, Medlock, Pinkham, Tarpley, Tyrer)

- Motion to report faculty review process: Tyrer
- Second: Humpherys
- Motion passed.

Medlock will email specifics of what information is to be gathered. After collating the comments, the Senate will address the results in a future meeting at which time a decision will be made on how to report the results to the administration. Volunteers who agreed to gather information are as follows by college:

- NHS- Farren
- COB - Humpherys
- ECSM – Gill
- FAH - Medlock
- ESS- Denton

Interfolio Issues

Several Senators commented that Interfolio was problematic in terms of the transfer of information and the structuring of materials. Medlock agreed to contact Amy Anderson, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, concerning issues with Interfolio.

NEW BUSINESS

Comprehensive Peer Review (CPE) Committees

Babb explained the spreadsheet functions which list by number those eligible to serve. Medlock will send out invitations to serve based on numbers of those not doing a CPE, not on a committee last year, and currently tenure or tenure-track. The following positions will form the committee:

- Agriculture and Natural Science (3)
- Engineering (3)
- Education and Social Sciences (3)
- CPE Outside Members
- Business 2
- FAH 2
- Nursing – Vanessa Fiaud & Helen Reyes

Magister Optimus

Medlock emailed the Magister Optimus requirements to Senators to distribute to colleges and departments. Although the due date is in April, early notification to faculty is encouraged.

Reducing Student Cost Committee Consideration

After a brief discussion, it was decided that the President's request to form a Faculty Senate committee on reducing costs would not be done at this time. Since administrative costs can't be considered, it would seem impossible for Senators to achieve any success in this regard.

Low Evaluation Scores, Drops, Failures

Several Senators mentioned that new policies or procedures concerning student drops and failures was under consideration. Medlock agreed to bring up the subject with Amy Anderson.

Other New Business

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

The meeting was adjourned at 1:31 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Pat Tyrer