

Approved Faculty Senate Minutes, Meeting, May 6, 2011

JBK Rm 11

President Byrd called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm.

Senators in attendance: Ambrose, Bartlett, Bigham, Branson, Byrd, Castillo, Chenoweth, Commissiong, Davis, Dursun-Kilic, Friske, Issa, Lee, Parr-Scanlin, Pendleton, Rausch, Rosa, Trela, Vizzini, Wilson.

Substitutes: Osei-Hwhere for Browning. Absent Landram.

Newly elected Senators, who will all serve 2011-2014 terms, also in attendance Rajan Alex (ECS), Syed Anwar (Management, Marketing & General Business), Kris Drumheller (Communication), Musa Jafar (IDM), Dave Rausch (Political Science & Criminal Justice), Steve Severn (English, Philosophy & Modern Languages), and Rocky Ward (Life, Earth & Environmental Sciences. Substitute Mary Rausch for new Librarian Senator Sidnye Johnson. New Senators unable to attend were Valecia Carter-Vaughn (Nursing 2011-14), Matt Keunnen (NHS at large 2011-14) and Frank Landram (BUSI at large 2011-14).

1. Minutes
 - a. After Vizzini moved and Davis seconded, the preliminary minutes from April 29 were approved as submitted.
 - b. Preliminary minutes from March 25 were approved electronically.
2. Old Business
 - a. Magister Optimus has been selected. It was a secret ballot, results known only to President Byrd. The selected individual will be named at the Fall Faculty/Staff Convocation.
 - b. Regents Professor, three nominees are preparing their materials. Bruce Brasington, Bob Beckley, and Gary Byrd. Old and new senators will review and vote on that material.
 - c. Budget Hearings. Byrd expressed the hope that people are attending those meetings held at the colleges. There has been a series of meetings, with presentations by Dr. O'Brien, followed by questions. The public hearings will begin next week, at which each dean will present a proposal relative to the budget.
3. Senate Office Elections.
 - a. Commissiong nominated Gary Byrd for President, Davis seconded. Branson moved nominations ceased, D. Rausch seconded. Elected unanimously.
 - b. Issa nominated Bill Ambrose for Vice-President, and Commissiong seconded. Branson moved and Bigham seconded that nominations cease. Elected unanimously.
 - c. Ambrose nominated Bonnie Pendleton for Secretary, seconded by Davis. Davis moved and Wilson seconded that nominations cease. Elected unanimously.
4. New Business
 - a. Gary Byrd expressed his appreciation for out-going senators and their stellar service.
 - b. Commencement Speaker Committee. Need an additional Senator to join the committee, as they are now looking for December speaker. Holliday volunteered.

- c. Resolution recommending the foundation of a faculty ombuds officer. Discussion involved the following: term deliberately left open-ended to allow the possibility of an excellent person continuing to serve in the position; it was suggested the introductory paragraph be revised to include the phrase “and in compliance with U.S. law and TAMUS policies and procedure.” Rosa moved and Vizzini seconded that the resolution as shown as Appendix I be approved. Approved.

5. Announcements

- a. Byrd plans to have voluntary, unofficial meetings by senators through the summer, to allow senate to respond quickly to issues that may arise through the summer. Byrd will be in JBK 11 at noon every Friday through the summer, beginning June 3. All are invited to join him.
- b. Pieces on the Edge premiers tonight at the WT gallery at Sunset Center.
- c. Vermillion will be having a BFA exhibit, 5-9pm.

Meeting was adjourned.

These minutes were approved on 2 September 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Chenoweth, outgoing Secretary

Appendix I

In response to the initiative of the president and the concerns of the president, the Faculty Senate resolves:

Whereas WTAMU has an Ombuds Office to provide services to students; and

Whereas faculty and professional librarians may also encounter conflicts that could be resolved with the services of an Ombuds Officer;

Faculty Senate hereby resolves that a Faculty Ombuds Officer be designated, with the following provisions:

The Faculty Ombuds Officer will serve as an independent, neutral and impartial, confidential, and informal resource for faculty and professional librarians at West Texas A&M University, and in compliance with U.S. law and TAMUS policies and procedure. The Ombuds officer will strive to adhere

to the professional ethical principles and best practices as defined by the International Ombudsman Association, summarized below.

Ethical Principles:

INDEPENDENCE: The Faculty Ombuds Officer is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY: The Faculty Ombuds Officer, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Faculty Ombuds Officer does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The Faculty Ombuds Officer holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

INFORMALITY: The Faculty Ombuds Officer, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

Purpose:

The Faculty Ombuds Officer will function as a confidential, neutral resource for faculty and professional librarians to raise and clarify issues and concerns, identify options, and request assistance to informally resolve workplace conflicts. When informal resolution of conflicts fail, or where informal resolution is not advisable, the Ombuds Officer will counsel faculty regarding their options for formal action and direct them to the appropriate university rules, resources, and offices.

The Faculty Ombuds Officer will inform the Provost and the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate of the type, volume, and severity of the conflicts and issues he or she observes. This information will be useful in guiding policy decision-making for the continual improvement of fairness, equity, and respect at West Texas A&M University.

Services:

Faculty will be able to seek guidance regarding concerns at any time, without fear of reprisal. The Faculty Ombuds Officer will hear individual or broader systemic faculty concerns confidentially. Whereas the response of the Ombuds Officer will be tailored to the dynamics of the situation and the nature of the concerns, generally the Ombuds Officer's role will be to assist parties in reaching informal resolutions that are consistent with the rules and policies of the university. The Ombuds Officer may supplement, but not replace or interfere with, formal processes available to the university community. The Ombuds Officer does not serve notice to the University, cannot impose remedies or sanctions, or enforce or change any policy, rule, or procedure. However, the Ombuds Officer may serve as a communication resource and catalyst for institutional change for the university by reporting trends and identifying opportunities to enhance policies and procedures.

More specifically, the Faculty Ombuds Officer will:

Provide faculty with individual assistance with university-related conflicts or concerns

- Listen impartially and give unbiased feedback

- Provide a confidential place to collaboratively explore complaints, clarify issues, and consider options
- Point faculty toward available services and resources

Assist with early problem-solving, to minimize the escalation of conflict

- Encourage and empower employees to find their own solutions to problems
- Provide support for addressing work place problems
- Facilitate communication when conflict arises
- Serve as facilitator in group problem-solving
- With the interested party's consent, consult with university units and departments to obtain more information about the issue and explore options for conflict resolution
- Suggest the redirection of matters to formal channels when appropriate

Identify and report about campus trends and problem areas

- Make recommendations regarding changes in policy and procedure
- Promote equality, inclusion and access for all persons
- Advocate for and model fairness, equity, and a healthy work environment

Limitations:

- The Ombuds Officer does not have any formal decision-making capability, or the ability to determine "Guilt" or "Innocence" in any matter.
- The Ombuds Officer does not offer legal advice and does not act as an advocate or representative of any individual or entity.
- The Ombuds Officer does not offer psychological counseling.
- The Ombuds Officer steps aside when a grievance is filed.
- The Ombuds Officer does not arbitrate or adjudicate grievances or disputes.

Appointment process and qualifications of the Faculty Ombuds Officer:

- The Faculty Ombuds Officer is appointed (evaluated and reappointed) by the Faculty Senate in consultation with the Provost
- Important qualifications for Faculty Ombuds Officer include:
 - Tenured faculty member
 - Knowledge of university policies and resources
 - Extensive cross campus experience
 - Strong communication skills
 - Ability to be objective and neutral
 - Strong conflict resolution skills
 - Commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Faculty Ombuds Officer role
 - Understanding of cross-cultural values and commitment to diversity
- The University Faculty Ombuds Officer will be provided a section of administrative release each semester, funded out of the Provost's Office.