

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – Special Meeting June 5, 2020

Senators Present: Hisham Al-Bataineh, Matthew Alexander, Rudolf Bohm, Jieming Chen, Maribel Gonzalez-Garcia, Jeff Glick, James Glusing, Kelly Hall, Kendra Huff, Patricia Huskin, Robert Kowalsky, Ya-Wen Liang, Steven Lukefahr, Lifford McLauchlan, Craig A. Meyer, Patrick Mills, Kyle Milsap, Richard Miller, Mais Najim, Ryan Paul, Larry Peel, William Procasky, Christine Radcliff, Kathleen Rees, Chika Rosenbaum, Alex Sanchez-Behar, Nick J. Sciuillo, Ari Sherris, Amber Shepherd, Ramiro Torres, Alinna Umphreys, Maria Velez-Hernandez,

Senators Absent: Lucy Camacho, Simona Hodis, Michael Houf, Tanner Machado, Humberto Perotto, Hui Shen, Velda Soydas, Subbarao Yelisetti, Teresa Young

Call to Order and Quorum Call.

This meeting of the Faculty Senate was held and recorded online through Blackboard Collaborate due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements. A recording of this meeting and a PDF version of the slideshow can be found on the [Faculty Senate Website](#) under the heading [Digital Faculty Senate Meetings](#).

At 1:04 p.m., President Sherris asked the parliamentarian, Patricia Huskin, if enough members were present for a quorum. Senator Huskin replied in the affirmative.

I. Approval of Minutes from May 5, 2020 Faculty Senate Meeting.

President Sherris motioned for approval of the previous meeting minutes. Senator Meyer seconded. Minutes were approved.

II. Presentations

a) Provost Allen Rasmussen

Senate President Sherris started by reading the TAMU System statement regarding camps reopening plans.

“Planning for the 2020-2021 academic year in The Texas A&M University System continues with an unwavering commitment to the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff, and in pursuit of the highest academic quality in our teaching, research, and service. With those foundational commitments at the forefront, the universities and agencies of the System plan to open this academic year and resume face-to-face instruction unless evidence or directives mandate otherwise. Making informed decisions on classes, activities, and residential living while remaining flexible to adjust as needed, we will act responsibly, assuring as best as we are able, the safety of students, faculty, and staff” (The Texas A&M University System’s COVID-19 Response Plan for Reopening Member Campuses and Programs for 2020-2021, May 21, 2020, p.1). <https://www.tamus.edu/pdf/Reopening-Plan-REVISED-FINAL.pdf>

Provost Rasmussen then informed the Senators that the System Board of Regents met the previous week and passed the guidelines for reopening, which would allow the

campuses to change their calendar for Fall 2020. College Station will be starting classes 3 days early, will not come back after Thanksgiving, and will have online finals. Commerce will not return after Thanksgiving either. TAMU-CC has not yet made a decision. Our students have been contacting campus asking if TAMUK will be doing the same thing. System has now asked TAMUK to make a decision and to start letting the students know what the plan is for the Fall semester. Provost Rasmussen proposed 5 options to consider, 3 for this Fall 2020 semester and an additional 2 that might apply to Fall 2021.

Currently we are scheduled to start August 24, 2020 (Monday). Thanksgiving is November 26-27. We return on the 30th and the last day of classes is Dec 2, 2020 (three days).

1. Stay the same and hope all goes well and adjust on the fly. (our current model)
2. Keep current calendar, but provide the last three days online/hybrid and online finals.
3. Start three days early keep classes the same and have online finals.

These last two are not probably this year, but could be discussed for the future because of the potential long term concerns. The main issue is that these two alter holiday schedules ½ way through the year.

4. Start two days early and remove labor day holiday and have online finals.
5. Keep the current start date and remove labor day holiday with two days on online instruction (one T/TH class and one MWF class).

He is also open to any other suggestions that the Senate may have. He is also asking the Deans and Colleges for their input. Provost Rasmussen then opened the floor for questions.

Q: Senate President Sherris – How does College Station’s proposed calendar meet the required number of weeks?

A: The Coordinating Board requires 15.5 weeks. College Station will meet the requirement because the week of finals counts toward this total because they moved the 3 days after Thanksgiving to the start of the semester. They will still meet the same number of days.

Q: Senate President Sherris - How do any of these options address any changes in the pandemic?

A: These options do not account for any spikes or changes. These are only if everything stays face-to-face all the way through the semester.

Provost Rasmussen mentioned that if you read through the guidelines that the System encourages all students who return to campus to not leave campus, to help minimize contact.

Q: Senator Rees – Do we have any idea what portion of classes will be taught face-to-face versus having been moved online for Fall?

A: We do not have a final number right now. There are a lot of students that are concerned about going online. We are trying to run through many scenarios to see how we can go. By using social distancing requirements classroom capacities will only be 1/3 or 40% capacity. Looking at what physical spaces we have available for face-to-face or hybrid classes.

Comment: Senator Kowalsky – If there is going to be a brief online period after thanksgiving (1-2 class meetings), then those class days won't be very valuable. Moving those class meetings to the start of the semester would have more value for face-to-face teaching.

Comment: Senator Glick – Advocates against option 1, it would be harder for faculty to craft finals in both face-to-face and online formats. It would be better to go with option 2, letting faculty plan from the start for online finals.

Q: Senator Rees – Have the academic advisors been asked for their opinion, since they are the ones registering the students?

A: They have not been having any conversations with the students about this. The concern would be about starting early as it might impact students' current personal calendars.

All core courses will now have an online section. Freshman parents want students to have online classes, but the students themselves would prefer face-to-face.

Comment: Senator Huskin – Option 2 would be the least disruptive to students and give faculty maximum time to prepare for an online final. This is the least disruptive of the options.

Comment: Senator Peel – He has classes (and many others in Engineering) that have quite a few labs, and the time after thanksgiving is used by many lab courses. Would we be disrupting valuable lab time?

Provost Rasmussen replied that this is an unusual year where there are only 3 class days after Thanksgiving (Mon-Wed), dead day is Thursday, and finals would start on Friday. Could labs be uploaded and done earlier? Could labs be held on Saturdays?

If students want face-to-face, could we shift our class days to be from 8am – 8pm and add Saturdays? (as College Station has done) There are many different options being looked at.

Q: Senator Velez-Hernandez – If we move to start 3 days early, does that mean dead week moves to the week of Thanksgiving?

A: If we move to shift the three days, then yes it would move to the week prior.

Comment: Senator Milsap – Music uses the days before dead day for students to do their final performances. If the schedule is moved up, it would be beneficial for their department.

Q: Senator Huskin – Is there an idea when the decision will be made?

A: Has input from Deans, waiting to hear from Faculty Senate then will meet with President Hussey. The decision should be made fairly soon.

Q: Senator Rees – Proper social distancing is not available in most faculty offices. Will there be other rooms available to have face-to-face meetings with students?

A: There are already discussions happening about this. They are working to find ways to schedule conference rooms, etc.

Q: Senate President Sherris – Can you speak about Freshmen in the Valley and their parents concern; also can you give a Freshman enrollment projection.

A: The parents of those students would prefer online courses, but the students themselves are signing up for mostly face-to-face classes.

As far as enrollment we are projecting to be about the same as last year. If we look at Summer, we are about even with the previous year. We are about 100 hours below where we were in the last count year (2yrs ago). We might be able to make that up in the second summer session to get even with the count year. We are about flat with freshmen who have accepted and said they are coming. 450 students have gone through online orientation. Freshman class is anticipated to be about the same as last year. Many other schools are projecting a 10% drop from last year.

III. Report of Officers

Senate President Sherris: Dr. Chen and I met with President Hussey and Provost Rasmussen via Blackboard Collaborate on Wednesday 3 June 2020. The President, at our request, discussed budget issues. State leadership has asked 4-year public universities (neither community colleges, nor health related institutions) to return 5% of their General Revenue funding and General Revenue related funding. The General Revenue funds are fairly straightforward in the words of the President, but the General Revenue-related funds can get into a lot of items that are historically exempted from budget cuts, so the President, as of Wednesday, was still working with a government relations team to get them to clarify exactly what is meant by General Revenue-related funds. The President went on to say that we are also asking for clarification on when the budget cut of 5% begins. It might mean 5% for this entire year (September 1, 2019; and another 5%

September 1, 2020). The President then took a broad-brush approach to ask how we make these cuts.

The President says we are essentially cutting the budget by eliminating unfilled positions within administrative offices and some select unfilled positions at the college level. Additionally, I asked if there have been discussions of pay cuts for all university employees? The President said that we have not had discussions of furloughs or salary cuts, but that he knows these are happening at universities around the country. The President went on to say that faculty ought to be discussing the 5% cut and how we can plan for a 10% cut. The President suggests that Senators should be informing faculty that budget cuts are going on and that they should be discussing these with Chairs and Deans. I asked, "What guidelines are TAMUK college deans given with respect to budget cuts?" the President responded by say that some deans are responding by eliminating vacant positions, others are doing some other things which he did not specify.

On the topic of teaching modalities during Fall 2020: A variety of teaching modes are in discussion such as online; hybrid; face-to-face; hyflex, labs, fieldwork, practicum, etc.) for the fall.

The hyflex teaching mode blends face-to-face and online synchronous teaching through the use of one or more webcams and a learning management system or simply a video conferencing platform (e.g., Blackboard Collaborate, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.). In an ideal hyflex mode, the physical classroom would be large enough for all enrolled students and faculty to be 6ft from one another, it would have a disinfectant handwipe dispenser by each entrance on the wall, and a podium set 6 feet from students in a clearly marked area. Because hyflex modes of teaching are always online and face-to-face, students who self-isolate or are quarantined, would be able to continue to attend class online and reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Students who are concerned about the health risks of attending any face-to-face classes would also have the option of taking those classes online. Also, should the pandemic spike, the pivot to online only instructional modes might be partially facilitated.

With respect to University emergency COVID-19 response to concerns President Hussey has designated Randy Hughes, who is chief of staff in the President's office and as his backup, Shane Creel to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 issues and concerns from students, administrators, faculty, staff, and the public at large.

Q: Senator Miller asked to clarify that when it was said that we would be offering classes both ways, does that mean in my face-to-face class if I have 3 students that want to do it online I am teaching online simultaneously with my face-to-face class?

A: No decision has been made, but if I remember correctly, in an Emergency Management Team meeting there was mention of making a bulk purchase of webcams to make sure all classrooms/faculty have access to one.

Comment: Senator Chen clarified that he thinks the University's thoughts on hyflex means using Blackboard Collaborate to record/stream your in-person class lectures for those students who do not want to come to campus.

Q: Senator Velez-Hernandez is this something that the faculty can choose to do, or is this something that will be required? The hyflex. Have conversations happened about how to control testing in hyflex?

A: Not that Senate President Sherris has heard nor been involved in.

Comment: Senator Peel wondered if there was a way to have a meeting with the Blackboard people to see what options are available for formative assessment, and to bring other questions the faculty have about Blackboard. He also mentioned that there is already a budget to support Blackboard and maybe that could be used to pay for a training.

IV. New Business

a) Polling for G. Allen Rasmussen – Fall Calendar 2020

Senate President Sherris reminded everyone of the options that we are voting on as the Faculty Senate recommendation for the Fall 2020 calendar.

1. Stay the same and hope all goes well and adjust on the fly. (our current model)
2. Keep current calendar, but provide the last three days online/hybrid and online finals.
3. Start three days early keep classes the same and have online finals.

The final vote count was as follows:

- 3 votes for Option 1
- 16 votes for Option 2
- 5 votes for Option 3
- 4 abstain

The official recommendation from the Faculty Senate for Fall Calendar 2020 is to keep the current calendar but provide the last three days online/hybrid and online finals.

b) Polling for G. Allen Rasmussen about Fall 2021

Senator Glick moved to table this poll. Senator Miller seconded. The vote count for tabling this poll was as follows: 25 yes, 1 no, 2 abstain. This poll was tabled.

V. Announcements

President Sherris shared the following reminders:

- Please email all motions and resolutions to FacultySenateOfficers@tamuk.edu no later than Tuesday, August 18, 2020, 5:00 pm CDT if you would like the Executive Committee to add them to the Tuesday, August 25, 2020 Faculty Senate Agenda.
- Our Fall 2020 Faculty Senate meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 1, 2020 from 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm and it will be online.

- Senators may raise motions and resolutions from the floor rather than submit them to the EC, but should have them ready in writing as in the format on earlier slides for this meeting to save time.

VI. Adjournment

At 2:34pm a motion to adjourn was made by Senate President Sherris and seconded by Senator McLauchlan, motion was passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Radcliff

Faculty Senate Secretary, 2020-2021