

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – February 2, 2021

Senators Present: Hisham Al-Bataineh, Matthew Alexander, Rudolf Bohm, Lucy Camacho, Jieming Chen, Maribel Gonzalez-Garcia, Jeff Glick, James Glusing, Kelly Hall, Simona Hodis, Michael Houf, Kendra Huff, Patricia Huskin, Robert Kowalsky, Ya-Wen Liang, Steven Lukefahr, Tanner Machado, Lifford McLaughlan, Craig A. Meyer, Kyle Milsap, Richard Miller, Mais Najim, Ryan Paul, Larry Peel, Humberto Perotto, William Procasky, Christine Radcliff, Kathleen Rees, Chika Rosenbaum, Alex Sanchez-Behar, Nick J. Sciuлло, Hui Shen, Ari Sherris, Amber Shipherd, Velda Soydas, Ramiro Torres, Maria Velez-Hernandez, Subbarao Yelisetti, Teresa Young

Senators Absent: Alinna Umphreys, Patrick Mills

This meeting of the Faculty Senate was held and recorded online through Zoom 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](#).

I. Call to Order and Quorum Call.

At 3:30 p.m. President Sherris asked the secretary, Christine Radcliff, if enough members were present for a quorum. Senator Radcliff replied in the affirmative.

II. Presentations

a) President Mark Hussey

Legislative Update – The session began Jan 12th and will end May 31st. The House and Senate have both filed their base appropriations bills on January 18th, which are the starting points as we go through the session. As anticipated both proposed a reduction in State funding for TAMUK, in part because decline in enrollment over the past 2 years and in part because they included the 5% reduction that we had in fiscal year 2020 and 2021. We are projected to receive 5.6m per year less than we were appropriated to receive this year, due to funding reductions in both general revenue and non-formula support.

The Senate announced their appointments to various committees. Senator Eddie Lucio Jr. will serve as Vice-Chair for Senate Committee on Finance, and VC for Senate committee on education. We are anticipating that the House would make their announcements soon.

We are scheduled to testify before the Senate Committee on Finance on February 23rd and this is the first chance for us to make a case for support before the legislature.

Funds updates:

CARES Act – In March 2020 this act was passed, and allocated about 7.2mil to tamuk. 3.6% was to go to direct student support essentially it was restricted to PELL eligible students, and 3.6% was used for university support. For student support, a committee in

enrollment management, which included faculty representation, was put together and they evaluated the applications and awarded funding based on Department of Ed guidelines. All 3.6 million has been spent. University funds were used to refund dormitory and food service meal plans and for IT upgrades across campus, to purchase ppe and sanitation supplies, etc. We have about half a million dollars remaining. Those funds will be used to address areas where expenses exceeded the proposed revenues that we had due to reductions in enrollment. Those funds need to be expended by approximately the first of May.

Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds - We have also received the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds that was passed in December 2020. The University will be receiving a little over 12 million dollars, with 3.5 million going to student support and another 8.6 million for university support. Right now we are waiting on the final guidelines, things you read in the popular press say the guidelines will be much different and we will have much more flexibility in terms of how we spend the student support funds as well as the university support funds. He is really trying to get clarification on the student support side. He does not feel it will be as restrictive as last time, and we might be able to spend those resources beyond the PELL students.

President Hussey said he is going to delay making commitments on the university support funds, we have until December to spend them and they need to be considered strategically in light of what happens in the legislative session and in light of enrollment. These funds have the ability to replace lost revenue sources that one had budgeted because of reductions in enrollment because of COVID, etc.

President Hussey said he welcomes any ideas on how to spend the funds. He asks that faculty send them through their department chair to the dean or you can send them to the faculty senate executive committee. He wants to make sure that he receives all the suggestions and that utilizing these avenues would help ensure that he gets them sort of at one time.

President Sherris asked if there were any questions, and President Hussey suggested that any questions be sent to the FS executive committee and then he could respond to those.

Q: Senator Peel asked if it was possible for the College of Engineering to get some funds to hire replacement administrative department secretaries for the ones that have been lost.

A: The short answer is that that request needs to come from the interim dean, and they will consider it if we receive that.

b) Faculty Senate Distinguished Service Award to honor Randall Williams

President Sherris recognized Dr. Randall Williams for his exceptional commitment to the honor, integrity, importance and seriousness of serving as a TAMUK Faculty Senator and asked him to share a few words.

Dr. Williams said that each faculty member has a strong suit. For some it is research and others it is teaching, but something all faculty can do is service. He said during his time at TAMUK he believes he has been on just about every committee there was, and that he spent about 15 years in total on the Faculty Senate, which is half of his 30 years here. He was Senate President from 1996-1998, due to the vice-chair who was to become President leaving the university about a week before the new senate took over. At that time University President Ibanez asked the Senate President to attend all of the Board of Regents meetings, as he wanted that information that was going on within the System to be brought back to campus. So for those two years, he attended every one of those meetings. Dr. Williams also knew Chancellor Barry Thompson and ended up on the Chancellor's Academy of Excellence, which was more service this time service to the System. This was a project to grow our own administrations within the System at the System level. He worked for half a year at the System offices in College Station, and then spent the other half of the year at West Texas A&M in their President's office. After that he came back to TAMUK and became our Faculty Athletic Representative to the NCAA for nine years, two of which he was the chair of the Lone Star Conference FAR's. Over his 30 years here he served at the local, State and national levels with FFA (Future Farmers of America), hosting tens of thousands of FFA students in many competitions on our campus hoping a percentage would become javelina students, and many of them did. This was something he was very proud of. Dr. Williams said his mantra to all of us is "Service is the rent you pay for the space that you take up". He questioned each of us to evaluate and see if we are behind on our rent to life. He left us with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

c) Provost Lou Reinisch

Provost Reinisch reported that they are establishing a search committee for the new dean of engineering. Dr. Shad Nelson, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, will chair the committee. Committee membership will comprise of one faculty member from each of the six departments within the College of Engineering, one engineering student, one non-academic staff member, one person appointed from the Office of Research, one alumnus recommended by Brad Walker from the Foundation Office, and one department chair. There are 12 members on the committee 7 of which come from the College of Engineering giving them majority per the regulations. The first task of the committee is to create a position description for the new dean.

Enrollment update

Numbers are down. Of all the Texas Universities, we are number two in our decline in enrollment over the last five years. This is concerning. Many people have pointed out

that some of these losses are from the College of Arts & Sciences, but in fact all those lost students were dual enrollment students and the model we had for teaching those students in the Valley meant that we were losing about \$200 per student. It was a deliberate effort to eliminate those students. There is also a very slight decrease in numbers from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, but this is due to the department of Health Sciences no longer being part of that College. The other place where we have lost many students is the College of Engineering. Many are international students, but beyond that there has been a large decline in the number of engineering students overall and we are trying to address that as quickly as we can.

As President Hussey pointed out the decline in enrollment is looking to result in an anticipated \$5.8 million dollar decrease in budget. To help make that budget we are putting together a voluntary separation package that we hope to have it officially announced in early March. This package would be available to all tenured faculty members who have been at TAMUK for 15 years or more, or they meet the [TRS 80 rule](#). Faculty would be asked if they want to volunteer for this between the anticipated dates of March 15 and April 16, 2021. Approved applicants must make their final decision by May 17th, and must retire no later than August 31, 2021. The incentive being offered is one-year salary. Faculty members who accept this package can still return to teach as an adjunct and they will retain emeritus status if already earned. This package is not official until it is approved by the System, and will not be formally announced until all the approvals are in place. The goal is to reduce what we are paying in faculty salaries by about one million dollars (about 15% of the deficit we need to cover). Provost Reinisch is interested in all thoughts and suggestions faculty may have about this package. Lastly, Provost Reinisch reported that the Ad Hoc Committee on Tenure and Promotion has completed its work. He wanted to thank Senators Hall, Houf, Machado, Mills and Dr. Tom Krueger for their work on the committee. He will give FS President Sherris a copy of the document at their next meeting to present to the full faculty senate for their review and approval. He will now start working on the other motions that have been brought to him from the faculty senate. Provost Reinisch then opened the floor for questions.

Q: Senate President Sherris asked in regard to the voluntary separation program, would there be a committee and would the faculty senate be represented on that committee who decides which applicants would be offered the package?

A: The decision on who would be offered the package will be made by the Provost's Office and he will make that in consultation with the deans and the department chairs. What he does not want to do is incentivize people who we really need to teach classes to leave. The goal is to select individuals who they feel that if we don't have their services we can still deliver quality programs, as opposed to having someone who might be very unique in what they are teaching and necessary for what they are teaching.

Q: Senator Hall asked in the chat, which programs are growing?

A: The MBA program is growing by leaps and bounds. Generally our growth is in our graduate programs, although music is also growing as is counseling.

Q: Senator Bohm asked if all of the Texas universities have gone down proportionately in their funding?

A: No, it was a combination of what did the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board predict for your enrollments and how you actually performed in those enrollments. We were predicted to be going up and we went down quite a bit, so we were cut a lot.

Senator Bohm commented that he suspects that minority serving institutions were more heavily hit because the COVID-19 pandemic is economically affecting minorities more, and he wonders if there is a way to normalize for that effect in that ranking.

Provost Reinisch responded that if you take that generalization and then look at UTRGV their enrollments were up quite a bit, and they are definitely a Hispanic serving institution.

Q: Senator Hall asked what about online versus on-ground programs (not courses)?

A: Our graduate courses that are online like our MBA program have been very successful and indeed many of the students looking to come back as mature students prefer that flexibility.

Q: Senator Peel asked if we have conducted any surveys of those students that did not come, to see why?

A: No. If we do a survey to find out why they didn't come back, the reason is that they couldn't afford to come back. If a third party does a survey to find out why students don't come back it's usually that the students felt nobody cared about them, and the students felt that it didn't really matter if they succeeded or not to the people at the institution. This is part of the student services that we're recognizing is a major problem, and we will be addressing that with trying to get some training for better student services.

III. Approval of Minutes from December 1, 2020 Faculty Senate Meeting.

President Sherris moved to approve the minutes; Senator Liang seconded. Minutes were approved.

IV. Report of Officers

a) Emergency Management Committee

Senator Radcliff reported that the committee met January 21, 2021. She reported that over half of the students are still at home and not on campus. 865 students have checked into the residence halls. COVID-19 numbers are increasing like they did at the start of the Fall semester, but that was to be expected. All returning athletes have been tested and fewer than 10 tested positive.

There is a new COVID-19 test registration process. Curative is now collecting insurance information, but there is still no cost. TAMU System was paying \$140 per test and wanted to reduce their cost.

CCYC Plan for Spring is to open January 25th. The 8 staff and teachers will be tested every two weeks. There are no thoughts on increasing testing due to the new strains at this time.

TAMUK is an approved location to provide COVID-19 vaccines, but there is no knowledge of if/when we would receive the vaccine. Distribution of the vaccine is controlled by the State. The Health and Wellness clinic staff are working to create a process/protocol just in case.

It was also discussed that if cases of C-19 increase higher than administrators are comfortable with, they will start asking employees in high contact/high volume areas to be tested. President Sherris was asked to discuss required testing of faculty teaching face-to-face with the full Senate.

b) Senate President Sherris' Report

In the December 1st minutes I reported on an invitation-only zoom meeting extended to me by Dr. Denisha Jones a member of the National Steering Committee of the Black Lives Matter movement. That meeting was held on November 23, 2020. Today, I am reporting on the products of my own outreach in order to start a Black Lives Matter in Texas Higher Education movement. I succeeded in drawing together 10 university activists from A&M Kingsville, International, Commerce; UT-RGV, Arlington, Permian Basin, U of H-Downtown, Angelo State, UNT and Tarleton State-Fort Worth. The 10 of us have a WhatsApp group and we are working to get a spot on the Texas Council of Faculty Senates. We held one zoom meeting on December 1, 2020, Faculty at that meeting reported antiracist activities have and continue to include: antiracist pedagogies, protests, marches, and vigils, name changes ([A&M Commerce announces decision to change name of lake, library](#) ; [Petition seeks to rename UNT's Stan Kenton Hall](#) ; [UT-Austin says it will keep "The Eyes of Texas" as school song, but will rename buildings as Black students call for change](#)); All such name changes recognize the symbolic power of language in society. Antiracist letters, statements, FB live interviews by chancellors, TV interviews with presidents, campus leaders and speakers on antiracism, cross-cultural competency workshops, professional development, the formation of antiracist councils,

committees, taskforces set up to organize and enact antiracist campus activities. Activists on university campuses in Texas aren't doing too badly. But there is much more to do.

The group's Wishlist of antiracist activities that is, the activities they wish to develop are as follows. It is hoped that we might develop enough of a trans-campus movement to be able to use for leverage locally. In the same way that many of us might use Faculty Advisory Councils, the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, or the American Association of University Professors, it would be nice to have a body that has some heft that we can take back to our campus that says "well, the BLM Faculty movement says campuses ought to do 'x'."

Locally, we hope to have students grab the baton of leadership -- perhaps inspired by faculty, mentored by faculty, but not necessarily led by faculty. (I used the analogy of Ella Baker in the Civil Rights Movement, and that feels right to me.) For many of us it is important to remember to be good allies, not sanctimonious ones, and to listen as much as we talk.

We hope to succeed at encouraging campus and alumni artists (musicians, poets, painters, sculptors, dancers, etc.) to present original creative work on antiracism via Facebook live/zoom events; to have these organized and selected by a steering committee of members from the Black Student Union, Student Government, Faculty Senate and the Alumni association. We hope to create webpages with links to texts and teaching modules on antiracism—a living document/webpage—shared across our colleges. We hope to have an interdisciplinary bibliography of source materials and texts germane to each discipline. We hope to advocate for more diversity among Cabinet members, Regents and Trustees; to decolonize the curriculum in all disciplines and to diversify our hiring practices. We hope to increase/support grassroots organizing for antiracism; we hope to raise the awareness for regular antiracist activity from deans and all upper-administrators and we hope to promote diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI) education for faculty, staff and administrators. We hope to celebrate accomplishments of underrepresented alumni and national figures in an effort to provide positive examples, and to promote pride.

We see our Challenges to BLM in Texas higher education as Alumni stonewalling antiracist activism/activities, doner criticism of antiracist activism/activities, leadership that only pays lip service to antiracism.

This brings my report of my outreach to BLM in Texas Higher Education to a close—for now. Locally, however, Senator Nick Sciuillo has formed an antiracist task force and I will let him tell you a little bit about what they have started.

Senator Sciuillo reported on the membership and function of this taskforce. The goals are to address some of the issues that President Sherris and his colleagues mentioned.

Working with other black lives matter interested faculty allies and activists in academic spaces and beyond. Committee members include Senator Chika Rosenbaum, Senator Mias Nijim, and Liliana Rodriguez. They will be having their first meeting Thursday February 4th. If there are any suggestions on how the committee can achieve some of these goals, and suggestions for a bibliography that can be live, updated regularly, and shared widely among different university channels, schools and colleges; please send them to the committee. Broadly they are working on addressing these issues, anti-racism and social justice, as they relate to faculty lived experiences, supporting faculty development, improving the climate for faculty members on campus, and programming.

President Sherris then shared a link to allow people to sign up to be connected to the national movement of black lives matter in higher education. Originally Texas was not listed, but he worked hard and managed to have it added. [Participation in BLM in Higher Education](#)

c) Council on Climate, Diversity & Inclusion Report

The President's Council on Climate, Diversity and Inclusion met on January 13, 2021. Dr. Hussey was present in the meeting. Ms. Barbara Collins and Mr. Henry Burgos were facilitators. All committee members were present. The focus of the meeting was on the following proposals: Office of Climate, Diversity and Inclusion; George Floyd scholarship; George Floyd symposium; Hispanic Legacy as it relates to the civil rights movement.

Dr. Hussey is supportive to the proposal of establishing an Office of Climate, Diversity and Inclusion, and he is in favor of a symposium in honor of George Floyd. CDI members commented on several proposals that they would like to see moving forward. There were some lively discussions about the proposed symposium. More detailed recommendations were made about the event. The discussions about establishing a scholarship in honor of George Floyd appeared to be inconclusive. Dr. Manuel Flores proposed to build a permanent fixture that honors the Chicano civil rights movement. He also suggested some additional actions to celebrate the movement.

A sub-committee will be formed to implement the plan of establishing a CDI office and another sub-committee is needed to further study the symposium plan.

V. Old Business

VI. Standing Committee Reports

a) Committee on Committees – No Report

b) Election Committee

The vote for the amendment was sent to the general faculty on January 15, 2021 and voting closed February 1, 2021. The amendment passed. The FS Constitution will be updated soon.

The election committee will meet next week to discuss dates for upcoming Department and At-Large elections.

- c) **Resolutions and By-Laws Committee** – No Report

VII. Reports from Committees Reporting to the Senate

- a) **Administrator Evaluation Committee** – No report
- b) **Annual Faculty Lecture Committee** – No Report
- c) **Piper Award Committee**

The committee sent out the call for nominations on February 1, 2021 and have already received three new nominees for the next round of the award.

- d) **Faculty Evaluation Committee** – No Report
- e) **Faculty Benefits Committee** – No Report
- f) **Policy Revision Committee** – No Report
- g) **Guidebook for Department Chairs Task Force**

Senator Glick reported that the estimated completion date would be the April Faculty Senate meeting, but this is likely to be an evolving document. We are outlining the standard tasks, processes, and issues that arise for department chairs. The goals are to provide new chairs with an overview of what they will need to do, and to give faculty a sense of the scope of responsibilities that chairs have. Where chairs' responsibilities differ by college, we will flag those.

- h) **Ad Hoc Committee on Tenure & Promotion Processes**

The committee met once a week from September 2020 to January 28, 2021. Provost Reinisch is preparing a final report to be send forward to the Faculty Senate.

Examples of items being proposed include: moving the major review to the fall semester of the fourth year; allowing faculty members to add materials to their portfolio during the review process; tenure should be linked to promotion from assistant professor to associate professor; external letters of review of the candidates for tenure and/or promotion; Advisory Committee and Hearing Committee – minimum of one member from each college.

VIII. New Business

- a) **Required COVID-19 testing of face-to-face teaching faculty**

Until now campus students, faculty, staff, and administration have not been required to be tested for COVID-19. Policy has been that they should be tested if they show symptoms. The exception, until now, has been campus athletes who participate in contact sports and the faculty and staff who work with them per NCAA rules. Currently, TAMUK leadership is considering requiring testing on a regular basis (possibly every 2weeks) of certain sectors of the campus community. This would include those who interact in close proximity with groups of people on a regular basis.

The University Emergency Management Team (Jan 21, 2021) would like Senators to weigh in the following question: Should faculty who teach in face-to-face classrooms be

required to be regularly tested for COVID-19? President Sherris put forth the following motion that was seconded by Senator Bohm.

MOTION: THAT THE FACULTY SENATE DISCUSSES THE FOLLOWING QUESTION AND IS SURVEYED ANNOYMOUSLY: “Should faculty who teach in face-to-face classrooms be required to be regularly tested for COVID-19?”

Q: Senator Kowalsky asked if there were resources to support this?

A: It was not clear from the discussion, where funding for these tests would come from. Senator Radcliff added that her impression was that the university is not using all of the monthly allocated tests, so that might be what is prompting the idea of testing face-to-face faculty.

The view of many people is that the testing should be voluntary and not mandatory.

Senator Peel called the question. The motion failed with a vote count of 12 yes, 13 no, and 6 abstentions.

b) Motion from the floor: TAMUK President and Administrators advocate for all university faculty to be moved up in COVID-19 vaccine priority in Texas.

Senators Shipherd, Kowalsky, and Peel proposed the following motion that was seconded by Senator Huskin.

Motion: That the faculty senate executive committee as well as the university president and administration advocate on behalf of the TAMUK faculty as well as for all university faculty to be moved up in COVID-19 vaccine priority in the state of Texas due to the increased return to face-to-face classes.

It was mentioned that K-ISD has vaccinated all of their faculty and staff, as has Texas Woman’s University. Why can’t we take care of our faculty?

Senator Miller called the question. The motion passed 26, yes, 5 no, 2 abstaining.

IX. Announcements

a) Library fund allocations – FY2021

Senator Radcliff wanted to remind the faculty that there are library funds available this fiscal year for one time purchases by departments. All department liaisons, Chairs and Deans received allocation letters in late October via email from Senator Radcliff herself. The deadline to request items is May 28, 2021.

b) Faculty Senate Distinguished Service Award Nominations (*see handout*)

Nominations will be accepted starting today February 2 through March 26, 2021.

- c) President Sherris shared the following reminders:
Please email all motions and resolutions to FacultySenateOfficers@tamuk.edu no later than Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 5:00pm CDT if you would like the Executive Committee to add them to the Tuesday, Faculty Senate Agenda.

Our next Faculty Senate meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2021 from 3:30 pm-5:00pm 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.

X. Adjournment

At 5:07pm a motion to adjourn was made by President Sherris and seconded by Senator Yelisetti, motion was passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Radcliff
Faculty Senate Secretary, 2020-2021

***TAMUK FACULTY SENATE
2021 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD***

This annual award to a past or current *TAMUK Faculty Senator* recognizes an exceptional commitment to the Honor, Integrity, Importance, and Seriousness of Serving as a TAMUK Faculty Senator

NOMINATION FORM: 2021 Faculty Senate Distinguished Service Award

**Please return/mail nomination to Faculty Senate Secretary Christine Radcliff at:
christine.radcliff@tamuk.edu (DEADLINE: March 26, 2021)**

Date: _____

NOMINEE (Past or Current TAMUK Faculty Senator):

Nominated by an Outgoing, Continuing or Incoming Faculty Senator:

Nomination Seconded by an Outgoing, Continuing, or Incoming Faculty Senator:

Please provide a brief statement below in support of your nomination:

Selection of the recipient of the Senate Distinguished Service Award will be made after the March Executive Committee meeting by the outgoing Senate Executive Committee and announced at the first Senate meeting in the Fall.