

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – March 1, 2022

Senators Present: Bart Ballard, Travis Braidwood, Lucy Camacho, Mauro Castro, Jieming Chen, Steven Chumbley, Steven Corbett, Zhaoqi Fan, Jeff Glick, James Glusing, Anders Greenspan, Kelly Hall, David Hicks, Michael Houf, Patricia Huskin, Dongwook Kim, Robert Kowalsky, Sarah Lucas, Tanner Machado, Lifford McLauchlan, Kyle Milsap, , Larry Peel, William Procasky, Christine Radcliff, Kathleen Rees, , Nick Scullo, Hui Shen, Velda Soydas, Daniella Varela, Teresa Young

Senators Absent: Hisham Al-Bataineh , Ammar Bhandari, Michael Cherry, Manuel Flores, Kendra Huff, Richard Miller, Mais Nijim, Alexander Sanchez-Behar, Maria Velez-Hernandez

This meeting of the Faculty Senate was held through Zoom due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements. This meeting was not recorded.

I. Call to Order and Quorum Call.

At 3:33 p.m. President Chen asked the secretary, Christine Radcliff, if enough members were present for a quorum. Senator Radcliff replied in the positive.

II. Presentations

a) Interim President James Hallmark

Board of Regents Meeting

Interim President Hallmark commented that at the Board of Regents meeting two weeks ago the prime topic was how to reduce student debt. He said that discussion is leading to charges from the regents to find plans for helping students. He mentioned that several of the student body presidents were surprised at how much the Board of Regents cares about people who don't qualify for Pell grants.

Another topic at that meeting was the use of standardized test scores in admissions policies. President Hallmark said that the way TAMUK uses ACT/SAT scores in admission policies is not problematic to him. The Board of Regents feels that they are potentially biased.

Presidential search update

He reported that the preferred apply date is today March 1, 2022. There are a higher number of applicants than he expected and they make for a very healthy final pool. He referred to a core group of candidates as interesting. He said there is a good variety of depth with Presidents, Provosts, Vice Presidents, and Deans. Over the next three weeks the search firm will fill in any gaps. By March 22nd the committee will have selected the candidates for the airport interviews, which they expect to take place the last week of March/start of April. The committee plans to have the final names to the Board of Regents and Chancellor Sharp by the end of April. Interim President Hallmark is hoping for the new President to be able to start in early summer.

Statement of Texas Lieutenant Governor Patrick

Interim President Hallmark said that Faculty Senate President Chen requested that he comment on the Lieutenant Governor's statement. He said that the System administration response was to separate the issues of tenure and critical race theory. Tenure is essential to building and maintaining great universities, and that we have to keep tenure to retain qualified faculty at institutions in Texas. As far as critical race theory, yes we teach it and why wouldn't we. It is a framework that should be taught in the disciplines where it is appropriate, and that to not teach it in those disciplines would be a

disadvantage to the students in those disciplines. The System also said that if/when bills that include these topics are introduced in the next legislative session, there will be people who will work to keep them from coming out of the committees.

b) Provost Lou Reinisch

Provost Reinisch was unable to attend today's meeting, but he did send the statement below that was read by Faculty Senate President Chen.

Good Afternoon Faculty Senate:

First, my sincere apologies for missing this meeting. I am in transit to a meeting in Dallas with the consulting company RNL about increasing our student retention rates. As you all know, this is a very important issue for our campus. If we want to stay competitive in today's higher education market, we must increase our student retention numbers without decreasing the academic quality of our programs. This involves all of us. You will be hearing more on student retention in the coming weeks and months, please "stay tuned."

The number of new cases of covid-19 each day in Kleberg and the surrounding counties is dropping as fast as it rose in early January. I am trying to encourage as many faculty and students, as possible, to return to campus and get back to a more "normal" university.

We do have spring break coming up. There is no thought of canceling or changing spring break. Student Success is planning a lunch on the lawn for the Monday after spring break (March 21). Both the president and I are serving. I hope to see many of faculty members at the lunch. Dr. Shannon Baker says that we have to re-learn how to have fun.

I do want to ask the Faculty Senate to think about your Friday classes, especially classes on Friday afternoons. If history is any guide, the Chancellor will give us a ½ day off on Good Friday (April 15). Would the senate be in agreement with cancelling all classes at noon on Friday, April 15....assuming the Chancellor gives us the ½ day off? Let me know if this is going to cause any problems.

I expect that Dr. Hallmark has filled you in about the most recent Board of Regents meeting. Martin, in my office, is planning for Commencement on Friday, May 13. The colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education and Human Performance will be at the 10:00 AM ceremony in the football stadium. The remaining colleges will be at the 6:00 PM ceremony. We are trying to avoid the mid-day heat. It is important for our graduates and their families to see a good turn-out of the faculty at the ceremonies. Please put them on your calendars.

Thank you for all your work and support. It is definitely appreciated. Keep up the good work.

III. Approval of Minutes from February 2022 Faculty Senate Meetings.

President Chen asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 1, 2022 meeting; Senator Kowalsky moved and Senator Castro seconded. Minutes were approved.

IV. Report of Officers

a) Senate President Chen

Meeting with Interim President Hallmark – February 2022

President Chen reported to Interim President Hallmark and Provost Reinisch at this meeting that the taskforce on reassigned time for research and scholarship is working in full swing. Interim President Hallmark is supportive of this effort. In regards to the issue about when lab assistants can be hired, Provost Reinisch said that this should be resolved and that he would make sure to talk to all areas involved in this process to make sure everyone is on the same page. President Chen asked the question of who's responsibility it is to make the changes to the faculty handbook, the Provost's office or the Faculty Senate. President Chen also brought up the issue of senior faculty development funds, and both Interim President Hallmark and Provost Reinisch said they would look into it. The last topic they discussed was the meaning of abstain during tenure, promotion and continuation voting. Interim President Hallmark and Provost Reinisch say that abstaining is a valid vote, but there should be an explanation.

Academic Freedom and Lieutenant Governor Patrick's statement

President Chen reported he asked Interim President Hallmark to address this during his remarks at the March faculty senate meeting.

Task force on reassigned time for research and scholarship

President Chen read an email from task force Chair, Dr. Hua Li that reported the committee has met virtually three times so far, and they are working on a draft report to address the teaching load reduction issue. Each member in the task force is supposed to ask for comments and suggestions from faculty members in the colleges as well. Members of this task force include; Ambrose Anouro, Ari Sherris, Brenda Hannon, Brent Kinghorn, Daniella Varela, Kathleen Rees, Md. Monirul Islam, Nick Sciullo and Seth Abugho.

President Chen then asked if any of the committee members present today wanted to report any additional comments. It was reported that the committee is discussing and looking at various areas in addition to the main task of reassigned time. Some of those areas include a policy for reassigned time, allocation of indirect cost, and faculty leave. It was mentioned that they are getting to the heart of the issue and great progress is being made.

V. Old Business

a) SRI Motion

Secretary Radcliff reported that she heard back from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIR) that it is possible to move the closing date, and that they would need authorization from Provost Reinisch to make the change as they are a department that is overseen by Academic Affairs.

President Chen and President-Elect Machado said that they will bring this request to Provost Reinisch at their next meeting. It was proposed by a Senator that we have a motion and a vote to show that the full senate is behind this change when it is presented to Provost Reinisch.

Senator Glick moved *That we empower the Faculty Senate President and President-Elect to talk to Provost Reinisch to move the date of Student Rating of Instruction (SRI) close to the last class day.* The motion was seconded by Senator Huskin.

During discussion a Senator commented that they do not feel like the Faculty Senate should have to ask permission from administration before moving forward issues. Another Senator commented that asking for this change is an easy win, but we are offering courtesy to Administration by running it by them first so that they are more likely to respond to this and future issues brought to them by the Faculty Senate.

The motion passed.

b) Faculty reinvestment funds

President Chen reported that this was mentioned to Interim President Hallmark and Provost Reinisch at their monthly meeting and both said they will look into it. Interim President Hallmark thinks that ten thousand dollars is not a lot of money to find and will talk to the Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies. Both Interim President Hallmark and Provost Reinisch believe these funds should continue. Senator Radcliff mentioned she found documentation of when these funds were originally created and the first pilot set of funds dispersed. She said she would send that documentation to President Chen and President-Elect Machado for them to have as supporting documentation.

VI. Standing Committee Reports

a) Committee on Committees – No Report

b) Resolutions and By-Laws Committee – No Report

c) Election Committee

Senator Radcliff reported that the majority of the department elections have been completed. The following faculty members have been elected to represent their department for the 2022-2024 term.

Anne-Marie Lelkes, Accounting & Finance
Jesus De La Rosa, Art, Communications & Theatre
Mais Nijim, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
Brian Menaker, Health & Kinesiology
Velda Soydas, Industrial Management & Technology
Elizabeth Goode, Library
Kathleen Rees, Management, Marketing & Information Systems
Thomas Zinninger, Music
Subbarao Yelisetti, Physics & Geosciences

The committee expects to have the remaining department and the At-Large election results finalized before spring break week.

VII. Reports from Committees Reporting to the Senate

a) Administrator Evaluation Committee – No Report

b) Annual Faculty Lecture Committee – No Report

c) Faculty Benefits Committee – No Report

d) Faculty Evaluation Committee – No Report

e) Faculty Handbook Committee

Senator Sciuillo reported that the committee has a list of recommended changes for the Faculty Handbook that have been sent to Secretary Radcliff. The majority of the changes center on changing all mentions of “he,” “she,” “he/she,” “his/her,” “his or her,” and “he or she” to “faculty member,” “student,” “employee,” or the grammatically and syntactically correct equivalent. The committee feels that in order to be more inclusive, and recognizing the increasing use of gender inclusive language as suggested by multiple style guides and increasingly popular in a range of disciplines, the change away from binary gender pronouns would promote a more inclusive Faculty Handbook that recognizes binary gender pronouns do not sufficiently account for University community members (administrators, faculty, staff, and students) and may be perceived as exclusionary and unwelcoming.

f) Piper Award Committee – No Report

g) Policy Revision Committee – No Report

h) Ad-Hoc Committee on Anti-Racism and Social Justice - No Report

VIII. New Business

a) TAMUK faculty definition of “Abstain” in promotion, tenure, continuation votes

President Chen brought this issue up and asked if the faculty senate should try and create an official definition to be followed by the campus as a whole or should the departments and colleges continue to proceed with the way they each interpret “abstain” in these cases?

An example was given on the two ways that abstain has been counted in the past.

Example: department level vote is recorded as 3 yes, 2 no, 2 abstain

One interpretation of this example is that the majority of people who voted said yes (abstain votes do not count). Another interpretation could be that the majority of people who could vote voted no or abstain which is higher than the yes votes.

It was commented that for Robert’s Rules of Order abstain is defined as someone purposely choosing not to vote.

The comment was made about what would be the intent of abstentions? According to President Chen Provost Reinisch’s interpretation of abstain is that it is not a vote so it does not count. President Chen also mentioned that Provost Reinisch had asked in their discussion on this topic if there was a way in the results forms that the reasons for abstentions could be explained to help the upper administration understand why people did not vote.

Additional comments include:

- that administration could look at the results and swing the vote result with abstentions either way.
- that a description is needed for all to be on the same page, because colleges and departments do not have to follow Robert’s Rules of Order.
- that these cases (promotion, tenure, continuation) are the only place where abstain has been interpreted as a no vote.

- that if a member of a committee did not review the documentation before the vote then most people will abstain from voting.
- that all votes should be justified. Mistrust of previous administration has led to this discussion.
- that if votes are being weaponized we need to understand why this is being done.

One senator voiced the reminder that the action of these committees (promotion, tenure, continuation) is only a recommendation that can be overturned at any time.

The question was asked if there is a place on the forms where the vote count is reported for a recommendation?

It was commented also that at the college level there has been written notice that one person did not vote at that level because they voted at the department level. This was used to account for all people eligible to vote.

It was decided to carry this conversation over to the next meeting.

IX. Announcements

- a) Senator Radcliff announced a call for nominees for the 2022 Distinguished Service Award. She said she would be sending out the nomination form via email tomorrow and that the deadline for nominations would be Friday March 25th.

X. Adjournment

At 5:09 pm a motion to adjourn was made by Senator Castro, the motion was seconded by Senator Glick, motion was passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Radcliff

Faculty Senate Secretary, 2021-2022