Texas A&M International University
Faculty Senate
April 5ᵗʰ 2024
12pm – 2:30pm
STC 230

    I.   The meeting was called to order by the Faculty Senate President, Dr. Hayley Kazen, at 12pm.

    II.   *Roll Call*: Dr. Hayley Kazen, Dr. Kate Houston, Ms. Jeanette Hatcher, Dr. Li-Zheng Brooks, Dr. James Norris, Dr. Andrew Hazelton, Dr. Kameron Jorgensen, Dr. Deepak Ganta, Dr. Runchang Lin, Dr. Tatiana Gorbunova, Dr. Marvin Bennett, Dr. Ediza Garza, Dr. Juan Hinojosa.

    III.   Our guests were given the floor.

Dr. San Miguel

Early Tenure Protocol for Faculty Handbook

Dr. San Miguel explained to the Senate some of the challenges with securing a reasonable timeline for early-tenure. In order to ensure that external reviewers are in place for an early-tenure review at Year 5, those external reviewers need to be contacted in Year 4 of the candidate's P&T process. The solution to this which Dr. San Miguel presented, is to reinforce the role of the third-year review process for any early-tenure candidates. Dr. San Miguel proposed that after evaluating the third year review, faculty who wish to apply for early tenure are encouraged to discuss with their Chair and activating the early tenure protocols. This language has been added to the Early Tenure section that is pending vote for inclusion in the faculty handbook.

Dr. San Miguel also drew Senate's attention to the Early Tenure language regarding the consequences of an unsuccessful early tenure application.

The language around Early Tenure has now been moved to an item for vote by the Faculty Senate at the May meeting.

Post-Tenure Review (PTR)

Dr. San Miguel shared that there are no substantial updates on the PTR process. Administration are currently working on updating SAP 12.01.01 regarding the implementation of tenure to align the SAP with the language in the Faculty Handbook.

The current plan for PTR at TAMIU is to follow the model of the PTR lottery that it currently being implemented at TAMU-Corpus Christi. Discussions are ongoing about a salary adjustment after successful PTR.

Current plans are for the PTR process to be digital, with the faculty member given 1 year to prepare their submission. The Lottery may begin in the Fall of 2024.

Questions remain regarding how to stagger the reviews for PTR committees to ensure an even workload, how to assess tenured faculty who are on 4/4 teaching loads, and more broadly how to accommodate concerns regarding work load and research productivity.

Policies on the use of Artificial Intelligence

No updates at this time. Work on this is on-going.

Reclassification

Dr. San Miguel discussed with the Senate the need to ensure a framework for reclassification of fixed-term faculty who wish to move to a tenure-track line. Progress has been made to formalize this procedure, however discussions currently center on whether the fixed-term faculty member needs to have publications since starting their fixed-term position at TAMIU in order to demonstrate research potential, or whether doctoral publications plus a feasible research plan or research currently in-process, presented in a similar way to how a job talk would be, could be sufficient to prove research potential.

Fixed-term Faculty Growth Plan

Up until now there has not been a growth plan to support fixed-term faculty who score low on evaluations. The proposed growth plan will provide this much needed structure to ensure support is available for fixed-term faculty.

The language for the Fixed-term Faculty Growth Plan was moved to faculty senate vote for the May meeting.

Announcements

Dr. Marcus Ynalvez to be interim Dean of COAS. Current plan is for a new search to commence in the Fall of 2025.

Dr. Peter Haruna

TAMIU Voices

Dr. Haruna gave a presentation on voluntary organization that is open to everyone called TAMIU Voices. TAMIU Voices aims to provide a space for faculty, staff and the student body to come together and get involved in the rich culture of our campus. Activities occur monthly around a theme, for example March was Women's History, April is Asian-American History. The format for events is a panel discussion, often accompanied by a professional presentation. The organization will often also share films, food and music. Looking to the future, TAMIU Voices wants to build on past successes and continue to promote mutual learning among faculty, students, admin and staff, and to create partnerships with other groups on campus. Dr. Haruna encouraged the participation of all faculty, students, staff and administrators in TAMIU Voices, they want to build community. Meetings are virtual.

Please email Dr. Haruna for more information.

IV.   The minutes from the March meeting were approved with no corrections. Dr. Norris motioned to approve, Dr. Garcia seconded.

V.   New Business

    a. <u>Handbook Updates</u>
    Handbook committee has sent a list of updates to Dr. Kazen, Faculty Senate President.

    b. <u>Pending Documents</u>
    Fixed-term Faculty Reclassification and Early-Tenure. These will be voted on at the next senate meeting for approval and thus inclusion in the handbook.

    c. <u>Books Included</u>
    Faculty were notified that some students in their courses had access to course texts via Books Included, despite having opted out. This access lasted for 10 weeks of the semester before being terminated without warning to the students. The issue was one of communication between the TAMIU Bookstore and the publisher of those speicifc courses texts. Not all publishers are automatically notified about students opting out of Books Included because their systems are not on-boarded to Follett. In these incidents, the Bookstore has to notify the publisher separately and that process experienced substantial delays in the Spring 2024 semester. Faculty Senate has been assured that this scenario where students have access that is suddenly revoked at a late stage in the semester due to not being included in the program, will not reoccur.

    d. <u>QM Procedures and Potential Changes</u>
    TAMIU is exploring options to certify courses that are not part of the QM program. QM certification may be reserved for AP courses, thus leaving the option open for other non-AP courses to have an alternative certification route. As more information becomes available it will be shared with the Senate.

    e. <u>Review Early Tenure Document</u>
    Senate reviews the Early Tenure Language from AOC – has been moved to vote of the faculty senate in the May meeting.

    f. <u>Faculty Senate & Executive Committee Elections</u>
    All current department elected representatives need to inform their department if their terms are up. Senators need to inform Jeanette if they wish to run, this includes department senators, at large senators and executive council positions (President, Vice President, Secretary, Parliamentarian and Elections Officer). Voting will occur prior to the next Faculty Senate Meeting.

VI. Old Business
   a. Senate Website Page: Ethics FAQ?
      Discussion with Ethics Committee over timing of providing this update to the Faculty Senate Webpage. TAMIU is currently reviewing it's procedures for reporting of ethical concerns. There will be a meeting in May to review the procedures for faculty filing grievance complaints and the Chair of the University Ethics Committee (Dr. Houston) will attend that meeting. Senator Houston will give feedback after that meeting to the Faculty Senate, but it is likely that updates to the Ethics FAQ will be pending until revisions to internal policies regarding grievances and other ethical complaints, have concluded.

   b. Grievance Policy and Record Keeping
      As discussed above, there will be a meeting in May to review TAMIU's policies and procedures for grievance reporting. Faculty Senate representatives will attend.

   c. Labor Day Survey
      A survey to assess faculty sentiment regarding the observance of Labor Day was presented to the Faculty Senate by Dr. Houston. The survey was put to a vote and was approved unanimously (2 senators abstained from the vote). The survey will be shared with Faculty before the May senate meeting.

   d. Ethics Point
      There is a need to clearly delineate grievance procedures and Ethics Points procedures to ensure that reports are appropriately filed to the relevant committees.

   e. AI Detection Tools
      Nothing further to add from discussion earlier in the session (see notes above).

VII. Open Agenda
   a. Concur
      Issues continue to be reported by Faculty about Concur. Specifically with receipts being challenged and reports send back to faculty for editing repetitively. Overall, the feeling is that the system is difficult to interact with.

   b. Withdrawn Students in Blackboard Gradebooks
      Faculty have asked whether they can have the option to check information in their gradebooks for students who have withdrawn from the course. Something the Office of the Registrar will contact faculty to ask about dates of last attendance/last submission of work for withdrawn students on financial aid, but faculty lose that information when the student withdraws. Dr. Kazen will check with ELearning Team about whether it is possible for faculty to access records of withdrawn students in this way.

    c.   <u>VPAT and Information Security Forms</u>
Dr. Houston raised questions about faculty being responsible for sourcing VPATs and completing information security questionnaires for new software purchases. Not only are faculty often not qualified to answer questions regarding technical specifications of software and security encryption, but completion of these forms takes a lot of time thus delaying research progress. A suggestion was made that the Office of Information Technology could possibly complete the forms and then send them to faculty for approval before the purchase is made. Dr. Kazen added this as an item to discuss during the next Executive Council meeting.

    d.   <u>Hiring and Pay for Research Assistants on Grants</u>
Concerns were raised over the length of time that it takes for grant-funded research assistants to be hired. Every stage of the process is very slow. Concerns were also raised that HR may be making decisions over the classification of grant-funded staff that does not necessarily match the duties of the position. Concerns were also raised over the pay scale for grant-funded RAs with many faculty complaining that they had budgeted to pay more per hour than they were allowed to by HR, despite the University approving the budget and pay rate before the grant was submitted for funding.

VIII.   Committee Reports
    a.   <u>Academic Oversight:</u> Minor edits needed to Early Tenure language, then it will go up for vote by the senate.

    b.   <u>Budget and Finance:</u> Working with Staff Senate on information relating to the financial status of the University.

    c.   <u>Ethics</u> – Updated description of the ethical committee has been circulated to the Senate and will be voted on in May. Updated infographics on grievance and ethical complaint procedures on hold until internal review and possible revision of policies and reporting procedures has concluded.

    d.   <u>Committee on Committee:</u> No update.

    e.   <u>Awards</u>: Observations of faculty nominated for the teaching awards have concluded except for one faculty member but committee is confident of having that assessment completed soon. All Senators have access to everything on Blackboard.

    f.   <u>Handbook Committee</u>: Working on updates.

    g.   <u>Assessment</u>: An informal assessment of the activities of the faculty senate will go out to all faculty.

h. <u>Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee:</u> Seeking updates on the alternatively certification path to QM. Blackboard Ultra will be used system wide. Some faculty asked if they could get access to Blackboard Ultra before the first class day in Fall so they can familiarize themselves with the new layout.

i. <u>Technology Advisory Committee:</u> Working on generating a list of a software that faculty can purchase as a discounted rate. Dr. Sosa is offering classes in Microsoft Office programs. TAC will also raise VPAT issues at next committee meeting.

j. <u>Fixed-term Faculty Committee</u>: Continue to develop growth plans for fixed term faculty and work on progress of fixed term faculty to the tenure track.

At conclusion of this last agenda item it was so moved that the meeting be adjourned, and upon being seconded the meeting was so adjourned at 2:27pm.