

Texas A&M International University
Faculty Senate
December 1st 2023
12pm – 2:30pm
STC 225

- I. The meeting was called to order by the Faculty Senate President, Dr. Hayley Kazen, at 12:00pm.
- II. *Roll Call:* Dr. Hayley Kazen, Dr. Lourdes Viloria, Dr. Cynthia Sosa, Dr. Andrew Hazelton, Dr. Kameron Jorgensen, Dr. Marvin Bennett, Dr. Seong Kwan Cho, Dr. Deepak Ganta, Dr. Ediza Garcia, Dr. Lin Runchang, Dr. Diana Linn, Dr. James Norris, Dr. Juan Homero Hinojosa, Dr. Li-Zheng Brooks, Dr. Tatiana Gorbunova, Dr. Leonel Prieto, Ms. Jeanette Hatcher, Mr. Timothy Rubel, Dr. Kate Houston.

III. Election of Senate Secretary

Senator Houston nominated for the position of Senate Secretary. No other Senators nominated for the position of Secretary. Therefore, as per procedure, Senator Houston was elected Senate Secretary by acclamation.

IV. Our guests were given the floor:

Dr. Pablo Arenaz and Dr. Claudia San Miguel

Study Abroad/Foreign Language Requirements

Dr. San Miguel raised concerns regarding the increasing expense of study abroad courses. One proposal had been to shorten the length of study abroad courses to 3 weeks in order to offset the increasing costs while continuing to provide opportunities to students. However, as study abroad often satisfies foreign language requirements, Dr. San Miguel is concerned that 3 weeks is not long enough for a languages course.

This led to a discussion over foreign language requirements more broadly, and whether study abroad may be adapted so that it is not part of foreign language requirement but instead satisfies an international studies requirement. If approved, an international certificate may replace foreign language requirements and would involve courses across campus.

Dr. San Miguel was clear that the Office of the Provost is not against foreign languages, these conversations are occurring as the University tries to adapt to changing student needs, increased costs, and a desire to give students a broad educational experience.

Faculty in attendance highlighted the popular nature of foreign language course offerings, especially online sections. Dr. San Miguel agreed that foreign languages are popular courses and that there remains a large demand for foreign languages. Dr. Arenaz added that the impact of any changes to study

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abroad and foreign language requirements will be minimal because it primarily only affects BA students in COAS. Most BS program in COAS already don't have language requirements.

Growth Plans for Fixed-Term Faculty

Office of the Provost is working to codify these plans and will provide updates as that process continues.

Books Included

Dr. San Miguel clarified some of the terms around Books Included:

- If digital copies are available they will automatically be provided over hard copies.
- If a new edition is available the book store will automatically substitute the new edition for the older one.
- If students do not want digital copies of books, they can opt out.

Senators raised issues around the faculty experience of Books Included, such as issues with ordering, the timeline for notification of issues with fulfilling orders, and reports from students regarding difficulties opting out of Books Included.

Summer Teaching

Traditionally, tenure-track and tenured faculty have been restricted to teaching 2 classes total over the summer. This is to protect their research time as the summer is typically when the majority of faculty research is conducted and written up for publication. Furthermore, there is a budget allocated for summer teaching and that budget does restrict the number of courses that can be offered for summer. Drs. San Miguel and Arenaz discussed their desire to increase summer options for Summer 2024, given we are in base funding period and that may mean that tenured and tenure-track faculty could be allowed to teach more than 2 courses. Drs. San Miguel and Arenaz are discussing ways to facilitate higher teaching loads in the summer given the budget limitations. It should be noted that there is no restriction on the number of courses fixed-term faculty can teach over the summer and they should be prioritized for summer teaching assignments over adjuncts. The only consideration for fixed-term faculty summer teaching loads is to ensure minimum enrollments are met and that offering the courses in the summer does not interfere with course sequencing and degree progression for students.

Drs. San Miguel and Arenaz did caution that they would be communicating to Chairs and Deans that they need to pay close attention to their faculty's research progression when evaluating them for summer teaching. If their faculty are deficient or approaching deficient in research then those faculty should be discouraged from summer teaching.

Freshmen are allowed to take pre-requisite courses in the summer.

If fixed-term faculty teach more than 2 summer courses it will count as overload.

Summer Research Support

Senators made note that if faculty are encouraged to focus on research over the summer then it would be helpful for TAMIU to identify funding mechanisms to support that work. Dr. San Miguel commented that COAS had a summer research funding program and it was highly successful. Dr. San Miguel will look into the cost of making such a program available outside of COAS.

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Post-tenure Review

This will be addressed further in January. Dr. Arenaz shared that the Board of Governors made changes to SAP 12.01 and 12.06. The change to 12.01 is in regards to awarding tenure to members of the National Academy who are hired by A&M. 12.06 involves language differentiating between periodic review and annual review of tenured faculty. Whether TAMIU needs to make changes to its periodic review policies in order to ensure compliance with new State laws is currently under review. Current thoughts are to review tenured faculty every 6 years, however there are still discussions on how to ensure faculty tenured before this policy is enacted, are evaluated. This will be the subject of further discussion between the Office of the Provost and the Faculty Senate.

Police Chief of Chiefs

System Police Chief is now in place to ensure universal policies across all system schools.

Health Fee Increases

Students voted in favor of increased fees so that vote now goes to the Board for approval. Raising fees as needed rather than every year, ensures transparency so students can understand the need to increase fees. The income generated from the fee increase will add additional counsellors to the health center.

SB17 Audit and Compliance

In Spring 2024 all agencies and universities will be audited to ensure compliance with SB17. DEI audit will likely focus on employment and HR practices. A&M System will audit all system schools prior to the State audit to help us identify any areas where compliance is still needed. Questions remain over which of our initiatives may be considered not in compliance with DEI – Lavender Graduation is one of those initiatives. Dr. Arenaz noted that many institutions are asking about Lavender Graduation under SB17 and we are awaiting a response from Office of General Counsel.

Budget

Aiming to secure funds in the next legislative session for a construction budget for Nursing.

Dr. Duffy

Presented the updated Mission Statement for TAMIU to the Faculty Senate (see attachment). New mission statement aligns with the strategic plan, and better aligns with system policies.

V. The minutes from the November meeting were approved with no corrections.

VI. New Business
a. Internal Grants

Senator Rubel raised a concern that internal grants offered to arts/creative projects is half that amount awarded to sciences when the requirements for both are the same. Senator Kazen motioned that this issue be brought up at Executive Council and Senator Rubel seconded that motion.

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b. Early Tenure

Some faculty may wish to go up for tenure review earlier than the current 5 year timeline. TAMIU needs a policy on early tenure. Academic Oversight Committee will draft language of this and present it to the Senate in January. Proposed timeline is to have all handbook changes approved by Senate in March, for Faculty vote in April.

c. SAP for Post-Tenure Review

See statements by Drs. San Miguel and Arenaz. This is largely on hold at our level until the Board of Regents makes forward progress on this issue. Updates will be shared at future meetings.

d. Fixed-term Faculty Growth Plans

Fixed-term Faculty should be given a growth plan if they score below a 3 on any of their PPE categories. PPE reviews occur in February, thus giving fixed-term faculty time to enact changes before their next review. Codifying the growth plan and timeline was assigned to the fixed-term faculty committee who will present language to the senate when it has been completed.

e. Summer Teaching

There is some concern that in certain programs summer courses are offered to adjuncts before being offered to Faculty. Senator Kazen will address this in Executive Council to ensure that Deans and Chairs are reminded to offer summer courses to faculty before offering courses to adjuncts.

f. Classroom Observations

Senate requires more clarity around frequency of classroom observations for faculty. This will be addressed at Executive Council and reported back to the Senate.

g. Books Included

Senator Kazen suggested a meeting with Follett to address concerns regarding the Books Included program. Senators were asked to email specific concerns from students about Books Included to Senator Kazen so they could form part of the meeting with Follett.

h. Faculty Senate Mission Statement

Moves to faculty vote.

i. Faculty Senate Constitution

Senator Houston raised a question of whether faculty should be allowed to vote in the election of Faculty Senate President, Vice-President and Secretary. Faculty Senate debated this issue at length but ultimately decided that faculty elect their representatives to the Senate, but the Senate gets to decide its leadership and representatives to the Executive Council.

Leadership vote occurs by senators nominating for the leadership position ahead of time and then a paper ballot vote for the position if there are multiple nominees.

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VII. Old Business

a. Informational: May Pay

The schedule of half pay for May and half pay for September will not change as per the Office of the President.

b. Informational: LMS Technology Survey

The question requesting students to provide feedback on specific faculty during the LMS Technology Survey has been removed.

c. Labor Day

Faculty will be surveyed about Labor Day. There are mixed opinions amongst faculty regarding whether they would like our calendar to align with other A&M Schools and have Labor Day as a holiday, or whether we continue with our current academic calendar which does not honor Labor Day. Concerns over Labor Day being a day on which the University is closed is of especial concern to those who teach lab sections of courses. There are logistical challenges with replacing a teaching Monday with a Wednesday and with ensuring staff don't lose out on hours. It was noted by Senators that other system schools manage to navigate these challenges.

VIII. Committee Reports

a. Academic Oversight

Continuing to raise issues over the use of AEFIS for faculty assessment with the Office of the Provost and Dr. Wilkinson. Recently conversations are over whether AEFIS will hold all of the faculty PPE materials as a repository or whether the storage of materials for assessments will be temporary. Also working on language around early tenure and policies for classroom observation of faculty.

b. Budget and Finance

Sent two requests to Mr. Castillo regarding greater transparency over merit pay and the impact of the half pay months for May and September when it comes to TRS contributions. Budget and Finance requested a breakdown of the number of faculty who received a 4% merit pool, a 3.5% merit pool, a 3% merit pool etc. Mr. Castillo responded to the request with aggregate data in dollar sum amounts from which committee members were unable to calculate the percentages they requested. There is an ongoing concern regarding transparency around the distribution of merit pay.

With regards to impacts of the half pay months on TRS contributions, Mr. Castillo responded by confirming that the half pay months of May and September do reduce TRS contributions for those months.

c. Ethics

Met to discuss the creation of a portal/hub for faculty to engage with reporting of unethical behavior by colleagues, somewhat like the ReportIt Hub for students. Discussed the possibility of including links and a FAQ entry regarding ethics reporting on the Faculty Senate website.

Further point of discussion around creating a mission statement for the ethics committee to clearly communicate that it is not an investigative body.

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d. Committee on the Creation, Composition and Responsibilities of Committees

The list of committees needs to be updated with only those committees which are active and fully staffed. Given changes to the office of student success (now enrollment and engagement) the language around student representatives also needs to change to reflect the name change for that office. This is not a substantive change.

e. Awards

A video has been created to help nominees to navigate the awards process. Nominations arrive with the committee by December 1st2023, with the next deadline being December 4th 2023.

f. Handbook

See appendix. With regards to revision, summer school language appears okay as it is. Fixed-term faculty changes will come through in February, waiting on guidance from System with regards to post-tenure review language. Committee is currently making non-substantive changes, such as spelling and grammar that do not require senate vote. Will request a vote when substantive changes are needed.

g. Assessment

No report.

h. Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee (DEITC)

Blackboard Ultra will roll out in Summer 2024. In Spring a limited number of faculty may be allowed to choose to migrate to Ultra early as a trial run during Wintermester. If Faculty decide to opt in to Ultra for their Wintermester courses, they cannot backtrack.

i. Technology Advisory Committee (TAC)

New FAQs on the Faculty Senate website, maintenance schedule is set to every 30 days. The maintenance schedule is created with Department level calendars in mind and every possible accommodation is made. However, in an institution this size not every request for scheduling of IT maintenance can be met. TAC reminded senators that 90% of the maintenance work does not affect Blackboard or Email systems.

TAC would like a representative from the Graduate School.

j. Fixed-term Faculty

Did not meet. Will be working on the agenda items for the growth plan. Summer school policy remains static.

IX. Announcements and Other Business

- a. Committee on Committees reports that the graduate council is ready! First meeting will occur in the new year.

At the 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 2:33pm.

Draft Mission Statement

Old

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society. TAMIU provides a learning environment built on a solid academic foundation in the arts and sciences. The University offers a range of baccalaureate and master's programs and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in International Business Administration and Criminal Justice. In addition, the University pursues a progressive agenda for global study and understanding across all disciplines.

Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, TAMIU improves the quality of lives for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

What we need to add:

Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service,

Current

Texas A&M International University nurtures its students' academic and social development to be responsible and productive members of our global society.

Proposed

Texas A&M International University nurtures its students' academic and social development through instruction, research, and service to be responsible and productive members of our global society.

Voted on and Approved by the Faculty Senate, awaiting Faculty vote

1. TAC Committee Description (updated 10-18-23) - **replace on page 15**

The purpose of this committee is to monitor matters related to the development and implementation of technology in learning spaces, pedagogy, and faculty resources as relevant to the University strategic plan. The member appointed from the Faculty Senate will serve as a co-chair of the related University Technology Advisory Committee. Other senators with expertise in Information Technology may also serve as appointed by the Faculty Senate President.

2. Faculty Senate Mission Statement - **insert on page 13**

The mission of the Faculty Senate of Texas A&M International University is to foster a community of mutual respect and cooperation within the University, working to ensure effective communication between faculty and administration. The Faculty Senate is empowered to act as the representative and resolving authority of the faculty, and it facilitates faculty participation in shared governance which includes making recommendations to the President and the Provost in matters that concern faculty.

3. Fixed Term Faculty document.

Under "Definition of Faculty Status" and the Major Subheading of "Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty" (p.37, tentative placement)

Fixed-Term faculty can apply no earlier than the beginning of their third year of their fixed-term appointment to be considered for reclassification as tenure-track faculty. The application for this reclassification will follow the timeline for promotion and tenure.

1. In order to be reclassified from fixed-term to tenure-track at the assistant professor rank, faculty members must submit to the department chair a letter of application along with a dossier in support of the application by September 1. The letter and the supporting documents should make the case that the faculty member has demonstrated evidence of planning, conducting, or publishing research or creative works of a quality that suggests the ability to be successful eventually in earning tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor.
2. The department chair will make these materials available to members of the department promotion and tenure committee for at least one week prior to its annual meeting in September to consider all applications for promotion, tenure, and/or reclassification.
3. The department promotion and tenure committee will follow its standard procedures for a confidential discussion and vote on the merits of the application. A member of the committee will write a report to the department chair stating the committee's recommendation and rationale.
4. The department chair, college dean, and provost will then write letters to the president either in support of or against the reclassification following the timeline required in the promotion and tenure process.
5. The president will consider the recommendations of the department's tenured faculty, the department chair, the college dean, and the provost and make a final decision.

UTSA has this:

Early Tenure. Tenure-track faculty may be considered early for award of tenure and promotion, that is, before the beginning of the sixth year of the probationary period. However, the expectation is that early tenure is reserved for faculty with demonstrated, exceptional achievements relative to years in rank in research, scholarship and creative activity, instruction and service. As such, although the overall record for scholarly achievement, teaching excellence, and participation in service for an "early" candidate shall be no less in terms of both quantity and quality to that of a successful candidate coming up in the expected sixth year, a candidate who is showing "good progress" toward tenure is not appropriate to be considered for early tenure. Note that opting out of the automatic covid extension does not constitute an early review, but rather forgoes the additional year extension.

My point is this: early tenure is fine with me but there has to be merit to it. I would hate for someone who is mediocre applying for early tenure and then if unsuccessful, they are given a terminal contract. He/she is not eligible to apply in their 6th year if they are unsuccessful in their fifth year.

1. Summer schedule: Given that fixed-term faculty do not have to engage in scholarship, may they teach more than two summer courses? Yes, but they must remember that we base schedules on the needs of students, course sequences, and two-year course plans created by department chairs (which should have included input from faculty). Thus, we rely on department chairs, deans, as well as advisors to follow a two-year course plan/schedule. If department chairs (and deans, with the input of advisors) do not see a need for a summer class or if offering a summer class disrupts the course sequence of a degree plan, then we should not offer the class. Faculty must also remember that there are minimum enrollment numbers to be met in order for us to offer a summer class.
2. Growth plans: On the fixed-term annual evaluation form, it states that if a faculty member receives below a 3, then an approved professional developmental plan to redress the deficiency must be attached. May we formalize this policy in the handbook and/or SAP? Given that most contracts are August 15-May 15 and evaluations are done in February, this would give the faculty member time to make improvements. Yes, absolutely!
3. Post-tenure review: We understand that in the new year, a committee will be formed to address periodic review as well as creating a SAP. Correct.
4. Books Included: May we create a document or checklist to clarify this process for faculty? It would also address questions about new edition books, physical copies of books, etc. Sure, but I'd like Trevor to review it before it is disseminated to faculty.
5. Early tenure: We will address this in the December Senate meeting. I think something like the UTSA policy will work, though. Great!
6. Language requirement: Could you clarify this? There was some confusion with the notes in the last DC meeting. Sure. Last DC, I mentioned the possibility of expanding the study abroad/foreign language requirement to include classes that have an international focus/content. This is based on conversations with the Office of International Engagement and their assessment of study abroad programs becoming more cost prohibitive. In fact, the cost is driving some study abroad programs to only be 3 weeks instead of 5. Back in the Mitchell days, in order for a program to count for the study abroad requirement, it had to be 4-5 weeks in duration. This may be changing too as the cost is too high in some countries to have our students spend more than 3 weeks abroad. In the interest of providing students with more options while also accentuating our "international" name, I proposed adding other options to the study abroad/FL option in certain degrees. The Office of Global Initiatives already has a certificate in International Studies and while the exception of a few courses we no longer offer, I was proposing we include those courses as part of the study abroad/FL requirement (granted, we may need to change the requirement to International Studies). Here are the courses as part of the certificate: <https://catalog.tamtu.edu/undergraduate-information/undergraduate-certificates/international-studies-certificate/> Now, all of this has to pass curriculum committees. I will not unilaterally add this to any degree until faculty vote and have a say on this.

Books Included

1. The ordering/adoption deadline is 2 weeks prior to the opening of registration to make us compliant with the HEOA (which requires that we publish course materials when registration opens).
2. Emails for what, exactly? For the most part, emails are not sent directly to faculty. Most college admins submit adoptions for faculty, and those who have access to Follett Discover (to enter adoptions) are the ones who receive emails. While some faculty have requested this access, most have not, but there is nothing precluding faculty from receiving access.
3. Are you asking about faculty copies? If so, the procedure hasn't changed, but we can look at documenting it. If you're referring to student materials, Books IncludED is a digital-first solution, and moving to physical books would only increase the cost for all students defeating the purpose of the program. Additionally, the platform on which the digital books are provided includes a number of features to improve student learning outcomes. These are not simple scanned copies of the text like they were in the early days of e-books.
4. This would be determined by Academic Affairs, although we do require approval of the Provost for changes requested within 3 weeks of the start of classes. The reason for this is that changing the materials at such a late date may result in a delay in provisioning, and the goal of Books Included is always for students to have their materials by the first day of classes (which incidentally is why this is sometimes referred to as a first-day solution).
5. While we cannot create an administrative procedure for a third-party, this is a customer service issue that we are committed to addressing with regional management. To do so, however, we need real-time, real-life examples including actual emails sent.