

Texas A&M International University

Faculty Senate

February 2nd 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. Lourdes Viloria, Dr. Kate Houston, Dr. Li-Zheng, Brooks, Dr. Leonel Prieto, Dr. Seong Kwan Cho, Dr. James Norris, Dr. Andrew Hazelton, Dr. Kameron Jorgensen, Dr. Deepak Ganta, Dr. Runchang Lin, Dr. Tatiana Gorbunova, Dr. Marvin Bennett, Mr. Tim Rubel, Dr. Juan Hinojosa, Dr. Diana Linn.
- III. Given Dr. San Miguel's absence, Dr. Kazen presented relevant information for the Faculty Senate.
 - a. Summer Schedule: Dr. San Miguel sent an email to All Faculty which answered questions about summer teaching loads. Dr. Linn asked for clarification over which year of PPE summer teaching assignments would be based on. Dr. Linn was informed that research productivity from the previous year will inform summer teaching – this 2023 PPE scores will be determining 2024 summer teaching assignments. Senate will confirm this with Dr. San Miguel.
 - b. Follett: Follett will be on campus on February 12th and 13th to answer questions from faculty and troubleshoot problems onsite. Dr. Hinojosa requested an open house style meeting with Follett. Dr. Kazen confirmed that Faculty Senate had asked for an open-house style forum meeting but that format was not approved. Faculty Senate Executive Council will meet with Follett and will circulate minutes to faculty. All Senators were encouraged to gather information from the faculty they represent regarding experiences with Follett so they can be shared with the Follett representative.
- IV. Our guests were given the floor.

Dr. Bernice Sanchez and Dr. Puneet Gill

Drs. Sanchez and Gill brought concerns regarding the administration of their PPE (annual faculty evaluation) within the College of Education. Drs. Sanchez and Gill described how the College of Education created an earlier deadline for submission than the posted University level deadline and dissuaded faculty from narrative style PPE completion, instead providing them with fill-in-the-blanks boilerplate statements regarding teaching, research and service productivity. Drs. Sanchez and Gill reported that requirements around PPE, specifically with regards to what faculty can submit and when, changes rapidly within the College and frequently emails are sent to faculty in close succession which contradict each other. The changing criteria causes great concern on behalf of the faculty, who have tried to meet with the College administration to express their concerns over the PPE, but have been unsuccessful in doing so.

Dr. Arenaz encouraged the guests to reach out to Dr. San Miguel, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, to make her aware of their complaints in the hopes that Dr. San Miguel can provide mediation.

Dr. Arenaz also notified the College of Education faculty present that he would encourage a narrative structure for PPE submissions rather than boilerplate statements, as narrative structures can be advantageous when faculty submit for third year review, tenure and/or any kind of promotional review.

Dr. Pablo Arenaz

Enrollment

Enrollment is up 5%. If numbers maintain then we are on track for our highest Spring enrollment. TAMIU graduated 900 students in the Fall. In addition, we have a 92% retention rate from Fall to Spring semesters.

Dean Searches

Dr. San Miguel will email to update timelines on COAS and Graduate School Deans. TAMIU is preparing to make an offer for the Library Dean. Search for the AARSB Dean is underway.

Next Legislative Session

We are a year away from the next legislative session and so are working on requests for appropriations. High on the list is support for computer science and civil engineering programs. Demand for these graduates in these areas is high in Laredo due to the port economy, but there is a lack of local training. Also working on a request for the new nursing and health sciences building. Plan would be to convert Canseco into an Engineering and Science research building once the College of Nursing and Health Sciences has moved.

Changes to the Library

Proposed changes to the library which will create a digital commons space have created anxiety amongst the student body. Ultimately there are plans to extensively remodel the library, but those will take substantial time to implement. Dr. Arenaz explained that he intends to use space that is not well utilized in the library, to expand tutoring services but study rooms and computer space will remain. Once tutoring has moved to the library the plan will be to create additional computer labs in Cowart Hall.

SB17 and SB18

The entire A&M System will be audited for compliance with SB17 in the Spring of 2025, with the Regents and Chancellor having to certify in August of 2024 that we comply with SB17. TAMIU is waiting for guidance over the continuation of ceremonies such as Lavender Graduation. We cannot currently have life model drawing classes unless we can guarantee all students are over 18 years old due to the nudity involved. Board of Regents will meet next week to discuss.

No updates on systematic reviews of tenured faculty under SB18. More information will be forthcoming as soon guidance is provided by system offices.

Guests from University College (Including Dean Alfredo Ramirez)

University College staff voted to update their PPE assessment form because the previous instrument did not fit their needs and specifically, did not adequately allow for teaching contributions to be assessed.

This new instrument allows an assessment of artifacts that University College develop to meet the specific needs of freshmen, as well as their pedagogical investments necessary for maintaining skills sets such as writing skills, being able to develop and instruct towards teaching objectives and professionalism in classroom conduct. Faculty in University College are fixed-term so there are no research requirements, which is why this redesigned PPE focuses on teaching and service.

University College guests described how the new instrument was developed by a committee of University College faculty and was put to vote by University College faculty whereupon it was unanimously approved. The next stage to make the instrument official, is for a Faculty Senate vote.

Senator Hinojosa motion to approve the new PPE instrument for University College, Senator Rubel seconded.

Faculty Senate voted with a unanimous vote in favor. Thus the motion to approve the new PPE instrument for University College was passed.

Dr. Manuel Broncano – Environmental Humanities Initiative

In September of 2023 Dr. Broncano kick-started an initiative to promote environmental humanities at TAMU. The goal is to develop a multidisciplinary think tank which combines the arts, sciences, and humanities. The initiative aims to place the environment at the heart of our professional dialogue as academics in order to demonstrate the value of the humanities to other areas of science and research. Currently planning a conference for October which will be a celebration of the river.

Dr. Broncano reports that the Provost is very supportive of this initiative.

Senator Rubel asked about the long term goals of the initiative. Dr. Broncano explained that they hope to start with a certificate, then grow to a minor, a major, a masters degree and all the way to a PhD program.

Dr. Randel Brown – University Ombudsperson

Dr. Brown attended Faculty Senate in order to reach out and connect with the University Ethics Committee as they undertake work to clarify the reporting process for faculty who wish to report misconduct. At no time do any of the below statements apply to Title IX violations which must be reported through very specific channels. Rather, this discussion focused around faculty grievances.

Dr. Randall Brown made the following points:

1. The goal of an Ombudsperson is to avoid grievances reaching the point of an Ethics Point complaint being filed. Dr. Brown explained that when faculty file grievance complaints they often believe there will be a winner, however in the process no-one actually wins. Dr. Brown explained that in his view, early stage mediation can resolve the majority of conflicts before they reach the level of needing to be officially reported. If complaints do need to be officially reported then the Ombudsperson would always fully support parties in that process.

2. Dr. Brown is concerned that information regarding the accessibility and function of the Ombudsperson is not clearly communicated to faculty at this time. University Ethics Committee decided to work with Dr. Brown to ensure clear and accessible communication of the Ombudsperson to the faculty.
- V. The minutes from the December meeting were approved with no corrections.
- VI. New Business
- a. Financial Report for the University (in conjunction with Staff Senate)
Staff senate is requesting a full financial report for the university in order to improve clarity and transparency over financial health of the institution. Faculty senate agrees that is a good idea. Senator Hinojosa recommended that Faculty Senate reach out to Daniel Berndt, president of Staff Senate in order to connecting them with our budget committee to support their efforts. Dr. Kazen encouraged continued collaboration with Staff Senate.
 - b. Prescription Insurance
A Faculty member raised concerns over Express Scripts and in person pharmacies saying they won't accept prescriptions under Express Scripts plans. Senators commented that there is an Express Scripts app that will compare drug costs and prescription costs for in person and online pharmacies. Faculty should be aware that there can be issues with in person pharmacy and our prescription insurance. This is for informational purposes as Express Scripts is not under TAMIU control.
 - c. Faculty Senate Website FAQs
FAQs have been created for:
 - i. Follett/ Books Included.
 - ii. May pay options.
 - iii. IT maintenance schedule
 - iv. Where to find Ethics Point
 - d. Calendar Committee
Discussions commences over whether the Faculty Senate should form a calendar committee. As our institution grows, multiple calendars are developed but there is no one centralized calendar. The Committee on Committees agreed to debate this issue and vote whether to move forward with a centralized calendar committee.
 - e. Childcare Facilities
Staff Senate raised the issue during one of the "Breakfast with the Provost" sessions, they wish to push for childcare facilities on campus. Faculty Senate to gauge interest from faculty. Recommended Staff Senate connect with College of Nursing and College of Education.

f. Parenting Website

Students who are parents now have a dedicated liaison on campus: Mayra Hernandez. Parenting students, regardless of gender, can access the parenting liaison and have protections regarding their educational journey. There is a dedicated Pregnant and Parenting Students webpage. Please encourage all parenting students to access the webpage and/or contact Mayra Hernandez for more information.

g. Honor Council

AI Detection. Honor Council was unaware the TurnItIn AI Detector was a trial only and did not have a role in the decision not to renew the service. Honor Council is seeking clarification regarding the removal of the TurnItIn AI Detection tool and it's hopeful reinstatement. In the meantime, Honor Council wished to inform the Senate that Grammarly is using Generative AI to suggest sentence completion to students. This technology will flag as AI in AI detectors. Faculty should also be aware that Microsoft Word is testing generative AI add-ins.

h. AI Detector Tools

AI Detector Tools are no longer available on TurnItIn. AI Detection on TurnItIn was a trial period only and not permanent. Senate will survey faculty to determine faculty thoughts and experiences with regards to the TurnItIn AI Detector whether faculty want it reinstated.

VII. Old Business

a. Internal Grants

Dr. Kilburn will visit Faculty Senate in March to discuss internal grants. This will also be discussed during Executive Council.

b. Labor Day Survey

Faculty senate were read a draft of a Labor Day survey by Senator Houston. Faculty senate agreed for Senator Houston to formally present the questions for vote at the March meeting of the senate.

VIII. Committee Reports

a. Academic Oversight: Working on language regarding early tenure procedures. Need further clarity over how to initiate the process of early tenure and whether a terminal contract is offered if early tenure is unsuccessful. Committee will request additional clarity from Office of the Provost.

b. Budget and Finance: Met with Mr. Castillo meeting yesterday to review the availability of a merit pool. Mr. Castillo informed the committee that he has to finalized enrollment numbers first, and then whether a merit pool is possible will be decided. Committee was also informed that immediate financial considerations for TAMU include online course development stipends and funding of AI detection tools. Mr Castillo appears

receptive to raising QM development stipends and will discuss it with Dr. San Miguel at their next meeting.

- c. Ethics – Working to centralize ethics reporting information. Considering a flow-chart type design so faculty know when to report and where to report depending on their grievance. Also working on revising the committee description to better align with other institutions. There is a new section of the FAQ on the faculty senate website regarding Ethics Point and links to information on how to access the Ombudsman. Ethics committee will reach out to the Ombudsman for further meetings as the semester progresses.
- d. Committee on Committee: Reviewing enrollment lists in committees and ensure that they align with the ways in which offices have been reorganized.
- e. Awards: Committee reports that they are unsure where to find information on past awardees. Dr. Kazen will investigate and notify.
- f. Handbook Committee: Updates are ready to be made but need to meet with Senator Hatcher.
- g. Assessment: No report.
- h. Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee: Blackboard Ultra will be rolled out to everyone. Trainings in Microsoft packages will be offered.
- i. Fixed-term Faculty Committee: Pending information from Dr. San Miguel regarding formalization of growth plans for fixed-term faculty.

IX. Voting

At the conclusion of the committee reports, Senator. Kazen motioned for three votes to take place. The purpose of the votes is to add representatives from new offices created on campus to committees where their representation is required. The voting procedure was as follows:

- a. Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee
 - i. Addition of a representative from Student Engagement. Senator. Kazen motioned for the vote, Senator Hinojosa seconded. Motion went to vote of the faculty senate and was unanimously approved.
- b. Technology Advisory Committee
 - i. Addition of a representative from Student Engagement. Senator. Kazen motioned for the vote, Senator Viloría seconded. Motion went to vote of the faculty senate and was unanimously approved.

- ii. Addition of a representative from the Graduate School. Senator. Kazen motioned for the vote, Senator Linn seconded. Motion went to vote of the faculty senate and was unanimously approved.

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 2:30pm.