



Student Fee Advisory Committee

February 20, 2024

I. Welcome

Attendees: Rosalinda Garcia, Fred Juarez, Dr. Tatiana Gorbunova, Mayra Hernandez, Carolina Ramirez, Alfredo Duncan, Rodolfo Rendon, Preston Salazar, and Jesus Soto.

Administration: Denisse Botello

II. Introductions

III. Review and Approval of Nov. 10, 2023, Minutes

Motion to approve by Mayra Hernandez, seconded by Carolina Ramirez.
Motion passes.

IV. Update on Referendum

Ms. Garcia reported that the Board of Regents approved the referendum. It will be implemented upcoming Fall 2024.

Note: At 5:10pm students from The Bridge newspaper walked into the meeting. Ms. Garcia invited them to introduce themselves. They identified themselves as Tiffany Luna, Juan Puente, and Dora Guerrero. Mr. Puente requested permission to take photos. Ms. Garcia agreed.

V. Discuss Plans for Funds Currently Available in Account

Ms. Garcia began the discussion of the \$12,000 that is in the SFAC account and that it's the committee's responsibility to decide how to use the funds. Student members of the committee have been discussing ideas for use of the funds. Ms. Garcia asks them to share what they've discussed.

Carolina discussed an idea to use the funds to provide a grant for parenting students given SGAs interest in supporting parents.

Students discussed a lack of seating for students throughout campus and suggested the money could be used to provide additional seating. A student mentions that the green area in front of the Student Center patio would be a good outdoor space. Caro and Jesus both mentioned outdoor seating with canopies or pavilions.

Ms. Garcia noted that the money can be used for multiple things.

Ms. Garcia asked how the committee wants to move forward on making this decision. Preston stated student input should be considered, instead of the committee speaking for students.

The committee returned to discussing the childcare idea. Dr. Gorbunova said that she doesn't believe student money should be used on that. Mr. Juarez provided background on a childcare area the university had previously and the challenges it presented. Ms. Garcia stated that some other universities have emergency grant funding for childcare assistance as a way to support students.

Dr. Gorbunova says that although the students would like more seating, she doesn't think using student money for something the university should provide is fair. She believes students should take their request to the University administration and express the concerns they have about the lack of outdoor study spaces. Dr. Gorbunova shares that childcare and grants have been a topic at faculty senate meetings. She agrees with the idea of the childcare grant for those who need it. Caro mentions that in doing research of her own, she learned that the A&M campus in San Antonio attained a grant for a childcare facility. She thinks this could also be another option. Dr. Gorbunova suggests contacting the different colleges and asking them what specific needs their department has. Preston questions if there is a need to spend all the money right now and asks if the 12k will disappear. Mr. Juarez assures Preston that the funds won't disappear. They roll over.

Preston suggests that instead of coming up with ideas that students should be surveyed to identify their needs and apply that to the decision. He goes on to say that the committee should formulate a plan on how to make that happen. He believes that is the best course of action. Ms. Garcia assured the committee that there is no rush to spend the money.

Ms. Hernandez asked when the money was collected and what it was used for. She asks if there was \$12,000 last year and another \$12,000 this year, making it a total of \$24,000. Preston explains that there was a surplus of funds in the last FY,

and the SFAC requested a separate account be created for those funds. Mr. Juarez states that this fiscal year also had a surplus of around \$600 or \$700 that will also be added to the account. Ms. Hernandez asked for the total student service fees collected. Mr. Juarez says the information was presented during the last meeting, and he can't recall the number now. Preston requested a copy of the Student Service Fee budget presented at the previous meeting. Mr. Juarez acknowledged his request and said he could provide that. Carolina asks what the process is and if the committee is required to get the majority vote from students or if it can decide on their behalf. Preston says that the committee can decide how to spend it if everyone agrees. Preston explains that he believes there should be two surveys. The first is to identify the needs of students and the second to vote on those needs. Ms. Hernandez requested to review the policies and procedures on the committee's duties.

Ms. Garcia states that the Texas Education Code does not mention surplus funds. It just states that the committee reviews and makes recommendations to president. Preston mentions that the previous year's SFAC created bylaws that were sent to the President for signature. Preston is unsure if they were ever signed but he does remember meeting with the President and receiving verbal approval with requested changes. Preston states that the bylaws were created before the surplus account was established; therefore, there would be no mention of how to navigate surplus funds. Rodolfo added that surplus funds were not considered in the bylaws so there is no existing structure for it. Preston says he will share with Ms. Garcia the final proposed bylaws document he has. Ms. Garcia states she will share the SFAC Education Code, and the Committee Charge form signed by the President with the committee.

Carolina said she has not read through the entire Texas Education Code on SFAC but that she is not opposed to starting the plan of collecting student opinions. Preston mentions that the Texas Education Code is more of an outline because it does not detail what needs to be done or how to do it. It mostly only addresses what SFAC is and who must serve.

Ms. Hernandez asks if minutes must be posted online. Ms. Garcia confirmed that meetings are open to everyone and minutes will be posted on the SFAC website that is in the process of being created.

Ms. Garcia asked Preston if his suggestion is that the committee vote on creating a survey. He agrees and says he doesn't believe the bylaws prevent the committee from doing so.

Motion to survey the students for suggestions on how to spend the money by Alfredo Duncan. Ms. Hernandez would like to amend the motion to instead ask students what they think are the “critical areas of need”. The committee discussed what the motion should be.

Motion by Alfredo Duncan to survey students to determine how the surplus SFAC funds will be used. Second, by Rodolfo. The motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Garcia thinks providing categories like parenting and study space is good but also asking students for specific suggestions, so there is a sense of categories that students are gravitating towards. She believes it may help the committee identify another area of need. The group discussed logistics of the survey.

Ms. Hernandez cautioned the team that the more surveys presented, the lower the responses received. She would like the committee to consider that there are other assessments out by the university.

Ms. Garcia asked the group to rename the categories mentioned, parenting being one. Ms. Hernandez summarized: parenting needs of students, furniture, and grants. She adds that transportation is a common inquiry her office often receives.

Preston asked what about transportation. Ms. Hernandez often hears from students that the metro is too expensive. Assistance with bus passes or a grant to help students with car issues would be appreciated. Carolina asked Ms. Hernandez how often her office receives residence life/housing issues. Ms. Hernandez reported there aren't many challenges reported related to housing. The more common concern raised is that there aren't enough funding/scholarship opportunities to pay for housing.

Preston stated that he had a list of areas that can be funded by the student service fee. He lists' textbook rentals, recreational activities, health and hospital services, medical services, intermural/intercollegiate athletics, artist and lecture series, cultural entertainment series, student publication, student government, SFAC and student transportation services. Ms. Garcia shared that she has personally heard students talking about wanting more things around campus that promote TAMIU spirit.

Ms. Garcia requested a raise of hand for committee members who want to help produce the survey. All students' representatives raised their hands.

Ms. Garcia asked if there were any questions to which Caro requested the committee discuss a timeline for the project. The committee agreed they would

like to survey students before the semester's end. The timeline would reflect 1-2 weeks to create the survey, deployment by the 3rd week of March after spring break, open to students for a week, and the committee would meet to discuss results on week 4. Carolina and Preston informed the group that they have a mass student email list so to reach out to other organizations and help promote the survey.

- VI. Crafting our Report to the President
This agenda item was not covered.

- VII. Request from Student Members

Carolina presented a request. She and the students are requesting offices/directors funded by student fees present on their budget to identify any room for potential relocation. She further states they are interested in seeing if there's money that can be relocated for student organizations.

Preston elaborates by saying that although they are provided overall budget information, the terms used are general and don't provide detailed information. Preston reiterated what Carolina proposed is that every office that receives money from the Student Service Fee should present their budget to the committee. He believes this will create a better transparent educated environment.

Ms. Garcia assures the committee that can be done. She will coordinate.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.