

Meeting: Faculty Senate
 Date: March 1, 2022
 Time: 2:06 p.m.
 Location: Video Conference via Zoom
 Adjournment: 3:34 p.m.

**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
 March 2022**

Present: Hongmei Jia, Brooke Clemmons, Joshua Ege, Johanna Delgado-Avecedo, Stephen Starnes, Omar El Ariss, Samantha Klassen (Secretary), Kathryn Dixon, Julia Ballenger (President), Jason Davis, Michael Oldham, Michael Ponton, Tina Cancaster, Emily Newman, Sandy Hayes, Christian Hemplemann, Yasemin Atinc, Brandon Randolph-Seng, Brock Johnson, Benton Pierce, Gracie Brownell (sub for Marta Mercado-Sierra), Zachary Palmer, and Andrea Williams

Guests Present: None

Not present: Thomas Boucher, Jane Kosarek

Summary of Discussion	
<p>February Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes: February Senate Meeting minutes were reviewed. Senator Ponton motioned to approve the February minutes, and Senator Williams seconded the motion. February meeting minutes were approved with no changes.</p>	<p>February Faculty Senate meeting minutes were approved.</p>
<p>Guests: None.</p> <p>Reports from Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling and Facilities: Senator Lancaster had no report but noted that the website had been updated with the corrected December minutes. She stated that we needed to compile a list of Standing Committee membership lists. Secretary Klassen stated she would send out an e-mail to all Faculty Senate members requesting that they send her a list of their committee assignments. • Awards Committee: Senator Jia stated that all Faculty Senate applicants for the Regent’s Professor award had been reviewed and the Awards Committee was recommending Dr. Carlos Bertulani from the Physics and Astronomy Department for the award. Faculty Senate voted by acclamation to approve Dr. Bertulani’s nomination for the award. Senator Jia noted that the committee was still reviewing applicants for the other awards and would present these nominees for Senate body discussion at the April 2022 meeting. 	

- **Academic Life:** Senator Ponton had nothing new to report, but noted that the Faculty Cultural Competence Survey was now live.
- **Academic Practice:** Senator Starnes had no report.
- **Budget:** Senator Delgado-Acevedo had no report.
- **Curriculum:** Senator Pierce had no report.
- **Admission and Retention of Students:** Senator Clemmons noted that her committee was working on the new 2023-2024 Admissions standards but had not yet received the draft from administration. She was awaiting receipt before sharing proposed changes with the Senate body. President Ballenger stated she would provide Senator Clemmons with a list of her committee members.
- **Organization of the Senate:** Senator Palmer stated that his committee had met to discuss the TAMUC Faculty Senate Constitution and to make recommendations for the update. Senator Palmer stated that they were currently merging their content for the Constitution with language from TAMUCC, TAMUK, and TAMU College Station. He noted that the language was largely the same, although the purpose of the Senate was being revised to empower the Senate to do more. Senator Palmer stated that a rough draft of the Constitution would be available for review at April's meeting. Senator Palmer also noted that our standing Faculty Senate committees were encoded into the constitution and asked for potential updates to the committee lists.

Unfinished Business

Continued discussion on proposed revisions to Policy 12.02.99.R0.03 Implementing Faculty Tenure and Promotion – Senator Ponton, Academic Life.

Senator Ponton indicated that the feedback he had gotten from senators up to this point was that the departments generally supported the proposed changes (i.e., limiting the voting on promotion from associate to full to only full professors). One concern was presented that this proposed change would “leave the voting on tenure to old, White male professors,” as many of our full professors represent this demographic. However, generally, faculty seemed to be in support of the revisions.

President Ballenger asked if there were any additional concerns to discuss at this time. *Senator Ege* stated his faculty were “split down the middle,” with the biggest issue they had being that there was a lack of

diversity within the department, and by eliminating associate professors from vetting full professors, they would limit the inclusivity and diverse perspectives involved in voting on full professors. Senator Ege indicated that “most associate professors should be able to make a judgment call and understand whether an item in a vita warrants promotion or not.”

Senator Davis stated faculty in his department felt the same way. He noted that there were no full professors in his department, and that his college had very few full professors, which would be challenging logistically. He noted that the revision “sounds nice, but is simply not practical because there isn’t a fair way to implement this across disciplines.” In his estimation, associate professors were more than capable of making the decision to promote beyond the associate level.

Senator Newman from Liberal Arts studies stated their faculty “strongly disapproved” because they have no full professors in their department. *Senator Clemmons* stated that her department was distinct, as they only have one department in the College of Ag and Nat and only two full professors. She noted that someone at the associate level should have the wherewithal within the discipline to vote on the promotion to full professor.

Senator Pierce indicated that Psychology and Special Education voted to approve the changes. President Ballenger stated the Department of Education Leadership approved revisions of the policy. *Senator Klassen* stated the Counseling Department universally approved the proposed changes as well.

Senator Palmer noted that Soc/CJ only has one full professor, and although members of his department did not feel strongly about the change, they are leaning towards keeping things the way they are. *Senator Dixon* noted that C&I feedback indicated that some faculty were concerned that there are not clear enough guidelines for T&P, and many associate professors do not think they have a good enough grasp on what a full professorship distinction entails, and are therefore not adequately prepared to make that vote. Another concern was that full professors from their department might need to vote on full professorship for other departments; as they do not feel comfortable with their own lack of clarity with the criteria, they would then be making decisions about other professors without understanding the parameters effectively.

Senator Oldham’s department disagreed with the change as well. *Senator Jia* in Accounting also presented similar concerns (only one full professor in the entire department who is in Finance, which isn’t the same discipline). *Senator Starnes* stated that within the Chemistry department, feedback was supportive of the proposed changes. *Senator Williams* stated that her department also did not have any full professors, and that while they understood the argument for the proposed changes, they would recommend clarifying the parameters around the full professor distinction rather than changing the voting structure.

Senator Pierce echoed this concern, stating that we needed clearer guidelines for making these decisions. *Senator Eugene Moreno* shared a

statement from his department, indicating that “letting only full professors vote would lead to continuing a ‘good old boys’ club,” and while there are risks of a quid pro quo situation with associates voting on the promotion to full, that seemed less risky than the aforementioned concern.

Senator Moreno clarified that this would be a university-wide policy change. *Senator Ponton* noted that at the current time, ALL tenured faculty in the department vote on someone’s tenure and policy, and yes, this would be a university-wide change, as this is an update to a university policy.

Senator Ege indicated that when his department updated their tenure and promotion guidelines, they made them extremely clear and explicit, and because of that, anyone within the discipline should be able to vote objectively on a candidate for a full professorship, regardless of rank. Therefore, he noted that the real problem that may need to be addresses is a lack of clarity around full professorship guidelines within individual departments. *Senator Palmer* indicated that there are also extremely clear guidelines for T&P in CHSA, and that was why his department was leaning towards keeping things status quo.

Senator Clemmons noted that in her college/department, there could be undue pressure on associate-level professors who were asked to vote on full professorships. *Senator Davis* recommended that if associates were uncomfortable voting, they could abstain, which would not necessitate a change to the policy, but a conversation at the department level.

President Ballenger called for a motion to vote. *Senator Pierce* moved that the Faculty Senate vote on accepting the changes put forth by the Academic Life Committee regarding the Tenure and Promotion policy. *Senator Clemmons* seconded. *Secretary Klassen* provided a link to the Google spreadsheet to record the votes.

Votes were cast as follows: Y – 5, N – 11, A – 2. The motion did not pass. The tenure and promotion policy will remain as written, whereby associate professors may vote on promotion to full professor.

New Business

Proposed 2023-2024 Admissions Standards – *Senator Clemmons*, Admission and Retention of Students Committee. *Senator Clemmons* is awaiting additional information. This will be added to unfinished business at the April 2022 meeting.

Tenure and Higher Education in Texas – *Senator Palmer*. *Senator Palmer* summarized the information provided by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who stated it is his legislative priority to have new professors not come in with tenure, and to strip tenure and fire faculty members who teach Critical Race Theory. *Senator Palmer* stated he had no agenda for this discussion, but felt it was important to discuss at the Faculty Senate level.

The tenure and promotion policy will remain as written, whereby associate professors may vote on promotion to full professor.

Secretary Klassen will add to unfinished business for April 2022 meeting.

In a discussion with the Dean of CHSA, *Senator Palmer* stated the Dean reported that conversations were happening at the TAMU System level, who was seeing what they could do to protect faculty. *Secretary Klassen* recommended prudence when discussing this at the Senate and waiting for more clear guidance from the A&M system. *Senator Pierce* concurred with *Secretary Klassen* but stated “we should not underestimate this.”

Senator Moreno noted that these proposed changes are impacting K-12 education as well, but that they have not resulted in substantive changes in how teachers are doing their jobs. *Senator Clemmons* noted that from her perspective, there wasn’t anything for us to do immediately, though we should keep it on our radar. *Senator Ponton* asked whether President Ballenger was in communication with other Faculty Senate presidents within the A&M System, and if perhaps the Faculty Senate presidents could write a letter stating that our senates support the current system policy on academic freedom. *President Ballenger* stated she would email the Texas president of Faculty Senates and copy the national president to determine if or when a statement would be forthcoming. President Ballenger reported that there would be a meeting of State Faculty Senate representatives on April 8th and 9th and that she would gather information at that time.

Additionally, *President Ballenger* and *Senator Atinc* noted that Faculty Senate Executive Council had requested to meet with Dr. Rudin to discuss the Senate’s Constitution, roles, and responsibilities, as well Dr. Rudin’s call for “communicating with civility” to students. *Senator Atinc* noted that this call for civility was troubling, as there was no evidence that a concern with this existed at the faculty level. *Senator Pierce* noted that he wanted to ask Dr. Rudin about what prompted the letter. Dr. Rudin has agreed to this meeting but has not yet scheduled a date or time yet.

Senator Newman asked whether Faculty Senate could put forth a statement of support to our transgender students, in light of recent legislative efforts related to transgender individuals. Senator Newman asked for an acknowledgement of this as “the silence was deafening because there is no support of trans students or trans faculty.” *Senator Palmer* stated that creating a statement of support for students would be simple and asked if we could go to the administration to offer a statement of support for students, as the university had not done very much in terms of supporting LGBT students in general and trans students in particular. Senator Palmer also noted that a statement of support would tie into the DEI mission/priority of the university at this time. *Secretary Klassen* stated this would be a logical extension of the DEI priorities recommended at the administrative level. *President Ballenger* recommended a conversation with Dr. Joyce Miller (DEI leadership) as well as with Academic Life (Senator Ponton) and the Provost’s or President’s Office.

[Senate Term and Elections Reminder](#) – Senator Starnes.

Senator Atinc recommended we emphasize the rule that someone must have been at the university for at least two (2) years prior to

being on Faculty Senate. Elections will occur in April, and new senators will be invited to attend the meeting in May.

President Ballenger called for a motion to adjourn. Senator Williams moved to adjourn, and Senator Davis seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 pm.