

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Texas A&M University-Commerce

March 07, 2023

Time beginning and ending: 2 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. (approximate)

Present: Hongmei Jia, Christian Hempelmann, Stephen Starnes, Samantha Klassen, Tami Morton, Julia Ballenger, Jason Davis, Mark Moreno (Secretary), Tina Lancaster, Sawyer Magnus, Yasemin Atinc (President), Nikolay Sirakov, Benton Pierce, Marta Mercado-Sierra, Zachary “Zak” Palmer, Thomas Boucher, Andrea Williams, Matt Wood, Johanna Delgado-Acevedo, MaryJo Dondlinger, Maggie Salem, Lee Hackett

Not Present: Omar El Ariss, James Devlin, Jane Kosarek, Ozum Yesiltas

1.) University Provost Dr. Tammi Vacha-Haase and Vice President for Finance and Administration/Chief Financial Officer Tina Livingston address the Senate:

The provost and vice president included a PowerPoint presentation on how budget monies are allocated, noting total university expenses of \$202 million, of which \$102,355,000 is for personnel costs, in addition to operation and maintenance and scholarships. (Revenue is about equal to expenses.) The university is short \$1,400,000 of where it needs to be to fully cover all costs. Enrollment is also responsible for the shortcoming. Although freshman registrations are up, transfers (especially) and graduate enrollment continues to drop – 900 students did not continue for the spring after the Fall semester. “What we want is for students to come here but we also want to keep them,” Vaacha-Haase said. She stressed that students need to feel as if they belong at TAMUC, and that faculty also needs to contribute to a welcoming environment. “We’re all in this together.” An important factor is again obtaining R2 status where various opportunities will open. Ms. Livingston answer questions (Senator Pierce) regarding how much of the budget goes toward athletics and athletic scholarships. (A quarter of the budget is set aside for student affairs; it is noted in this part of the discussion.) Dr. Vacha-Haase emphasized “strategic budgeting” under the circumstances, and “making a good commitment to investment.”

Senator Palmer asked if the university is pursuing Hispanic Serving Institution status – current Latinx/Hispanic enrollment is at 22 percent and needs to be 25 percent to qualify for the federal funds. Dr. Vacha-Haase preferred to call it “Hispanic Success Institution” status and that all factors and all demographic groups need to be considered in recruitment and enrollment. “Some of our students of color are not being retained, they are not graduating at the same rate.” Senator Ballenger noted that enrollment is up (among new students); Dr. Vacha-Haase answered that it has been an “accumulated” drop in enrollment which is the problem, but also reiterated that the university is down 1.4 percent in enrollment overall in comparison to previous numbers. After further discussion, the forum concluded, and the Senate moved on to regular business.

- **The Senate unanimously voted to approve the amended minutes for Feb. 7, 2023, after corrections noted by Senators Mercado-Sierra and Dondlinger.**

2.) Voting of Posthumous Degree for Ms. Rita Dye for May 2023 Commencement Exercises

Senator Wood moved to table the matter. Senator Ballenger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3.) Department Chair Policy

Dr. Atinc forwarded her proposal to the provost, who will investigate some items to bring to the department heads council. She would like the Senate to share the information with their respective departments, and she is not personally opposed to items within the proposal. Dr. Pierce warned against “automatic turnover,” while Senator Palmer said terms for department chairs under the proposed system should be four years instead of six years as stated. He stated that term limits are an important factor under a proposed new system. Dr. Atinc said chair appointments by deans is not something she is familiar with in her experience. Some discussion occurred on such a system’s impact on pay scales, or whether departments needed to employ searches for positions, and anecdotes from recent workplace experiences. Senator MaryJo Dondlinger read off the stipend schema for chairs at TAMUC, and other factors involving duties of chairs. Dr. Palmer will head a subcommittee to create a formal proposal.

4.) Administrator Evaluations

Senate President Atinc reported that the Academic Life and Practices committee will formulate a system proposal and bring it to the Senate for a vote.

5.) Feedback from TCFS Meeting and Meeting with Vice Chancellor Hallmark

Dr. Atinc reported on discussions involving topics such as DEI, critical race theory, and academic tenure, proposals in the state legislature, and possible outcomes and negotiations.

6.) April 19th Faculty Appreciation and Awards, Faculty Senate Summit- Sound Governance Theme

Dr. Atinc provided an update on developments.

7.) Faculty Athletics Representative and Ombuds Office

According to latest discussion with President Rudin, he supports keeping the current FAR regarding the proposed Athletics Representative on the Faculty Senate. She will continue with updates on the subject.

- **The meeting adjourns by unanimous vote of the Faculty Senate.**