

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Texas A&M University-Commerce

April 4, 2023

Time beginning: 2 p.m.

Present: Hongmei Jia, Christian Hempelmann, Stephen Starnes, Kathryn Dixon, 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, Joshua “Josh” Ege, James Devlin

Not Present: Johanna Delgado-Acevedo, Omar El Ariss, Tami Morton, Emily Newman, Jane Kosarek, Ozum Yesiltas, Marta Mercado-Sierra

1.) Dr. Ricky Dobbs Addresses the Senate regarding faculty success and student success.

Provost Dr. Vacha-Hasse requested Dr. Dobbs to address the Senate in her stead; Dr. Dobbs focus is faculty success and student success: Questions poised to senators for feedback were, “What does it take to belong to the university; to the extent that it’s a two-way street, how is the university contributing to and building a cohesive set of bonds?” “How do we share governance on the campus, and what does that mean to us” Dr. Dobbs emphasized the need to work collaboratively toward faculty and student success. In “investing in us,” Dr. Dobbs noted the emerging program of courses developed by Dr. Carrie Klypchak (of the college of innovation and design?). This is an ongoing pilot program now involving some professional-track faculty in mathematics, aiming to develop a “sense of belonging” among the faculty, to auto-discover leadership potential within individuals taking the courses.” The provost wishes to develop up to 200 faculty and staff where it is possible to step into administrative roles either temporarily or permanently. Dr. Dobbs also reminded senators of the previous “Provost Fellow,” the last of which was Dr. William Kuracina, dean of CHSSA, and remarked that such a program is needed.

Dr. Dobbs on student success: Senators and their colleagues were thanks response rates on early intervention surveys. Lastly, 90 percent of faculty reported when prompted, leading to absentee students returning to classrooms. The response to faculty reports by students is up 2.1 percent. Academic advising is important amid vacancies in such positions on campus, for example in the College of Business and the College of Education. Several senators commented on aspects of advising, including in cases where students have erred in choosing majors and had difficulty recovering from earlier bad grades. Dr. Dobbs supports the efforts of the current university advising staff, remarking that they do good work. Much of the student population is “first generation,” along with several faculty senators during a show of hands. (It is possible the current population at TAMUC contains up to 40 percent of such students.) Dr. Dobbs reiterated “more collaboration” is needed on recruitment and retention efforts.

2.) Dr. Eric Branscome, Chair of the University QEP Committee, addressed the Senate on authorizing removal of the “Global”-oriented question from student evaluations.

The designation came out of the last approved QEP requirement for the university and has been a question on evaluations since 2014. The university is preparing for renewed accreditation and a new committee is formulating a QEP plan for inclusion in that process. The Senate voted to authorize removal of the global awareness question from student evaluations.

3.) Approval of the minutes for March 7, 2023: With corrections in the attendance list, the Senate unanimously approved the minutes.

4.) Senate Committee reports: No committee reports (outside of Finance) were submitted.

5.) Voting for Ms. Dye’s Posthumous Degree

Dr. David reiterated (from previous correspondence) that the Senate could not approve of this matter without violating current policy. President Atinc believed the Senate should approve of the posthumous degree, although Ms. Dye was not ready for graduation this spring (per Dr. Villanueva-Russell). Because President Rudin could, per policy, override regulations and grant the posthumous degree, senators agreed the matter could be tabled with the proviso that they would urge the provost for a change in policy allowing for such instance in the future.

6.) Revising The current Posthumous Degree Policy

Senator Moreno moves to table action, seconded by Senator Davis. The vote was unanimous.

7.) Update on Revising T&P Policy

No discussion currently.

8.) Current Department Chair Policy

Dr. Atinc said there was a call for revisions because the current policy on department chairs and succession is vague and does not cover some contingencies. It must be made more descriptive. Checking documentation, Senator Dondlinger said the policy is due for a revision on Nov. 11 of next year. The issue will be discussed further in future meetings.

9.) Voting for Faculty Senate Awards

Dr. Jia lists the awards in a hierarchy of Tiers 1, 2, 3, and also initiated a committee policy of having nominating faculty excused from the awards committee for conflict-of-interest issues. Any faculty on the committee is applying for awards must be excluded from discussion and voting; applicants will not receive voting from their own departments. Senator Starnes mentioned earlier discussions on replacing the Barrus service awards name for diversity purposes. Current senators recall Dr. Barrus and other faculty with names attached to awards recall such teachers fondly and did not at this time advocate a name change. Dr. Ballenger

recalled fond memories of Dr. Lafferty, for example. Senator Salem suggested adding awards rather than name changes. Senator Seng moved to approve all awards voted upon by the Finance Committee; Senator Salem seconded the motion. Approval passed unanimously.

10.) Faculty Senate Summit (sound governance theme) collaboration with TABPHE and LATINX on April 19th

Dr. Atinc stressed that senators needed to work hard to make the event a success and announced the keynote speaker as the Texas Council of Faculty Senates president Dr. Joseph Velasco, and details about the program and introductory remarks. The budget now stands at \$4,100, down from \$4,900. About 125 people were projected to attend, including 100 for breakfast.

- **President Atinc moved to adjourn the meeting; Senator Salem seconded. The end time is 3:38 p.m.**