

FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES – October 2024

Date: 10/01/2024:

Senators present in person:

Brandon Randolph-Seng, Stephen Starnes, Hunkar Gizem Yesilyurt, Mei Jiang, W Kuracina, Josephine Durkin, Julia Ballinger, Tami Morton, HongMei Jia, Maggie Salem, Jason Lee Davis, Rusty Fox, Ozum Yesiltas, Carlos Bertulani, Omar El Ariss, Jeanette Vaughan, Yasemin Atinc or Nikolay Sirakov, Kelly Featherston

Senators present via zoom: Zachary Palmer, Jimmy Womack, Carrie Klypchak, Adam Northam, Dongmei Chang, Stephen Furlich

Dr. Atinc started the meeting at 2:01 and welcomed Senators and the SGA to present:

SGA joins to discuss student success

SGA individual instructions were made (7 members from the SGA were present).

SGA members shared:

- the mission of SGA, represent, empower and serve.
- SGA alignment structure
- College vs at-large senator's similarities and differences
- In transition year related to elections and appointees
- Benefits of collaboration between student senators and faculty, bridge gaps that have developed.
- Surveys could be developed (ex: concerns or problems within a specific college) collaboratively with the faculty. Workshops (ex: career development or other student needs) could be considered.

Recommendations were made to connect with individual departments as each discipline is so different.

SGA asked about a list of Faculty Senate, Dr. Atinc shared that the website should be updated soon with an accurate list of members.

Approval of the September meeting minutes.

- Kelly Featherston's last name needs to be edited in past minutes, remove the 'e'.
- Julie Ballenger moved to approve the minutes, Dr. Vaughan 2nd. Minutes approved.

Dr. Atinc shared the approval process of the meeting minutes. Dr. Davis will post the minutes on the university Faculty Senate website.

Dr. Atinc introduced Dr. Vacha-Haase. She began by shared content that should be brought back to Senators' departments.

- CATE awards (Chancellor's teaching award) messaging has gone out, nominations are needed. She asked that we shared with departments.
- Ombudsman position open. Questions have been asked about the position and time commitment (currently unknown), there will be a stipend attached to it based on time spent.
- 2nd floor library updates to the Student Success Center (ex: life coaches), she encouraged all to experience the remodeling.

- Encouraged Deans to meet with the Senators. Deans are working on 7 expectations (growing enrollment, strategic budget, faculty development, Dallas campus).
- Faculty workload has been a concern of Dr. V-H since she arrived. She is in favor of re-evaluating the load plan as it can be left open to interpretation. Dr. Dobbs and Dr. Rudin have met to discuss this process. Developing a strategic working group is in progress.
- Adjunct is impacted by strategic budgeting.
- Questions she is considering: How do we go about looking at salary equity for faculty? There is caution in comparing salary differences if we do not have the money to do anything about it.
- In the past, a 4-million-dollar fund that supported adjuncts and oversight was implemented and it did not have a great deal of oversight. Rough analyses were done to determine where could we release adjuncts, change workloads, add in course releases as well as stipends. Can we make cuts by 75%? If we can show that expenses can be cut from 4 to 3 million...can that 1 million be put into faculty salary? Dr. V-H was given that commitment. How could 75% of previous budget be used for adjuncts and overloads? A 5-year analysis was completed, giving all Deans an allotment/amount for fall and spring semester that led to agreements. None of this could be at the expense of our student's quality education. Goal: 75% of the original 4 million dollars (beta). Rolled out around March.
- Interpretations and change over in Deans have caused some challenges.
- It was shared that Dr. Rudin (May 2024) met with Faculty Senate about a review, information was given to CFO who is working with a third party to determine a review (national and within system salary comparison). Results should be shared openly with faculty once complete.
- Continued questions about merit come up.
- She wants to be strategic and transparent.
- Excellence in teaching is very important. How can the Faculty Senators be a part of ensuring a high level of teaching excellence.
- OAT has been re-envisioned. One of the few universities that does not have a teaching and learning center. The basics of paying for and building that are needed, information from Senate will be sought.

Carlos Bertulani to Dr. V-H shared that few good news has been given since he has joined the university. He shared an example about losing some IDC funds and brought up administration salaries differences compared to other areas of the university. An example was given about adjunct salary of \$3,000 per course and shared the low quality that is connected with amount.

Dr. V-H shared that she was actively listening and hearing the comments and she notes that she has heard this information before. She cannot go backwards and wants to move forward. The VP salaries and number of VPs are not within her department or under her control. Changes that she does speak to: there are concerns about past use of funds without oversight, there are concerns about adjuncts and the variability in salary across departments. Should we go with market value for adjuncts?

Dr. Atinc shared that things are different from college to college (within the system) related to adjunct workload.

Carlos Bertulani mentioned the importance of the budget and quality of teaching and more resources should be given to faculty to use for students.

Dr. V-H reminded that VP salaries are not under her budget, that is under the President's responsibilities.

Dr. Nikolay Sirakov – discussed administration roles and how low salaries are tied to low quality teaching. He shared that he got a subcontract with another university, and he made comparisons with TAMUC and other research universities (cost differences in purchasing lectures).

Further discussions occurred about differences in costs related to grants, research and teaching.

Dr. Palmer asked about strategic changes and if they can better reflect a R2 status.

Dr. Yesilyurt asked Dr. V-H why there is a need for “beta-testing” (getting rid of some adjuncts to see how much can be saved), rather than gathering this data from university’s financial offices? [correction updated by Senate Secretary 11/5/2024].

Dr. V-H shared that gathering this type of data is not that straightforward and rather more complex. Schedule consistency needs to be maintained and data informed. Schedules should be made around the current needs of students (once a fall, rather than each semester). Decisions need to be made based on data rather than just a leap of faith. Open communication was welcomed and Dr. V-H reminded that she has open hours and welcomes individuals to come and speak with her. Equity needs to be goal related to college funding (HEEF, college classrooms). Merit is important and it will be revisited.

Dr. V-H clarified how merit funds are distributed within departments.

Several Senators agreed that the evaluation process that merit funds are based on is subjective and needs to be revisited.

Dr. Vaughan discussed specifics in the Nursing department related to budget cuts (travel stipends or conference travel). How were these budget cuts determined?

Dr. V-H confirmed that the earmarked funds in discussion were related to overloads and adjuncts.

Dr. V-H left the meeting at 3:03pm.

Senators shared that the goal of Faculty Senate is to have these difficult discussions (i.e., salaries).

Dr. Atinc has shared the changes that are happening and recognized the change in the open communication from the higher level VPs (ex: Dr. Donham communicating directly).

Dr. Nikolay Sirakov shared continued frustrations with administration salaries compared to faculty.

Discussions occurred about how Dr. V-H could better advocate for faculty. Dr. Atinc said we would like to welcome Tina Livingston VP of finance to a meeting.

Dr. Atinc announced a Coffee and Pie with President and Provost-(twice a semester)

- November 4th 3:00 - Executive Committee
- December 4th 3:30 - first come first for Senators.

Information from Assembly of Faculty Senates Meeting

Dr. Atinc shared related to meeting with other A&M system officials.

- The Chancellor shared directly that there have been a loss of connection with donors related to past name change
- Main concern related to financials (additional burden with tight budget). Those costs will be taken care of by the Chancellor as they feel that donors and alumni will bring other support. Dr. Rudin does not want to advocate for any changes at the moment. He wants to hear from key stakeholders (i.e., faculty senate, other stakeholders).
- Dr. Hallmark confirmed that there will be big support if a name change occurred, considering that this will be a long-term support
- Ex: One of the sister schools from a rural got a 20 million donation from an alumni.
- Senators shared anecdotes related to name changes in other schools in the A&M system, positive and negative. Dr. Vaughan shared her personal opinion about the name recognition and

branding is important. Dr. Salem also shared her perspective related to the east Texas connection, be proud of it, and we should not try to compete with the Texas A&M name.

- Dr. Atinc shared that a formal statement related to position about the name change from the Faculty Senate. Dr. Featherston made a motion related to this, a second was not made.
- Dr. Atinc shared the student organizations that were in favor of a name change to East Texas A&M. There are no other name change options on the table, it will be keep the current name or change to East Texas A&M University.
- Discussions occurred between senators about what type of support should be provided to administration. Senators shared that they did not want to vote on this issue without talking with faculty from departments.
- Dr. Fox suggested each faculty go back to their departments and get feedback about the change (East Texas A&M or no change), submit by Thursday from full-time faculty. **Follow-up needed.**

Dr. Jia shared about the Senate Awards Committee Structure, structured by October 15th. Call for the Piper award has gone out. Two representatives from each college, with two alternates have been selected. Dr. Atinc asked if we want to move forward with this structure or make a change. Dr. Salem made a motion to leave as is, Dr. Sirokov 2nd. **All approved.**

Dr. Featherston shared issues with new parking permit system. Other senators voiced opinions about the struggles with parking and the new added costs. Dr. Atinc said we could ask Tina Livingston when she comes to the meeting. Dr. Featherston is meeting with Dr. Donham and the assistant chief of police in the coming weeks.

Dr. Atinc wants clarity of department chair merit distribution policy. Transparency is important, this should be a minimum responsibility of the department chair. This is a right of the faculty. Department chairs should communicate expectations related to evaluation. **Follow-up needed.**

Dr. Atinc shared that she has some family health issues so she will not be present at the next faculty meeting. She has asked Dr. Starnes and Ballinger to take her place at the next meeting.

Dr. Salem moves to adjourn. Dr. Davis 2nd. Time 4:08