



Faculty Senate Agenda
Texas A&M University-Commerce
April 5, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting
<https://tamuc.zoom.us/j/8319968795>

- I. Call to Order: 2:01pm

- II. Present: Hongmei Jia, Brooke Clemmons, Joshua Ege, Stephen Starnes, Omar El Ariss, Samantha Klassen (Secretary), Kathryn Dixon, Julia Ballenger (President), Jason Davis, Bahar Modir, Michael Oldham, Michael Ponton, Tina Cancaster, Emily Newman, Sandy Hayes, Yasemin Atinc (incoming President), Brandon Randolph-Seng, Brock Johnson, Benton Pierce, Marta Mercado-Sierra, Zachary Palmer, Thomas Boucher, Jane Kosarek, Brooke Clemmons, Ozum Yeziltas (replaces Robert Rodriguez), Andrea Williams, Johanna Delgado-Avecedo, Christian Hemplemann, Mark Moreno

Absent: Brooke Clemmons

- III. Approval of Minutes – March 1, 2022 . Senator Davis moved to approve, Senator Ponton seconded. Minutes have been approved with no changes.

- IV. Guests: President Rudin, Dr. Kuracina and Dr. Branscome –
Tenure and Promotion Processes in D2L

Summary of Discussion

President Rudin provided a brief update on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee meeting on 3/24. President Rudin expressed his appreciation to the Executive Council for the invitation and dialogue. Rudin noted a few things that came out of the meeting that prompted additional conversation with the deans and provost, including: 1) *Course evaluations*, including the challenges students have had with performance and commitment to the academic process post COVID, revisions to our course evaluation procedures, and the potential for greater standardization across departments and colleges; 2) Standardizing faculty teaching evaluations (tenure metrics) and additional clarity around these processes and procedures, and 3) Resurrecting a Center for Teaching and Learning or Faculty College which has greater opportunities for professional development.

President Rudin called for questions and responses following this update. Dr. Ballenger noted that some faculty have shared concerns that the current evaluation tool we utilize does not truly evaluate teaching effectiveness, and that the evaluation should be reviewed for its validity and reliability. Senator Pierce agreed and noted that in his discussions with colleagues, faculty generally perceive the need to improve the validity and reliability of the student evaluation tool. Senator Pierce asked what the evaluation procedures looked like at Texas A&M – College Station. President Rudin noted that he was not sure what the main campus used at this time, but would be open to asking for resources from College Station in the endeavor to revise the current tool. Senator Palmer recommended greater communication at the department level regarding any issues that arise within the teaching process (e.g., peer teaching observations). Senator Ege shared that in addition to revising our evaluation tool, we ought to reconsider our evaluation process as well (i.e., increasing the level of participation in student evaluations at the end of the semester to yield a greater response rate). Senator Williams noted that some kind of forced completion for evaluation would be helpful, and that it is typically more effective to give these evaluations in person than to rely on students to complete these on their own time. Senator Moreno noted that as long as the evaluations are optional and online, we may continue to have low response rates or skewed student responses. Senator Pierce asked whether there was a way to move the evaluation process to much earlier in the semester, as this might yield a greater response rate (i.e., surveying students right after midterms instead of at the end of the class). President Rudin noted that he would have conversations with Provost Humphreys and Dr. Kuracina to support revisions to the student evaluation tool as well as the process and timing of student evaluation processes. Dr. Ballenger noted that Dr. Archie and Dr. Humphreys had already requested to attend the May 2022 Faculty Senate Meeting to continue discussing student evaluation processes.

Dr. Kuracina and Dr. Branscome – Tenure and Promotion Processes in D2L. Drs. Kuracina and Branscome met with Faculty Senate to discuss the integration of a digital portfolio within the tenure and promotion process via D2L LMS. Dr. Branscome, Mike Smith, Cynthia Rhodes, and Dr. Kuracina are all working together to study the process of integrating T&P review processes into an online format. Drs. Kuracina and Branscome were seeking Faculty Senate input regarding the pilot for integrating T&P processes into D2L. Dr. Branscome shared a mock D2L shell (a tenure and promotion digital pilot) and demonstrated how faculty members would upload T&P portfolio materials within a specific D2L course shell. Some advantages noted to this process were that these documents could be worked on from anywhere, easily disseminated to other stakeholders such as department chairs and deans, and increasing faculty member digital competence. Senator Klassen shared her appreciation for this discussion and for the process of digitizing T&P materials. Senator Ponton agreed that standardizing this digital process would be helpful, so long as ballots for T&P voting remained confidential. Senator Davis noted that our policies related to Implementing Faculty Tenure and Promotion would need to be updated or reviewed to allow for

this digital process. President Ballenger shared one potential limitation of this process, whereby technological changes (i.e., switching from D2L to another LMS) might be lost in transition. Drs. Branscome and Kuracina discussed the process of “backing up” or exporting digital portfolios every year to be saved in an additional place. Senator Ege shared that his only concern would be having to download multiple documents to evaluate a T&P portfolio, but that the ability to reduce paper waste outweighed this concern. Senator Palmer asked how letters of support could be dealt with through the system. Dr. Kuracina shared that because the dept head solicits and collects those materials anyway, the dept head would be responsible for uploading those documents into the D2L portfolio.

IV. Committee Reports

Academic Life – Senator Ponton – No report.

Academic Practice – Senator Starnes. Senator Starnes indicated that there have been ongoing conversations about potential policy issues related to tenure and promotion at state universities between TAMU-C Senate leadership, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at A&M System, and the Texas Council of Faculty Senates. At this time, as no legislation has been proposed, no formal statements from Texas A&M System or TAMU-C specifically have been disseminated. Senator Moreno asked whether there were any faculty at TAMU-C who employed critical race theory at this time and noted that he was unfamiliar with the academic underpinnings surrounding the theory. President Ballenger, Senator Palmer, and Senator Delgado-Acevedo noted that they do integrate this methodology within their work at the university. President Ballenger stated she could share resources regarding CRT for any interested faculty but would not recommend using Faculty Senate time for this purpose. Senator Ege shared an update regarding possible changes at the state level to make modifications regarding academic content at the Board of Regents’ levels at public institutions across Texas. Senator Ponton summarized the issue as an academic freedom concern. President Ballenger asked what decisions Faculty Senate body would like to make with regard to this issue. Ponton noted that this could be framed as an Academic Freedom Support Statement. Senator Starnes recommended that we wait until the Texas Council of Faculty Senates met prior to making any other decisions before moving forward on this issue.

Admission and Retention of Students – Senator Clemmons – Not present. No revisions to admissions policy (just went with the changes from the university).

Budget – Senator Delgado-Acevedo – No report.

Curriculum – Senator Pierce – No report.

Faculty Awards – Senator Jia – Senator Jia shared the 2022 Faculty Senate

Awards nominees. President Ballenger called for any discussion regarding the current nominees. Senator Jia noted that Provost Humphreys had rejected the Regents Professor nominee, Dr. Alan Headley, and stated that the provost declined to disclose the reason why he rejected the nominee. At this point, Faculty Awards Committee is trying to determine whether another Regents Professor candidate would be nominated for consideration, or if this nomination would remain unfulfilled this year. Senator Delgado-Acevedo noted that she had asked Provost Humphreys why the nominee had been rejected but was not updated regarding that decision. Senator Ponton shared that this was indicative of broader issues with “top down decision-making” at the executive level. President Ballenger called for discussion at the Senate level regarding the open Regent’s Professor nomination as well as the other nominees for Faculty Seante Awards. Senator Atinc asked what the policies were around this, and Senator Davis read the specific university policy indicating that nominees for these awards were “suggestions” or “recommendations” for administrative consideration, but that final determination would be made at the provost level. President Ballenger stated she would be following up with the provost to ask for more information and would report back to Faculty Senate regarding the outcome of that conversation. No nominations for Regent’s Profesor this year.

Organization of the Senate – Senator Palmer – No report. Reviewed the rough draft of the Constitution. Has received additional comments and edits from other members of the committee, though these were relatively minor changes rather than substantive in nature.

Scheduling and Facilities – Senator Lancaster – No report.

V. Unfinished Business

- a. Tenure and Higher Education in Texas – update from Texas Council of Faculty Senates (Senator Starnes) – Discussed during Committee report.
- b. Academic Life – Faculty Cultural Competence Survey (Senator Ponton) – Shared that he had downloaded the report and results for the Faculty Cultural Competence Survey. Ponton asked what our next steps would be with regard to these surveys (i.e., keeping it in the Academic Life committee, sending it along to the Univeristy DEI Committee and the new VP for DEI). President Ballenger stated that the next step would be the analysis of the data, and asked whether Senator Ponton wanted to analyze the data or to provide the information to Dr. Dan Su in Institutional Effectiveness. President Ballenger recommended that the Academic Life committee continue to analyze the data and then present the information to the president and the

VI. New Business

- a. Academic Practice (Senator Starnes) – Officer Elections. Reminded that individual Senator elections should be occurring during department meetings. Ponton will be continuing for HIED – C&I Kathryn Dixon. Officer Nominations:
- b. Nomination for another secretary needs to occur as Senator Klassen will be transitioning out of the Counseling Department’s senate seat.
 - i. President Ballenger called for any nominations for Faculty Senate Secretary at this time. No nominations were received. President Ballenger asked other members to continue reflecting on this.
 - ii. Treasurer: Brandon Randolph Seng – accepted the nomination to continue as the current treasurer. Moved by Yasemin Atinc, seconded by Zak Palmer.
 - iii. President-Elect: Do this at the end of next year. Currently Yasemin is the president elect, and she can choose to appoint a parliamentarian during the start of the academic year.
 - iv. Parliamentarian: Appointed by the president elect prior to the first meeting of the senate for the new academic year.
- c. Organization of the Senate (Senator Palmer) – Draft of Faculty Senate Constitution – Senator Palmer stated the draft has been circulated and members of the committee had provided very minor updates to the current draft. Senator Palmer asked whether any modifications might need to be made to the standing committees, as these are codified into the Faculty Senate Constitution. President Ballenger suggested that we have a Faculty Senate member on the president’s executive council. Senator Delgado-Acevedo agreed. Senator Lancaster recommended that this person should be the president of the Faculty Senate. President Ballenger agreed and recommended that other recommended changes be sent to Senator Palmer for consideration.
- d. Faculty Senate Executive Council Meeting with President Rudin (President Ballenger) – Faculty Senate Charge to Review Student Evaluation Methods – Discussed at the beginning of the meeting with President Rudin.
- e. Adjournment – Andrea Williams moved we adjourn, Senator Davis seconded. Adjourned at 3:50pm.