

## **Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

### **Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Oct. 4, 2022**

**Time beginning and ending: 2:05-3:35 p.m. (approximate)**

**Present:** Hongmei Jia, Joshua Ege, Christian Hempelmann, Stephen Starnes, Omar El Ariss, Samantha Klassen, Kathryn Dixon, Julia Ballenger, Jason Davis, Mark Moreno (Secretary), Michael Oldham, Tina Lancaster, Sawyer Magnus, Yasemin Atinc (President), Brandon Randolph-Seng, Nikolay Sirakov, Benton Pierce, Marta Mercado-Sierra, Zachary “Zak” Palmer, Thomas Boucher, Jackie Rosenfeld (for Andrea Williams), Bahar Modir, Tami Morton, Johanna Delgado-Acevedo, James Devlin, Ozum Yesiltas, MaryJo Dondlinger

**Not Present:** Johanna Brooke Clemmons, Brock Johnson, Jane Kosarek,

After proposed corrections (Senator Davis) regarding the composition of senate committees, and the addition of one name (Senator Modir) to the attendance for Sept. 6, Senate Secretary Moreno acknowledged the amendments; Senator Palmer moved to approve the minutes of Sept. 6, 2022. Senator Lancaster seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved as amended.

#### **1.) Meet and Greet Dr. Vacha-Haase- Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs**

Senators introduced themselves to incoming Provost Dr. Vacha-Haase, who expressed enthusiasm for her new role on campus and wished to prioritize students, while recognizing the commitment of the faculty to them. She was currently meeting with people and groups around campus, including the Staff Council. Although there was no immediate solution to the faculty pay issue, Dr. Vacha-Haase wished to work on the issue, to try to make the university a desirable place to work and as a professional destination. She also said that the Faculty Senate is essential in an advisory capacity, and that it should retain its nature as an independent body. She announced to the Senate the vacant position of Sr. Vice Provost, with the search committee chaired by Dr. Villanueva. The person who fills the position must be “faculty-centered,” she said. In response to questions: Dr. Vacha-Haase reiterated her strong support for shared governance, accountability, and responsibility, and she is engaged in talks with the college deans about that issue and wishes for them to be empowered; governance need not be “top down.”

#### **2.) Vote on the Revised Constitution**

Dr. Sirakov asked if the senate planned to distribute the document to the various departments, for faculty to provide edits, and that some members in his department wished to see the final revised constitution. Senate President Atinc stated that it was possible to do that before final adoption, and that President Rudin would also review it. Since it already underwent major revisions, the document is in fact the final draft, and it will need review by Compliance.

The Senate voted unanimously to accept the final draft of the revised Constitution. 3

#### **3.) Faculty Athletics Representative and Ombudsperson Positions, Meeting with Compliance**

Dr. Atinc reported that the provost asked for proposals on incorporating a Faculty Athletics Representative, and her talks with Compliance on the Ombudsperson being appointed by vote of the faculty senate, with a term limit of three years. Compliance, where the Ombudsperson office is located, states that the reason for that arrangement is unknown, and is open to having the office under the jurisdiction of the Senate. One further step on the athletics representative, Dr. Atinc said, is to talk with Athletics regarding that representative position, which would have a vote on the Senate. That separate proposal will also go to the provost for review.

#### **4.) Faculty Leave Policy and Merit Increases**

Dr. Atinc raised the topic of faculty and staff merit increases, indicating the fact that staff members get merit for a Satisfactory rating, while faculty members must be Exceeds Expectations. Senator Dodlinger asked if a solution is to raise the staff standards, while Dr. Atinc favored making merit expectations equal across the university. Senator Ege asked if all merit pay should be above Satisfactory and expressed concerns about that issue. Dr. Atinc reminded the Senate that there are no legal inflation increases for faculty in the state of Texas. After further discussion among faculty members and comments by Senators Ege, Palmer, Mercado-Sierra, and Sirakov, it was agreed that a 2 percent merit increase for higher than Satisfactory across the university is acceptable. Senators will discuss the issue at a later date.

#### **5.) Forming Senate Committee Members, Restructuring Awards Committee**

Senator Jia reminded the Senate of her earlier email soliciting one faculty member from each department to serve on the Awards Committee. She indicated that there were several responses. Senator Devlin volunteered for the Department of Counseling. Dr. Atinc said that the TAPHE Awards Committee under Dr. Willie Edwards needs 3-4 more volunteers and would like a faculty senator to serve. Dr. Atinc has also sent out an email seeking volunteers for the Piper Awards Committee. Senators Mercado-Sierra, Oldham and Pierce volunteered for Admission and Retention chaired by Senator Starnes. Senator Ballinger is chair of the Budget Committee; she and Senator Atinc will seek to have her present at university-level budget meetings. Organization of the Senate will remain inactive for now. Senators Ege, Pierce and Morton will serve with Dr. Palmer on the Academic Life and Practice Committee. Senator Pierce is chair of the Curriculum Committee, although there is only one other senator who serves with him. Senator Lancaster suggested Amanda Willows, an instructor in the College of Innovation and Design, who is willing to serve on the committee. Being a Faculty Senator is not required.

#### **6.) Faculty Senate Summit and Faculty Senate Awards- Sound Governance Theme**

Senate President Atinc will propose the planned faculty senate summit to the provost. There could possibly be a faculty appreciation event along with the faculty awards ceremony, which will merge with the summit. The whole event will commence with the summit, with the ceremony afterward. She proposes a date of April 12. At the next meeting of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, she will solicit potential guest speakers. She also proposed a “health check” survey of the faculty on sound governance, and what types of actions define it.

#### **7.) Faculty Senate Budget**

Dr. Atinc and other senators discussed raising the amounts of faculty awards -- the amounts in the Senate budget, and the provost allocation for awards that might suffice to cover those costs. The amount granted by the provost office comes about when funds are allocated to departments on campus, she said, in response to a question by Senator Davis. Senator Devlin, new to the Senate, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve with senators.

#### **8.) Meeting In Different Locations and Faculty Senate Sponsored T-Shirts**

This item was not discussed at length.

- Senator Moreno moved to adjourn. Senator Oldham seconded. The motion carried unanimously