

Faculty Senate Business Meeting
January 25, 2021

Submitted by K. Craven

Members Present:

Stephanie Adams, Douglas Airhart, Dan Allcott, Michael Allen, Jeremy Blair, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Wei Tsun Chang, Kris Craven, Dennis Duncan, Mary Lou Fornehed, David Hajdik, Tammy Howard, Janet Isbell, Brian Jones, Christy Killman, Nancy Kolodziej, Matt Langford, Emily Lee, Chad Luke, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Mark Melichar, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Anthony Paradis, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Mike Rogers, Lee Ann Shipley, Troy Smith, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Daniel Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Zac Wilcox, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Jeannette Wolak

Members Absent:

Yun Ding, Steven Frye, Susan Laningham, David Larimore

Special Guests:

Kathy Friedrich, Sharon Huo, Sean Alley, Kerri Demeri, Sharon Holderman, Genny Patterson

1. Call to Order

Senate President Holly Stretz called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Senator Rand made a motion to approve the agenda. Senator Mills seconded.

There was discussion regarding the order of the items, a consensus was reached such that the items from invited guests would be moved to earlier in the meeting to allow the guests to take their leave before the discussion of Senate business. The motion was approved.

3. Approval of Minutes from November 23, 2020 Business Meeting and Notes from November 30, 2020 Meeting with the President

Senator Rand made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous business meeting. Senator Mills seconded.

Two minor editorial changes were requested. The business meeting minutes passed with friendly amendments to include the changes requested.

Senator Pardue made a motion to approve the notes from the previous meeting. Senator Mills seconded.

There was no discussion. The notes from the meeting with the president passed.

4. Nominating Committee for BOT Faculty Representative (Pardue)

Senator Pardue gave an update of the status of the process. There have been three inquiries from interested candidates. Two inquiries were requesting more information, one was a nomination.

She reminded the Senators that the deadline for nominations is February 15 and encourages them to talk with faculty to recruit more interested candidates. She also reminded the Senators that candidates do not have to be current Senate members. There was a brief discussion that concluded that the elected candidate would not be placed on one of the councils, but serve as a member-at-large of the Senate during their term as BOT Faculty Representative. It was pointed out that as the Procedures for the Councils and for the Senate are currently being updated, this needs to be reflected in those documents.

7. Invited talk on Institutional Research Dashboard (Guess: Friedrich)

The Dashboards will soon be released and at that time they will be Public Facing, meaning that the public will have access to see them. The data included in the Dashboard reflects 10 years of data and shows extensive demographics and trends related to the student body. In addition to the Dashboard, faculty will still have access to other Institutional Research data with the ability to download Excel versions of reports that have been previously available. This is through SharePoint and is accessed through the same web site. An extensive and informative preview was presented to the Senators.

9. Textbook Policies and Procedures (Sean Alley, Genevieve Patterson, Sharon Ho, Kerri Demeri, Sharon Holderman)

First the Policy was presented and discussed. This is a direct response to a Tennessee State statute. The policy responds to the points in the statute and for the most part reflects what we are currently doing in regard to textbooks. As required it also addresses contractual obligations with the Barnes & Noble store on campus.

A question was raised about cost being available to faculty when making selections. This is a part of the new system that will be in place soon. Also, will the faculty have latitude to use criteria other than just cost when choosing a textbook. The answer is yes.

There seems to be a definite conflict between the contractual obligations and the best interest of the students. If faculty are expected to not disclose to the students that there are other options for purchasing class materials, then they spend more money at the bookstore, but that is not what is best for the students financially. Faculty should be advocating for the students.

Another question was raised that there have been issues with an insufficient supply of textbooks for students before classes begin. It causes issues with the first weeks of classes when students are waiting on textbooks to arrive. The bookstore is aware of some of these issues and asks that faculty make them aware of them also. They will work to get it fixed. Early adoption is the key.

This policy will be presented and voted on by the Councils. Please raise these issues at that time.

Next, the Procedures were presented and discussed.

There was discussion about the way textbook adoptions are handled. Some departments want faculty to use the same book, chosen by a department committee, for multiple sections of the same class and some do not require this. Some departments have the department administrative assistant do the adoptions and some require faculty to do it themselves. This is considered acceptable.

Another concern is the use of open source materials. It was stated that since these materials are available at no cost, the Barnes & Nobel bookstore on campus will not have an issue with their use. Faculty are free to use open education resources for their class material and to supplement course textbooks.

Another question was raised regarding the timing of textbook adoption. The desire is to have this done before advising for the following semester. With the new advising center, the time for advising begins earlier than ever. Since departments are not required to have made all decisions regarding course teaching, for example how many sections will be offered and what adjuncts will be needed, how can the decision be made about what textbook will be required in each section? When asked for a reasonable deadline for textbook adoption, a compromise appeared to be around the time that the schedule is posted. However, there could still be changes here and there after this as faculty placement is finalized. It was pointed out that this is not something that is being arbitrarily requested. The Higher Education Opportunities Act requires that students have the advantage of knowing the cost of taking a class, which includes the cost of the textbook, prior to registering for courses. This is something that they will need to discuss with their advisor during advising, that is why that particular deadline was chosen.

5. Faculty Senate President Update

Calendar: There is still a lot of talk about the changes in the calendar for next year. There are additional concerns that the shorter break between fall and spring semester will impact the ability of housing to turn around the resident halls for the students to return in January. The President's Cabinet is feeling the pressure and there is a decision to make a Standing Calendar Committee. This will include representation from housing, based on the issue above. It was also suggested that there needs to be representation from the joint programs with ETSU and the students in those programs are taking classes at TTU and ETSU and the differences in the calendars is a significant impact on those students.

Stimulus Money: TTU will be receiving more stimulus money this semester. Some of the funds are to be distributed directly to the students, similar to prior money. The remaining funds are somewhat up to our discretion. There is an opportunity to use the money to recover lost revenue. Senate President Stretz is looking for suggestions. There is a Budget meeting on Friday where this will likely be on the agenda.

Student Activities/Events: There is no set decision on how to handle various summer activities that typically take place on campus. Boys State has decided to do their program virtually. Some

other programs are getting some pressure to go back to the usual in-person delivery. There is probably going to be a task force to look at this from the university perspective, please volunteer if you are interested in this topic.

Quarantine Guidelines: The CDC is changing the guidelines for the required length of the quarantine period for various situations. It is no longer a simple decision. The average will be a 10-day quarantine period. For students, the Health Services will take the appropriate information and determine the proper length of the quarantine.

Vaccine: Everyone should have seen the letter that was sent from the Presidents of the universities in Tennessee to the Governor asking for university faculty to be included in the 1b category for vaccination. There has been no official response and it looks like this will have no effect.

Library: There are still issues with students not complying with the COVID response requirements in the library. The library staff will now be asking students who are not wearing a mask to leave the library and return with a mask being worn properly. Their possessions will be guarded so that the student can return without worry of theft of their stuff.

Martin Methodist College: The University of Tennessee is looking to purchase this college. The administration here is concerned that it is situated in an area where we focus recruitment and get many students. It is believed that TTU needs to do something to get ahead of this situation.

IDEA Evaluation Forms: There is again talk about the use of the IDEA evaluation tool and whether we should consider an alternative. Senate President Stretz is looking for volunteers to form a committee to evaluate alternatives. Senators Troy Smith, Michael Allen, and Holly Mills volunteered. Then several questions were raised. Is the evaluation tool bad or is the process valuable? Will another tool be any better? Should the committee be considering the procedure and process of evaluating faculty and not the tool? It was pointed out that both the Provost and President Oldham have expressed displeasure with the way faculty are being evaluated and that there is too much weight placed on the IDEA results and that other measures should be included.

There was some discussion about building a tool of our own to use. There are faculty on campus who research this topic. However, it must be considered how big a task this is and it is vital to consider how the data will be evaluated and used. For other similar decisions, the university has used outside consultants to guide these decisions. There needs to be a clear understanding of the time line and the ultimate goal for the use of the tool. There was also the question of whether this is being driven by the Senate wanting to make the change or is it something that the Provost is requesting the Senate to do?

We have to be careful to define the charge of the committee. The IDEA has had a number of issues over the year, even law suits regarding discrimination. They have a sufficient amount of data and national norms to get these dismissed. A tool developed here will not have that. The committee should probably consult the legal counsel. Is there a legal issue here? Who is responsible for any liability in a new tool? Is this even something that the Senate should be considering?

There have been prior attempts at this in the past. There were a number of complaints, specifically with how the data was interpreted and applied. There have been issues with gender bias. With a new tool, there is no national norm data and creating the right one is time consuming and the result would likely have its own flaws. Maybe the issue is that it is the only thing being used.

Another problem is that we don't do any bias training. The inherent biases need to be accounted for when evaluating the results. Is there an actual perfect metric? But is it the bias of the person filling out the survey or of the person interpreting the results? Can we keep the IDEA by adding our own additional questions? If we come up with the right questions, will we be able to mitigate the biases that exist?

Broad Band Access: The project discussed at the last meeting is needing 200 students who are interested in getting a hot spot.

8. Review of After-Action Reports

In the interest of time, Senate President Stretz will send the After-Action Reports to the Senators for their review and we will revisit this at the next meeting.

6. Invited talk on Diversity Champions (Owens)

This item will also be revisited when Dr. Owens is present at a future meeting.

10. Old Business

None

11. Such Other Matters

None

Adjournment

Senator Rand moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Airhart seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Approved: February 22, 2021