

## **Faculty Senate Business Meeting**

August 30, 2021

**Submitted by K. Craven**

### **Members Present:**

Douglas Airhart, Dan Allcott, Michael Allen, Sean Alley, Troy Brachey, Chris Brown, Debra Bryant, Steve Canfield, Melissa Comer, April Crocket, Kris Craven, Dennis Duncan, Mary Lou Fornehed, Steven Garner, Scott Hagarty, David Hajdik, Syed Rafay Hasan, Katherine Hermann-Turner, Tammy Howard, Samantha Hutson, Janet Isbell, Christy Killman, Matt Langford, David Larimore, Emily Lee, Jane Liu, Mark Loftis, Chad Luke, Jeanette Luna, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Kristin Pickering, Elizabeth Ramsey, Richard Rand, Christopher Reames, Lee Ann Shipley, Drew Sisk, Scott Smith, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, Dan Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Kimberly Winkle, Laith Zuraikat

### **Members Absent:**

Stephanie Adams, Yun Ding, Holly Stretz, Russ Witcher

**Special Guests:** Brandi Kriebel, Steven Keller, Heather Cathey, Brent Drexler, Savannah Griffin, Aaron Lay

### **Call to Order**

Senate President Jeanette Luna called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Senator Duncan made a motion to approve the agenda. Senator Bryant seconded. There was no discussion. The motion was approved.

### **Approval of Minutes and Notes**

Some non-substantive edits were discussed. The institution that left the TN eCampus was ETSU, not TSU.

#### **1. April 19, 2021 Business Meeting**

Senator Mills made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Business Meeting as edited. Senator Smith-Andrews seconded. The motion carried.

#### **2. April 26, 2021 Meeting with the President**

Senator Duncan moved that the Notes be approved as edited. Senator Langford seconded. The motion carried.

### **Committee Memberships**

3. Faculty Affairs Committee – ratify membership from 2021-2022

The following changes are proposed. Senator Troy Smith to replace Senator Jeff Roberts on the committee. Senator Allen moved to approve the substitution. Senator Mills seconded. The motion carried

#### 4. Budget Advisory Committee – need two members

Senate President Luna called for nominations from the floor. Senator Smith-Andrews volunteered to serve. There were no other volunteers or nominations. Senator Maxwell moved to elect Senator Smith-Andrews to the Budget Advisory Committee. Senator Isbell seconded. The motion carried.

### **Preview Day Presentation**

Stephen Keller, Director of Admissions, presented about this event. Preview Day is a major recruiting event that occurs in the fall semester. He updated the Senate that new admits for the academic year are down 13 undergraduate students in relation to 2020. Considering that recruiters were not allowed to visit schools due to the pandemic, this is good. Also, the numbers have increased in transfer students and international students. Boosting admissions starts with Preview Day, which is held in the morning of the first Saturday of October and ending around noon. Approximately 50% of the students who attend Preview Day do enroll at Tech in the fall semester. Considering the continuing pandemic, we will be requiring masks at this year's event. However, the planning is to have about 90% of the participation occur outdoors. Knowing that everyone is busy, he is requesting that departments commit to having two faculty members present on that day. Stephen showed the itinerary and stated that there will be two training sessions for faculty to attend. Each faculty will get a new polo shirt and shirt sizes will be collected when faculty enroll through the link distributed to the colleges.

Question: How is this event different from the Showcase Days in the Spring semester?

Answer: Preview Day targets all high school students interested in attending Tech. The Showcase Days are targeted to students who have already been admitted, but are still considering other options. They are also divided into different days for the different Colleges, so they can decide how to sell themselves to these students.

Question: Are these events essentially pre-orientation? What is the effect on retention?

Answer: We don't track the effect on retention, so he doesn't have those numbers. Many students don't make the final decision until March, April, or May so the events are important to help persuade the students to attend Tech.

### **Discussion of Academic Calendar**

1. Introduction to recent Calendar changes (Luna)
2. Listening Session with SGA and Joint Program students

- a. SGA Guests: Aaron Lay (SGA President), Savannah Griffin (SGA Treasurer), Brent Drexler (SGA Chief of Staff), Addison Dorris (Secretary of External Affairs)
- b. Nursing Joint Program Guests: Heather Cathey and Amy Burse
- c. Engineering Joint Program Guests: Dylan Cox and Ben Eldreth

Senate President Luna discussed the information graphics that were sent to the Senate with the other documents last week. There was some discussion about the Good Friday Holiday – it doesn't appear on the calendar at this time. Senate President Luna also stated that she met with the Provost during the regularly scheduled time earlier today and they discussed issues with the calendar. Senate President Luna then opened the floor for the special guests to express their ideas and opinions on the academic calendar.

Special Guest Drexler said that he has talked with some other students about the new class schedule and academic calendar and they have stated that they are enjoying the shorter (50-minute) classes. Special Guest Lay talked about his experience with the planning of the new schedule and said that the scheduling committee did present at a Student Government Association (SGA) meeting. He also remembered the survey that was done with the students noting that approximately 1500 students did complete the survey. However, he believes that many of the students did not understand the repercussions of their responses, especially in relation to summer internship opportunities. Currently, the feedback that he is getting from students is apathetic with some negative comments and little or no good comments. Additional concerns that he has include the lateness of the end of the fall semester impacting students (particularly international students) being able to travel home for the holidays.

Senate President Luna discussed the history of what happened with the two different committees, one looking at the calendar and the other looking at the class times. She agreed that there was some misunderstanding associated with the survey questions and the ramifications of the decisions being made. Another consideration is the strong emphasis by the SGA on mental health and how it will be impacted by the new calendar.

Special Guest Griffin expressed her memory of the polling in 2019, indicating that family was seen as important along with the timing of graduation relative to the break. She also expressed that students need a brain break between semesters and this will be more limited now.

Special Guest Lay also remembers the survey determining that approximately 70% of the students responding to the survey reported having a job and that about 1/3 of those work 20 or more hours a week. They also rely on working during the break.

Special Guest Cathey, a student in the Joint Nursing Program with ETSU, finds the difference in the calendars interesting. There has been an issue with incomplete grades being issued due to differences in the dates for grade submission. This is only going to get worse. These grades impact the fee waivers and other financial aid. This was reinforced by Senator Fornehed who teaches and coordinates the program. Students have problems getting access to iLearn to start

the semester on time due to the holds from the incomplete grades. Senator Howard, also a student in this program, talked about issues she has had with group work required for the classes. There are also implications for the certification that is a requirement of the program. Students need to complete hours at an internship. With the longer semester, it is hard to get the required hours which not only impacts the degree completion but also has a high financial impact on the student. She is aware of students who would have voted differently if they had completely understood these issues when they took the survey.

There was additional discussion of whether the extra week of the semester is required for accreditation, as this was given as one reason for the extra week being added when the class length was shortened. It was pointed out that other peer institutions are receiving the accreditation without the extra week with the same class length. Reducing the multitude of different start/stop times for classes could be fixed administratively without the drastic changes that were implemented.

There is some confusion over the current situation with the restrictions placed on course expectations the week before finals, often called dead week. A clarification of this would be appreciated.

Senate President Luna and Special Guest Lay are both concerned about the amount of advanced planning and the need for urgency in proceeding if there is a hope of any changes moving forward. Senate President Luna asked Special Guest Lay if he could bring this topic to the SGA for discussion and partner with the Senate on this issue. He agreed. She also gave him authority to share the information graphics that were presented at the beginning.

Special Guest Drexler reiterated that he felt misled by the presentation of the questions on the survey. He definitely did not understand the big picture in regard to moving the class start/stop times and shortening the length of the classes. He felt like the students who were surveyed were led in the wrong direction.

It was also pointed out that the longer semesters with a shortened break will be a strong negative influence on recruiting new students.

The question of the new calendar committee was again raised. President Oldham had agreed to form a committee in the past, but that has not happened. Senate President Luna repeated that she feels it is a win that the Provost did agree to review and also believes that a committee is a good idea. The student reaction will be felt more nearer to the end of the semester and when finals have concluded. The question remains as to whether it is even possible to make changes for the spring semester.

## **Review of Faculty Senate Breakfast Items**

### **1. Supporting New Parents at TTU**

- a. Working Group to Partner with the Women's Center – need 4 faculty
  - i. Lactation spaces, Policy Updates, etc.

Senate President Luna said that she will distribute the notes from the Workshop. She also pointed out that a Working Group is needed because this is a big task with about a dozen policies that need to be addressed. This group will be led by Helen Hunt, Director of the Women's Center. The following Senators volunteered: Katherine Hermann-Turner, Dan Allcott, Drew Sisk, Lee Ann Shipley, Tammy Howard

Other notes: Pregnant faculty members can get handicap parking by going to HR; like to have a packet to give to new faculty members; would like to get updates at the business meetings

2. Priority Items for Meeting with the President
  - a. Enrollment
  - b. Launchpad Success

There had been a Resolution several years ago about extending benefits to same sex couples. It was passed by the Senate, but nothing further happened. Is this something that the Senate should pursue? Senate President Luna suggested that we should investigate the issue to find out what happened to the prior Resolution. We have seen that President Oldham responds better when there are facts and other supporting arguments to a topic.

There is continuing concern regarding the changes in the Budget model and the fact that funds are now being distributed to different departments in different manners. Some departments went to great effort to increase their student hours due to the benefit in receiving student course fees and now they are no longer receiving these fees. How are they now supposed to operate without these fees? There was also some concern about who does and who doesn't pay the fees. For example, when spouses and dependents get the 50% discount on tuition, they still pay the full fees. It feels like we were asked to operate like a business and it didn't have the desired effect. This is causing suspicion and frustration. This is a university and shouldn't be operated like a business. Our goal should be to deliver a quality education.

Senate President Luna agreed that these are all good topics and plans to invite appropriate representatives to future meetings.

## **Other Such Matters**

### 1. Update on Policy 223 – Distance Education

There is a working group assisting with the revisions of this policy. It was not ready for further action back in May and no special meeting was held. The expectation is to have it approved by January 2022.

**Adjournment**

Senator Mills moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Howard seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Approved: September 27, 2021