

Faculty Senate Business Meeting
April 18, 2022

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, 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, Emily Lee, Jane Liu, Mark Loftis, Jeanette Luna, Chad Luke, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Kristin Pickering, Elizabeth Ramsey, Christopher Reames, Drew Sisk, Scott Smith, Troy Smith, Sandi Smith-Andrews, Holly Stretz, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher

Members Absent:

Stephanie Adams, Yun Ding, Dennis Duncan, Lee Ann Shipley, Dan Swartling, Laith Zuraikat

Call to Order

Senate President Luna called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

Senator Airhart moved approval. Senator Fornehed seconded. The motion was approved.

Approval of Minutes and Notes

1. March 21, 2022 Faculty Senate Business Meeting Minutes

Senator Mills moved to approve the Minutes from the Business meeting on March 21. Senator Airhart seconded. The motion carried.

3. April 4, 2022 Faculty Senate Meeting with the President Notes

Senator Airhart moved to approve the Notes from the meeting with the President on April 4. Senator Smith-Andrews seconded. The motion carried.

Promotion Salary Increase Proposal Final Draft (Luna, 15 minutes)

1. Incorporated suggestions from March 21 meeting
2. Update on promotion salary amounts and implementation timeline
3. Discussion

Senator Smith-Andrews moved that the proposal be approved by the Senate and sent to the President's and Provost's Office as a recommendation for adoption. Senator Isbell seconded.

Senate President Luna briefly discussed the changes from the previous version. She said that the time for adoption is intended to be immediate, for the 2021-2022 academic year. This would mean that the approximately 30 faculty members who are up for promotion this year would receive the new amounts. Senate President Luna also clarified that the numbers included in the draft were obtained by the Provost's office though a review of the current salaries of faculty members at each rank. The resulting values were chosen to be close to the median for each promotion category.

There was a question as to whether it should be stated that the funds for these promotions are not to be taken from the raise pool. The decision was that that was not needed. Another question was about salary inversion issues. Senate President Luna stated that the Provost's intention is to implement this plan which should then trigger a review of salary inversion and equity across campus. There was general agreement that the draft looks good and Board Representative Allcott stated that he will support it with the Board of Trustees.

Senate President Luna also talked about presenting it to the President's Cabinet earlier in the day. President Oldham did support the proposal at that time. It is believed that the process used to generate the draft, the Senate President working with the Provost, is a good example of shared governance. There was also discussion that the salary compensation for promotion had not been changed in over a decade and that this is a good time to address this issue.

The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

TTU Organization Structure, Human Resources (30 minutes)

1. HR reports to a Vice President (Planning and Finance or Provost) at some Tennessee universities. At others, HR reports directly to the President. The President stated in April 4 meeting that he is agnostic about this. Does Senate have a recommendation?
2. Discussion

Senate President Luna reminded the Senators of President Oldham's comment in the last meeting that he is agnostic about the organizational chart and his primary concern is that it be functional. There was considerable discussion about his use of the word agnostic and its application in this context. Senate President Luna has had a discussion with AVP Vedder who believes that many other institutions use a more progressive structure where HR reports directly to the President of the institution. There were questions about some of the other units, like that ITS is under Planning and Finance even though they serve the entire university. Some believe that the current structure is promoting unnecessary competition and conflict of interest among some units. This is evident in the process of hiring faculty where different units require different paperwork and different steps during the process. There is also a general lack of communication. One concern is that changing the organizational structure could increase the number of middle management personnel on campus.

How would this help? Other institutions have both COLA and equity raise considerations. However, it is difficult to speak of the issue if HR is reporting to the person who makes the financial decisions for the university. It would be easier if HR reported directly to the Provost or the President who are not directly responsible for making those decisions. There is a conflict of interest that could be removed.

Another example came from some recent attempts to hire faculty. The candidate needed accessibility accommodations that would cost money. Planning and Finance told the unit doing the hiring that they would be required to pay for the accommodations out of their operating budget. The point was made that budget should not be the primary concern when hiring the best person for the job but HR should drive such decisions.

It would appear that this topic requires further discussion, possibly with the President and the Provost as part of the conversation. It will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Faculty and Staff Salary Concerns (30 minutes)

1. Update on salary data on 56 individuals who received more than an 7% pay raise
2. An Internal Audit investigation has been launched. HR is providing data on all salary adjustments from July to October of 2021. We can expect to hear results in coming weeks.
3. What concerns does Senate have going forward?
4. Discussion

Senate President Luna discussed that the salary data was shared with President Oldham some weeks before the recent meeting. She also said that the data came from the Provost's Office and they looked at employees who had remained in the same position but who received raises above the 7% approved by the Board. She has also been able to confirm the current salary of these individuals using the current salary database, but can't confirm the previous year's salary. As part of the internal audit investigation, AVP Vedder has been asked to pull the monthly salary amounts for several months for all university employees, including staff, so that it can be confirmed when the raises went into effect and what they were attributed to.

There was a comment about the situation in ITS with even more recent substantial raises this semester and that these are related to the explosive growth in that field and the recent departure of employees in that unit. There had been some attempts to keep the employees that left, but Planning and Finance said that there was no money for higher salaries in order to compete with the other employment offers.

One senator suggested that the Senators remind themselves how these numbers were obtained. The employees in question did not receive a promotion or reclassification. However, President Oldham said that this could explain the discrepancy between the figures and the raise pool restrictions. This is in direct conflict with the information provided. There is also an issue with the definition of equity. President Oldham said that equity is for minorities and other protected

classes. If these individuals are not in the category, then the raise they received could not be due to equity. We need answers, these are strong issues.

Senate President Luna share that she asked AVP Vedder in a meeting for his definition of equity. His response was that it is an adjustment for underrepresented groups. This is an issue for follow up.

One senator raised the question of how a faculty member would go about requesting a raise if they feel they are deserving. Can he/she approach the chair? Are the chairs aware of a pathway to ask for faculty raises? Is there a documented process? There does not appear to be any such policy or process.

Senate President Luna said that this circles back. HR is not aligned with academic affairs. The processes are unclear when it comes to hiring or asking for raises. We don't want faculty to go looking for a position at another institution just to get a raise. Salary concerns, like inversion and compression, should be evaluated annually. If it got out to the rest of the faculty, it would be demoralizing. President Oldham saw this data on March 8 and he has taken no action.

The Senators were reminded that years ago there was an equity committee. They worked to create a model that included national norms. It was adjusted a number of times and then dropped. How can President Oldham be surprised? There have been signs of issues since about 2012 or 2014. Things come to head when salaries are involved. Then we care and that makes us look selfish. Proper recognition is overdue.

There were similar concerns about the budget and what happened to the cuts that didn't come back into the departments when the enrollment didn't decline. Now there are these issues with the raises.

Questions were raised about who has the final signature authority for approving the raises. It is believed that it is the director of HR, the CFO, and President Oldham. One main issue is that the data appears to show that academic affairs, the biggest unit on campus, only received an average of 3%, when other units exceeded the 4% average and/or the 7% cap which was approved by the Board of Trustees. President Oldham stated that he believes the data is invalid and talked about other factors being involved, but we have no evidence of that.

There is also concern about the time for the internal audit and that if there is no answer before summer, interest in a resolution will be lost. There was some discussion about how to keep this issue relevant and make sure there is a resolution that is satisfactory to everyone. Senate President Luna reminded the Senate that she has communicated salary concerns to the Board of Trustees in the past. She intends to communicate with the Chair of the Board of Trustees about this issue again after this meeting. This should help keep it on the radar. Other discussion included the fact that the minutes of this meeting would not normally be approved and posted on

the web site until the first Business meeting in the fall semester. It was decided to approve the minutes at the next meeting and get them posted before the summer break.

Other possible actions were discussed. Initiating a vote of no confidence was an option. There are no official consequences to this action, but with this in the approved minutes it becomes public which will result in pressure on the individual in question. At least one example in the recent past, the individual stepped down from their position with the inference of a vote of no confidence pending. However, there is no binding action to a vote of no confidence.

Senator T. Smith made a motion for a vote of no confidence against the Vice President of Planning & Finance. Senator Killman seconded.

Senator Smith-Andrews made a motion to table the vote pending more information (which is expected in the report from the ongoing internal audit). Senator Mills seconded. There was brief discussion of the timing for a meeting to approve the minutes from this meeting. That will occur just prior to the meeting with President Oldham on Monday April 25.

The motion to table carried with a unanimous vote.

Report from ad hoc committee on President-Elect and Secretary (20 minutes)

1. Vote for President-Elect
2. Vote for Secretary

The Nominating committee of Senator Smith-Andrews (chair), Senator Null, and Senator Hadjik have been working hard and were thanked for their efforts.

The candidate for Senate President Elect is Senator Mike Allen. Senator Allen accepted the nomination.

Senator Smith-Andrews made a motion to cease nominations and elect Senator Allen by acclamation. Senator Airhart seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

There is no candidate for Senate Secretary. A number of Senators were asked to accept the nomination and none agreed. The nominating committee will continue to search for a candidate and this will be revisited at the next meeting.

Summary of Business Items for Carryover into 2022-2023 Academic Year

1. Policy 206 (Promotion Policy) currently under revision with Dr. Stephens. Senator's comments are included. Senators Fornehed, Meadows, Null asked to read once draft is complete. Expect this policy to come to Council(s) next fall.
2. Policy 780 (Misconduct in Research) currently in working group with Dr. Taylor. Working group includes research active faculty (any Senators?). Expect this policy to come to Council(s) next fall.

3. Faculty Evaluations – working group led by Jerry Gannod. Presented preliminary ideas and received feedback from Senate in fall 2021, would like to return to Senate for an update on this process in fall 2022.

4. Family Policies – working group led by Helen Hunt and Women’s Center. Bereavement Policy updated, next policies will be Family Leave.

1. No additional discussion

2. No Senators spoke about being on this committee.

3. Dr. Gannod was asked to return for an update. Since this is the last meeting this academic year, this will happen next year.

4. There is a working group convened. The Family Leave policy is next on the agenda for this group. It is more complicated and will require more consideration. This will be addressed next year. There was a clarification that the Bereavement Policy was tabled in Administrative Council and has not yet been officially updated. This will also come back in the fall.

Other Such Matters

1. Topics for final Senate meeting with the President?

2. Any other such matters

Both Senate President Luna and Senate Secretary Craven were thanked for their work this year.

Adjournment

Senator Airhart moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator Fornehed seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Approved: April 25, 2022