

Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes

November 30, 2020

Submitted by K. Craven

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Chris Brown, Yun Ding, Dennis Duncan, Tammy Howard, Susan Laningham, Mary Matthews, Mark Melichar, Anthony Paradis, Lenly Weathers

Guests Present:

Lee Wray

Call to Order

Senate President Stretz called the meeting to order at 3:44 p.m.

President Oldham's Opening Remarks

The President began with a discussion of COVID-19 saying that by all accounts for the previous nine months TTU is in a good spot. He hopes that everyone feels good, is managing successfully, and he thanks all faculty for their hard work and devotion to our students. He plans to echo these sentiments during the Board of Trustees meeting tomorrow.

So far, the COVID-19 numbers have been manageable and have not come close to being a stress on the campus. The number of active cases has hovered around one-half percent, which is pretty good. There are continued questions, but this is normal. The decisions and efforts in the area have been pretty correct and on track. He hopes everyone enjoyed the extra day off at Thanksgiving. He said that the bonus he plans to request from the Board is not as much as he would like to give, but it is not insignificant, and everyone deserves it.

Question: It was again asked about the thresholds and decision points for COVID-19 response.

Response: We have, so far, opted against setting a specific number for this. It is a situational decision involving multiple factors. The number of active cases does not tell the whole story. There are considerations about whether any perceived spread is from on-campus activities versus off-campus activities. There is also the degree of illness of the patients, the impact for each individual varies substantially. At this time there is no good feel for the capacity, no rule of

thumb, it is all relative to total population. Currently, we are not at a level that is stressing the existing capacity of the campus.

Question: What is the amount of partnership with CRMC?

Response: Significant. We are in contact with hospital CEO frequently. They are busy but ok. We continue to ask them if there are any issues we need to be aware of and they indicate that we are doing a great job on campus. Health Services communicates multiple time a day and they are working well together.

Question: Some faculty are concerned about class attendance. Left unchecked, some students are just not participating and this is affecting their learning. Is it acceptable to begin to require some form of attendance?

Response: We still feel that it should not be a requirement for students to attend physically for a grade. We do not want ill students to come. But we also don't want to limit participation. Their participation can be virtual. We need to exercise a lot of flexibility. You should work with your chairs and deans to determine what is reasonable for your department. The point was to not encourage students to come when they are sick just to keep a high course grade.

Question: If a student was newly exposed over the Holiday, then they will be required to isolate for 14 days. How do we wrap up the semester when they are not able to be present? Is it an individual decision on how to handle this for your class? Will there be a recommendation on how to proceed?

Response: Refer to the Provost Office. These decisions are really up to the instructor. I am hesitant to be too specific about how to handle these situations. The individual circumstances can vary significantly. But I know you can find a resolution. Options include incomplete, make-up work, grade change.

Question: Chairs are seeing a decline in enrollment. How will the budget be revised due to this?

Response: Currently we are in a safe zone. The numbers are lagging historical trends, but it is hard to predict due to the unique situation, they have been all year. Student behavior is sluggish. A lot of outreach is being done to engage the students to enroll for the spring semester. Uncertainty about modes, but we are pulling out all the stops to get caught up. According to the budget, we should be ok.

Question: How will all of this affect Athletics?

Response: There has been some one-time funds to keep them whole. There will be a lot of required testing in the spring which will require a significant investment. There is a lot of stress, but financially we are in good shape. First, we need to get the spring enrollment, then we can

begin to recruit for the fall semester. This is being extremely difficult. A lot of usual recruitment places are not allowing visits, and those who allow visits have few students attending in person. Students are not taking the ACT at the usual rate, so getting the data from the test scores is not available. This will impact the fall semester more than the spring.

Question: Due to the lagging registration, some chairs have had to shut down schedules. Today the paperwork for adjuncts and overloads was due. They are also look for book orders. The timing is unfortunate. Can we move some of these deadlines to be able to adjust schedules later?

Response: I would say “yes”. The issue with the book orders is the publishers. With schedules, we can be a little flexible. Work with your chairs and deans to communicate your needs. When making a request, it is helpful to know when the decision will be made so try to estimate when decisions will be finalized. It is more important to get people paid on time. There are some general deadlines that must be met. However, if we are up front about when this can be done there can be some flexibility.

Comment: About paperwork, if the administration has advocacy on our behalf, then we don’t get push back.

Response: You should organize your requests and go through the deans. Then you will get the advocacy.

Question: In previous years, there was a sweep of unused department funds. Will this happen again this year?

Discussion: The term is lapse funds. If you have a vacant position, or if a trip was canceled. These funds get reallocated. Also, can be impound.

Response: This is typically done at the end of the fiscal year, during the closeout. These funds need to be used for the best of all concerned. Any unit can have funds reallocated if there is no good reason to hold them back. Therefore, it is not a good idea to have extra funds at the end. You can’t really argue that you need more money if there is unspent money left at closeout. It is allowable to hold back some money if there is a strategic purpose for the funds. We want to continue to try for the right balance. There is no plan either way at this time.

Comment: If your department has a vacant line, don’t wait until the end to do something about it. If the money is still sitting in the department budget at closeout, it will go back to the university for another use.

Question: Is there anything that we are facing now that you need our advice?

Response: Not at this moment. The executive council is aware of the discussion on faculty compensation and the conversation will continue, but there is nothing ready for review at this

time. We have learned a lot of lessons this semester that we need to capture for future benefit. Please be thoughtful about the lessons learned. This will make the spring semester even better. It is possible that we will have a vaccine by spring break, but at the start we will probably be where we are now. We need to hope for the best and plan for the worst. I hope we are closer to the best.

Question: Can you speak about the results of the Sunset Audit? There are written reports available, but the campus would benefit from hearing from you.

Response: There will be comments in the Board of Trustees meeting tomorrow and there has already been something in the Herald Citizen. We received a four-year extension. There were no negative comments. This is not a traditional financial audit. There were three findings that mainly involved details about reporting, we have taken some action on all three of these. President Oldham said he would work on getting something out to the campus.

Discussion:

Senate President Stretz: The President's Cabinet would like to get some advice on a spring Showcase, similar to the Preview Days. Please work with your deans to provide input.

Senator Smith-Andrews: The TUFs meeting is happening soon. Please let us know if there is anything for this meeting.

Senator Rand: I fear that there is a sense of malaise among the faculty. There is a need for a morale boost, some encouragement. We are all learning new tools and teaching differently. This will certainly benefit the university going forward.

President Oldham: We have all learned a lot about our students, how they work within the new modalities of course delivery. This has been somewhat of a forced experiment. Hopefully we will pay attention. I can't be any more proud of the campus community. Everyone has done an exceptional job and it has been remarkable to witness.

Question: Tell us about Commencement.

Response: It is moving forward. We learned some lessons from the previous event. The staff have it well in hand.

In closing, President Oldham commented again about how impressed he is with the students. He has worked on three different campuses and our students are great.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Approved: January 25, 2021