

Faculty Senate President's Meeting Notes

April 26, 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, Mary Lou Fornehed, David Hajdik, Tammy Howard, Janet Isbell, Matt Langford, Christy Killman, Nancy Kolodziej, David Larimore, Emily Lee, Chad Luke, Ann Manginelli, Lori Maxwell, Jennifer Meadows, Holly Mills, Lachelle Norris, Linda Null, Brian O'Connor, Joseph Ojo, Anthony Paradis, Sally Pardue, Richard Rand, Jeff Roberts, Lee Ann Shipley, Sandra Smith-Andrews, Troy Smith, Barry Stein, Holly Stretz, Daniel Swartling, Lenly Weathers, Robert Wilbanks, Zac Wilcox, Kimberly Winkle, Russ Witcher, Jeannette Wolak, Jeff Womack

Members Absent:

Yun Ding, Dennis Duncan, Steven Frye, Brian Jones, Susan Laningham, Mark Melichar, Mike Rogers

Guests Present:

Troy Perdue (University Counsel)

Call to Order

Call to order 3:36 p.m.

Secretary Nominations: This was tabled at the last meeting. Senator Smith-Andrews moved that Senator Craven be elected. Senator Larimore seconded.

Motion is approved.

President Oldham again praised the campus community for a job well done this academic year.

There were a number of topics submitted, President Oldham started with these.

Guns on Campus: Terry Saltsman is detained, so President Oldham will give a high-altitude overview. In 2016 there was a statute regarding adult employees with a legal permit being permitted to conceal carry on campus once they provided the necessary paperwork and registered with Campus Police. With the new legislation, this will continue as the university campus is considered a protected space. However, students are not permitted to conceal carry unless they fall under other special categories such as law enforcement officers or military personnel. President Oldham emphasized that the identity of individuals who have registered to carry is confidential and can only be known by the University Police. As president, he is permitted to know the number of individuals, but not their identity. The requirement is for a one-time registration and the university has no authority to prevent an eligible adult employee to do so once they have registered. Troy Perdue, the University Counsel, agreed with this explanation.

He also indicated that the new bill did pass and will go into effect on July 1. However, this will only affect off campus, there will be no change on campus.

Question: With the new law a permit to carry is no longer required. Can adult employees now register with the University Police and carry without a permit?

Answer: Troy Perdue explained that campus is like a protected circle within the state. An individual can carry without a permit within the state, but there are exceptions for schools. For these protected areas, there is an enhanced permit that is required. This is the same as it has been.

Question: What are the conditions that must exist to revoke the privilege?

Answer: President Oldham confirmed that the university does not have the authority to revoke it. Only the courts can revoke a carry permit. Counsel Perdue said that the state must revoke a permit.

Question: You said you can know how many adult employees have registered to carry on campus, how many do?

Answer: President Oldham said roughly 70 have registered. However, just because they have registered does not necessarily mean that they actively carry all the time, so an accurate number is not known.

Question: Are employed graduate students allowed?

Answer: President Oldham said he would consider them students. The allowance is for adult employees. There are grey areas. Counsel Perdue agreed that some cases are not clear. He believes that common sense is the answer when there are questionable situations.

Question: What if we know of someone who is carrying, how do we know if they are registered to do so? Who polices for individuals who are carrying illegally? Can we report it? Can you express reservations to the legislature?

Answer: President Oldham said that we can't know and there is no way for us to police. If the University Police find out, they can deal with the situation. If you feel threatened, yes call the police and they will handle it according to the statute. However, they are not allowed to divulge the list. He stated that he did make his position known at the time the legislation was originally enacted. President Oldham doesn't want guns on campus. Unfortunately, this was not successful in changing the results.

Question: There has been a lack of text alerts recently. How do we know if there is an issue with the system or if there just hasn't been anything that needs communicating to the campus?

Answer: President Oldham stated that this issue is governed by the Cleary Act. There is a requirement to alert the campus community when there is an imminent danger or risk. This is when the text alert system will be employed. It is a judgement call by the administration. They must determine the level of threat and also when that threat is over. If the situation is dealt with quickly so that it is not a pending threat, then there is no need for an alert. Counsel Perdue also stated that there are processes in place for these types of responses. The University Police Officers are the primary deciders. They must assess the situation and decide if the criteria are met.

Question: Isn't it better to get the information from within, and not to read it in the paper after? Isn't transparency better than hindsight?

Answer: President Oldham agrees but also believes that it is tricky. If the situation involves personnel matters, then it must remain confidential. However, things can be made public with others make statements.

TN e-campus:

Question: TSU has pulled out of the TN e-campus, are we contemplating action?

Answer: President Oldham stated that there are no active discussions about that. It is believed that it is not viable for the long term and there are plans to become independent. There are currently no plans to suddenly drop out. The collaboration of the TN e-campus is sort of falling apart. It might be better to have our own program for online learning.

Question: New classes could be owned by TTU now that were owned by TSU before.

Answer: This is worth further investment. Consult with the Provost Office.

Faculty Evaluations:

Question: Can persons outside the university request these as open records?

Answer: There are some university records that can be protected. This could be one. Counsel Perdue said that evaluations and self-evaluations are protected. Other assessments are not included.

Question: What about student evaluations?

Answer: Counsel Perdue is not sure but they can probably be protected as standard.

Fall 2021 Semester

President Oldham stated that it is too early to predict the status for the fall semester. Now that vaccines are available we hope that everyone will take advantage but we will not be requiring them. There is discussion about doing a survey in the next few weeks. This should give some useful information about mask usage. There is much debate nationally. The situation will continue to move and evolve.

Question: There are some things in the music program that require one-on-one contact for instruction. Do we have the right to ask about vaccination status? Thinking about virtual versus in-person lessons.

Answer: Vaccination status is health related information and there are privacy concerns. President Oldham does not have an answer at this time. It is not a good practice; however, he is happy to tell anyone who asks.

There was additional discussion about the side affects of the vaccine and complaints from students. It is recommended that we all encourage the students to get the vaccines. They are very available on campus. New regulations no longer require isolation if you are in close contact with a COVID-positive individual and you are fully vaccinated – can continue to attend class unless you experience symptoms. Also, it will be safer for their family when they leave campus and return home.

President Oldham said that these are good points for the implementation team. Also, the number of cases on campus continues to remain low and there was no significant increase seen after Spring Break. Currently the local environment is in good shape.

Other:

Some discussion about the state of current campus projects was discussed.

On the topic of IDEA evaluations: The Institutional Research Office is not surprised that the response rates are low. We are seeing that the rates are even lower with the online instruction, with some courses having 0 responses from students. We need to reach out to our students to encourage them to complete the forms. President Oldham talked about getting his from the fall semester, this being the first time for the IDEA. He had 42% respond and had his own feelings about the responses. These are all good to know.

Question: With Commencement now being on Friday, can we close the offices to allow our staff to attend?

Answer: President Oldham hadn't thought about that. It is a good idea. The only concern is students not getting served in the office. He encourages department chairs to manage the situation so that the office isn't completely unstaffed.

Question: Will there be an official attendance policy in place for the fall semester?

Answer: President Oldham deferred to the Provost's Office. There have been no conversations regarding attendance. Most likely we will revert to the old policy.

Policy 223

This policy is on the Agenda for the University Assembly. Senators feel that this policy should be taken before the Administrative Council before final approval. There was some discussion about having a joint meeting before the end of the academic year to address the issues.

Adjourned 4:58 p.m.

Approved: August 30, 2021