

TAMIU Faculty Senate

Agenda

Friday, October 4, 2024, 12:00-2:30

STC 230

Present: Hayley Kazen, Kate Houston, Andrew Hazelton, Li-Zheng Brooks, Leonel Prieto, Seong Kwan Cho, Andrew Hilburn, Kameron Jorgensen, Puneet Gill, Runchang Lin, Tatiana Gorbunova, Mavin Bennett, Ediza Garcia, Jose Lara, Tim Rubel, Cynthia Sosa, Won Kim.

- I. Dr. Kazen called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM
 - a. Announcements
 - i. Provost's office will be finalizing post tenure review schedule and guidelines next week.
- II. Approval of September Minutes (Senator Hazelton)
 - a. Dr. Rubel moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Dr. Hilburn.
 - b. Minutes approved unanimously by all attending.
- III. New Business
 - a. Executive Committee update and review of DC minutes
 - i. Executive Committee met with the Provost San Miguel on 9/25/24. The following items were discussed:
 - ii. SafeZone issues
 1. Gilberto Perez will be here to address privacy concerns and battery life issues at Nov. Faculty Senate meeting.
 2. Dr. Houston outlined the security permissions concerns (app access photos, social media activity, location when off campus, etc.) with SafeZone on a personal device that has to be used for work. Faculty who have chosen not to download SafeZone are concerned that they will not be notified about security concerns. Can we use a text-based system for those who don't want to opt in?
 3. Other colleges and universities using SafeZone have alternate notifications systems for faculty.
 4. Dr. San Miguel noted that the administration was unaware of the potential for privacy permissions concerns when the platform was being presented and adopted.
 5. Discussion ensued concerning lack of phones in classrooms. Dr. San Miguel expressed they're looking into hallway phones. Discussion continued regarding access points to certain campus buildings and the security concerns these presented. Requests for additional access points at AIC, for instance.
 6. Dr. Kazen noted that we can raise these questions with Mr. Perez when he attends the November meeting.

iii. Study Abroad

1. Rumors have been circulating about changes to study abroad, but these are unfounded. Faculty will still have the option of running 5-week study abroad courses, but they will also be able to offer shorter options provided the course meets contact hours requirements (such as meeting at TAMIU for class sessions before/after departing).
2. The provost's office will deny any study abroad courses that do not meet the required contact hours. Contact hours are more important now.
3. SLOs must be aligned with excursions, activities, etc. while abroad.
4. The emphasis is on substance, alignment, and contact hours.

iv. Hiring for grants

1. It's always been a problem and continues to be frustrating for faculty attempting to hire employees on grants.
2. To expedite the process, the university is trying new forms using Laserfiche.
3. Thus the application process will be smoother, but the bottleneck remains hiring through HR.

v. Program directors and coordinators

1. Dr. San Miguel will follow up on this issue if we gather information and forward to her concerning program directors vs. program coordinators.
2. The difference:
 - a. Coordinators are not officially designated by provost's office, so those duties count as faculty service.
 - b. Directors are provost-approved and -designated, so those positions come with release time and/or stipends.
3. Dr. Houston noted that some faculty are being designated as director or believe that they are directors, and are now being told that's not the case, losing or not getting release time, etc.
4. The problem is: lack of consistency for these positions. There is no language in the faculty handbook about delineating what these roles are. Faculty Senate would like to have some recalibration and sorting out of these titles.
5. Coordinators do high-level service, and this should be considered when they're being assigned to additional service tasks. Faculty Senate should advocate for these individuals and protect them from being overburdened with additional service tasks.

vi. Hiring and failed searches

1. Dr. Kazen: Dr. San Miguel assured Exec Com that should a TT search fail, a dean can hire someone as visiting from that pool.

2. A senator noted that searches that fail, fail for a reason. Why do we return the pool that produced a failed search and simply hire from that pool into visiting positions that are created from the failed search?
3. The claim by some administrators is that faculty don't need to be involved in hiring for visiting line positions for one-year positions. Individual hired into such positions may not be reclassified to either continuing fixed-term positions or TT, though they can apply when these positions become available. There is concern about the fact that deans are presenting the issue in such terms as to make faculty choose between accepting unilateral visiting faculty hires or accepting higher teaching loads/larger class sizes when searches fail.
4. Discussion ensued concerning the process of how these visiting hires get made outside the normal channels without faculty input. Perhaps we need to discuss what a visiting faculty member looks like in the handbook since faculty classifications have evolved over time.
5. Overall, the concern is that these back-channel hires amass further power to the dean's level and circumvent the norms of shared governance. Also, faculty are kept in the dark about what decisions are being made at the HR level on candidates.
6. Can we invite head of HR to a Faculty Senate meeting to ask questions about the process?
7. Dr. Kazen asked the senators where we would like to take this with Exec. Com. meetings with the provost's office in the future?
 - a. What is the process for visiting hires? Can faculty have a voice in these decisions?
 - b. Discussion ensued concerning hiring in general and where faculty recommendations are overridden on the argument that faculty are only making recommendations whereas admin retains the "right to manage" and ultimately decide, sometimes over the recommendations of faculty.
 - c. Can we change faculty handbook language concerning visiting faculty and faculty role in searches?
 - d. Dr. Kazen recommended that senators talk to faculty in their departments to get more momentum on this. Discussion ensued on trying to advocate on this issue at the level of the deans and provost.
 - e. Perhaps a fair compromise for situations where a search has failed and a visiting position is approved to plug the hole, that the hiring manager would go back to faculty and ask to make a recommendation from that pool of candidates/finalists to as to whom should be hired into the visiting role.

- f. Processes need to be better outlined on hiring. In certain colleges, these processes have been monopolized by dean. Committees are being overridden—finalists are being arbitrarily chosen. SAPs are not being followed in hiring.
 - g. At next Exec. Com. meeting with provost, we should ask about what the rules/legalities are for hiring. We might also look at provost's rules about role of faculty in hiring to see what the guidelines say to pinpoint where practice is departing from policy.
- b. Graduate Council membership change
 - i. Update: A Graduate Council member from COED moved over to COAS, producing overrepresentation. Balanced by someone from ARSSB now serving on the Council. The problem has been resolved.
- c. Handbook Committee meeting with Dr. Gonzalez
 - i. Handbook committee met with Dr. Gonzalez. Definition of faculty is problematic in handbook given various kinds of faculty we have. Will revisit with the visiting line. Want to add service to faculty workload. Grievance also came up. No policy for staff-faculty and faculty-staff, but there is a Standard Admin. Procedure.
- d. Fixed term faculty promotion document-VOTE
 - i. Reclassification policy for fixed-term faculty was approved by the provost. Committee met to revise language for fixed-term faculty promotion policy, and P&T and Retention Com. Minor revisions.
 - ii. Policy was revised to include expansion of promotion committee.
 - iii. Dr. Houston moved to vote on the new policy.
 - iv. Motion passed unanimously; no abstentions, no votes opposed.
- e. WIN Courses
 - i. Conversations in COED about WIN.
 1. Data are being submitted, but they haven't seen that.
 2. WIN began 20 years ago for QEP purposes. Program evaluation: is it happening? Who's in charge of it, where's the training, who makes decision to make a course WIN?
 3. COED had tried to make all courses in elementary ed WIN, raised concern with too much, lack of appropriateness of WIN courses to SLOs, so made change to 3 courses, but courses that shouldn't be WIN are still listed as WIN.
 4. COED is asking what that process looks like, and is it still needed?
 5. Discussion ensued about WIN designations mostly being done at chair's discretion in consultation with faculty at most programs. May need to submit a rationale.

6. Discussion ensued concerning enrollments. Some WIN courses have caps of up to 80 students in violation of WIN policies concerning course caps for these sections. Caps aren't being adhered to.
7. Discussion ensued about origins of WIN. And is this doing what it needs to do? Assessment concerns? Where does the data go in terms of closing the loop? Concern about students being forced to take more WIN classes than they are required to when some classes are only run as WIN.
8. As a Senate body, we should be advocating for class size caps, esp. for WIN. And this should be a dialogue between faculty and their chairs about appropriateness of the course for WIN designation, faculty workload, and respect for faculty expertise.
9. One senator reported having found documentation stating the policy should be a 25-student course cap for WIN, and beyond 30 should have a TA. But a new dean came along, and that documentation disappeared from university websites. Cap sizes then rose to 40.
 - a. If WIN caps is going to be handled in this high-handed manner, then can these count as 2 courses if they're too big?
10. Dr. Kazen noted that Exec. Com. will bring this up with the provost at our next meeting.

IV. Old Business

- a. Full faculty vote-PASSED, see above under III. d.
 - i. Reclassification
 1. Some discussion ensued concerning college P&T committees being saddled with these additional reclassification dossiers to evaluate
 2. General consensus emerged that while this additional burden was not ideal, we probably do want some discussion at the college level when reclassifying faculty from fixed-term to TT.
 3. Discussion diverted into general issues of collegiality in discussing dossiers for PTR at all levels.
 - a. We don't have clear standards for tenure in research productivity.
 - b. Is there a way to differentiate and establish rubrics for disciplines, etc.
 - ii. Fixed-Term Growth Plan—approved
 - iii. Early Tenure—approved
 - iv. Ethics committee description—updated and approved
- b. Open Senate and committee member replacements-results shared
- c. Faculty Senate Committees and chair decisions
 - i. Most committees have met in Sept. or early Oct. to determine who will chair.

V. Guest: Dr. Hudson

- a. All-in Democracy Task Force
 - i. We've been a member of the Democracy Task Force organization since 2017.
 - ii. Non-partisan.
 - iii. Committee is composed of students, staff, and faculty.
 - iv. The goal: to achieve universal voter registration of the campus community.
 - v. We send our student data to Tufts and compare with clearinghouse.
 - vi. In 2020 election, we achieved 86% eligible voter registration.
 - 1. We also beat voter turnout vs. Webb County "by a mile." Campus turnout was 55%.
 - vii. This year's goal is 60% turnout for 2024 election, would be an increase of 5% from 2020.
 - viii. Will require assistance of faculty.
 - ix. No early voting site on campus this year.
 - x. We have Election Day site on campus. At University Village.
 - xi. Oct. 29 is National Early Voting day. Shuttle buses will be available. Nov. 5th, we will have party at the polls.
 - xii. Town halls will be mid-Oct. for local candidates for office. City council and mayoral.
 - xiii. Dr. Hudson requests that Faculty Senate considers making this committee a university-level standing committee. This would give incentive to faculty to volunteer to serve on the committee. Would like to get some larger buy-in from more folks, and elevating it to university committee would help achieve this. Nonpartisan, etc.
 - xiv. Discussion ensued asking who moved the voting site to University Village?
 - 1. Was not Event Services; decision was made at administration level.

VI. Committee Reports

- a. Academic Oversight
 - i. Chair established (Kate Houston); need to have first meeting.
- b. Budget and Finance
 - i. Haven't met, but some back-and-forth emails on who will be chair.
- c. University Ethics
 - i. Ediza Garcia, chair
 - ii. Review grievance procedure and create a flow chart for complaints.
 - iii. Ombudsperson office is looking to get more involved and increase presence. Need to clarify when to bypass ombudsperson and go to compliance/ethics.
 - iv. Ombudsperson is optional. So perhaps some language around what that office does is advisable.
- d. Committee on Creation, Composition, and Responsibilities of Committees
 - i. Malynda Dalton, chair. Yet to meet.
- e. Awards

- i. Timeline—can't make any changes to timeline for this year, but admin is considering a celebration for winners ideally in April or May.
 - ii. However, that would move our process up significantly and present formidable problems for the evaluation process.
 - 1. Awards committee preference would be to just do a luncheon the following year.
 - 2. Discussion ensued concerning announcement of winners at Convocation instead of beginning of the year assembly. Free parking, for instance, is less meaningful if it's awarded in Nov, 2/3rds of the way into the Fall semester.
 - 3. Teaching observations will take place via Echo this year as that process worked well last year.
 - iii. We need to add instructions to candidates concerning keeping award portfolio information private—public websites using student work can lead to complaints, so these websites need to be private. Student names should be redacted.
 - iv. One vs. two observations. If doing via Echo, then go ahead and do two, as the barrier to observing is reduced.
- f. Faculty Handbook Revision
 - i. Met briefly.
 - ii. Suggestion concerning linking SAPs
 - iii. Timeline for updates
- g. Assessment
 - i. Did not meet; will have a meeting in Oct.
- h. Distance Education and Instructional Technology
 - i. Went over Blackboard Ultra, videos will be done on what people find helpful.
 - ii. Payment for QM certification is \$3000, and revision is \$1500.
 - iii. If you have a problem with something Blackboard Ultra does strangely:
 - 1. For example, SafeAssign didn't generate the similarity report, and a faculty member teaching several sections and didn't have access to this information.
 - 2. There's a link where you can report problems and upvote the submissions of others to elevate the issue.
 - 3. Discussion ensued concerning problems with Blackboard Ultra. President Kazen recommended go to the anthology and submit problems, upvote them to elevate known issues.
- i. Technology Advisory
 - i. VPAT update
 - 1. Dr. Gill: Making some progress on this, streamlining process. Gilberto Perez is coming to discuss with Faculty Senate in November.
 - 2. Mike Munoa: We are going to have a list of pre-approved software.

3. They'll be making a flowchart so you can see where you are in the process.
4. Point of contact will be made for faculty to follow-up on any concerns.
- ii. Also asked Mike Munoa on SafeZone app.
- iii. USB drives and issues with Forcepoint blocking access.
- iv. Student evaluation problems
 1. Would it be possible for faculty to customizer evaluations to gather more targeted feedback on course?
 2. Students didn't get popup notifications this past spring. Faculty were not notified of the evaluation period via email as has been practice in the past.
 3. Discussed with Pat Abrego.
- v. Discussion ensued considering the inadequacy of faculty computers because the equipment we are issued doesn't function sufficiently to perform our work well. Many faculty simply bring their own equipment to do their jobs out of frustration at inadequate hardware or excessive monitoring software using too much CPU and RAM.
- j. Fixed-Term Faculty
 - i. Promotion committees
 1. Committee met, revised document, which was voted on earlier in the meeting. See III. d.

VII. Announcements and Other Business

- a. Future Guests
 - i. Mayra Hernandez
 1. Staff senate president.
 2. No other updates regarding staff senate.
 - ii. Gilberto Perez
 1. Will be here to discuss Safe Zone, other items.
- b. Labor Day
 - i. We shared the survey results at Exec Com.
 - ii. There was a dispute at Dean's Council between Faculty Senate representative and provost over the alleged impossibility of scheduling classes to accommodate Labor Day observation.
 1. Dr. Houston went over the discussion at Dean's Council. See those notes for a summary of that discussion, but the general takeaway is that every other A&M System campus with the exception of Qatar has figured out how to observe Labor Day and still meet contact hours. TAMU chooses not to observe.
- c. May Pay issues
 - i. Dr. Kazen: Workday won't break up into 12. Administration and faculty don't want to run the school year from August 1 to May 1 or Sept. 1 to June 1, as this

would necessitate physical presence either too early or too late vs. academic calendar. Appears that we are stuck with the half paychecks in Sept. and June.

1. Last time she inquired about May pay issues, she was told not to ask it again. Administration's advice to faculty continues to be: budget accordingly.

- d. Faculty member guest in attendance raised an issue for consideration by the Senate.

- i. A faculty member sought Senate guidance on an issue in her department concerning promotion and tenure. Senators advised accordingly.

VIII. Dr. Houston moved to adjourn; seconded by Dr. Garcia. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned, 2:35 PM.