

Minutes of  
THE FACULTY SENATE OF  
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

This meeting of the 2020-2021 Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 on WebEx. The following members were present:

Dr. Alejandra Carballo	Dr. Sean Reed
Dr. Jon Clements	Dr. Scott Jordan
Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Randy Kelley
Dr. Pam Dixon	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Dr. David Eshelman	Dr. Asim Shrestha
Dr. V. Carole Smith	Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. Shellie Hanna	Mr. Steven Junker
Dr. Newt Hilliard	Dr. Brendan Toner
Dr. Efosa Idemudia	Dr. Masanori Kuroki
Dr. Cynthia Jacobs	Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon
Dr. Sean Huss	

Guests: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Ms. Pat Chronister, Dr. Sarah Gordon, Dr. Tennille Lasker-Scott, Dr. Melissa Darnell, Mrs. Sara Bailey, Dr. Rebecca Goldstein

## I. Call to Order

**A. Approval of the minutes** - from the October 13 meeting. **Dr. Jeremy Schwehm moved. Dr. Newt Hilliard seconded. Motion Carried.**

## II. New Business

### A. Curricular Items -

<https://www.atu.edu/registrar/2021CatalogCurriculumProposals.php>

**Dr. Jeremy Schwehm moves to accept in a block. Dr. Sean Huss seconds.**

Emergency Management, Engineering, Prof. Studies, Biological Sciences, Dept. of Communication and Journalism, Dept. of Music, Dept. of Management and Marketing, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction and Dept. of Electrical Engineering. No Discussion. **Motion carried.**

### B. Faculty Senate Budget Sub-committee update (Dr. Sean Huss)

**Dr. Sean Huss** indicated that the committee has a lot of data gathered, internal data, survey info. The committee met with Dr. Bowen, Mr. Branson, Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Bedsole. The committee indicated that it wanted to stop the bucket process. The discussion included scholarships and concurrent students. A more formal report is forthcoming, and will deal with perceived discrepancies. The committee is meeting with Dr.

Johnson and the Deans on Friday. More data has been shared between the senate budget subcommittee, Mr. Branson, Dr. Bedsole, etc.

### **C. Shared Governance Standing Committee (Dr. David Eshelman)**

**Dr. David Eshelman** asked Dr. Johnson whether or not we heard back from the EC about that. Dr. Johnson indicated that she remembered they might have another suggestion, and that this is still in process. This will continue on Old Business.

### **D. HLC Update**

**Dr. Johnson**, just prior to the senate meeting, finished with the reviewers. She thanked everyone for attending the forums and being candid. The reviewers have asked for additional information, and we are working on compiling that information. We will receive a preliminary draft report in the next few weeks and will have the opportunity to prepare a response if necessary. We don't anticipate any major concerns except for one or two areas where we were expecting to have issues. The final decision is expected in March.

### **E. IRB Updates (Dr. Sarah Gordon)**

**Dr. Sarah Gordon** is in The Center for Leadership and Learning and the new Chair of the Institutional Review Board. She indicated that one of the things she is working on in the IRB area is shoring things up and making the process more efficient. We are working with IRBs in Arkansas and adjacent states to get a sense for their policies, procedures, etc. A couple of the issues facing Arkansas Tech are 1. How people get on the IRB, and 2. how long they can stay. She reminded senate that there is a federal law that outlines how institutions handle research with human subjects. This isn't just in academia – hospitals and other institutions that deal with research featuring human subjects have IRB's. It takes about 30 modules of training (intensive) to qualify to be an IRB member. Knowledge of federal guidelines and the research processes are necessary, and sometimes, even knowledge in a particular field. Currently, the structure of the ATU IRB is outlined in the Faculty Handbook and contains members from both the faculty and the research office. Dr. Gordon is suggesting that we remove descriptions of federal guidelines from the Faculty Handbook because they frequently change. Federal guidelines stipulate that an IRB must have at least 5 members, ATU currently has 7. The IRB wants the power to expand or shrink the numbers beyond or below 7 to ensure representation from every college and create needed flexibility. The IRB wants the Dean of the Graduate College and Research to work with the deans of each college to help identify potential IRB members. Dr. Gordon suggested the language in the handbook that describes term limits be removed in order to preserve the institutional knowledge of the IRB. Dr. Clements asked whether the IRB's timeframe

would allow Senate to review the proposed changes and vote at the November 30 meeting. Dr. Gordon indicated that would be acceptable.

### III. Old Business

#### A. VPAA update

**Dr. Barbara Johnson** presented some updates and informational items:

- a. Dept Head/Dean evaluations are closing at midnight on November 12<sup>th</sup>. There currently is still a low response rate.
- b. Final Exams will occur Dec 1-4 and they *will* be virtual.
- c. MT49 and MT99 – hopefully your Deans have talked about these delivery modes. If we say that ½ of the class will be in person (MT49), it is very important that we really do that. We have received complaints from parents that students have come back to campus, but the classes ended up being entirely online. Some of the confusion came from the students, but we need to make sure that faculty don't add to the confusion.
- d. Spring 2021: classes start **January 11**. Prof. Development is **Jan. 6**. We plan to start January 11. Whichever modality you have chosen is going to be the anticipated delivery method, but whatever happens with Covid-19 over the semester break may dictate necessary changes.
- e. Spring 2021 Final Exams: the schedule has been amended – they are now April 26-30. We will have to wait and see whether not they are virtual.
- f. Dr. Shellie Hannah indicated that some groups of students have an issue with the virtual final exams. Traditionally, professors of online classes have the ability to schedule finals whenever they choose during finals week. At this point, many faculty have assigned the due date on the first day of finals, forcing students to take multiple finals early. Dr. Johnson indicated that she will speak with the deans tomorrow and ask that faculty try to avoid this. Dr. David Eshelman reminded that students can petition to have exams moved if they have too many in one day.
- g. Spring Break is set, possibly subject to change.
- h. Spring Commencement: Dr. Johnson has asked that we prepare for two possibilities, 1. On the football field socially distanced, 2. In Tucker Coliseum socially distanced. (The Coliseum is to be the back-up plan.) A survey will be sent out to all 2020 graduates to determine if they would like to come back for their own special graduation ceremony in May. That ceremony would take place on Friday the day before the Spring 2021 ceremonies.

At this time it is uncertain of the faculty's role in the graduation ceremonies.

- i. December Commencement – Dec. 12, 10am live/virtual. We are looking into ways to enhance this. The Deans are going to the television studio and recording their parts and anticipate being able to call the name of each student.
- j. Dr. Bowen wanted Dr. Johnson to let us know that today the governor stated that higher ed funding for Budget year 20-21 will be fully restored. This is Category D. Tech didn't expect to get D at all. This equates to about \$1.6M, and will be used to replenish the reserves.
- k. HLC: The syllabi repository is good. When reviewers asked for certain syllabi, Dr. Johnson was able to go straight to the repository and access the syllabi in 30 minutes. The reviewers were impressed that this happened so quickly.
- l. Hull Hall – the new student union. The union is scheduled to be opened to students soon. The capacity will be limited similarly as BazTech is now. The final product is well done.
- m. Health and Wellness received tests for the rapid testing machine. There are now 700 tests for people who are symptomatic.
- n. The Deans are doing a good job of advocating for faculty in regards to the current Bucket restructuring exercise.

#### **B. Intellectual Property Policy Proposal (Dr. Newt Hilliard)**

**Dr. Newt Hilliard** indicated that Dr. David Eschelman and other artists were concerned about the original policy and sent feedback to university council. The new policy ensures that the university will not claim ownership unless significant resources are used. Motion to pass from Dr. Shellie Hannah and second from Dr. Sean Reed. Motion Carries.

#### **C. Faculty/Board of Trustees Communication (Dr. Jon Clements)**

**Dr. Bowen** would like for Faculty Senate to submit a document to the Board of Trustees at their December board meeting. The document should highlight senate's achievements and future goals. David Eshelman, Sean Reed and Sean Huss indicated that they would be willing to serve on the committee that drafts the letter. Dr. Clements indicated that we should attempt to have the letter completed by our next meeting, and that we should keep the letter brief.

#### **D. Certificate of completion for student evals (Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon)**

**Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon** has communicated with Wyatt Watson and confirmed that the current Evaluation Kit sends an e-mail to students

thanking them for completing the evaluation when they finish. This question was posed by faculty looking for a way to offer students extra credit for completing the survey and raising the class response rate to semester end surveys. Wyatt Watson indicated that asking a student to send this e-mail as proof of completion might pose a problem with anonymity, especially in small classes.

**E. Handbook revisions (Dr. Jeremy Schwehm/Dr. Sean Huss)**

The first phase of Handbook changes was presented for adoption. Dr. David Eshelman moved that we pass the motion as a whole. Dr. Sean Huss seconded. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm indicated that most of the revisions were procedural, and that they included small changes in wording for clarity. In some cases, things were moved around a bit for those same reasons. The changes were discussed and agreed upon at the subcommittee level. Dr. Barbara Johnson indicated that she has reviewed them all and did not have any changes. Motion Carried.

**F. Tuition Waiver Policy (Dr. David Eshelman)**

Dr. David Eshelman reminded everyone that elements of the policy seems to be a bit Draconian. If you switch to a 'w', for example, you have to pay back the money for the class. This is part of the ongoing restructuring discussion, and will remain in Old Business for the time-being.

**G. Concerns related to the primacy of academics / Provost (Dr. David Eshelman)**

Dr. David Eshelman has made a little progress with the Shared Governance ad hoc Committee. They have a list of things that they would like to see in the future. There are some things that will not happen in the near future. One of them is the elevation of the VPAA to the title of Provost. The members believe that the committee should keep these ideas, along with the general primacy of academics, on the backburner – as sort of a strategic plan for this group. In this way, they hope to keep the ideas we hold as important, in the case that there might be a time to realize them in the future.

**IV. Open Forum**

Dr. Sean Huss asked a question to Dr. Johnson. We received a request for information about Critical Race Theory and 1619 Project. What is the purpose of this? Isn't this far afield from pending legislation that is really supposed to address K-12? Dr. Johnson has collected the information as requested. She has asked our governmental liaison when they need this. Dr. Huss indicated that this is big concern for a lot of people and Dr. Johnson acknowledged this.

**David Eshelman** – Dr. Eshelman reminded us that the new Faculty Choice award that was recently approved, needs nominees to be selected in the fall. He suggested that we ask senators to speak with their constituents and determine possible nominees to be determined at the Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> senate meeting. These are awards for administrators that show support for the primacy of academics.

**Dr. Jeremy Schwehm** – He wants to continue to advocate for more ARGOS access for faculty. Running numbers to determine retention, graduation rates, etc. Handbook changes: The majority of Tech’s peer institutions have standing committees for this. ATU has been doing this on an ad hoc basis. Senate may want to determine the need for a standing committee to determine ARGOS access.

**Dr. Randy Kelley** asked about acceptance letters from admissions. Is there a problem with this?

**Dr. Jeremy Schwehm** inquired about the status of the sale of Lakepoint. What is happening with the money generated from that sale? Dr. Johnson doesn’t know at this point.

Professional Development in January will be virtual.

**Dr. Jon Clements** asked whether or not there is any discussion of changing our Covid phase status? **Dr. Jamie Stacy** indicated that there isn’t any talk of that at this point.

Responding to a chat question, **Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon** indicated that there is mental health/counseling provided within our insurance. We have been working with St. Mary’s to help people with Covid related PTSD. There are counselors in town who currently have reduced fees for Tech people with Covid related mental issues. There is currently a list being put together. **Dr. Alejandra Carballo** indicated that there is still CARES Act money available as well.

## V. Announcements and Information Items

Next meeting is Nov. 30 – 1pm (Reading Day)

## VI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Dr. Shellie Hannah, seconded by Dr. Jamie Stacy seconded. Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jon Clements, D.M. President



Sean Reed, D.M.A. Secretary