

Minutes of
THE FACULTY SENATE
OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

This meeting of the 2019-20 Faculty Senate was held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29, 2020 on WebEx. The following members were present:

Dr. Alejandra Carballo	Dr. Randy Kelley
Dr. Jon Clements	Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon
Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Joshua Lockyer
Dr. Pam Dixon	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Dr. David Eshelman	Dr. Asim Shrestha
Ms. Holly Ruth Gale	Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. Shellie Hanna	Dr. Joe Stoeckel
Dr. Newt Hilliard	Dr. Brendan Toner
Dr. Efosa Idemudia	Dr. Jack Tucci
Dr. Scott Jordan	Dr. Alaric Williams

Guests: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Dr. Jeff Robertson, Dr. Sean Reed, Dr. Sean Huss, Dr. Chris Kellner, Ms. Pat Chronister, Ms. Tammy Weaver, Ms. Kayla Chambliss

I. CALL TO ORDER Dr. Eshelman called the meeting to order.

A. Approval of the Minutes Dr. Eshelman requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the April 14, 2020 meeting.

Motion by Dr. Laffoon, seconded by Dr. Carballo to approve the April 14 minutes. Motion carried.

II. NEW BUSINESS: Dr. Eshelman requested changes to the agenda to allow guests to speak first.

Motion by Dr. Hanna, seconded by Dr. Stacy to adjust the agenda. Motion carried.

A. Taskforce B Dr. Jeff Robertson, Dean of the College of Natural and Health Sciences, reported on the activities of the Global Efficiencies and Additions working group. The charge of the group is to look at efficiency in budget reduction for the 2020-2021 budget and to find additional revenue streams. The working group is specifically looking at quick action; long term strategies are the being considered by the Institutional Efficiencies Committee. Dr. Robertson stated the budget shortfall is a moving target of anywhere between \$8 - \$15 million dollars. Things the working group are reviewing include deferring expenditures, energy efficiency, early retirement, and voluntary furloughs. Dr. Robertson stressed that loss of benefits, salary, or positions is last on the list when looking at budget reductions. The working group plans to report their findings to the Executive Council shortly.

Dr. Tucci ask about what Arkansas Tech is doing with the CARES Act money. Dr. Robertson stated the University received approximately \$7.5 million from the CARES Act. Approximately \$3.5 million of that money goes directly to students. The rules are being reviewed for how the funds have to be allocated.

Dr. Robertson reiterated that Dr. Bowen's goal is to preserve positions, salary, and benefits.

B. Faculty/Staff
Tuition Waiver

Dr. Kellner discussed current issues with the tuition waiver policy, particularly the punitive aspects of the policy that do not allow for unexpected issues/hardships. As written, the policy includes a monetary penalty if a course is not completed successfully. Dr. Eshelman suggested we take the work of the ad hoc committee and turn it into a specific policy. Dr. Eshelman will work with Ms. Hinkle and Dr. Johnson to draft a policy.

C. COVID-19 Issues

Drs. Clements, Stacy, and Huss presented a three part statement on how changes to COVID-19 should factor into tenure clock decisions, faculty evaluation, and promotion and tenure decisions. Part I of the statement included language already existing in the Faculty Handbook that allows for extensions of the tenure clock. Part II included recommendations on how Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees (DPTC) might adjust criteria for Spring 2020 and stressed the need for general understating of the complex circumstances currently faced by faculty. Part III outlined future considerations for annual review and promotion and tenure decisions.

Motion by Dr. Davis, seconded by Dr. Carballo, to approve statement. Motion carried.

Dr. Eshelman suggested faculty include three-part statement in their portfolios.

Dr. Eshelman asked that Faculty Senate officially commend various individuals and departments who have work diligently to provide support to faculty as we moved to online delivery.

Motion, by Dr. Shrestha, seconded by Dr. Stacy to commend the Office of Information Systems, the Custodial Staff, Public Safety, eTech, the Library, and Dr. Aulgur. Motion carried.

D. Adjunct and
Instructor
Representation on
Senate

Dr. Eshelman called for a motion to approve the Faculty Senate constitution changes to include one member of the adjunct faculty as a voting member on Faculty Senate and to open up Faculty Senate eligibility for all full-time faculty.

Motion by Dr. Clements, seconded by Ms. Gale to approve.

Dr. Hanna asked about protected both adjunct faculty and instructor-track faculty who do not have the protection of tenure. Ms. Chambliss stated that those fears are present for adjunct faculty, but thinks it is important for adjunct faculty to have a voice on Senate. Dr. Eshelman said that peer institutions in the state have untenured faculty on senate. He advised to let individuals make their own choice in running for Senate.

Dr. Schwehm requested the addition of library titles in the revisions so that librarians are eligible to serve on Senate.

Ms. Chronister advised that any changes to the Faculty Senate constitution require a 2/3 vote of the full Senate and then be sent to the full faculty for a vote.

Motion, with the amendment to include librarian titles in the list of eligible faculty to serve on Senate, was voted on using a roll call vote. The final vote tally was 19 yea, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Motion by Dr. Schwehm, seconded by Dr. Carballo, to add the vote on Faculty Senate constitution changes to the standing committee elections. Motion carried.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

A. REPORT BY VICE PRESIDENT for ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Barbara Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, announced that the end of term update and Promotion and Tenure Workshop would be held on May 11 starting at 1:30pm.

Talk is ongoing about Fall 2020 scenarios. The current plan is to open in August. The focus will be on ways to maintain physical distancing. There will be a great need for flexibility going forward. There are three potential scenarios for the fall: a) open in August, b) open later in the Fall 2020 term, or c) Fall 2020 100% online. Faculty need to have the expectation of uncertainty. The University will need the voice of faculty in planning as we move forward in how to offer classes and maintain physical distancing.

Summer classes will be delivered online. There will be some exceptions for lab courses. Faculty who teach labs need to collaborate with the Director of Health Services to run the labs safely.

The University is reviewing ways to utilize CARES Part B funds. Some ideas include money to train faculty on offering effective online and blended-learning courses. The University wants to support faculty who desire to enhance their teaching practices using technology. The training would be voluntary. Staff will be offered training as well. CARES Part B funds might also go toward the purchase of Blackboard Ally, a system that ensures ADA compliance in online courses.

Williamson construction is moving forward. Insurance funds are being used for construction. Hull renovations will move forward as well. These funds have already been collected through student fees. Additional construction projects moving forward are the Witherspoon elevator, sewer repairs, and roofing repairs for some residence halls. All other projects are on hold.

There are 71 open positions. Some positions are being put on hold. Dr. Johnson stressed the importance of moving quickly to fill necessary faculty positions. The Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Assistant Vice President of Student Success searches have been put on hold. Dr. Johnson will appoint faculty to these positions in an interim role.

Dr. Lockyer asked what qualified as an open position and how this impacts faculty lines that are projected to start in August. Dr. Johnson stated to move forward with faculty searches.

Dr. Lockyer asked if CARES money can be used to help students gain access to the technology needed to be successful online, including access to internet, tablets, laptops, etc. Dr. Johnson said students who receive money through the CARES Act should be able to use that money on technology. The Office of Information Systems is working on a plan regarding tablets and laptops, but student access to the internet would still be an issue if tablets/laptops are loaned to students.

Dr. Carballo asked about offering 8-week courses or block courses. Dr. Stacy mentioned that we already offer 8-week and alternate start/end date courses at the University. Dr. Johnson said there would be help for faculty who wanted to deliver their courses in different time formats.

B. Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee Handbook Edits Dr. Schwehm stated the need to continue discussions on the handbook changes. The changes to the schedule because of COVID-19 made it difficult to carry out the planned meetings with the Dean and Department Head Councils. Dr. Schwehm also suggested the committee grow to include Department Heads.

Motion by Dr. Schwehm, seconded by Dr. Davis to table changes until Fall 2020. Motion carried.

C. Standing Committee Elections Dr. Schwehm said the standing committee elections would end on May 4.

D. Travel Issues Tabled to Fall 2020.

E. Evaluation of Department Heads Dr. Tucci stated he only received feedback from one individual on performance requirements for department heads. Dr. Davis expressed concern for department head turnover while still supporting the idea of everyone being evaluated. Dr. Kelley asked about a lower performance number triggering a change. Dr. Hanna suggested we also need to review how any changes would cause issues with how contracts are administered.

Dr. Eshelman suggested an ad hoc committee be formed to work on this issue in Fall 2020. Dr. Hilliard volunteered to lead the committee. Dr. Tucci volunteered to be on the committee.

Academic Affairs/Senate looking into the issue further. Dr. Davis noted that an earlier start might cause issues with professional development.

IV. OPEN FORUM Dr. Sean Reed, Chair of the Professional Development Grant Committee, submitted draft changes to the Professional Development Grant guidelines. He stated the changes are primarily for clarity and transparency. The changes will be put on the Senate agenda in Fall 2020.

Dr. Laffoon stated the Evaluation Toolkit has the capability of providing students with a certificate of completion. The option has to be approved by Academic Affairs and turned on for all evaluated courses.

Dr. Tucci expressed his gratitude and enjoyment in working with everyone on Senate over the past 7 years.

Dr. Johnson thanked everyone for an enjoyable first year. She praised the collaboration of the Deans and Academic Affairs in pooling resources to fund necessary items.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION ITEMS No announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT Motion by Dr. Hanna, seconded by Dr. Tucci to adjourn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



David Eshelman, Ph.D., President



Jeremy Schwehm, Ph.D., Secretary