

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, September 8, 2020 on WebEx. The following members were present:

Dr. Alejandra Carballo	Dr. Scott Jordan
Dr. Jon Clements	Dr. Randy Kelley
Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Sean Reed
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, Mr. Bobby Sewell, Ms. Pat Chronister, Dr. Erin Clair

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

- A. Minutes Dr. Clements requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the August August 18, 2020 meeting.

Motion by V. Carole Smith, seconded by Dr. Jamie Stacy to approve the August 18, 2020 minutes. Motion carried.

- B. Dr. Clements welcomed Mr. Steven Junker as a new voting member of the senate, representing the Adjunct Faculty

II. New Business

A. Curricular Items

The following Curriculum proposals were considered:
<https://www.atu.edu/registrar/2021CatalogCurriculumProposals.php>

Motion by David Eschelman to accept them together, seconded by Jamie Stacy. Motion carried.

B. General Education Committee Memo

The Senate received a memo and update from the General Education committee. This update outlined the committee's rewording of the fifth general education goal to make it better match the recommendation from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. Dr. Erin Clair explained that a program review led to a recommendation that we change the catalogue to better reflect Bloom's taxonomy. GEC met and approved changes. The goals haven't changed – just the wording.

C. Certificate of completion for student evaluations (Laffoon)

Dr. Ellis Laffoon indicated this came about at the end of last semester by a nursing faculty member. A faculty member discovered that there is a certificate of completion that could be used by faculty members in order to ensure completion. Options could include withholding final grades. Dr. Laffoon volunteered to follow up on this issue to find more information.

D. Professional Development Grant policy revisions (Reed/Schwem)

This agenda item is being moved to a future meeting by request of Dr. Treadway, Chair.

E. Popular Vote for Chair of Senate (Eshelman)

David Eshelman said that the shared government committee last year came back with feedback from the faculty at large, indicating that they might feel more enfranchised if the faculty senate chair was elected by a popular vote of the faculty.

Newt Hilliard moved to approve as presented by Dr. Eshelman, Alejandra Carballo Seconded.

Discussion: Jamie Stacy sought to clarify that we were not including a two-year term for the senate chair, and that was confirmed. Jon Clements discussed reasons that a two-year senate term would be difficult. A vice-chair would also, presumably, be a two year commitment, leading to four years. David Eschelman indicated that no other universities in the area have two-year senate chairs. Jamie Stacy inquired about construction of a ballot. If a senate member wants to let the senate know that he/she does not want to be a candidate, that could happen before the ballot is created. Jamie Stacy also asked what would happen if everyone opted out.

Jon Clements called for a vote. The motion was carried.

David Eshelman indicated that a special election is needed because it is a change to the constitution in order to go forward before the spring general election.

David Eschelman makes the motion to hold a special election. Sean Huss Seconded the motion.

Jeremy Schwehm volunteered to work on this and Jamie Stacy volunteered to help (create a Blackboard shell, etc.).

A vote was called. The motion carried.

Jamie Stacy asked who would be allowed to vote. Pat Chronister indicated that full-time faculty and instructors would be allowed to vote. She requested that the timing is also a critical issue as the BOT needs to see it asap.

F. Faculty/Board of Trustees Communication Opportunities

David Eshelman indicated that there was a groundswell of support from the faculty to have an open line of communication with the Board of Trustees. David Eshelman believes that we have the right to contact the BOT in an open and transparent communication, and that we would need to rely on administration to help open these lines of communication. Jon Clements would craft the letter and run it by the Senate Advisory Board. He underscored that this would be an invitation for BOT members to attend meetings.

Jeremy Schwehm so moved. Dr. Huss seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

G. Faculty Senate Choice Award (Eshelmann)

David Eshelman submitted a proposal. He indicated that he would like to have academics be a priority at ATU. This proposal creates an opportunity to reward administrators who we believe are supporting academics.

Newt Hilliard moved to approve. Sean Huss seconded.

Sean Huss asked what the award would be. David Eshelman indicated that there would be a plaque.

Vote called. Motion carried.

II. Old Business

A. VPAA update

1. Dr. Barbara Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, reminded the senate that the faculty handbook acknowledgement page is due and asked the senate to pass that information on, along with a reminder that the Syllabus Repository is not complete yet as well.
2. Dr. Johnson stated that there is a committee developing to help us to identify basic parameters to identify students who need resources in the case that we go fully virtual.
3. Dr. Johnson says thank you for those who took the time to read the HLC draft. We will have a mock interview with faculty in October to make sure we are prepared.
4. Dr. Johnson stated that the Shared Governance Committee will meet on October 5.
5. Dr. Johnson indicated that Academic Affairs will be running a list of faculty who have not been active in Blackboard since August 28 and contacting faculty who are on the list to find out how they are communicating with students. They will *not* be looking specifically at what faculty are doing in Blackboard.
6. The Strategic Plan – Dr. Bowen has asked Dr. Johnson to ask the senate to consider a swing year, or an extension of one year in consideration of the pandemic. Dr. Jon Clements indicated that working on the strategic plan takes an amazing amount of time, as does the normal teaching we are doing during the pandemic. He indicated support for a delay, as did several senators.
7. Dr. Johnson asked how we can better support faculty and staff if the university has to shift to remote learning again. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm indicated that information is helpful. He requested a steady flow and consistency of information. Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon indicated time would be helpful. V. Carole Smith indicated that more access to an instructional design person to help develop classes. Dr. Shellie Hanna indicated class size and room capacity needs to be considered. Several Senators agreed that class size is an issue. Dr. Sean Huss indicated we could use support with degree audits and other bureaucratic issues. Dr. Johnson asked what type of paperwork did not relate to teaching. Jamie Stacy emphasized advising duties. Dr. Shellie Hanna mentioned forms from different offices on campus. Dr. Newt Hilliard mentioned bandwidth.
8. Dr. Johnson indicated that members of the Board of Trustees have requested tours and/or meetings while on campus for meetings. More information will be forthcoming.
9. Dr. Johnson indicated that, in conjunction with HLC, one of the things we haven't done well is linking assessment of student learning with the budget. Nor have we done that with program review or specialized accreditation.

10. Dr. Johnson indicated that Dr. Jeff Robertson worked with the faculty on program performance metrics. They are also using an outside firm to analyze this. Dr. Huss requested copies of the items/measures and Dr. Johnson indicated that she would have that sent to Dr. Sean Reed. Dr. Johnson indicated that this would help in making decisions where new positions will receive priority. Dr. Johnson calls this an 'academic master plan', and given that money will be short, these discussions will need to be made with the faculty.

B. Handbook revisions (Schwehm/Huss)

Dr. Jeremy Schwehm indicated that the group will meet again in the next week or two and will have something for the October senate meeting.

C. Tuition Waiver Policy (Eshelman)

Dr. David Eshelman indicated that the policy is quite punitive right now. If someone fails a class, they have to pay back the tuition – other solutions may be possible.

D. Concerns related to the primacy of academics / Provost (Eshelman)

The senate acted on this last year. Last year there was a strong movement to convert the VPAA position into a Provost position, elevating this position above the other Vice Presidents. President Bowen declined. The senate asked Dr. Bowen to consider other ideas regarding this issue, then Covid-19 delayed this. Dr. Jon Clements will meet with Dr. Bowen and will bring this up. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm indicated that we should indicate what we think *does* have primacy at the institution if we think that academics does not. He indicated that we should know where money is being spent elsewhere in order to be able to make that case.

E. Evaluation of deans and department heads (Hilliard)

Dr. Newt Hilliard indicated that this came up at the end of last year. He would like to propose that the senate form a working group with some faculty who have and have not held administrative positions. He indicated that the senate should ask Dr. Johnson to appoint a dean and department head, and that have a Q&A session with this group and faculty at a professional development session. He proposes that we hold off on this until after the HLC visit. Dr. Hilliard will work to finalize a working group. Dr. Sean Huss volunteered to help.

III. Open Forum

Dr. Jamie Stacy indicated last semester the fact that our instructors have representation issues. She started a working group with Sean Huss. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm volunteered to help. Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon also volunteered.

Dr. Jamie Stacy – Covid task force for academics: the task force requests that we consider what changes we need to make to our Covid-19 response? She has been asked to share that we are not hiding Covid cases at the university.

Dr. Michael Davis – can grading deadlines be extended for non-seniors? Dr. Johnson indicated that she still has this issue in mind.

Dr. Johnson: The Honors program – we will be looking at having a more inclusive honors program. We will be getting a group together to represent different aspects of the institution. Dr. Jamie Stacy indicated that the group would revamp this program.

IV. Announcements and Informational Items

Dr. Jamie Stacy indicated the Green and Gold Cupboard is taking donations again. There is a dropbox outside of the pantry, but you can also coordinate a food drive in your area. Items like shampoo, conditioner, pasta sauces, hamburger-helper type meals, are items that are always in need.

V. Adjournment

Michael Davis – motion to adjourn. Huss seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jon Clements, D.M. President



Sean Reed, D.M.A. Secretary