

Minutes of  
THE FACULTY SENATE  
OF  
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The meeting of the 2019-20 Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 in Rothwell 456. The following members were present:

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

Absent: Dr. Jack Tucci; Dr. Asim Shrestha

Visitors: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Ms. Pat Chronister, Ms. Charity Smith, Mr. Jonathan Collins; Dr. David Blanks

**I. CALL TO ORDER** Dr. Eshelman called the meeting to order and requested a motion to approve the December meeting minutes.

A. Approval of the Minutes **Motion by Dr. Hilliard, seconded by Ms. Gale to approve the December minutes. Motion carried.**

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

A. CUPA Update Dr. Clements stated he was named Vice Chair of the CUPA advisory committee. The committee is waiting for the most current CUPA data, which should be available in late February to mid-March. Dr. Gunter is working with Wyatt Watson and others on identifying a relevant peer group. The current CUPA peer group is tied to a goal in the University's strategic plan. The use of the current peer group will continue for one more year to align with the timeline of the strategic plan. The intent is to expand the CUPA peer group moving forward.

Dr. Stoeckel asked what types of comparisons are guiding the selection of new peer institutions for CUPA. Dr. Clements noted that the intent is to expand the peer group both regionally and nationally. The new group would include institutions similar to Tech and aspirational institutions. Dr. Stoeckel asked why we are not using all MA granting institutions. He suggested that using all public MA granting institutions in our peer group would allow small programs to be represented. Dr. Eshelman requested Dr. Stoeckel provide additional information to the CUPA advisory committee on selecting a new peer group.

B. Energy Policy Mr. Jonathan Collins, Energy Manager for Arkansas Tech University, was available to answer questions about the University energy policy. Dr. Lockyer asked about faculty who have personal refrigerators. Mr. Collins said the policy on personal refrigerators is not necessarily a blanket policy, but faculty should make refrigerators communal. Personal refrigerators should be documented. The goal is to curtail the use of individual refrigerators.

Dr. Laffoon stated the biggest concerns voiced to here were related to temperature. Space heaters are needed when thermostats are not working properly. Mr. Collins stated space heaters are not allowed because of the risk of fire. Measures are in place for individuals to apply for oil based heaters. These heaters are fine to use, when permitted, because they are self-contained and do not have an open heating element. Mr. Collins stressed it is important to notify facilities when there are issues with thermostats.

Drs. Clements and Hilliard asked Mr. Collins to verify that temperatures would remain constant in areas/buildings that required a consistent temperature. Mr. Collins stated changes have not been made to the existing policies and rooms that required a consistent temperature would remain the same. Mr. Collins also stated the HVAC units must remain on when a building is occupied to move CO2.

Mr. Collins said LED lighting and motion-controlled lighting have been added to new buildings. He asked for work order requests for issues with lighting to go through Facilities Management. Mr. Collins stated to contact him via email ([jcollins3@atu.edu](mailto:jcollins3@atu.edu)) with questions.

#### C. General Education Committee

Dr. David Blanks, chair of the General Education Committee, informed Senate that the General Education Committee voted to remove Wellness Concepts from the General Education goals and voted to add Civic Engagement. Dr. Hanna asked why wellness concepts was being removed. Dr. Schwehm stated that wellness courses are no longer required as part of the general education curriculum and therefore cannot be assessed as part of general education. Dr. Stacy asked if “civic engagement” required an action verb similar to the other General Education goals. Dr. Schwehm suggested a motion to remove wellness concepts and add civic engagement and to empower the General Education committee to reword the civic engagement goal.

Motion, by Dr. Hilliard, seconded by Dr. Hanna, to remove wellness concepts from the general education goals, add civic engagement to the general education goals, and to empower the General Education Committee to select the appropriate wording for civic engagement. Motion carried.

#### D. Student Evaluation Response Study

Dr. Eshelman pointed the Senate’s attention to the pilot study results provided by Mr. Wyatt Watson, Director of Institutional Research, on end-of-course evaluation response rates. Mr. Watson found that response rates went up if faculty allotted time in class for students to complete the online evaluation. Dr. Eshelman stated he could invite Mr. Watson to a future Senate meeting if necessary.

Dr. Lockyer pointed out it is difficult to use technology in class because not all students have access to the needed devices. Dr. Clements asked how much it would cost to go back to paper and it was stated the costs are significant. Dr. Dixon mentioned that other institutions withhold grades until end-of-course evaluations are completed and asked if Tech might consider doing the same.

Drs. Schwehm and Kelley told Senate they use extra credit as a means to encourage students to complete the evaluation. In their classes, students provide a screen-shot of the completion page to earn extra credit. Dr. Davis uses the overall response rate for the class to award extra credit. If the class gets to a certain level of responses, he awards extra credit. Response rates can be accessed through EvaluationKit.

E. Online Quality Working Group

Dr. Eshelman informed Senate that a new committee had been formed to review online course quality. The intent is to ensure we do not offer online courses that can be viewed as correspondence courses. This is important to meet HLC guidelines, as well as accreditation/membership in state authorization reciprocity agreements. Dr. Eshelman attended the first meeting as a representative of Faculty Senate, but stated the Senate should vote on an official representative.

Motion by Dr. Hanna, seconded by Dr. Laffoon, to appoint Dr. Eshelman as the Senate representative on the committee. Motion carried.

F. Students Accounts Appeals Committee/Faculty-Staff Tuition Waiver Policy

There are issues with the current waiver policy for faculty/staff. The current policy requires some type of appeals process because faculty and staff do not get a waiver for F grades or audit. Dr. Eshelman asked Dr. Chris Kellner to be part of an ad hoc committee to review the policy and present recommended changes to the Senate. Dr. Eshelman asked for volunteers to work with Dr. Kellner. Dr. Stoeckel volunteer.

Motion by Dr. Hilliard, seconded by Ms. Gale, to nominate Drs. Kellner and Stoeckel to work on the ad hoc committee. Motion carried.

G. Student Affairs Collecting Faculty Complaints Policy

Dr. Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, stated the complaint policy is a federal requirement, but acknowledged concerns with how the policy was announced. The announcement of the policy only listed issues with faculty/academic affairs and did not list issues in other areas. The plan going forward is to either list all areas where complaints might be submitted or not list any specific areas. Dr. Johnson said Student Affairs would act as the repository for complaints, but each complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate area. Complaints specific to faculty would go to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Expect revisions to the policy/announcement in April.

H. Provost Position

Dr. Laffoon informed Faculty Senate that all full-time faculty in the Nursing department voted to send a recommendation to Faculty Senate to elevate the Vice President for Academic Affairs position to a Provost. Dr. Stacy asked if the position should be a Provost or a hybrid VPAA/Provost. Dr. Eshelman suggested Senate make a request to Dr. Bowen, University President, and invite her to report back to Senate by the March meeting. It was acknowledged that the transition to a Provost or Senior VP would be a process and would require some work to make it happen.

Dr. Lockyer stated the title change would represent aspirations to elevate academics at the University. Dr. Schwehm noted that Senate had talked about this before and previous budgets have the position of Provost listed. He said to look at the 2017-2018 budget on page 57. The position is listed as Executive Vice President and Provost. Dr. Schwehm asked if the University has an official policy for chain of command when the President is not on campus. Dr. Johnson stated Dr. Robin Bowen designates who takes on specific responsibilities.

Motion by Dr. Laffoon, seconded by Ms. Gale, to request to the President that the Vice President for Academic position transition to Provost, and to invite the President to the report back to Senate at the March meeting. Motion carried.

### III. OLD BUSINESS:

#### A. REPORT BY VICE PRESIDENT for ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Barbara Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, reported the HLC forums would start on Friday, February 14 and be held each Friday for the next five to six weeks. She asked for faculty to attend and give feedback, particularly for arguments 3 and 4.

HLC requires yearly evaluation of all faculty. At present, the University does not have a set process to evaluate adjuncts. Dr. Johnson asked the Deans and Department Heads to show how adjuncts are being evaluated. It was recommended that the Adjunct Support Committee draft an evaluation policy to present to Senate.

Mr. Mike Bogue was hired as the new director of the Accelerated Plan for Educational Excellence (APEX) Center. College of Business dean candidates will be on campus in the coming weeks. Some candidates have withdrawn from the process because of other jobs or because of salary. Dr. Johnson said she is beginning the process to hire the vacant Associate and Assistant Vice President positions in Academic Affairs. The plan is to have positions advertised by the end of February and to have new hires in place by July 1, 2020.

Promotion and tenure workshops are being planned for the Spring 2020 term. May 7 is Professional Development day.

The Shared Governance Committee is holding open forums in late February and early March. Each session will be led by a member of the Shared Governance Committee.

Dr. Johnson stressed the importance of faculty being familiar with the University mission.

#### B. Faculty Satisfaction Survey

Dr. Schwehm asked for any additional feedback on the Faculty Satisfaction Survey prior to it being released to the faculty. Dr. Lockyer asked if an “I don’t know” option could be added to some of the questions. Dr. Hanna asked for clarification in the instructions on if faculty should be answering the questions based on just last year or based on their overall experiences at Arkansas Tech. Dr. Schwehm said the ad hoc committee would review the questions and instructions to provide additional clarification before releasing the survey.

Dr. Schwehm asked Ms. Chronister, Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, if the survey would be distributed this year the same way it was last year. Ms. Chronister said to send the invitation wording and a link to the survey to her for distribution to the faculty. Dr. Schwehm requested the survey be distributed to all full- and part-time faculty at the Russellville and Ozark Campus. Ms. Chronister stated she would send the survey link to Ms. Sheila Jacobs, Chief Academic Office of the Ozark campus, for distribution to Ozark faculty.

#### C. Faculty Excellence Awards (untenured)

Dr. Schwehm said the link to the survey would be send out on Tuesday, February 18, 2020.

Dr. Lockyer stated there were concerns with funding additional faculty awards, specifically for offering the awards on a yearly basis. He stated alternate funding methods were discussed, including the identification of a donor who would fund the awards. Dr. Johnson stated salary savings could be used to fund the awards for this year, but funding could not be guaranteed going forward. Several Senators did not think it would be a good idea to offer the award only once.

Dr. Johnson asked about opening up the current awards to everyone. Drs. Clements and Schwehm said the idea was discussed previously and did not have the support of the Senate.

Several Senators noted that there are relatively few compensation increases after the ranks of Associate and Full professor. The awards serve the function of rewarding faculty after tenure is achieved. The award would not service to retain high performing, tenured faculty if it were open to everyone.

Dr. Johnson stated staff would also like to establish awards and asked if additional awards should be created for faculty without considering staff.

D. Departmental  
Promotion and Tenure  
Committee Revisions

Dr. Schwehm reported the ad hoc committee working on edits to the handbook would send out the suggested revisions to Faculty Senate with the March agenda, if not before.

E. End of Semester  
Schedule/Commence  
ment

Dr. Johnson said if final grades are not submitted prior to commencement, it would cost the University \$8,000.00 to mail diplomas to students. Dr. Davis asked why we could not submit grades early for graduating seniors, but have a different deadline for other students. This is not being done because Banner currently calculates GPA. If there were a different deadline, GPA would have to be calculated by hand for a significant amount of students. The Registrar's office does not have enough staff to calculate GPAs by hand. Dr. Davis noted that Summer grade deadlines are different for graduating seniors. It was also noted that other universities in the state have separate deadlines, so there are potential solutions to issues with final grades.

F. Early warning  
English Skills

No update.

IV. OPEN FORUM

Dr. Eshelman read an anonymous comment submitted through the Faculty Senate website. Someone asked why the University is paying Biomedical Research Academy in New York. This is a necessary expenditure for the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The Institutional Efficiencies Committee was formed to take proactive measures so the University runs efficiently. Faculty Senate has representation on the committee.

Dr. Eshelman reported Ms. Hinkle, Vice President of Administration and Finance, noted several reasons why Arkansas Tech is in a better financial position than other universities in the state. Some of these include not allowing a balance of over \$500.00 and a vigorous collection policy.

There are four Shared Governance Committee led forums for faculty. The forums will cover guiding principles and action items.

Ms. Chronister requested volunteers to handle standing committee elections. Drs. Stacy and Schwehm volunteered.

The University has an official mold policy. The policy was distributed to Faculty Senators via email.

Arkansas Tech will be hosting a luncheon for Faculty Senate Chairs/Presidents from various universities in Arkansas.

Dr. Lockyer voiced concern that the general student complaint policy would lead to additional distrust. He stated some might see this policy as a foot in the door to something else. He requested Senate be provided with the federal regulation that requires the policy.

Dr. Hilliard said he received an anonymous letter asking about the Executive Council. He posted a response in the faculty break room, but the response was removed.

Dr. Stoeckel asked what portion of the University budget is spent on academics and how we compare to other institutions. Dr. Johnson stated that less than 50% of the University budget is allocated to instruction, and that the current allocation is just over 30%. HLC may find that percentage of the budget allocation to be problematic. Some Senators expressed concern that academics as a top priority is not being reflected by the budget. Dr. Schwehm asked if there was easily accessible data to review hiring practices over past three years, including unfilled faculty lines, and reclassification/reorganization of current positions along with pay increases. He gave the example of an open faculty line in his department for a degree program with almost 100 students going unfilled, but positions being filled in other divisions for similar salaries.

Dr. Davis notified Senate that employees with an HSA were being charged a fee to have their accounts moved to the new HSA provider. He requested Human Resources send out an announcement to make sure all employees with an HSA are aware. Ms. Chronister said Ms. Hinkle is working with Data Path on this issue to possibly refund the money.

Dr. Stacy mentioned a complaint letter that was sent to the travel office to which the travel office responded. Dr. Williams said the Department Head's Council invited representatives from the travel office to speak. A working group was being formed to work with the travel office to address concerns. Dr. Stacy suggested Senate should be made aware of issues raised in other committees that are related to faculty.

Dr. Jordan asked if faculty could receive email notification of late registrants in classes. Faculty are currently emailed when someone drops the course, so we should have the ability to receive an email when someone registers late.

No announcements.

V.  
ANNOUNCEMENTS  
AND  
INFORMATION  
ITEMS

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Dr. Laffoon, seconded by Dr. Schwehm to adjourn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



David Eshelman, Ph.D., President



Jeremy Schwehm, Ph.D., Secretary