

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, March 10, 2020 in Rothwell 456. 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
	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

Absent: Ms. Holly Ruth Gale

Visitors: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Ms. Pat Chronister, Dr. Sean Huss, 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 February meeting minutes. Dr. Stacy pointed out the header on one of the pages of the minutes listed an October date.

Motion by Dr. Tucci, seconded by Dr. Hilliard to approve the February minutes with the requested edit of the header. Motion carried.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Standing Committee Elections Dr. Schwehm announced that standing committee elections would be held in Blackboard from April 6 – 17, 2020. Drs. Schwehm and Stacy are assisting with administration of the election in Blackboard.

B. Travel Issues Dr. Eshelman invited comments on the list of issues collected by the Department Head's Council in relation to the travel office and asked how Senate might help in the matter. Dr. Williams asked if Senate could work with the Department Head's Council to help address continuing concerns.

Motion by Dr. Carballo, seconded by Dr. Stacy, to form an ad hoc committee to work with the Department Head's council on travel issues. Motion carried. Drs. Carballo, Lockyer and Hilliard agreed to be on the committee.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

A. REPORT BY VICE PRESIDENT for ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Barbara Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, handed out the adjunct evaluation policy for review. Ms. Chambliss noted that the Higher Learning Commission requires the evaluation of adjunct faculty. A group including Ms. Chambliss, Dr. Carl Brucker and Dr. Carter developed the policy. The policy was also reviewed and approved by the Committee on Adjunct Support.

Dr. Dixon suggested changes needed to be made to the evaluation form associated with the policy. It was noted that the form was an example and was not a required part of the evaluation. Dr. Hilliard pointed out that the policy has a reference to the evaluation form.

Motion by Dr. Hilliard, seconded by Dr. Carballo, to approve the adjunct evaluation policy with the reference to the evaluation form removed. Motion carried.

Dr. Johnson said Academic Affairs has received one-time surplus funds and is planning to use those funds on a summer bridge program. She is working with a group of faculty and staff to plan the program and identify specific student populations the program will target. Any faculty interested in helping with the program can let Dr. Johnson know. The program will happen in the second summer session of 2020.

A promotion and tenure workshop will be held on the afternoon of May 6. Professional Development Day will be held on May 7. In addition to professional development, the day will also include the President's address and recognition of tenure and/or promotion recipients, emeritus faculty, years of service, and retirements. A reception for recipients will be held starting at 1:15pm.

Preparations for COVID-19 are underway. These include identifying where students are globally in study abroad programs within the states completing internships or exchanges. Several upcoming trips to at-risk areas have been cancelled. Additionally, all out-of-state travel for University-related business has been restricted. Dr. Johnson asked that all faculty, staff, and students use their best judgement when travelling, especially students over spring break.

Dr. Johnson asked the deans to assess capability of moving all instruction online. The University plans to offer training to faculty in Blackboard, WebEx, and use of VPN. All faculty are encouraged to download WebEx and become familiar with how to use VPN.

The University also plans to have areas available where individuals can access the internet. This is important for students and faculty who do not have internet access at home. Drs. Hilliard and Lockyer stated approximately 20% of students do not have internet access at home. Dr. Laffoon suggested sending information to students to help them make good choices in regard to travel, especially over spring break, and in general precautionary measures. Dr. Stacy said anyone interested in learning more about emergency preparedness activities/plans in the area can attend the local emergency management committee meeting on Monday, March 16 at 10am in the Doc Bryan Lecture Hall.

B. Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee Handbook Edits

Dr. Schwehm passed out a list of proposed edits to the handbook.

Motion by Dr. Tucci, seconded by Dr. Clements to approve changes. In discussion, Dr. Stacy expressed concern with the ability of the DPTC to provide recommendations. She also spoke about the DPTC role in formative and summative evaluation. Dr. Schwehm said the DPTC has a role in both formative and summative evaluation and the recommendation is

necessary to provide faculty with feedback for both annual evaluation and when making recommendations for promotion and/or tenure. Dr. Huss explained why it is important to have a committee of one's peers be part of the evaluation process along with the evaluation provided by department heads. A few Senators asked if it would be better to allow more time to review the suggested edits.

Motion by Dr. Davis, seconded by Dr. Hanna to table the vote on handbook edits until the April meeting to allow time for additional feedback from faculty.

C. End of Semester Schedule

Dr. Johnson plans to meet with the registrar about the end of semester schedule and report back to Senate.

D. Provost Request

Dr. Eshelman read aloud the response of Dr. Bowen, University President, to Senate's request for the Vice President for Academic Affairs position to transition to a Provost. Her response was as follows:

Dear Dr. Eshelman,

I will be at a retreat all day March 10. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the Faculty Senate meeting in person. Feel free to share the following message with Senate members.

Please know that I take this request very seriously. To me, the title "Provost" implies that the person in that role is second in command. As the article below from the Chronicle of Higher Education indicates, the role of the Provost is to make sure that administrative and support operations runs as they need to on a daily basis. As such, not only academic issues, but everything else can also land on the plate of the second in command.

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Vice-President-vs-Provost/46483>

I believed, to burden Dr. Johnson with the oversight of the entire university at this time, even intermittently, would be unfair. Given where we are as a campus, I think it is most important for Dr. Johnson to focus on the academic core. Please know that changing the title in the future is a distinct possibility. As I stated before, such a move would require a shift in structure and takes time to establish.

However, for now, I believe it most beneficial for Dr. Johnson, in collaboration with the university's academic community, to be given time to hire and onboard her entire staff, establish an academic master plan, help lead us through the Higher Learning Commission visit and, ultimately, to continue to solidify the importance of academics as the core of the institutional mission.

Thank you.

Robin E. Bowen

Dr. Clements reiterated that the request is not about the current Vice President of Academic Affairs, but about structural changes that are necessary at the institution. Dr. Tucci mentioned that this was not the first time Senate made this request and had it rejected and that academics should be the primary focus of the University. Dr. Stacy discussed how this

issue is reflected in the current budget distribution in which academics is underfunded in relation to other areas and Dr. Stoeckel asked what the plan is going forward to address issues with academics being under-supported.

Dr. Hanna mentioned a request to transition to a Senior Vice President might work as there is precedent at the University for a Senior Vice President position. Dr. Schwehm stated that he did not want to create a confrontational atmosphere with our request, but wanted to make sure we do not settle for a change in title without the structural changes needed at the University.

Dr. Eshelman suggested we continue Senate's communication with the President on this matter and penned the following letter:

Thank you, Dr. Bowen, for your response. Our proposal to elevate the position of VPAA to that of Provost was based on the belief of the Senate as representatives of the faculty---and as evidenced in the Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the Shared Governance Forums---that academics should be the focus of the university. We would like to see structural changes to ensure the primacy of academics at our institution---for example, changes to the budget or Executive Council. Please tell us what you can do to ensure that the Senate's concerns about the primacy of academics is addressed. We respectfully ask for a response by the April meeting.

Motion by Dr. Tucci, seconded by Dr. Stacy, to send a response to the President. Motion carried.

E. Student Evaluations of Faculty

Dr. Eshelman reported that changes to current end-of-course evaluation procedures would come at significant cost to the University in both dollars and the time and effort.

F. Early Warning English Skills

There is now an option available within the Academic Early Warning system to identify students who need assistance with English proficiency.

G. Faculty Satisfaction Survey

Motion by Dr. Hanna, seconded by Dr. Lockyer, to add the Faculty Satisfaction Survey to the agenda. Motion carried.

Dr. Schwehm stated the survey results would be posted online with the Senate minutes by end of day today. Dr. Dixon encouraged Senate to do something meaningful with the results and to use the data from the survey to develop/propose policies. It was decided that members of Senate would go back to constituents to discuss survey results and bring suggested changes to the Senate.

IV. OPEN FORUM

Dr. Hanna voiced concern with pay for Administrative I positions with the minimum wage increase set to take effect this summer. Dr. Clements said pay is set by the state and pay will go up for Administrative I positions when the minimum wage increase takes effect on July 1.

Dr. Eshelman asked Senators to consider the pros and cons of adding an adjunct faculty position on Senate. This issue will be discussed at the next Senate meeting.

The results of the Shared Governance Committee open forums will be posted in the near future.

Dr. Shrestha said the Technology Committee is continuing to review requests for technology applications. Currently, the committee is reviewing Blackboard Ally, which is used to make

online content more customizable and accessible. Additional technology under review are an email marketing software (EMMA) for MARCOMM and an interactive campus map.

Dr. Clements reported on the Campus Efficiencies Committee. He asked that Senators speak with constituents about ideas to increase efficiency. The committee wants input from everyone, including innovative practices that might already be happening across campus.

Dr. Schwehm asked Senate to consider how we might advocate for instructor-track faculty to have access to awards and PDG grants. He said he would like to work to identify additional funding for awards and PDG over simply opening up both to all faculty. He mentioned it might not be helpful to have more faculty competing for the same amount of resources and suggested working to increase resources or creating different funding opportunities for instructor-track faculty.

Dr. Tucci requested Senate review retirement incentive offers for faculty close to retirement. Dr. Clements said stepped retirement was work on in the strategic planning process, but did not make the final strategic plan.

V.
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND
INFORMATION
ITEMS

No announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT **Motion by Dr. Davis, seconded by Dr. Stacy to adjourn. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,



David Eshelman, Ph.D., President



Jeremy Schwehm, Ph.D., Secretary