

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

February 4, 2021
3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
Remote via Zoom

Senators Present (28).

Samuel Adu-Prah (COSET), Mario Aschauer (CAM), Natalie Baker (CJ), Maria Botero (CHSS), Siham Bouamer (CHSS), Timothy Brown (COE), Valencia Browning-Keen (COHS), Rhonda Callaway (CHSS), Brandy Doleshal (COSET), Jamie Durán (COE), Debbi Hatton (CAM), Damon Hay (COSET), Soo-Yeon Hwang (NGL), John Lane (CAM), Kevin Lord (COM), Lee Miller (CHSS), Geraldine Monjardez (CJ), Carolyn Moore (CAM), Jan Taylor Morris (COBA), Benjamin Park (CHSS), Dwayne Pavelock (COSET), Mary Petrón (COE), Debbie Price (COE), Kevin Randall (COHS), Stephen Rapp (CHSS), Karen Sherrill (COBA), Aneika Simmons (COBA), Kyle Stutts (COSET).

Senators Not Present (2).

Patrick Buzzini (CJ), Susan Skidmore (COE).

Called to Order.

3:30 P.M., Remote via Zoom, by Chair Lee Miller.

Approval of Minutes.

The minutes of the January 21 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report.

The chair led a discussion on the Chair's Report which was distributed ahead of the meeting. Included in the report were responses from Dr. Kristy Vienne to questions that the Senate had received regarding the Bearkat Bundle. This information may be shared with faculty. Senators were asked that further comments be discussed at that moment or sent to senate leadership. A number of senators expressed continued concern and opposition to the program. A number of senators indicated that they would like to see a detailed study of the actual cost savings to students. It was noted that faculty are spending a lot of time dealing with issues related to the Bearkat Bundle.

Unfinished Business

There was a discussion based on feedback on the draft policy on tuition scholarships for dependents of faculty and staff. The savings estimated to be about \$2900 based on 15 credit hours (54% reduction). The policy appears to be viewed mostly positively by faculty. There were some negative views expressed by a limited number of faculty. Some complaints included that it looks fiscally irresponsible, that those without dependents would not benefit, and that it could lessen chances of merit pay, or increased payments to retirement funds. There were concerns on how the policy defined *spouse*. The policy appears to use IRS definitions of *dependents* and *spouse*. The scholarships will be available to students currently enrolled going forward. Policy is also being circulated around staff council. Send additional comments to senate leadership, including forwarded emails from faculty containing comments.

The draft proposal for modified faculty workload for significant life events was reviewed by HR. Senate leadership had a meeting with Dr. Anne Gaillard, interim vice provost, over HR's feedback on the proposal. Dr. Gaillard is working on language and clarification in response to HR's comments. Senate should see this soon. Staff Council working on their own such policy.

New Business.

The senate chair was notified of the existence of the Faculty Centennial Endowed Scholarship. Faculty Senate awards this. It is not awarded every year and it is renewable. The Senate needs a selection committee this year. This scholarships office will work with the committee to whittle the candidate pool down (currently 1600). It is a \$1000 scholarship per academic year. Let the senate chair know if you are interested in serving on this.

Senator Morris, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, reported that the Academic Affairs Committee has been working on a shared governance plan, and is crafting a letter to the administration to initiate this work with them, and will be sharing the letter with the Senate soon. The committee requests faculty to send them suggestions and examples of institutions with strong shared governance practices.

The senate chair reported that Senator Marianne Moore is now at Bowie State University and is no longer at SHSU.

The senate chair reminded the Senate that Feb 10 at 2:00 PM is the next *Conversations with Administrators*. This episode will feature Dr. Hernandez, VP of Finance and Operations, Dr. Frank Parker, VP of Student Affairs, and will be about student fees. It will be moderated by Senator Hatton. Senator Lane was thanked for moderating the first one.

Individual senator photos can be submitted to the chair-elect for posting on the Faculty Senate website.

The chair-elect, as a member of the provost search committee, gave an update on the provost search. Applications for the position are currently being accepted, and review of those applications will begin in March. Finalists will be invited to campus and there will be opportunities for faculty to interact with them. A final decision by the president is expected in May.

A senator expressed concern over the creation of the new position for a communications director in the Office of Academic Affairs, and that such a position was created without faculty input.

Senator Price, member of the search committee for a communications director for Academic Affairs, reported that the search is ongoing and that there have been at least 40 applicants. The pool appears to be made up of communications professionals.

A senator expressed ongoing concern about documentation for student absences related to COVID. The senate chair is still trying to get written communication from the interim provost on this matter.

A senator inquired about getting a written response to the senate's November 2020 recommendations that were sent to the administration. Senate leadership brought this up to the interim provost who reportedly gave a response which was noncommittal about whether such a written response would be forthcoming. This issue will be brought up at the senate leadership's

upcoming meeting with President White. A number of senators expressed dismay over the reluctance to respond in writing.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 P.M.