

**FACULTY SENATE MINUTES  
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

December 3, 2020  
3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.  
Remote via Zoom

**Senators Present (30).**

Samuel Adu-Prah (COSET), Mario Aschauer (CAM), Natalie Baker (CJ), Maria Botero (CHSS), Siham Bouamer (CHSS), Timothy Brown (COE), Patrick Buzzini (CJ), 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), Marianne Moore (COHS), Jan Taylor Morris (COBA), Dwayne Pavelock (COSET), Benjamin Park (CHSS), Mary Petró (COE), Debbie Price (COE), Kevin Randall (COHS), Stephen Rapp (CHSS), Karen Sherrill (COBA), Aneika Simmons (COBA), Kyle Stutts (COSET).

**Senators Not Present (1).**

Susan Skidmore (COE).

**Special Guests.**

President Alisa White, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Chris Maynard, Vice President of Student Services Drew Miller

**Called to Order.**

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

**Discussion with special guests President White, Dr. Maynard, and Dr. Miller**

A general discussion was held about topics such as the status of the university with respect to COVID-19, the upcoming Spring semester, vaccines, and the difficulties faced by students and faculty this past Fall semester. A summary of the major points of some of these discussions follows.

Dr. Drew Miller began by giving an overview of where the university stands with respect to COVID-19. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the Thanksgiving holidays on the current infection levels. There is concern about the current condition of the state and nation and there is an increase regionally, but the hospital zone in which Huntsville is located is looking OK in terms of hospital beds (8 or 9% of capacity locally). The university was testing 400-500 people a day at the kiosk before Thanksgiving. The positivity rate has dropped to 2.9% of total. There were only two known cases in residence halls before break.

Planning for the start of the spring semester includes doubling down on what has worked this fall, plus more fine-tuning of current procedures. A brief multimedia COVID educational training tool is being developed that returning students may be required to complete. A self-assessment app will also be rolled out to help students make the right decision about coming to campus if they have symptoms or have been potentially exposed. Residence halls are being targeted through a campaign to encourage residents to get tested on a cyclical basis. Extra quarantine housing will be on stand-by for first few weeks. There is no formal campus-wide protocol for enforcing mask-wearing. Faculty can say something to a student in the class or asked them to leave if not

complying. Residents can be (and have been) removed from dorm for sufficiently many mask violations.

The university may serve as a vaccination site, and may aid county in distributing vaccine depending on federal and state guidelines. The university will not pursue mandated testing or vaccines (legal concerns, compliance, resistance). Federal and state agencies will determine how the roll out will happen and that will determine if the university will distribute vaccine to all students, faculty, staff, and their families.

The Medical School testing site is only for med school students, not students at TWC. Those students can use the Curative site nearby in The Woodlands.

Following Dr. Drew Miller's commentary, the floor was given to Dr. White and Dr. Maynard following a prompt for their views on the recent Senate recommendations.

Dr. Maynard thinks that we are better situated now than where we were for the beginning of the Fall. There are more face-to-face classes but in larger venues, more online classes, and more hybrid options for faculty. The administration has processed and extended more accommodations for faculty. The data with respect to the pandemic will continue to be watched.

Registration numbers were strong, but there has been a lull, particularly when freshmen started to register. Freshmen have expressed hesitancy to register for spring, perhaps waiting to see how they did in the fall and what the spring may look like.

Upon being asked about asking students for documentation for absences due to having COVID-19, Dr. White reiterated that faculty cannot ask for such documentation and recommend that Senate follow up with Drew Miller for an explanation as to why, especially since faculty can ask for documentation for other things.

Dr. Maynard emphasized putting clear guidelines in the syllabus about absences.

Dr. White asked whether students are doing their work if they must stay home. This led to a lengthy discussion of the difficulties of having students out or in quarantine, and a general discussion and sharing of experiences this semester.

Dr. White asked that faculty work on keeping students engaged, and that if you have ideas about reaching out to students, please send them to her.

Dr. White mentioned that faculty may be experiencing many of the same difficulties as students. A senator indicated that training to identify stressed/shutting-down people would be helpful. Such training is known as PQR training. Daphne Johnson in COE has done this training for faculty and students.

Dr. White was asked about any updates she might like to give the Senate. She mentioned the following.

A contract has been signed with the firm Academic Search for the Provost search. Nominations are being solicited from faculty to serve on the search committee. There will be 5 or 6 faculty

members on the committee, as well as Dean representation. The committee will be led by co-chairs consisting of one cabinet member and one faculty member. The cabinet member will be Heather Thielmann. There will be other members of the committee from other units. There will be opportunities for faculty and the campus community to participate/engage with the finalists publicly and transparently.

The Provost's title has been changed to Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the job description has been modified to reflect what Dr. White thinks the job should be.

Dr. Maynard reminded faculty that Commencement will be at NRG Stadium. Faculty attendance is not required, but faculty are welcome to come. Interested faculty should RSVP with their college dean. Travel and parking expenses will be reimbursed.

**Chair's Report.**

The Chair led a discussion on the Chair's Report which was distributed ahead of the meeting.

**Unfinished Business.**

A draft of Leave policy will be emailed out and an electronic vote will be held – watch email.

**Approval of Minutes.**

The minutes of the November 19 meeting were approved.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 PM.