**Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso**

**Minutes of the Online Faculty Senate Meeting of February 9, 2021**

Meeting was held via Zoom: https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/89322071871?pwd=U0lpQWk5VytDdjRsU3ErbWU4UktwZz09

Meeting ID: 893 2207 1871

Passcode: 396519

0. The meeting began with a 20-minute “listening session” in which senators joined Zoom breakout rooms to discuss questions and concerns about COVID-19’s impact on the upcoming summer and fall semesters.

1. Call to Order

Senate President Núñez-Mchiri called the meeting to order at 3:20.

2. Determination of a quorum.

A quorum being present, the alternates were seated.

3. Consent Agenda

Fleck moved to approve the 2.9.2021 minutes. Conwell seconded.

4. Acceptance or Modification of the Agenda

Faculty Welfare was added to the agenda.

(5. Faculty Listening Session)

This preceded the formal opening of the meeting

6. Announcements

A. Provost Wiebe spoke on President Wilson’s behalf concerning the ongoing technology outage at UTEP. He described the timeline of the problem and efforts to address it. After an “event” on Friday March 5, all IT was turned off to prevent a spreading problem. UTEP’s IT people and trusted consultants worked tirelessly over the weekend and by Tuesday March 9, many essential systems were returned to service. Student email exists in the cloud and was never affected, but faculty and staff email remained unavailable as of Tuesday afternoon. Campus telephones, which are linked to the IT system, remained inoperable and therefore, for safety concerns (no ability to call 911 if needed), everyone was urged to stay off campus. The administration hopes faculty will be as flexible as they can with students. It appears that some email messages from the period of the blackout will never be recovered. Kreinovich noted that an important issue that was not perfectly handled this time was timely communication of the situation and updates to UTEP community. Rohrleitner asked whether personal information had been compromised. Wiebe replied that there are no indications of such a breach. Subiq asked whether UTEP laptops used at home need to be checked for infection. Wiebe replied that IT will know and may ask to check laptops. Gill asked whether a stable workaround for PeopleSoft exists and Wiebe said he would provide information on how to access PeopleSoft. He provided three useful pieces of information: blackboard can be accessed at blackboardlearn.utep.edu PeopleSoft can be accessed at my.utshare.utsystem.edu and Tech Support questions can be addressed to [TechnologySupport@minersutep.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:TechnologySupport@minersutep.onmicrosoft.com)

7. Committee Reports

A. Faculty Welfare Committee

Ashby reported that the committee has two proposals for consideration but that the present technology issue prevented those from being forwarded. One would concern a new policy about ADA parking and the second would concern the development of an Ombudsperson’s Office. Further consultation with Parking and with the Provost will take place before the items are brought to the April Senate meeting for consideration.

B. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

Duval presented a large number of proposals approved at the most recent meeting of the UGCC. In Business, Econ and Finance has proposed a Minor in Banking; Accounting proposes replacing the CIS prerequisite for CRE 4301; Marketing/Management would remove the hold on MGMT 3312. In Education, Education Psychology would remove the prerequisite for TED 4355 and revise course descriptions due to a new year-long teaching residency. In Engineering, Electrical Engineering would remove EE3372 as a prerequisite for EE 4574. In Health Sciences, the proposal is to make DRSC 3401 an elective for the Bachelor of Science; Public Health would remove HSCI 4307 as a prerequisite for HSCI 4313 to allow it as a concurrent course; Kinesiology would remove the departmental approval requirement for many courses. In Liberal Arts, English would revise the course descriptions of RWS 1301 and 1302 to make their antiracist pedagogy more apparent. In Science, Environmental Science is updating courses in the minor following the recent update to the major and renumbers ESCI 2201 to ESCI 3201, a course more appropriate for juniors. Duval moved that these proposals be accepted and the senate voted unanimously in favor.

6. Announcements Part II

B. Wiebe reported on UTEP’s plans for summer and fall in light of the current views of COVID-19. Locally, distribution of the vaccines is increasing and supply should meet demand before the height of summer. UTEP provided 1170 vaccine doses on Friday 3/5. UTEP remains adherent to the directives from Texas Public Health authorities. The state recently made K-12 teachers and staff eligible, so some UTEP individuals were added to the recent clinic. IT issues are complicating the planned clinic for March 12. There should be even more broad eligibility criteria at some point in March. By April or May, the hope is that any adult wanting a vaccine will be eligible. As a result, UTEP plans to begin slowly, safely opening some on-campus offices on June 1. The expectation is that by July 1, much more of campus will be open. Probably, most classes in the fall semester will return to in-person face-to-face instruction. Núñez-Mchiri asked about the university’s failure to communicate to faculty about the IT problems starting on March 5. Wiebe replied that as soon as the administration has more concrete information it will be communicated to faculty. Back asked what about projections given many faculty have young children at home who cannot yet be vaccinated. Wiebe replied that UTEP will follow CDC guidelines. Padilla added that the CDC has a tier system and has trials on children ongoing, with some hope to have results and possibly vaccination by September. Núñez-Mchiri asked if there are over 1000 people vaccinated per clinic. Padilla replied in the affirmative. College of Nursing has joined the effort and now many more can be vaccinated at each clinic.

7. Committee Reports Part II

C. Academic Policy Committee

Badreddin reported on three items. One would be a policy concerning students’ use of a preferred first name. A second concerned Excused Absences. APC would remove “professional conferences” from the list on the present policy. Kim McKean (Genna, second) proposed a friendly amendment to explicitly add team competitions to the new formulation of the policy. The third item would clarify the distinction between official letters and friendly letters about these excused absences. Baddridin moved to accept these three proposals. The senate voted unanimously to approve the amended proposals.

8 Announcements

A. COACHE Survey

Vice-Provost Ann Gates provided an update on the COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) survey. It was administered last March and the results were processed during the fall semester. A committee (Wiebe, Gates, Lester, Keating, Horak, Villegas) helped process the results. The survey is confidential, anonymous, and aggregate (so no individual should be able to be identified as a respondent). The presentation described the peer-group UTEP selected for comparing its results. It listed themes (such as research, tenure, university leadership) addressed in the survey. At UTEP, 334 out of 669 individuals responded, yielding a higher response rate from most categories than among UTEP’s peer group. The good news from UTEP’s results were faculty satisfaction with the quality of colleagues, the quality of our undergraduates, and the cost of living locally; areas of concern were about lack of support for research, compensation, and the quality of campus leadership. Tenure policies created anxiety in some groups – the policies seemed too “variable” and inconsistent. On research support, there was satisfaction that faculty determine their own research agenda, but concern about growing expectations around external grant support and insufficient internal campus research support. Some concern about the quality of graduate students was also expressed. Satisfaction with departmental leadership was on par with UTEP’s peer institutions, but there was some concern about satisfaction with institutional leadership. These COACHE results will be disseminated on a website and there will be town-halls and listening sessions as well.

C. Office of Student Conduct

Jovita Simon made a presentation about academic dishonesty issues on campus during the epidemic. There were more cases in 2020 than in the previous year. Some tips to address this included 1) Inviting Student Conduct to make presentations about academic integrity in your classrooms, particularly on days in which faculty are on travel so instead of canceling a course, ask the Office of Student Conduct to present a session; 2) Making faculty expectations clear; 3) Reiterating expectations ahead of significant assignments and tests; 4) Creating new assignments/prompts often instead of reusing previous ones; 5) Using tools from Blackboard, such as “Responder”.

B. UTEP Vaccination Clinics

Núñez-Mchiri mentioned that a question about whether UTEP could force individuals to get the vaccine should be in the negative. Padilla thanked Carla Ellis and Jacob Martinez for helping get the College of Nursing involved in the UTEP vaccine clinic, resulting in new capacity (over 1,000 vaccine injections per clinic). Padilla says that UTEP now will have the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, which requires less extreme cold-storage and requires only one injection.

Núñez-Mchiri concluded with a reminder of Women’s History Month.

Meeting adjourned at 4:56

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Faculty comments sent to Senate President Nunez via teams and gmail include the following:

Question posed: What questions or concerns do you have about resuming in the Summer/Fall? Here is feedback received:

1. Can we force our students to resume face-to-face? Will instructors be able to enforce mask wearing in their own classrooms? In particular, the person bringing this up has experience working with viruses and is extremely concerned about the risk arising if some students do not wear masks.
2. Can we force our faculty/staff to resume face-to-face? Will faculty who feel unsafe teaching in person be forced to do so? Will faculty and students be required to be vaccinated to be in the classroom?
3. How are we addressing anticipated variances (mutations) despite our vaccine efforts?
4. How closely are we following CDC guidelines versus state?
5. If we are return to campus? Have rooms been modified to align with current guidelines for social distancing?
6. Should we consider Hybrid models (hyflex); example work face to face M-Th 8am -12pm; virtual 1-4 (avoid zoom fatigue) and don't work from F-Sun (modeling other schools) or student come to class in AM every other day (cohort a on Mon, Cohort b on Tuesday)
7. Should the policy to return to campus be left to departments? Some schools (Nursing, Pharmacy, CHS) may need to come back to meet accreditation standards for quality training for healthcare fields.
8. What if we are not vaccinated by the time school starts? It seems that it is taking time to get vaccinated (some people in our group are getting frustrated about it and worried that they won’t be fully vaccinated when summer or fall classes start). Is there a way to opt out of F2F teaching if we have not been provided a vaccine by UTEP yet?
9. What about children in the household who may not be vaccinated by the time F2F classes start? Many children have been shielded for about a year now and it is pretty scary to think that the parents who shielded them may now be in a place to infect them. What is the plan for vaccinating them?
10. There was a concern also about whether we can know / enforce that our students are vaccinated.
11. Admin seems not to care much about those unwilling to get vaccinated. They’re using vaccine availability as the yardstick to opening fully without understanding the cultural context of why some faculty and students of color are refusing to take it. Then giving the option of “come in or quit,” making their colleges more white.
12. Can we really plan this far in advance? Remember what happened last fall and the rapid ‘pivots’ we were making? Asking faculty to spend all summer planning different modality (unpaid in our case) is not an option this year.
13. How do we deal with absence policies when we return to in-person classes? Some universities have adopted universal absence policies.
14. Everyone forgets that faculty with children will be waiting a lot longer for children's vaccines, which is going to affect school/daycare options. My big concern is that I have a child at home who is not old enough to be vaccinated, so I have a lot of anxiety over potentially carrying the virus to them with unknown long-term effects.
15. How will administration prepare faculty and students for the anxiety of in person classes? My students are having panic attacks going to the grocery stores.
16. Why don’t we take student accessibility into account? Some students want to be remote, and it’s far more accessible for non-traditional students.
17. What safety measures will be put into place? Social distancing, masks, hand sanitizer, testing?
18. Is the school's ventilation adequate?
19. Will classrooms be socially distant, and does this mean that class sizes will be reduced?
20. How will the school enforce mask wearing? Can they? How will faculty know how to discipline students appropriately?
21. What conditions do they expect will be in place that will make it safe enough to open? What will the process be for faculty and staff who do \*not\* feel safe coming to campus (exemptions etc.)?
22. Will faculty need to teach "hyflex," teaching both in person and online simultaneously? Will there be training and/or workload adjustment for the extra work that would entail? Or pay adjustment?
23. For virtual, I would want to know about what accommodations might be provided to students (and faculty) who do not have electronics/wi-fi, etc.
24. What, if any, policies/procedures will be put into place for using cameras, for virtual classes? They requested if hybrid is an option for faculty to teach, if not online.
25. Will we have “Covid Caps” for all classrooms (e.g., my 30 person class meets in a classroom designed to hold 100 + students so all can spread out). Will classrooms have signs taped to desks or chairs blocking space between? When large enough classrooms aren’t available, can we teach half online and half in person OR make a hybrid so only teach in classroom but more grading? There doesn’t seem to be a consistency here. Perhaps ask about expectations and/or policy?
26. Will we need to record all lectures for hy-flex accessibility?