

Baylor University Faculty Senate Minutes
9 November 2021
Cashion 501
3:30pm-5:00pm

Present: Sara Alexander, Dwight Allman, Cassy Burleson, Gerald Cleaver, George Cobb, Holly Collins, Matt Cordon, Christy Gantt, Brian Garner, Chris Hansen, Julia Hitchcock, Julie Holcomb, Beth Hultquist, Kristi Humphreys, Mariah Humphries, Bob Kane, Karon LeCompte, Michael Long, Elissa Madden, Karena Malavanti, Joyce Nuner, Lourenco Paz, Sam Perry, Coretta Pittman, Scott Gibson, Denyse Rodgers, Keith Schubert, Carol Schuetz, Jennings Sheffield, Ann Shoemaker, Kathryn Steely, Lynn Tatum, Ann Theriot, Anzhong Wang, Lauren Weber.

Absent: Erica Ancira (sub. Drew Risinger), Stacie Petter, Barbara Purdum-Cassidy, Jamie Van Eyck (sub. Amy Petrongelli), Shelby Garner

- I. Call to Order, 3:30pm—Chair Pittman
- II. Invocation—Senator LeCompte
- III. Approval of Minutes of 12 October Senate meeting—Senator Long

Senator LeCompte moved to approve the Minutes of the 12 October 2021 Faculty Senate meeting; Senator Perry seconded; the motion passed.

- IV Guest Speaker: Members of Health Management Team (HMT): Michael Muehlenbein—Dept. of Anthropology, Jim Marsh—Dean of Student Health and Wellness, Kristina Campos-Davis—Provost’s Chief of Staff, Chris Holmes—General Counsel, Office of General Counsel (OGC)

J. Marsh. Guidelines from State gov. and Exec Orders from White House are conflicting. Introduced Health Management Team.

C. Holmes. OGC navigating tension between Federal rules and State gov. rules. BU is a federal contractor, guidelines released in September 2021; other rules released Nov. 4, 2021. OSHA-apply to employers with more than 100 employees. Does not apply to places covered by federal contractor guidelines; standards stayed on Sat. Nov. 6 by Federal Court of Appeals. Federal guidelines will go into effect Jan 4, 2022.

Federal Contractor Guidelines. BU making a determination on how guidelines apply to campus; preparing a response; the guidelines are ambiguous which allows for an expanded scope of coverage. Certain institutions have entered into a lawsuit to counter the Federal guidelines. OGC is preparing a response re: masking and vaccination mandates.

Senators asked questions related to tension between State regulations and Federal Orders; are grants contracts?; types of exemptions, e.g. religious, health, or personal conscience?

C. Holmes summary. BU will prepare responses to issues as needed with reference to policies of public schools in the State of Texas vs. Federal guidelines. Good news is vaccination numbers are up and higher than those in our community. Under Federal guidelines, when the county is at a high rate of transmission, it triggers masking requirements. Guidelines do not apply to campus visitors, only employees.

J. Marsh summary. As of this morning 18 active Covid cases, 10 cases in the last 7 days. vaccination rate, 91% faculty, 86% Staff, 76% students, 79% of total campus population. HMT—job to review scientific information on Covid, review BU data, make recommendations to the President’s Council, works closely with Provost Nancy Brickhouse (PNB), Wes Null, Kristina Campos-Davis, related to masking, signage, responses to campus situation.

M. Muehlenbein summary. HMT in constant communication with county officials, county is not tied to BU data or decisions, but Federal guidelines tie BU to the county situation; BU is doing very well in comparison to peer institutions. Since March 2020, 360,000 tests conducted; actions on required testing of unvaccinated individuals mirrored is by other institutions. HMT conducts modeling of outcomes of different measures. BU is aiming for an increase in vaccination rates among students; county vaccination rates seem to have plateaued at 53%. Future: masks may be required for employees if number of cases in the county do not meet standards: positivity rate less than 8%; number of new cases per 100K individuals per week, 50/100K per week, that is, 125 cases in the county over 7 days, triggers masking. Vaccination distribution to children 5 and older begins tomorrow. BU has maintained low positivity rates. No new VOCs—Variants of Concern—on the horizon. Delta is primary strain circulating worldwide; will change over time, but as vaccination rates increase, decreases likelihood for strain mutation.

Senators ask questions: vaccination over time vs booster; whether campus events will take place with the pandemic; whether HMT can make recommendations about mask requirements; consequences for non-compliance of faculty and students; if no masking mandate, can depts or individual instructors require masking in classes?

M. Muehlenbein summary. Evidence supports that vaccination provides greater protection than natural immunity; much of the worldwide situation is dependent on the vaccine supply; directs persons to Personal Care Provider (PCP) for third or fourth shot—no longer referred to as booster. HMT—following mandates of CDC, Federal guidelines, and campus should reflect openness of the country. Any further mask mandates will be made in reference to Federal guidelines. The majority of transmission is not taking place within classrooms, but at a point in time, we will need to move away from mask requirements, also with reference to practices on other campuses. Only firm part of HMT plan for Spring 2022 is that BU must be prepared to pivot to testing depending on positivity rates and other factors. Discussions on whether depts or instructors can require masks are ongoing.

V. Reports

a. Provost/EC Meeting—Chair Pittman

Two items: discussion of the dual interest disclosure and invasive questions; extending fall break to a week.

PNB Audit committee knew about conflicts that were going unreported, so a more probing dual interest disclosure was developed. Discussion on fall break should start with the calendar committee. PNB suggested that the HMT speak with the Senate and informed EC about the Fed mandate and possible ramifications.

b. Executive Committee Meeting—Chair Pittman

Discussed the Agenda, policy issues which will be addressed later in today's meeting.

c. Academic Leadership Council Meeting—Chair Pittman

Senator Pittman reported that Senate voted on a Priority List, gave all present a copy of the Priority List. Fielded questions from deans on certain items on the priority list, e.g., unpaid mentoring, promotion policy, third-tier promotion for lecturers and change of title of lecturers.

d. Board of Regents Report—Chair Pittman

Senator Pittman gave a report last Thursday, Nov. 4. Congratulated, thanked leadership for restoring retirement benefits and COVID protocols, distributed the Senate Priority List, reported work with students re: food insecurity, textbook costs; need to affirm teaching faculty with the third-tier promotion for Lecturers.

e. HR Meeting—Chair Pittman

HR reported that email forthcoming re: restoration of retirement benefits to pre-COVID rate retroactively to June 1, 2021. HR. not responsible for the switch to Microsoft Teams for telephone calls.

f. Senate Policy Committee—Senator Collins

Finished draft of By-Laws changes, will share with Senate in December for implementation in Spring. Some concerns/ Senate recommendations on Distinguished Prof. policy accepted by administration, grievance policy changes under review.

VI. Unfinished Business

- a. Senior Lecturer and Assoc. Professor ad hoc Promotion Committee Charges and Appointments
- b. Committee on Committees (COC): Council of Principal Investigators, OVPR Committee

Charge and slate of committee members presented; Senator suggested that we try to populate lecturer committee with more members to get greater cross-section of the university.

VII. New Business

- a. Vote: Summer Sabbatical Policy
Discussion of discrepancy between BU PP-714 on Summer Sabbatical and new Summer Research Program adopted in College of Arts & Sciences.

Senator Paz moved to approve the BU PP 714 Summer Sabbatical Policy; Senator Cobb seconded; motion passed.

Senator commented that years of service on the A & S Summer Sabbatical Committee; committee makes recommendations for awards but does not know which proposals get funded; committee makes effort to consider proposals from units that typically don't have access to funding from other sources; requests that Senate try to address differences between BUPP 714 and A&S policy.

- b. Faculty Regent Policy—Senator Collins

Faculty Regent Policy is in the Senate's court; has been drafted, will be reviewed and carried forward.

VIII. Adjournment: 5:00pm.