

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 3:30 pm via Zoom

Senators Present: Jose Carrion, Danyelle Ackall, Sean Atkinson, Lisa Bashore, Samantha Bates, Aurthur Busby, Layne Craig, Patricia Duncan, Jennifer Engler, Pamela Frable, Greg Friedman, Jessica Fripp, Julie Fry, Sophie Garcia, Eric Gonzales, Dustin Hahn, Omar Harvey, Jill Havens, Diane Hawley, Emily Herzig, Hayat Hokayem, Oteka Jackson-Cenales, Marlo Jeffries, Clark Jones, Swaminathan Kalpathy, Katie Lauve-Moon, Andrew Ledbetter, Sohyun Lee, Alex Lemon, Laurel Lynch, Lydia Mackay, Kelly McCormick, Thomas Moeller, Steve Palko, Michele Meitl, Santiago Pinon Jr., Jan Quesada, Ranga Ramasesh, Twyla Robinson, Chris Sawyer, Marie Schein, Eric Simanec, Laura Singletary, Loren Spice, Greg Stephens, Amy Stewart, Daxton Stewart, Tee Tyler, Timothy Watkins, Beingyang Wei, Daniel Williams, Barbara Wood, Oinghua Yang, Kathryn Ellis, Ted Legatski, Lavonne Adams.

Guests Present: Teresa Abi-Nader Dahlberg (Provost).

Call to order: Sean Atkinson, the faculty senate Chair called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm, and welcomed everyone (*There were 300 participants which was the zoom capacity limit*). *He announced that the first part of this meeting with the Provost will be recorded and made public for all TCU faculty. He then handed the discussion of our Fall 2020 plans over to the Provost.*

Provost Teresa Abi-Nader Dahlberg thanked everyone for participating in the COVID-19 survey which had an 88% response rate. Of those, 31% felt good about returning, but 37% were not satisfied, and more than 40% were unsure. She said that there is an effort to be clearer about community safety. They will communicate with all students that if they want to take the classes fully online they can do so. International students were already informed of this option. There is more information of testing and tracing that will come out.

She emphasized that our mission at TCU is teaching in the classroom, so to be an instructor of record you need to teach in the class. The issue is complicated because she's thinking of this for the long term after COVID-19. She does not want to set a precedent that online teaching can be thought of as an accommodation for reasons other than COVID-19 in the future, because TCU will suffer from that. The idea is that remote teaching is not an accommodation. FMLA works because someone has to care for themselves or a family member, and they have to prove that to qualify for it. Therefore, someone has to prove that he/she is one of the 8 categories that puts them in severe illness for COVID-19, or the person they live with is at high risk. This way they qualify to teach online. There isn't a final mechanism right now, but TCU is striving to find one. As a university, it's not TCU's mission to teach online, but some courses just for fall 2020 will be online. TCU is trying to provide a way for faculty to go to the HR and see if they are eligible to be at risk for COVID-19, then they can designate those courses as online courses. She's confident in safety protocols so classes with 40 and more students are considered unsafe because of too many people, so those courses will be taught online. She mentioned that students expressed their strong desire for coming back to campus and seeing the professors. Since this is an extraordinary time, the provost thinks that if we could reduce class sizes by 40%, then we would be OK. The idea is a balance between accommodating students who do not want online teaching, but at the same time accommodating safety concerns of faculty and others. One idea now is to break freshman courses to smaller sections so that they can be on campus. The main goal to seek right now is a mechanism where instructors can say that someone at home is at high risk and teach online, but still keep the option of

campus classes for others. This way, the university could provide a way for someone to ask to be online provided this does not exceed 40% class reduction across all university classes.

The Provost then opened it up for questions. The questions are designated by **(Q)** and Responses by **(R)**.

Q: Can some of us ask to be partially online? **R:** This is maybe a good solution and a great suggestion. The goal from the provost is to have some kind survey to find what can be done. After meeting with the Deans, she feels that graduate students may be different so the Deans will handle what will happen with graduate classes. She also answered another question of where it is written in TCU mission statement that teaching at TCU must be in the classroom. The provost said that for 147 years we have been doing teaching in the classroom. A lot of students in the country are waging law suits that they didn't get what they paid for in online education, and so she wants teaching in the classroom to continue to be TCU's Hallmark.

Q: Those 65 years and older is not a qualifying condition unless the person has an underlying condition. **R:** the practices in the classes will match with the CDC guidelines even if not everyone approves those guidelines. Another question **(Q)** was if we are giving students to choose, why not faculty. The Provost answered that students are paying for a certain kind of education and we need to provide that.

Q: Are there some key measures for how many students' death or cases will happen until the university shuts down again? **R:** we are following the CDC guidelines and Tarrant county guidelines. Staff talks to Tarrant County twice a day. COVID-19 testing is around campus now and will test and get an idea what the whole picture looks like in our area, so when Tarrant County tells us we need to shut down, we will.

Q: Many decisions are left to be made and we are running out of time, we still don't know which modes, timeframes would help so that we can plan for the fall. **R:** if your class is under 40, we have high confidence that we will move every class to a socially distanced classroom so that it can accommodate all students safely. Any pedagogical issues are left to the college Deans and connect teams to handle.

Q: What is TCU's liability if we get COVID on campus? **R:** that is handled with the TCU lawyer.

Q: We have experienced record high of COVID-19 in the past week, what if we experience more in the next 10 days. **R:** we have to see what Tarrant county CDC tells us to do. Some are a bit salty because they think that TCU just wants money. However, I want to remind you that we are a non-profit university. We don't get money for shareholders but to keep the university viable and vibrant and look after long term health and provide salaries.

Q: Will everyone fit in the socially distanced class? **R:** you can assume that everyone will fit in the class, we first assumed that everyone will have to teach dually but now things are evolving. We are still developing the process to know who for sure will be online. We are working on the process so that if a student got sick, faculty will be notified. And if a student says I'm not feeling well, can I stay at home, this is left up to the instructor.

Q: A concern for TCU is if you ask someone to teach in person that has requested to go on line, if they contract a virus, it's likely they will sue TCU, so make sure whatever you do, it is legal. **R:** I hear you.

Q: I don't listen to the governor of Texas for health issues because he doesn't believe in science. As a scientist I listen to Fauci, we need to follow those on top of the science like Fauci, we know that

students will party and do what they want to do, and all of us will be exposed, so there is also an ethical consideration. **R:** I hear you.

Q: I have faculty who are talking about retiring early or resigning their contracts, or adjunct, and I did a computation, my adjuncts teach 1000 students. I looked at CDC guidelines and over 65 of age are at high risk, and taking people like me I would qualify for ADA. I am one those who did not leave the house for 4 months. So one fraternity part and this will spread. By not taking a progressive approach, someone will be forced to the classroom and get sick, and other faculty may not show up, and as a department chair how can I handle empty classes on a short notice. **R:** I don't have all the answers, and no one has that. I appreciate you talking to me today, and give us time to get to some decisions, and I really need time to get some decisions. My goal is to help everyone feel safe, so please be patient.

Q: Will the process of FMLA and ADA be the same for grad students and contingent faculty? **R:** anyone who is an instructor of record will be eligible.

At 4:30 pm, the faculty senate Chair, Sean Atkinson, announced moving to a semi-closed session for the faculty to talk freely. Anyone with the rank Dean and above were politely asked to leave.

Sean Atkinson wanted to open the floor for discussion and many faculty brought their concerns. Here is the summary of those concerns and the responses to some of them. Many expressed serious health concerns for teaching on campus and ethical issues involved with that to TCU and its community. Others expressed concerns for finding safe classes for everyone even with the current limit of 40 students per class. Some asked about the technology in the classroom to which the response was that there will be cameras in classes, so any student not in class can watch what is going in the class. Also everyone was informed that masks will be provided to everyone, and the Provost will buy face shields for faculty who want that. The liability issue came up and that it should be taken seriously. The topic of the SPOTS came up and it was emphasized that the faculty no longer are obliged to include SPOTS in their evaluation material. Some expressed the difficulty for people of color to police students, especially white students, to wear masks. Then there was a motion about a vote for no confidence that was seconded. Afterwards, there was a discussion about a vote of no confidence against the Chancellor, Provost, Vice-Chancellor for finance and administration, Board of trustees, and vice-Chancellor for Human Resources. Many wanted such a vote to happen while others were asking to exercise caution. Some objected to including the Provost for the no confidence vote because she is new to TCU and she's trying her best to make the most in a pandemic situation. The Chair of the faculty senate decided to move the discussion of the vote of no confidence to the faculty senate executive committee (FSEC) at this point.

At 6 pm, the Chair of the faculty senate, Sean Atkinson adjourned the meeting.