

**Academic Excellence Committee Summary Report
TCU Faculty Senate
AY 2022-2023**

AEC Membership

Layne Craig (Chair), Molli Crenshaw, Greg Friedman, Julie Fry, Emily Herzig, Till Meyn, Kimberley Owczarski, Twyla Robinson, James Rodriguez (FSEC Representative), Rebecca Sharpless, Kelly Trager, Mat Wenzel, Xiaolu Zhou (Fall 22 only)

AEC Purpose

The Academic Excellence Committee shall propose and monitor solutions to issues of rigor, innovation, and creativity in order to sustain academic excellence in the University.

AEC Standing Charges

1. Propose solutions to issues arising from policies, procedures, programs, and goals that affect the academic excellence of the University.
2. Act as a consultative body for the Faculty Senate (FS) representative to Faculty Advisory Committee for the John V. Roach Honors College and bring relevant issues to FS.
3. Propose strategies for innovation, creativity, and rigor in university programs.

AEC Tasks and Accomplishments for AY 2022-2023

Continue our role in Core review and amendment process.

The AEC met with Theresa Gaul twice in Fall 2022 to offer feedback on the changes proposed by the Core Curriculum Review Committee and served as a liaison between Dr. Gaul and Faculty Senate during the process of proposing those changes to the Faculty Assembly.

Continue the past two years of work on proposing a university-level mental health committee

This effort was stalled in summer 2022, and although conversations occurred among AEC, Student Relations Committee and Faculty Senate Executive committee about possibilities for revival, it has not moved forward this year.

Continue our advocacy for convenient and accessible testing space(s) on campus

In Fall 2022, our testing subcommittee collated the survey of faculty the AEC conducted last semester into an executive summary (Appendix A) about faculty experiences with testing accommodations and testing centers on campus. The subcommittee met with Annorah Moorman to present her with the executive summary in Fall 2022, before the Provost agreed to open the campus testing center in Sadler, and again for an update just before the center opened. In Spring 2023, we met with Lynn Jackson to discuss concerns that the Inter-collegiate Athletic Committee had brought to Dr. Moorman about the Sadler testing space being open only to those with disability accommodations, and we met with and distributed our executive summary to Reginald Wilburn. The committee is grateful that a university testing space has been opened in Sadler and that the college

testing centers have reopened; we continue to believe testing at TCU could be made more convenient, equitable, and accessible to faculty and students.

Continue to evaluate the impact of budget cuts on teaching, scholarship, and academic excellence

The AEC budget subcommittee continued to collate and gather information about the impact of pandemic budget cuts on departments, culminating in a report (Appendix B) summarizing last year's work and noting gaps in information collecting.

Initiate exploration of TCU administration's stance on research and research funding

The AEC research subcommittee met with Floyd Wormley to discuss ways in which TCU's faculty and administration could better collaborate on promoting research and working toward a goal of "R2+" status for the university. This meeting resulted in a visit by Dr. Wormley to a general Faculty Senate meeting to answer questions generated by the committee and by senators. Following the conversation between Dr. Wormley and the Senate, in which many questions about research funding were referred back to the college level, senators set up a series of meetings with college deans to gather their perspectives on the state of research at TCU. Notes on those meetings have been filed for next year's committee.

Initiate documentation of TCU's reliance on adjunct faculty.

The AEC adjuncts subcommittee formulated a set of questions around how many adjuncts TCU employs, which classes adjuncts are most likely to be teaching, and how many first year students are being taught by adjuncts. However, due to complexities and changing rules about using IR resources, we weren't able to get answers to those questions. They have been filed for next year's committee.

Report prepared and submitted by Layne Craig, AEC Chair 2022-23

Appendix A: Executive Summary of Testing Impacts Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Faculty Senate Academic Excellence Committee Access and Accommodation Survey, Spring 2022

INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

Over the 2021-2022 academic year, the Faculty Senate Academic Excellence Committee took up a charge to review the impact of access and accommodation issues in TCU classrooms, with the goal of identifying opportunities to increase academic excellence through improving communication and processes surrounding these issues. Members of AEC met with Stacy Mason, director of Student Access and Accommodation, in order to develop a white paper for TCU faculty on best practices for classroom accessibility, including information about TCU's college-run testing centers. Members also researched access and accommodation practices at our peer institutions, focusing particularly on testing practices. We found that all seven peer institutions we reviewed (Baylor, SMU, Vanderbilt, Tulane, Notre Dame, Clemson, and Trinity University) have testing centers administered by a centralized student accessibility office.

Finally, the committee developed a survey for TCU faculty intended to gauge their perception of the impact of access and accommodation in the classroom in 2021-22. We were particularly interested in faculty perception of how increasing numbers of students with accommodations at TCU¹ affect course structure, equity in the classroom, and student experiences. Since testing accommodations had arisen most frequently in our Faculty Senate conversations as an issue impacting the classroom, we included several questions about faculty members' experiences with the existing testing center structure.

The survey results detailed below, summarizing highlights of the 189 total responses received, show faculty's strong engagement with and concern about student accommodations, as well as a clear consensus that TCU's administration must step in and provide more structure and resources to ensure equitable and realistic implementation of our students' accommodation needs. We would like to call attention to these observations about the data collected:

- When asked to agree or disagree with the statement "I can meet the access and accommodations needs of my students," 49% of faculty agreed; however, only 36% agreed with the statement "TCU provides me with the resources I need to meet the access and accommodations needs of my students." This discrepancy suggests that faculty are operating without guidance in the area of access and accommodations, a lack that will likely lead to suboptimal outcomes in equity and academic excellence in the classroom.
- Survey respondents indicated that as access and accommodations loads have increased, they have adjusted pedagogically by eliminating quizzes, giving

shorter exams, or moving exams online, but many identify those changes as negative for academic excellence, particularly by enabling academic misconduct and cheating.

- Survey respondents repeatedly identified an urgent need for a centralized physical testing center with flexible hours, run by trained full-time staff. Faculty with large classes are forced to find alternative solutions. According to survey responses, an average of four students require testing accommodations per class, but many faculty have classes that exceed the capacity of their college's testing room, needing 15-35 seats at one time.

Appendix B: Budget Cuts Impact Summary

A subcommittee of the TCU Faculty Senate Academic Excellence Committee began its investigations of the budgetary impact of Covid on the university in October 2021. Members of the committee included Emily Herzig, Scott Williams, Jeffrey Todd, and Rebecca Sharpless.

The committee had two primary questions:

1. How increased enrollments affected the academic excellence of the university between 2015 and 2021.
2. How cuts in budgets affected the academic excellence of the university between 2015 and 2021.

Finding 1. Enrollment has increased dramatically since 2015 without a comparable growth in the number of faculty members, and the overall official student:faculty ratio has increased to 14:1.

In the fall of 2015, the university enrolled 9,680 students and had 717 full-time faculty members. By fall 2021, enrollment had risen to 10,927, while the number of full-time faculty had declined to 699. Furthermore, the number of classes with more than fifty students had risen from 96 to 151.

Between 2017 and 2021, enrollments increased in every college except Schieffer, which remained steady: Harris, 3.66 percent; Education, 7.5 percent; Science and Engineering, 13.49 percent; AddRan, 17.27 percent; Neeley, 21.69 percent; and Fine Arts, 25.30 percent. Credit hours rose accordingly: Neeley, 17.8 percent, Fine Arts, 13.28 percent; AddRan, 13.11 percent; Schieffer, 9.51 percent; Science and Engineering, 9.26 percent; Education, 4.92 percent; and Harris, 4.87 percent.

A sample of departments showed that some remained stable or declined slightly while others experienced significant increases in credit hours. Departments with large increases between 2017 and 2021 included Modern Language Studies, 37.5 percent; School of Music, 22.8 percent; Economics, 22.3 percent; Criminal Justice, 20.7 percent; and English, 15.4 percent.

Finding 2. The size of the faculty has not kept pace with the growth of the student body. Between 2017 and 2021, the total number of full-time faculty members grew by only 4.48 percent. The university does not know how many adjuncts teach at TCU. Further research might reveal how many credit hours adjuncts and student instructors teach.

While the cuts to the library budget have largely been restored in 2022, staffing remains down by about 20 percent, with many mission critical positions still unfunded.

Evidence from Academic Department Chairs

In December 2021 and January 2022, academic department chairs responded to a survey on the impact of budget cuts since 2019. The committee received answers from 27 chairs: 8 from AddRan, 2 from Fine Arts, 2 from Schieffer, 5 from Science and Engineering, 4 from Neeley, 3 from Harris, and 3 from SIS, for a response rate of more than 50 percent.

Impact of Increased Enrollment

Chairs described negative impacts on their departments from increased enrollment, including:

- Increased section enrollment size
- Increased reliance on adjuncts
- Increased overload teaching by full-time faculty members
- Increased advising loads
- Decreased ability to help students with individual research projects
- Decreased ability to offer classes to all students who need them
- Inflexibility in scheduling in terms of availability of classes for transfer students and current students needing to change their schedules
- Increased pressure on classroom spaces

Impact of Budget Cuts

Chairs reported negative impacts on classroom instruction and student learning from budget cuts.

- Loss of student-facing administrative staff
- Loss of tenure-track faculty lines
- Inability to replace, increase, or repair computers and equipment
- Inability to properly equip adjuncts
- Loss of library support, including acquisitions and journal subscriptions
- Loss of community through social events
- Loss of intellectual community through speakers, et cetera
- Loss of student salaries
- Inability to produce basic needs such as copies and printing

Summary

In summary, it is clear that increased enrollment and budget cuts negatively affect Vision in Action Goal 1, "Strengthen the academic profile and reputation of TCU." The recommended actions most directly affected include "Support and preserve the teacher-scholar model" and "Recruit and retain a diverse world-class workforce."