

TAMU Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2021

3:00pm

Via Zoom

<http://facultysenate.tamu.edu>

The full video recording of the meeting can be accessed on the Faculty Senate website:

<https://facultysenate.tamu.edu/Faculty-Senate-Meeting-Recordings>.

CALL TO ORDER

Speaker Dale Rice called the fourth meeting of the 39th Session to order at 3:00pm. Due to ongoing social distancing practices resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted via Zoom. Speaker Rice reminded Senators of the Zoom features to be used during the meeting. He then proceeded to swear in the newly elected and reelected Senators.

GUEST SPEAKER

Speaker Rice welcomed guest speaker TAMU President M. Katherine Banks, Ph.D. The following members of her leadership team also attended: Tim Scott, Provost; Greg Hartman, Chief Operating Officer; Jack Baldauf, Vice President for Research; John Crawford, Chief Financial Officer; and Damon Slaydon, Vice President of Human Resources.

President Banks began by expressing her condolences for Kristyn Ahuero, the TAMU sophomore who lost her life to COVID the week prior. She assured the Senate that they were doing everything they could do within safety guidelines. She underscored the importance of vaccinations and wearing face coverings.

In her first 100 days as President, she focused on meetings with leadership in each college; faculty, staff, and students; as well as external stakeholders in order to listen and learn. She heard aspirations and frustrations and wants everyone to know she is listening.

Additionally, she hired a top higher-education consulting firm to evaluate the administrative operations of the university and expects their evaluation and recommendations by the end of September. The goal is to maximize efficiency in order to direct more funds to the core mission of teaching and research. She will reinvest in the mission of education, including rewarding faculty achievement and contributions.

Another area needing attention is TAMU's built environment. She has already taken action by allocating \$30 million annually to address deferred maintenance.

President Banks also has built a strong, collaborative leadership team, some of whom were present at the meeting and introduced.

Questions were posed by the following Senators: Senator Catharina Laporte, College of Liberal Arts, on behalf of the Senate's Academic Affairs Committee; Senator Adam Kolasinski, Mays Business School;

Senator Peter McIntyre, College of Science; Senatore Raymundo Arroyave, College of Engineering; Senator Tracy Vemulapalli, College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences; Senator Maria Irene Moyna, College of Liberal Arts; Senator Andy Tag, College of Science; Senator Stefanie Harris, College of Liberal Arts; Senator Rajesh Miranda, College of Medicine; Senator Ranjana Mehta, College of Engineering; Senator Clint Magill, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences; Senator Won Bo Shim, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences; Senator Grace Townsend, TAMU Galveston; Senator Andy Banerjee, College of Engineering; and Senator Asha Rao, College of Science. Answers and comments were provided by President Banks, COO Greg Hartman, and Provost Tim Scott.

Speaker Rice thanked President Banks and her team for speaking to the Senate.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Jocelyn Widmer, Assistant Provost for Academic Innovation, and **Dr. Juan Garza**, Assistant Vice President for Academic Services & Director of Provost Information Technology Office – [Attachment A](#) – ***For Informational Review – FS.39.059***

Dr. Widmer provided her monthly update on the progress of Canvas (LMS) via a video, and the meeting time was devoted to questions only. The following Senators posed a question or offered comments: Speaker-Elect Patti Smith, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and Senator Eduardo Gildin, College of Engineering.

Speaker Rice thanked Dr. Widmer and Dr. Garza.

SPEAKER COMMENTS

Speaker Rice began his comments by acknowledging the intense challenges confronting faculty this semester due to returning to face-to-face instruction. He assured the Senate that the Executive Committee, as well as other faculty groups such as the Distinguished Professors, have repeatedly communicated faculty concerns to the Administration at both the university and system levels. He promised to continue to push for ways to keep faculty safe and healthy in the pandemic.

Several announcements included:

- The nomination period for the open seat on the Executive Committee would launch soon; an email would be forthcoming with nomination instructions.
- Caucuses were reminded to elect a caucus leader by September 30th.
- Speaker Rice sent an email to the deans of each college notifying them of the senators in their college and requesting that these faculty not be scheduled to teach during Faculty Senate meeting times.
- He announced the appointment of Senator Tianna Uchacz of the College of Architecture to be Senate Parliamentarian for the 2021-22 academic year, and thanked her for taking on the role.

Speaker Rice then introduced the following motion, requesting Senator Hammond read the motion.

Emergency Item: Motion to Conduct Faculty Senate Meetings via Zoom 2021-2022 – *Attachment D – Passed – FS.39.060*

The motion passed to approve online meetings for 2021-2021.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The motion passed to approve the August 9, 2021 minutes as presented. **Attachment B – Passed – FS.39.061**

CONSENT AGENDA

The motion passed to approve the September 13, 2021 Consent Agenda as presented.

*(Full **Consent Agenda** with FS #'s can be found under **Adjournment** below.)*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Core Curriculum Council Course Report – Attachment C – Passed – FS.39.064

The motion passed to approve the Core Curriculum Course Report as presented.

*(Full **CCC Report** can be found under **Adjournment** below.)*

OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Speaker-Elect Patti Smith convened the Committee of the Whole.

Senator Tracy Hammond, College of Engineering, announced the Texas Land Grants Day, which offers the opportunity to engage with researchers from TAMU Prairie View.

Senator Joan Wolf, College of Liberal Arts, encouraged the Senate to invite the Board of Regents to a Senate meeting to answer questions left unanswered by the President and her team.

Senator Clint Magill, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, wanted to call attention to the university's change from Google to Microsoft mail and the potential pitfalls.

Senator Adam Kolasinski, Mays Business School, asked the Executive Committee to work to gain greater faculty input on selection of Interim Deans and Provost similar to the Standard Operating Procedure (SAP) for Deans and Department Heads.

Senator Angie Hill Price, College of Engineering, called attention to a proposed SAP regarding academic administrative structure that has implications to continuing shared governance. She also requested that the Senate look into the new process for honor code hearings.

Senator Dan Collins, College of Science, asked to have Dr. Tim Powers, Director of the Aggie Honor System Office, recognized to speak to concerns related to honor code hearings. Speaker-Elect Smith recognized Dr. Powers who shared information about the office and the new process, and stated he was open to further discussion. Other Senators who provided comments: Senator Larry Fickel, College of Architecture; Senator Ali Foran, College of Science; Senator Dan Collins, College of Science; Senator Adam Kolasinski, Mays Business School; and Senator Raymundo Arroyave, College of Engineering.

Senator Stefanie Harris, College of Liberal Arts, seconded Senator Angie Hill Price's concerns about the proposed SAP on academic administrative structure, asking the Senate to look into it. Speaker Dale Rice provided background and information about the proposed SAP to ensure everyone was familiar with the issue.

Senator Rajesh Miranda, College of Medicine, asked if the Senate could investigate the possibility of hiring external counsel for consulting on faculty issues. Senator Tianna Uchacz, College of Architecture, expressed that legal counsel could be helpful in determining if a mask mandate could be done. Speaker Rice expressed his concern at the University's lack of messaging regarding masking.

Senator Peter McIntyre, College of Science, asked if the Faculty Senate might consider adopting the resolution recently shared by the Order of the Broken Gavel (the organization of former TAMU Speakers of the Faculty Senate), or the Senate's own resolution.

Senator Catharina Laporte, College of Liberal Arts, expressed three concerns: 1) lessons learned from moving all classes online being forgotten, 2) the difficulty in taking photos of students for social media purposes when the large majority are not wearing masks, and 3) lack of contact tracing and inability to notify students who were exposed to COVID so that they can be tested. Senator Andrew Klein, College of Geosciences, shared that he had been appointed to a committee convened by former Interim Provost Weichold to examine lessons learned; this committee would be presenting its findings to Acting Interim Provost Tim Scott later in the week.

Speaker-Elect Patti Smith expressed concern over the lack of COVID-related metrics shared by the President and her team, and was troubled by their apparent lack of concern about the current numbers of positive COVID cases on campus, how many student deaths it would take to implement greater safety precautions, and the lack of availability of ICU beds.

Senator Adam Haney, TAMU Galveston, suggested a resolution changing the TAMU motto stating fearless leadership, until the university leadership can demonstrate fearless leadership instead of enacting the governor's political agenda.

Speaker-Elect Smith returned the meeting to Speaker Rice.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.

APPROVED CONSENT AGENDA for September 13, 2021

GRADUATE COUNCIL

None

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Change in Courses – *Passed* – FS.39.062
[CSC 452: Robotics and Spatial Intelligence](#)

W&C COURSES

Courses Submitted for W Certification – *Passed* – FS.39.063
[BICH 414-W: Biochemical Techniques I](#)
[FREN 300-W: Written Communication in the French-Speaking World](#)
[PHIL 418-W: Existentialism](#)

End of Consent Agenda

CORE CURRICULUM COUNCIL COURSE REPORT – *Attachment C – Passed* – FS.39.064

Recertification for Foundational Component Area: Creative Arts

[PERF 200-GE: Introduction to World Theatre](#)

Recertification for Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

[SOCI 206-GE: Global Social Trends](#)