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Dalton State Faculty Senate: Minutes of February 11, 2021, Meeting

Members Present:

Christian Griggs (Senate President), Karren Bennett, Samantha Blair, Alicia Briganti, Amy Burger, Omin Chandler, Cecile de Rocher, Carl Gabrini, Nick Gewecke, Tom Gonzalez, John Gulledge, Mike Hilgemann, Mike Joseph, Clint Kinhead, Jon Littlefield, Victor Marshall, Nancy Mason, Annabelle McKie-Voerste, Travis McKie-Voerste, Hussein Mohamed, Jennifer Parker, Jennifer Randall, Tammy Rice, Deb Richardson, Kristen Weiss Sanders, Gregory Smith, Sharlonne Smith, Jeff Stanley, Megan Vallowe, Margaret Venable (*ex officio*), Bruno Hicks (*ex officio*), Jodi Johnson (guest), Mary Nielsen (guest), Lori McCarty (guest), Marilyn Helms (guest), Gina Kertulis-Tartar (guest), Stacie Kilgore (guest), Melissa Whitesell (guest), Lorraine Gardiner (guest), Susan Burran (guest), Lisa Peden (guest), Barbara Tucker (guest), Mackenzie Manley (guest), Tammy Byron (guest), Laura Tolliver (guest), Amber Lesicko (guest), Mariela Vazquez (guest), Angela Nava (guest), Lorraine Gardiner (guest), Garrett Burgner (guest)

I. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting of the Senate was convened remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Senate President Christian Griggs called the meeting to order at 3:15pm and established that a quorum was present. He asked for approval of the minutes of the November 12, 2020, meeting; Carl Gabrini made the motion, and it was seconded by Hussein Mohamed. The motion was passed via electronic poll.

II. Reports from Officers

- a. Welcome and General Information – Christian Griggs welcomed everyone back to another semester. He mentioned that much has been going on with committees working behind the scenes. He reminded everyone that in our last Faculty Senate meeting, we recommended adjustments to the substitution policy. Those recommendations were sent to Academic Affairs who are going to look into making policy updates based on our recommendations as well as the existing policies of the USG. Christian expects an update at some point this semester.
 - Christian then mentioned that SACS accreditation is coming up. Henry Codjoe is taking lead once again, and several faculty members have been asked to sit on different committees to aid in the process. The expectation is to put the accreditation reports in circulation by March of this year.
 - People have asked Christian about student evaluations again this year. There are concerns that current instruction formats in place due to COVID-19 will reflect poorly on faculty, so Christian brought up these concerns with Academic Affairs. Statements regarding how student evaluations will be used will be developed and sent to the Faculty Senate for feedback and approval. It was noted these evaluations should not be used punitively against faculty going up for Promotion and/or Tenure.
 - The Faculty Senate Executive Committee is looking into making updates to the Senate bylaws. These updates would be minor, and the most significant change would be to extend committee assignments from 1 year to 2 years to provide some continuity within committees year-to-year.
- b. Committee Reports and GeorgiaView – John Gullede mentioned that one of his duties as President-Elect is to house all reports from Senate committees, and so he announced that there is now a committee meeting minutes repository in GeorgiaVIEW to house these minutes (search for “Faculty Senate Committee Meeting Minutes” in GeorgiaVIEW). This GeorgiaVIEW “course” is available to all Faculty Senate members. John asked all committee chairs and/or Faculty Senate representatives, who have

instructor access, to upload the minutes by date so that they are available for viewing. He requested to make any chairs not present at this meeting aware of this.

III: Reports from Committees

- a. Academic Conduct. No report for this meeting.
- b. Academic Programs. Dr. Hicks said they had a direct and productive meeting, but nothing specific to report.
- c. Assessment Committee. Megan Vallowe reported that the committee met yesterday to talk about the upcoming SACS accreditation and learned more about how process works. They discussed having an information session so that all coordinators understand the manual that was passed last semester, and that information session is tentatively scheduled for April. They also discussed figuring out if there are any gaps in program assessments as well as the best way to collect that data.
- d. Faculty Development Committee. Kristen Weiss Sanders reported that BOLD talks will happen virtually on February 26 from 9:00am-12:00pm via Microsoft Teams, and they will use one link to all presentations for ease. Presentations will be grouped into 3 different sessions (1/2 hour each) moderated by members of the committee. The moderators will encourage attendees to make comments or questions via the chat function on Teams. After each session has concluded, moderators will pose the questions asked to the speakers; this there will be 15-minute breaks/Q&A sessions between presentation sessions. Dr. Hicks will give both introductory and closing remarks, and there are a total of seven talks with each one being 8-10 minutes.
- e. Faculty Evaluation Committee. Omin Chandler reported that the committee's first meeting will be on Monday, February 15th. They have nothing to report today.
- f. Faculty Resource Committee. Jennifer Randall reported that they met last week on Thursday. The committee is working on a survey for faculty to gather information about what resources they are using or what they would like to start using. The committee will compile the responses and report them to the Senate and at budget meetings for anything that may require funding. Jeff Marshall is purchasing a few high-tech cameras

to install in the side of classrooms that will track faculty movement around the room and can automatically zoom. He is seeking faculty volunteers who would like to test this equipment out for 30 days before he buys more for the campus. If any faculty are interested, they can email Jeff, Jennifer Randall, or Melissa Whitesell.

- g. Faculty Welfare Committee. Amy Burger reported that they are proceeding as expected on updating the Faculty Handbook. The committee met already this semester, and they have one more meeting scheduled. The handbook project is slated to be completed by the end of the semester.
- h. Strategic Planning Monitoring Committee. There is no report this meeting, but Victor Marshall will report on progress at the next meeting.
- i. Student Success Committee. Carl Gabrini reported that committee is recommending that faculty use a common supplemental syllabus to house standard policies and procedures. Their rationale is that every semester faculty prepare a course syllabus, and every semester they must check the accuracy and completeness of the required standard content. The supplemental syllabus would be a place (on a website) to house these standard statements where they can be updated and are available to all students. This proposal was discussed in new business as summarized below.
- j. Tenure and Promotion Committee. John Gullledge reported that the committee met in January to make recommendations regarding the candidates up for promotion and/or tenure. Recommendations were made and passed along to Dr. Hicks.
- k. Ad-hoc committee on class size policy. Travis McKie-Voerste reported the committee met virtually and gathered information about class size policies. There is no class size policy right now, and they noted that class sizes often change from semester to semester. They believe that there should be a policy, so they are currently gathering data to support that. They are hoping to have something to report to Faculty Senate by the end of the semester. They also discussed seeking feedback from the Student Government Association president to get the students' perspective.

IV. Old Business

There is no old business to report.

V. New Business

a. Diversity Syllabus Statement – Susan Burran, as a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee (a subcommittee of strategic enrollment) and Mariela Vazquez, as SGA President, presented a proposal to include a diversity statement in course syllabi (see proposed statement below). Mariela explained that, because we are a diverse institution and the only Hispanic Serving Institution in Georgia, our commitment to diversity and inclusion should be emphasized more than it currently is. This is how having a diversity and inclusion statement in syllabi came up—they want to be a way to show and embrace our diversity on campus, and they made the statement short to acknowledge that syllabi are already filled with a variety of statements. Victor Marshall made a motion that this goes to the Student Success Committee to figure out where in the syllabus the statement should go (and/or to make any adjustments). Samantha Blair seconded the motion, and after some discussion, the motion was passed via electronic poll.

Proposed Diversity and Inclusion Statement: “Diversity enriches human interaction and learning. Different perspectives lead to innovative, sustainable solutions for our most persistent and challenging problems. When we engage and learn from each other, we thrive. Thus, we support diverse communities; we respect and value their unique experiences and contributions. Everyone in our community has a responsibility to ensure that all feel secure and welcome, that the contributions of all individuals are respected, and that all voices are heard.”

b. Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Approval—Round 5

Carl Gabrini made a motion to approve Round 5 of the edits to the Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Manual, and it was seconded by Victor Marshall. Two questions arose from these edits: (1) Is there an Office of Instructional Technology? Mary Nielsen said there was, sort of—Pat Horton is in that role in more of a part-time form, and (2) When did it become a policy that faculty were to email students enrolled in an online class a week before the class starts to inform them that they are enrolled in an online class? Mary stated that this has long been a

policy, but not all faculty know about it, and it may not be as relevant during the pandemic. After discussion, the motion was passed via electronic poll.

c. Student Success Committee Recommendations – Carl Gabrini presented the proposal that we adopt a supplemental syllabus where required syllabi statements are housed. The primary point of this is to keep syllabi accessible and to help to manage length and consistency. Some semesters faculty have their syllabi ready and printed when they get notification that a statement has changed. Having a supplemental syllabus will cut down on that. He also acknowledged that the proposed diversity and inclusion statement should take on a similar importance as the Roadrunner Pledge and should be included in the printed syllabi rather than put in the online supplemental syllabus. John Gullede made a motion to adopt a supplemental syllabus, and Nick Gewecke seconded the motion. During discussion Christian Griggs asked where this supplemental syllabus would be housed, and Carl suggested on the website for current students, but that it is a discussion to be held in the next Student Success Committee meeting. They will look to see what other institutions do. The motion passed via electronic poll.

d. COVID-19 Feedback or Questions from Faculty

Christian has been contacted by faculty regarding concerns about the COVID-19 policies, so he decided to bring the discussion to Faculty Senate to see if faculty have any specific questions they would like to have answered regarding how COVID policies are being implemented on campus.

- Victor Marshall asked what are the current assumptions for the fall semester? Dr. Hicks shared what he heard at the most recent RACAA meeting: we should be planning our schedules like 2019, not 2020, but we should be ready to transition to the 2020 flexible formats if that need occurs. In other words, we should be looking to get back to as normal as possible.
- Travis McKie-Voerste asked about the numbers we are getting in the COVID reports. He stated that the numbers seem to be very restricted and seem to provide a false picture as to what is actually happening on campus. He, and other faculty, would like to see full numbers (i.e., how many people have been affected overall, rather than just the ones

that have been on campus up to two days prior to symptoms presenting or a positive test).

- Omin Chandler asked that, when someone tests positive and then quarantines, should they be tested again before returning?
- Lori McCarty reminded us that if any of us are exposed, to please make sure to communicate that exposure by emailing Human Resources and not via the student form. Either way is greatly appreciated, but the Dean of Students gets a lot more reports on student side, so Lori can respond much quicker if faculty reports are sent to her. In regard to requirements for testing, they do not require employees to test negative after quarantining, but that they follow CDC guidelines, and they are very strict on these guidelines. Regarding Travis's question, Lori stated that it is hard enough to gather the numbers of those individuals on campus within two days of symptoms presenting or testing positive, so she doesn't know if it would even be possible to track everyone. She stressed that they are trying to do what they can with the data.
- Jennifer Parker wanted clarification that faculty are not required to be tested and about quarantining for 14 days because, according to the CDC, a person can end quarantine early if they present a negative test after the first 10 days. She wanted to know if we are enforcing the full 14-day quarantine? Dr. Venable stated that Cheryl Owens is advising students, and she is being as conservative as possible. Christian will check with Cheryl regarding these questions. Lori clarified that they are not requiring negative tests to return to campus.
- Annabelle McKie-Voerste stated that she has had quite a few students who expressed appreciation for online courses during the pandemic because they've been able to work and still go to school rather than having to quit school to care for family. Some students are still wary of coming back to school during the pandemic. She wants faculty to still have an opportunity to teach online courses in fall, even if we are supposed to "go back to normal." Thus, she made a motion that faculty who are currently teaching online are still able to teach online in the fall; it was seconded by John Gulledge. Nick Gewecke stated that we cannot supersede what the system office is telling us to do, and Dr. Hicks

stated that DSC has always had an online curriculum. He said that teaching online in the fall can be a discussion that faculty have with their Dean and Chair as long as we stay within the spirit of what the USG is asking us to do. The motion that faculty have the option to continue teaching online in fall was approved via electronic poll. Travis suggested having a specific infection rate that drives the decision to teach online or not (or to implement protective measures) in the fall. Kristen Weiss Sanders asked whether faculty have autonomy to still allow instructors or staff with medical conditions to teach virtually, even if it is not a system-wide policy? Christian will follow up to get the answer.

e. Tenure and Promotion Review Recommendations

Christian brought up that over the break, Dr. Venable sent a letter about an incident that occurred in the most recent Promotion and Tenure cycle. There were two disqualifications, but one was more significant than the other. The disqualifications occurred after the Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee implemented the policy that was voted on and approved by the faculty last year. Both Dr. Hicks and Dr. Venable supported the decision. However, in light of this situation, the P&T Committee has made recommendations on changing the policy to prevent this from happening again. Victor Marshall wanted clarification that an incomplete portfolio results in disqualification, and the answer is yes. He also asked who makes the disqualification decision? Currently the decision is made by the P&T Committee chairperson. Victor would like to see a written proposal of the recommended changes. Jon Littlefield, who was on the P&T Committee this year, would like to see disqualifications made at the discretion of the P&T Committee as a whole, rather than the chairperson, during the P&T Committee meeting that occurs in February. Clint Kinkead supports the idea of disqualifications being a committee decision. He stated that to simply allow one person that much authority is a bad idea. Christian stated that the idea when the policy was implemented was that it would be a check mark—a faculty member either has everything or they don't—and a single member of the committee, the chairperson, does the checking. A written proposal with recommendations will sent to the Faculty Evaluation Committee for review.

f. Ad Hoc Committee for Carl Vinson Study Implementation

Christian stated that some faculty members are still below minimum salary according to the Carl Vinson study and that Dr. Hicks is open to an ad hoc committee to help him look into this issue. Clint made a motion to put together an ad hoc committee, and it was seconded by John Gullledge. The motion passed via electronic poll. So far, volunteers to be on the committee include Clink Kinkead, Nancy Mason, and John Gullledge.

V. Announcements

- a. Next Faculty Senate meeting on Thursday, March 11, 2021, at 3:15pm via Teams
- b. Bold Talks 2021: Increasing Student Engagement During Times of COVID-19 – Friday, February 26, 9am-12pm
- c. Other announcements. There were no other announcements.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Briganti, Senate Secretary