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Dalton State Faculty Senate: Minutes of September 12, 2019, Meeting

Members Present:

Matt Hips (Senate President), Karen Bennett, Samantha Blair, Donna Blesdoe, Alicia Briganti, Amy Burger, Susan Burran, Nick Gewecke, Tom Gonzalez, Bob Haverland (also proxy for Jim Gordon), Cindy Davis, Christian Griggs, John Gullledge, Tim Hawkins, John Asplund (proxy for Mike Hilgemann), Calley Hornbuckle (proxy for Lorena Sins), Cathy Hunsicker, Jean Johnson, Ben Laughter, Victor Marshall, Travis McKie-Voerste, Annabelle McKie-Voerste, Amy Mendes, Hussein Mohamed, Lydia Postell, Tammy Rice, Deb Richardson, Sharlone Smith, Jeff Stanley, Tami Tomasello, Megan Vallowe, Kevin Yan, Margaret Venable (*ex officio*), Adrian Epps (*ex officio*), Cheryl Grayson (guest), Katrina Autry (guest), Brooklyn Herrera (guest), Andrea Roberson (guest), Meagan Standridge (guest)

I. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Senate president Matt Hips called the meeting to order at 3:17 pm and established that a quorum was present. He asked for approval of the minutes of the April 16, 2019 meeting. Cathy Hunsicker moved to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote. Matt also wanted to welcome all senators and guests, and he expressed his appreciation of their attendance.

II. Introduction and Address of Dr. Epps

Matt Hipps introduced the interim PVPAA, Dr. Adrian Epps, and invited him to address the senate. Dr. Epps spoke of his admiration for all the employees of Dalton State. During his time here, he wants to concentrate on making sure that everything we do as a college is for the benefit of the students. His main focus will be on trying to define what Dalton State stands for, what is our vision for the college, what is our “signature.” He has started this process with the deans of the schools and will ask for other input from faculty in future.

III. Senate President Address

Matt Hipps addressed the senate. First, he praised the senate of the past few years as being highly effective, producing many important documents. He believes that shared governance has succeeded in a number of cases. The senate needs to stand as a voice for faculty. The senate does not make the decisions, but it must have a voice in the decision-making process. However, there is a problem when we look at how the senate interacts with the rank and file faculty. Many faculty do not know or understand what the senate is doing. Senators need to be proactive in reaching out to their constituents, letting them know what the senate is working on and asking for feedback.

Matt wants to focus on three major areas this year. First, the senate must work to reduce friction between faculty, staff, and students. We are not enemies. We have similar concerns and need to stand together, whether it is an issue that affects faculty or not. Matt would like to have regular meetings with the Staff Council and SGA presidents in order to communicate with administration effectively.

The second area of focus will be on the senate committees. Unfortunately, minutes from committee meetings are rarely available. Few have any idea what the committees are working on or who is on the committees. Matt would like to see all the senate committees have a first meeting by the day of the next senate meeting in October. These committees are charged with producing a list of priorities for the year. He would also like a public list of committees on the Dalton State website, as well as the committee meeting minutes. He would also like each committee to report its activities, even if none occurred, at each senate meeting.

The third area of focus will be on developing a recognition program for senators. Matt suggested a communal meal at the end of each year as an example. Senators should not feel as though their work is unnoticed or unappreciated.

As part of the regular working of senate meetings, Matt would like to go into executive session more frequently to debate freely any topics under consideration. Any guests we invite to speak or guests who have an issue to bring to the senate would be scheduled first in the agenda so their concerns can be heard. Then the senate would go into executive session for debate.

IV. Committee Assignments

Matt Higgs announced that almost all committee assignments have been made. He reminded senators that it is their responsibility to call the first meeting of the committee to which they are assigned, preferably by Oct 10, 2019, the day of the next senate meeting. The committees need to elect a chair and produce a list of priorities. All committees will report at each meeting. Each committee should post its meeting minutes within a week. Matt wants committees to be working on things related to their purpose, especially to produce resolutions that the senate can send to the administration for action.

Matt explained the special nature of the School of Education committee members due to the school having only one representative on the senate.

Susan Burran asked for a list of all committees with their make-up. Matt replied yes, we want to update the website to include all committees with their minutes.

Matt asked that not all matters end up with Faculty Welfare committee because it tends to get overloaded. Also, there will be some new committee structures with new subcommittees due to changes made last year.

Dr. Epps wants a list of all committees with their by-laws. Some committees are not senate committees. Committees without by-laws would be considered *ad hoc* committees, but Dr. Venable is free to establish as many *ad hoc* committees as she feels are appropriate. The full list of campus committees should be maintained by the Committee on Committees. With the frequent changes in the position of VPAA, there is no institutional knowledge of many of these committees and how they function.

V. New Business

a. Draft Resolutions

Matt Hipps asked all visitors to leave so the senate could go into executive session. Matt then presented the draft resolutions he had circulated on August 20, 2019. The first was 2019-2020 Resolution 1.1- Faculty Input in Decision-Making Processes. The draft calls for established procedures for including the faculty senate and the faculty in the process of creating and staffing of committees, task forces, and working groups. It asks for a place on the DSC website where committees are listed so everyone is informed about committees and their membership. The second resolution was 2019-2020 Resolution 1.2- Affirming Faculty Participation in Administrative Searches (Dean Level or Higher). This resolution calls for faculty senate input in the search for a new VPAA or any positions of deans or higher in the future. It calls for a faculty senate interview committee that will have an opportunity to speak with candidates and provide feedback to the administration and campus search committee. It is not intended that the interview committee be making suggestions on who to interview, only to provide feedback on the candidates under consideration.

John Gullledge asked whether other colleges have faculty senate representation on search committees. Matt Hipps replied yes.

Several senators commented on the list of VPAA search committee members that Dr. Venable recently sent out. There were questions about how these particular people were chosen. The senators noted that 8 out of 11 members of the committee are now or had been chairs or higher. The senate had not been consulted on which faculty would be on the committee. Matt Hipps suggested that someone from FYES or IRB should also be on the search committee.

John Gullledge made a motion to modify Resolution 1.2 to include a faculty senate representative on all search committees for deans or higher, with special reference to the current VPAA search. The motion was seconded. During discussion, the wording of a “permanent seat on search committees” was suggested. There was some discussion as to whether a vote was permissible during executive session. Parliamentarian Susan Burran later clarified that votes can be taken during executive session.

Nick Gewecke asked if we needed to include staff participation in the wording of the resolution. Matt Hipps replied that it is not within the senate purview to take on responsibility for staff. Annabelle McKie-Voerste suggested 50% of the search committee should be non-administration faculty. The senators on the VPAA search committee in attendance were commended as acceptable choices for the committee. They will represent both the faculty in general and the faculty senate. They can report to the senate on the progress of the search committee. However, the senate wants Dr. Venable to clarify how these people were chosen for the VPAA search committee.

Matt Hipps called for a vote on John Gullledge's motion to include modified language in Resolution 1.2. The motion carried. Matt Hipps will send both resolutions to the Welfare committee to work on modifying the language.

b. Testing Center Policy

Matt Hipps invited Travis McKie-Voerste to speak about the testing center policies. An email came out changing the number of times students in hybrid or online classes can utilize the testing center to take exams during the semester. The policy says students can take one midterm and a final. It also restricts when students in hybrid or online classes can take exams. Travis wanted to know why this policy was so restrictive. It seemed to him that this policy was detrimental and not in line with the purpose of the testing center. Matt Hipps did not know how the policy was determined. Apparently a committee voted on this policy, but since not all committees are known or their work advertised, no one knew how the policy was decided. Amy Mendes asked if there are any restrictions on students who have disabilities. The policy does not apply to them. They have access when needed. Some senators commented that the testing center now spends a considerable amount of time on testing for profit. Senators wanted Andrea Roberson to speak about this. Andrea Roberson had been present to speak about the testing center policies, but unfortunately, the senate went into executive session before this came up for discussion. Matt Hipps apologized for jumping the gun on the executive session and promised to make sure anyone invited to speak or who had issues to bring to the senate would be allowed to speak before executive session in the future. He said we would invite

Andrea Roberson or someone from the testing center to address the senate on the topic at a future meeting. No motions were made and the topic was tabled for the present.

c. New Senate Positions

Matt Hipps introduced a proposal for two new senate positions. One would be Webmaster. This person would be in charge of keeping information on the senate webpages up to date. The other position would be Past President. This would be a position for a past senate president to be on the Executive Committee as an advisor. The immediate past president would generally take on the position, but any past president could take the position. It would be a one-year position during the transition from one president to the next. The proposals were tabled for discussion at the next senate meeting.

d. Parking

The issue of parking was discussed. Senators had a number of complaints about recent closures of faculty parking spaces for special events. In one case, the entire faculty lot at Memorial was closed and only eight guest cars ended up parking there. In another case, no warning was given by campus security before a lot was closed for another special event. Amy Mendes asked why the campus cars and vans are always parked in the Liberal Arts lot. Samantha Blair recounted an incident in which she was verbally abused by a student when she was parking in a faculty lot. Most senators were in agreement that parking restrictions are not enforced in a way which sufficiently discourages students from parking in faculty spaces.

Matt Hipps commented that there is supposed to be a Parking Committee appointed by the Committee on Committees, but he did not know if that committee meets or who might be on it. He agreed that parking is a major issue and that it should be addressed. If there are not sufficient parking spaces for faculty on campus, this needs to be changed.

e. Faculty Meeting with the Chancellor

Matt Hipps described how he got an email from Chief of Staff Jon Jaudon asking for a list of senate members who can meet with the USG Chancellor on Nov 19 when he comes for a visit related to assessment of Dr. Venable. Matt suggested that instead of the senate sending a list of senators from which four will be chosen by Jon Jaudon, that we submit the names of five senators, one from each school, as our representatives that we have chosen. John Gulledge

made a motion to accept this suggestion. It was seconded and approved by voice vote. Matt Hipps will send an email asking for volunteers.

f. Other Business

Annabelle McKie-Voerste asked if we need to make a motion to add executive sessions to the agenda. This would let guests know when they can expect to be able to speak or ask questions. Amy Mendes suggested that there is a place on the agenda for questions or comments by guests. Matt Hipps said that was fine, but that guests should not expect that the senate will take up their issue immediately. He also explained that the senate will not always need to go into executive session at every meeting.

Amy Mendes then brought up an issue that a guest had come to the senate to discuss, but had not been able to bring up because the senate went into executive session and she had to leave. Amy asked about the issue in her place. The faculty member asked if there was a cap of 20% of faculty who could earn a 4 on their evaluations every year. Matt Hipps replied emphatically that there is no cap! He explained that the intention of the expanded scale in the evaluation process was to give credit to the most exceptional faculty, but that it was not meant to be easy to earn a 4. Most people will earn a 3. The schools should have a committee that looks into the evaluation criteria for their school to determine if they are fair and workable. John Asplund remarked that he had pointed out in an email to Dr. Pat Chute at the time that the criteria were approved that there were logical fallacies in the wording of the evaluation process. Also, some senators remarked that STM had not approved their evaluation criteria, but had been overruled by Dr. Chute. Matt Hipps again urged the evaluation committees for each school to begin the process of getting feedback from the faculty on how the process is or is not working. The evaluation system enacted by the faculty in 2018 was meant to be tracked and modified as needed. As there seems to be a need, each school should work on this issue. Matt also admitted, in the end, it will be up to chairs to interpret the system of evaluation and there is no way to make that uniform. Some senators said the new system disincentivizes hard work because there is little chance of earning a 4 on their evaluations.

VI. Adjournment

The next senate meeting is scheduled for Oct. 10, 2019. The room being required for a class, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean M Johnson, Senate secretary