

November Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 24th via Teams
4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Nathan England, Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller, Ana Riojas, Sylvia Flores, Richard Smith, Nadia Carreon, Louis Lee, Jesus Munoz, Martin Knecht, Nihan Kayaardi Hinojosa, Tim Weber, Pooja Rishi, Mark R. Murray, Jorge Martinez, Reynaldo Jasso, Robert Vela, Brittany Leckey, Jaclyn Miller, Lee Basham, Aaron Wilson, Micah Bailey, Rainlilly Elizondo, Annette Wingard, Nora Martinez, Sharon Rice, Ruben Flores

Also Present: Angelita Teniente, April J. Castaneda, Auristela Lung, Daniel A. Montez, Elizabeth Munoz, Enriqueta Cortez, Juan Gaytan, Mario Morin, Marisa Taylor, Meng-Hung Wu, Rachel Sale, Rene C. Rios, Robert Ho, Ronald F. Schermerhorn, Victor Gomez

Meeting called to order by Nathan England at 4:00 pm

Nathan reviewed guidelines for online Senate meeting: presenters will have 5 minutes; senators will have 3 minutes, with extension granted if others do not request the floor. He also asked that individuals minimize the use of the Teams chat and instead use microphones as much as possible. Motions and seconds are encouraged to be given verbally so that it is recorded accurately in the meeting notes.

Old Business

- Roll Call
Quorum was determined
- Approval of October Minutes
Ana Riojas mentioned one edit was needed. Mark Murray made the motion to accept minutes with revision. Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller seconded. Minutes approved unanimously
- Re-Branding Office Hours – Wendi Williams
Motion to table was made by Tim Weber. Seconded by Mark Murray.

Nathan requested that Guest Speakers be given opportunity to present information before addressing committee updates. Micah Bailey made the motion to suspend the regular agenda to bring forth Blackboard Ultra discussion. Aaron Wilson seconded.

- Committee Updates – Committee Chairs

Nathan gave overview of committee updates as follows:

- **Constitution Committee:** no update
- **Salary and Benefits:** Nathan and Aaron Wilson are working with VP Elizondo to get documents for Aaron to begin work chairing the committee. Recruitment of members will begin in Spring.
- **COVID-19 Committee:** the College's COVID-19 committee has been rolled into the College's Safety committee. Participation of the Senate's COVID-19 committee would need to be approved by the Senate first. Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller reported that since the college-wide committee is still being developed, the motion for the Senate committee's participation can be made at a later date, once more information is known. She also mentioned that the Senate's COVID-19 committee unanimously voted to participate (with the Senate's approval). The committee also decided Mehrzad would serve as their representative on the College's committee if needed.
- Nathan advised it would be best to get the Senate's approval during the meeting in case administration needed the committee's participation prior to the next scheduled FS meeting. Mark Murray asked for clarification that involvement with the administration's committee would not impede the work of the Senate's COVID-19 committee. Nathan assured it would not.
- Sylvia Flores made the motion to have FS COVID-19 committee collaboratively work with the tentatively named Safety Taskforce Committee that administration is creating as needed. Mehrzad seconded. Roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.
- **Academic Classification Committee:** Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller reported that a list of recommendations had been made. RAS survey is

pending with results available in Spring. Application platform has been selected; an electronic template will be used for portfolios.

- **Synchronous Committee:** Aaron Wilson presented a summary of RAS Survey results (see report given to Senators prior to meeting). Rainlilly Elizondo presented three recommendations from Synchronous Committee based on RAS Survey results and VP recommendations:
 1. The college take action to inform students of the Sync modality's nature and requirements, which can include but is not limited to the following actions: registration locks on "sync" courses, modality description on syllabi, PR & Marketing disseminate the relevant information to students by email, etc., train advisors on the modality nature and requirements, distance learning post modality descriptions on Blackboard.
 2. Faculty should NOT be required to teach an online synchronous course. Teaching synchronous should be voluntary.
 3. The VP's office and/or Distance Learning Department issue a statement, clearly indicating the requirements and restrictions for faculty teaching online synchronous courses so that faculty stay in compliance with the college's policies, ADA, and FERPA.
- Mark Murray made motion to accept committee's recommendations. Jaclyn Miller seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

- Blackboard Ultra – Distance Learning
 - Dr. Rachel Sale was present to address questions from Faculty Senators. Mark Murray asked about issues regarding copying course content from Blackboard Learn to Blackboard Ultra as well as the use of publisher course packs. Dr. Sale said it was almost impossible to copy content from Learn to Ultra. She reported that many college campuses are changing LMS platforms to meet SACSCOC accreditation requirements. Many faculty members expressed interest in learning more about Ultra, with ten percent already using it for the Fall semester. Distance Learning has been working with faculty and department volunteers. Successful integration of course packs is dependent on individual

- publishers and whether they have made provisions for Ultra. Dr. Sale mentioned that since accessibility is a large concern, Ultra provides safeguards which will not allow users to design course content that is inaccessible to learners. She also said Blackboard has been providing updates more frequently for the Ultra transition.
- Nihan Kayaardi Hinojosa asked how long the college planned to keep Blackboard Learn and whether faculty are required to use Ultra. She also asked if the BB Learn features that faculty were trained on were going to be incorporated into Ultra (faculty put in a lot of work and time to fulfill required trainings for BB Learn during the COVID-19 transition to remote learning). Dr. Sale reported that issues with embedding content (like Padlet) were corrected during the November update. Microsoft Office files in OneDrive can be embedded in Ultra (which helps the College with BB storage issues and costs). The goal is to have the entire campus using Ultra by Fall 2021, but Dr. Sale is aware that it may take longer. Distance Learning will not force anyone to move to Ultra; their main goal is to ensure quality for students.
 - Sylvia Flores asked if it was easier for faculty to share Ultra courses with each other. She mentioned having a standard Ultra shell may be easier for faculty to share and modify as necessary. Dr. Sale recommended using master shells, but not everyone agrees with their use. She is looking to build a virtual hierarchy within Blackboard which would provide chairs and deans with more administrative privileges. Privacy would still be maintained within each department and each division. Dr. Sale also reported that Blackboard is building a dashboard for chairs to track instructor activity (similar to faculty tracking student activity). This ensures that any issues that arise can be handled internally before going to the administrative level. There have not been any reported issues with copying courses within Ultra.
 - Jaclyn Miller brought up the lack of email notifications appearing on the Ultra homepage. On the Blackboard Learn homepage, faculty members receive notifications of new messages received from their courses. She asked whether this was going to be addressed. Dr. Sale responded that BB was working on the system with filter level alerts (daily, weekly, or monthly), but would look further into the matter.
 - Tim Weber asked if Ultra shells for Psychological Science Department had been approved since he had not seen them yet. He also asked if

- there would be enough time to transfer content from Learn to Ultra when faculty return for the Spring semester. Dr. Sale replied that she had spoken to Carlo Gonzalez and reiterated that everything was transferable. The timing decision would be left up to Carlo.
- Martin Knecht asked why Canvas was not selected if it is considered a superior product to Ultra. Dr. Sale mentioned that the decision was made to renew the contract with Blackboard to keep some continuity for students and faculty during the pandemic and the transition to remote learning. After the pandemic is over, there could be follow-up discussions about the use of Canvas.
 - Nathan asked that follow-up questions be sent to the Executive Committee so they could be forwarded to Dr. Sale. Dr. Sale invited faculty senators to contact her directly with any issues or concerns they might have.
 - Nathan asked for a motion to resume meeting agenda items. Sylvia Flores made motion. Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller seconded.
- Instructor Consent for Live Classes – Lee Basham
 - Lee Basham made the following motion:
 - Clause 1: Allow conducting of on campus face-to-face classroom courses by consenting faculty and consenting students.
 - Clause 2: These face-to-face classroom courses shall apply COVID-19 safety measures appropriate to the current development of our medical responses to COVID-19 as determined by our professional medical community.
- He cited that a return to the classroom would be an excellent value for students and faculty motivation.
- Discussion ensued. Micah Bailey asked whose guidelines would be followed (College can determine which); Mayra Garcia asked if class size would be determined by medical professional community (Yes). Ana Riojas asked if it would still be on voluntary basis (Yes). Jaclyn Miller cited that spacing issues limit how many sections can be offered. Sharon Rice said positivity rates are increasing, they will be high in early Spring, and that safety issues need to be considered. Lee mentioned that in the future, things will become safer, and that the motion states that Senate has a preference for face-to-face courses (on the condition that they meet the second clause). Aaron Wilson asked if under-enrolled classes could possibly

count towards the faculty baseload. Nathan stated that the faculty would have to appeal to administration to allow for lower enrollment in classes. Mario Morin mentioned that THECB would also have to approve whether smaller class sizes would count towards the baseload, and if approved for STC, it would need to be approved for colleges across the state. Similar considerations have been brought forth before and were denied. Mario reported that a return to face-to-face classes was occurring because of student demand. The Math Department has been approved to offer 8 traditional classes during the Spring semester, with up to 25 students enrolled in classrooms that seat 48 or more students (2 at Starr, 2 at Mid-Valley, 4 at Pecan).

- Aaron Wilson asked Mario if 2 smaller class sizes could count toward 1 base course. Mark Murray cited that faculty would then be teaching twice as many courses for the same pay. This could pose problems in the future.

- Richard Smith seconded motion.

- Roll call was taken to determine that quorum was still present.

- Discussion continued. Mark Murray stated that STC is already following safety protocols, which is why there is a limited number of face-to-face courses. Micah Bailey reiterated Mark's concern. Lee Basham stated that the motion is mainly to prioritize a safe return to the classroom. Richard Smith expressed his concern about the College moving to more online courses and what this could mean in the future. The motion would let administration know faculty's preference for that future. Louis Lee asked how the motion impacts hybrid courses. Aaron Wilson brought up timing and recommended to wait and see what direction the College decides to go in once the Fall semester ends.

- Senate voted on motion. Motion failed. Tim Weber, Aaron Wilson, and Sharon Rice requested further discussion on the issue.

- Richard Smith made a motion to postpone the matter for further discussion at a later meeting.

- Nathan England said the issue could be put on the agenda in the future, even if the motion had been voted down.

- Update on Dual Credit Task Force – Sylvia Flores
 - Sylvia Flores sent out a detailed report to Senators prior to meeting
 - April Castaneda, Relations Manager for Dual Credit Programs, described that a Drive-Through Program Fair is scheduled for February 4 – 6, 2021 at

the Starr (4th), Mid-Valley (5th), Pecan (6th), and Technology (6th) campuses. Discussions are ongoing for one to be scheduled at the NAH campus. The Program Fair would be open to the entire community and PR will help advertise the event. CDC guidelines will be enforced. While logistics are still being worked out, April hopes the event will help increase enrollment for Summer and Fall 2021 courses. She would like faculty to be represented at all the campuses and will send an email to chairs asking for faculty volunteers.

- Nathan asked that follow-up questions to be sent to Sylvia so she could forward them to April.

Micah Bailey made motion to adjourn meeting. Mark Murray seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:17 pm.