

**Texas Tech University
Academic Council**

**Meeting of September 21, 2021
1:30 PM, Skype**

Attendance

Present: Faisal Al-Hmoud, Dennis Arnett, Nurcan Bac, Mario Beruvides, Stephanie Borst, Chance Brooks, Bobbie Brown, Dee Dee Brown-Campbell, Todd Chambers, Robert Cox, John Dascanio, Cathy Duran, Dottie Durband, Kristi Gaines, Jason Hale, Lindsay Hollowell, Jamie Hansard, Kaelene Hansen, Melanie Hart, Bret Hendricks, Wendy-Adele Humphrey, Jorge Iber, Catherine Jai, Darryl James, Michelle Kiser, Amy Koerber, Rodney Lackey, Mitzi Lauderdale, Ryan Litsey, Justin Louder, Brenda Martinez, Shirley Matteson, Pat McConnel, Kuhn Park, Reagan Ribordy, Pradip Sahu, Brian Shannon, Rob Stewart (Chair), Carol Sumner, Suzanne Tapp, Clay Taylor, Elizabeth Trejos-Castillo, Nicolas Valcik, Patricia Vitela, Annette Uddameri, and Janessa Walls.

Guests: Sandra Addo, Kasey Marshall, and Eric Rasmussen.

Action Items:

1. Associate deans are asked to complete the Perceived Barriers to Faculty Advancement survey and to encourage faculty in their area to complete the survey as well, which can be found [here](#).

Stewart called the meeting to order by inviting the new Council members and guests to introduce themselves. After the introductions, Stewart presented the August Council minutes. With no comments or revisions needed, Chambers moved to accept the minutes. Louder seconded, and the minutes were approved.

For the next item of business, Hollowell introduced the course proposals, beginning with the voting items. Hollowell specifically pointed out items 5 and 7, which were related proposals to add a new course, PR 2330 – Advocacy and Activism, as both a new course and as a Core Curriculum course in the Language, Philosophy, and Culture area. Stewart asked for a representative to discuss the justification for adding the course to the Language, Philosophy, and Culture component. Rasmussen explained that the course will approach advocacy and activism from a PR and strategic communication perspective. Rasmussen added that through the Language, Philosophy, and Culture area, students are to be able to think critically and evaluate multiple interpretations, whether cultural, historical, or based on value. As an example, Rasmussen explained that a person working in public health needs to be able to advocate for public health solutions to people from various backgrounds, cultures, and ideologies. CoMC believes this course will serve this need.

Stewart asked for a comment regarding the Core Curriculum element. James explained that the course has been submitted for Core consideration, and a decision on the course will be forthcoming. James clarified that it has not been approved as Core yet, but it has been submitted for consideration.

Stewart then highlighted item 11, which was a course number change for CS 2350. Hollowell clarified that the number is being changed to 3350 to help students meet their upper-division hour requirement. Stewart also highlighted item 16, which was a course deletion for ACOM 4100. Stewart speculated that the course was no longer used in the curriculum, and Brooks confirmed

that. With no further discussion, Chambers moved to approve, Beruvides seconded, and the course proposals were approved.

Stewart then introduced the program proposals, beginning with the new programs. Durband explained that the Advanced Wedding and Conference Management Graduate Certificate is designed to help students become event planners. Stewart asked about the significance of the word “Advanced” in the title. Durband clarified that item 1 was for the graduate certificate and item 4 was for an undergraduate certificate in Wedding and Conference Management. Stewart asked about the differences between the certificates in coursework. Louder added that the undergraduate certificate is designed as an introduction to the subject, and the graduate certificate is a deeper dive into the subject matter. Durband also explained that all the graduate courses use the word “Advanced” in the title.

Stewart then asked for a representative from Architecture to give information on the two proposed undergraduate certificates. Park explained that the Architectural Digital Media certificate will focus on digital modeling, documenting, and imaging. The college is anticipating bringing in professionals to contribute. The Ecological Architecture and Design certificate will focus on sustainability in architecture. This certificate offers the opportunity to go to Costa Rica.

Stewart mentioned that these four proposals could be considered for a vote, as they were similar items. James pointed out that each certificate is an internal TTU certificate and does not need THECB approval. Beruvides motioned to approve the new certificates, Gaines seconded, and the new certificates were approved.

For the next item, James introduced the Intra-Institutional Dual Degree proposals, which are dual degree programs between the Languages and Cultures area of the Department of Classical & Modern Languages and Literatures (CMLL) and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Romance Languages area of CMLL and Curriculum and Instruction. Hendricks explained that there is a lack of teachers in these areas, and the programs are designed to meet that need. Stewart asked if both degrees would be earned. Hendricks confirmed that both degrees would be earned, but there is potential for specialization in one of the areas. James added that there are 60 hours total, and 12 hours will be shared between the degrees. James also added that in this year’s legislative session, there was emphasis on enhancing training for teachers in the languages, so these programs will serve that need.

Stewart asked what kind of approval these programs will require. James explained that because they are existing programs that we are already authorized to offer, no further approval is needed. Stewart called for a motion for the dual degrees. Beruvides moved to approve both Intra-Institutional Dual Degrees, Iber seconded, and the programs were approved.

Stewart then introduced the informational items, which were all curricular changes. Beruvides added that the majority of the curricular changes are from the School of Music, which has worked diligently to clean up its curriculum. James added that the effective date for the curricular changes is Fall 2022.

For the next item of business, Stewart invited Trejos-Castillo to give an update on the work the Provost’s Faculty Fellows are doing. Last spring, Trejos-Castillo and Raegan Higgins developed a survey of perceived barriers to faculty advancement related to tenure promotion. The first stage has been completed with chairs, deans, and admins, and focus groups were completed in the summer. The project is now ready for stage two, which is specifically intended for faculty input. The survey has been made available and will be open until October 22. Trejos-Castillo asked

Council members to encourage their faculty members to complete the survey and participate in the forthcoming focus groups, and to complete the survey themselves. Trejos-Castillo added that there is an intention to conduct an additional stage of data with non-tenure track faculty next year. James encouraged Council members to make comments and suggestions as provided by the survey, as these comments help to clarify the data requirements.

Stewart then invited Louder to give an update on the Student Learning Placement Survey. Louder explained that in the next few weeks, all students participating in internship, externship, or practicum courses this fall will receive an email from eLearning with a survey about out-of-state learning placements. We are required to annually report all students with learning placements outside Texas but within the U.S. by program, CIP Code, and location. The survey will ask for confirmation of program of study, where they are taking part in the off-campus educational placement, what the company name is, and where it is located. Louder explained that this information is required for our approval with NC-SARA to provide distance and online courses outside Texas. eLearning will pull the information with the help of the Registrar's Office, so Council members will not need to take any action on this.

For the next item of business, Stewart introduced COVID-related academic matters. Stewart was not aware of any specific changes in guidance but mentioned that individual faculty are able to work with their respective areas to make temporary changes in course modalities in response to COVID-related conditions. Stewart also mentioned that there has been an increased interest in claiming religious exemptions for the vaccine. Some conversations to that effect focus on the regulations governing state-mandated vaccines for students living on campus not including the COVID-vaccine. Stewart added that there will be an update from Dr. Edwards of Student Health Services at the Provost's Council.

Al-Hmoud asked if there are specific religious exemptions that deter someone from getting the vaccine. Stewart was unaware of specific exemptions but mentioned that religious exemptions in general have existed in the broader landscape of vaccinations. Lauderdale and Hart both expressed that some religions do not support modern medicine.

Al-Hmoud then asked what opportunities students have if they are compelled to miss class because they have a COVID exposure, but their classes do not have hybrid or online options. Stewart explained that students who test positive or who have been in direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID should have provisions to work remotely while in quarantine or isolation. However, if students are merely concerned about an outbreak but have not tested positive or have not been in direct contact with someone who has tested positive, the decision is left to the faculty members' discretion. Stewart clarified that while the university mandated for instructors of face-to-face classes to have remote learning plans last year, no such mandate was made this year. Rather, the university has advised and encouraged instructors to prepare remote learning options (and not necessarily synchronous online class time) for students who fall under these conditions.

Al-Hmoud added that there is concern among students that some faculty members are not accommodating students who feel the need to self-isolate. Stewart encouraged students who are required to self-isolate to visit with the faculty member and to possibly escalate the issue to the department chair if necessary. Lauderdale added that faculty members are expected to provide opportunities, either synchronous or asynchronous, for students in those situations. While not all classes may provide the opportunity for students to remote in synchronously, students should at least have the ability to make up the work. Al-Hmoud said some students are not given the opportunity to make up the work, but they are outlier cases.

Chambers mentioned that there is a possibility that not all faculty understand the guidance or expectations because there is no mandate this year. Chambers added that not all classes provide the opportunity for synchronous learning, and some faculty are unsure how to serve the students in those situations. Stewart clarified that there is no mandate for faculty to provide synchronous opportunities for students in these situations. Faculty have been asked and encouraged to enable students to keep up with and/or make up coursework they miss because of COVID. Stewart added that the Provost has encouraged faculty to have grace and understanding for students who have COVID-related concerns. Vice Provosts offered to work with Al-Hmoud on individual cases. Iber also mentioned that concerns of faculty members in A&S specifically not working with students in these situations have not been expressed to the dean's office as of yet.

Duran added these types of concerns are often brought to the Office of the Dean of Students, and while there is much confusion among faculty on what can or should be done, Student Affairs has seen few such issues that are unable to be resolved. Al-Hmoud thanked the Council members for the advice and asked that since these provisions cannot be mandated to encourage faculty members to record their lectures to provide to students needing to miss class. Stewart explained that recording lectures was one of the options recommended by the Provost to help students keep up with coursework but that recording is not feasible in every classroom context.

Chambers mentioned that CoMC is seeing a lot of absenteeism in classes and asked Council members if they are seeing the same. Iber mentioned experiencing the same in A&S, and that students expressing their COVID concerns regarding their missing class are in the minority. However, Iber added that, historically, students in the large lower-division history lectures stop attending class every day by the fourth or fifth week. Lauderdale expressed a similar sentiment in the chat that attendance in HS classes varies from class to class.

Hart highlighted Louder's comment in the chat regarding the required accessibility of recorded lectures posted on Blackboard. Hart added that the lectures need to either be captioned or transcribed. James asked if the automatic transcription services provided by many platforms meet our accessibility requirements. Louder mentioned that those automatic transcription services are not 100% accurate and added that if a lecture is going to be offered multiple times or if a student has a letter of accommodation for that class, 100% accuracy is required.

Austin added that IT is researching the accuracy of the Zoom and Teams captioning services, and offered that the results of that research should be forthcoming in the spring. Hart added that in many situations it is likely sufficient to use the automatic transcription and captioning services as long as they are close enough.

Stewart then asked for items of other business. Sumner mentioned that a new forms portal is in progress for military and veteran students. The portal will offer a new way for MVP participants to submit all documentation and certifications. The portal will also provide an SBS view and the forms they have submitted throughout the university. Testing is ongoing and should be completed by the end of the month. All veteran students across the TTU System will be required to use this new forms portal beginning with registration for the Spring 2022 semester. This portal will allow students to see the status of the forms they have submitted and will incorporate warnings and notifications related to withdrawals and other concerns.

In another matter of other business, Bilkey asked if the tenure promotion deadline extension has ended and if the extension will be reevaluated. Stewart explained that the last formal timeline for the extensions was through May, and that has not been revisited since then. Stewart offered to

discuss it with the Provost, as the question has come up more than once in the past few weeks. (N.B. The question of probationary period extensions was taken up with the Deans subsequent to Academic Council and will be discussed at the September 28 meeting of Deans Council.)

Stewart voiced Kiser's comment in the chat regarding training for the book adoption process from the new bookstore. Stewart mentioned that the process should be available for spring, so training should be forthcoming. Stewart asked Austin if there was an update. Austin explained that the book ordering process has been launched and added that IT has put together some learning materials. They are anticipating some short videos and forums to be offered later in the fall. Austin also explained that the process has been integrated into Blackboard and that faculty members can search for textbooks by publisher. Austin then offered to discuss with the Blackboard Steering Committee to see if additional educational materials can be provided throughout campus.

Walls asked if there was a way that an administrative representative for a college can get into the system to verify that faculty members are submitting book orders and what book orders they are submitting. Austin asked how the Law School previously submitted book orders with Barnes & Noble, and Walls explained that faculty members gave book orders to the Law School and a representative placed the orders manually. Stewart mentioned that Follett should accommodate that practice. Austin offered to connect Walls with the right people to set up an interface to allow the Law School appropriate moderation.

Hearing no other items of business, Stewart asked for any announcements. Austin asked to give an announcement on the use of TopHat across the university and requested that a specific agenda item for TopHat be present on the October AC agenda to give a more in-depth update on the platform. Austin then informed the Council that after much research over the last year, the university has begun using TopHat to increase classroom engagement. The university is funding the use of TopHat for every TTU student, faculty, and staff member. IT is working with faculty who are still using other solutions to migrate to TopHat.

Hendricks asked if on-campus COVID testing would still be available for the next few days at Urbanovsky, Sam's Poolside, and Student Health. Stewart clarified that the state-provided vendor should be with us through the 27th and another vendor should be on campus through the remainder of the semester. Duran mentioned that the COVID testing clinic at Urbanovsky is only available to students, so Student Affairs has been sending staff to the Faculty and Staff Clinic at Student Health Services. Duran asked if the other clinics are available to the entire campus community. Stewart was unaware that some clinics are only available to students. Stewart offered to ask Dr. Edwards for clarification. (N.B. The testing clinic at Urbanovsky had been for students only.)

With no additional items or announcements, Stewart adjourned the meeting.