

**Texas Tech University
Academic Council**

**Meeting of February 18, 2020
1:30 PM, Library Room 309**

Attendance

Present: Cindy Akers, Andrea Bilkey, Shelly Bowman (for Bobbie Brown), Todd Chambers, Mayukh Dass, David Doerfert, Dottie Durband, Genevieve Durham DeCesaro, Kristi Gaines, Greg Glaus, Sheila Gray (for Jamie Hansard), Melanie Hart, Lindsay Hallowell, Darryl James, Michelle Kiser, Amy Koerber, Andrew Martin, Elizabeth Massengale (for Cathy Duran), Pat McConnel, Dee Nguyen, David Roach, Rob Stewart, Carol Sumner, Annette Uddameri, Patricia Vitela, Janessa Walls, Lesley Washington (for MaryAlice Torres-MacDonald), Dana Weiser, Vicki West, Aliza Wong.

Guests: Joe Dannemiller, Kaelene Hansen, Robert Peaslee.

Action Items:

1. Associate Deans are asked to provide feedback on the template designed for student absences for university-sanctioned events.
2. Associate Deans are asked to revisit the email from Durham DeCesaro regarding degree audit procedures, which are due by Friday, February 21st.
3. Associate Deans are asked to share the information about a moratorium on proposals to add courses to the core and multicultural curriculum. The moratorium is effective for proposals specific to the 2021-2022 academic year. Proposals for the 2020-2021 academic year are moving forward.

Stewart called the meeting to order by presenting the minutes from the January Council meeting. With no additional discussion, Chambers moved to approve the minutes, Roach seconded, and the minutes were approved as presented.

Stewart then invited the members to introduce guests. Hallowell introduced Kaelene Hansen, who was hired to serve as the new Official Publications senior editor. Uddameri then introduced Joe Dannemiller, who was hired as a new academic dean in the College of Engineering. Dannemiller will fill in at Academic Council when needed. Stewart also welcomed Lesley Washington, who will be filling in for MaryAlice Torres-MacDonald, and Shelly Bowman, who represented the Registrar's Office.

Stewart then turned the floor over to Hughes, who gave a presentation on the Spring 2020 Retention and Re-enrollment rates. Overall, the rates are encouraging, especially the fourth-year rate, which is up considerably from last year. There is a small group in the 201527 cohort that is getting close to the six-year graduation deadline, and Hughes mentioned that the university has an opportunity to help those students graduate. The "Students Expected to Return" cohort consists of all students, rather than only First Time in College (FTIC) students, and the low figure could point to a transfer student issue.

This presentation from Hughes led directly into the next item of business, which was a discussion of departmental retention plans. Stewart explained that following an audit of the student success and retention processes in late fall, the Office of the Provost started exploring the idea of departmental retention plans. Stewart announced that within the next few weeks, the Office of the Provost will send out a call for departmental and college retention plans, first drafts of which will be due by the end of March. Hughes encouraged departments to think beyond the central processes and to include documenting interactions with students and how students perform in courses, specifically DFW rates. He also pointed out that the students' attrition rates are based on their first colleges, meaning that if students transfer to a different college, those students are still their first college's responsibility in terms of retention and tracking.

Roach mentioned that many students do transfer between colleges, and it might be helpful to bring awareness to that responsibility. Hughes clarified that the responsibility should be shared, so having centralized resources is invaluable. Stewart commented that retention is a team effort and that it is his hope that these retention plans will help the departments and colleges know how to share that responsibility to better serve the students and increase retention. Hughes added that while we track college-specific retention rates for our own reporting, we only report university-wide rates. James mentioned that SACSCOC requires us to break down our reports by gender, race, and socio-economic status and show what we as an institution are doing to increase retention rates in those three categories.

Stewart then introduced the list of course proposals. Hallowell explained that she and Durham DeCesaro are experimenting with a new format for presenting the proposals to the Council to make it easier to edit and to read on the screen. The main change is the separation of proposals by type. Stewart highlighted that item 15, KIN 2307 Medical Terminology for Kinesiology Majors, is a result of a previous discussion from the fall during which the Council determined that the departments of Kinesiology and Sport Management and Nutritional Sciences should come to an agreement on how to handle the proposed new course. Doerfert mentioned that item 17 was incorrectly listed as UN rather than GR. Akers requested that the Council table item 41 so the college can investigate the CIP code change.

Durham DeCesaro then mentioned that as previously discussed, pre- and corequisite changes are now listed on the summary so Associate Deans can look at those changes and report to their colleges any changes that may affect their students. With no further discussion, Doerfert moved to approve the proposals with the suggested amendments, Chambers seconded, and the proposals were approved.

Durham DeCesaro then introduced the program proposals, which included several voting items. The first voting item was an administrative unit change to move the B.S. in Wind Energy to the College of Arts & Sciences. Roach thanked Hughes for getting the process started, and Hughes expressed excitement that WE has finally found a college home and is sure the program will flourish in A&S. The next administrative unit change was a proposed title change for the department of Human Development and Family Studies to Human Development and Family Sciences. Durband explained that this change would allow the department to mirror trends in the industry.

The next two proposals were degree modality changes: one to offer the B.S. in Kinesiology at the Waco campus and the other to offer the M.S. in Personal Financial Planning at two external campuses. James asked how much of the programs would be offered face-to-face, and Hart clarified that they should be less than 50% if these will be administered the same as other campuses.

Roach asked for clarification of the term “degree modality change” for proposals that add campuses rather than change the mode of instruction. Hart explained that with the campuses being external, it is considered a modality change. Durham DeCesaro will clarify language on Curriculog to better reflect that a modality change includes a change in the location that a program will be offered.

The last voting item was a new undergraduate certificate in Game Design. Peaslee explained that two courses for the certificate have already been approved, and the certificate will be effective in fall of this year. As a representative from the College of Education was absent, the Council agreed to keep the proposal for the semester credit hour reduction for the B.S. in Multidisciplinary Studies on the table. Akers moved to approve the proposals as presented with the Multidisciplinary Studies proposal tabled, Doerfert seconded, and the proposals were approved.

The remaining program proposals were informational items only. The majority of the proposals were curricular changes, and there were also three proposals to remove the concentrations from the Information Technology B.B.A. With no additional discussion, the council moved to the next item of business.

Durham DeCesaro then gave an update regarding core and multicultural curriculum. On January 6, 2020, we were notified that THECB would no longer review individual courses submitted as additions to an institution’s core curriculum. As we had several courses approved at the institutional level but rejected by THECB and listed as “skills-based courses,” this new policy prompted meetings with the Core and Multicultural Curriculum Steering Committee. The Steering Committee decided to bring forward the proposal attached to these minutes. The first part of the proposal is that the committee decided not to interrupt the current cycle of core and multicultural course submissions. The attachment includes the list of courses proposed to include as core curriculum effective fall 2020. The proposal is for the Council to approve the attached list, which we will then send to Austin. This submission will effectively certify that TTU is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code 4.28, which prescribes required learning objectives for specific course areas.

Durham DeCesaro clarified that courses listed with a single asterisk were those courses deemed by THECB to be “skills-based” courses, a determination that we disagreed with. The Steering Committee decided it would be best to reach out to the affected home departments and offer them the opportunity to revisit these rejected courses and submit revised proposals with more in-depth syllabi to prove that course content was in addition to the specific skill being taught. The courses marked with a double asterisk were approved by all our internal committees but were

rejected at the state level. These affected units were also allowed the chance to resubmit their proposals.

Uddameri asked when the departments were approached to review their submissions. Durham DeCesaro explained that all departments were contacted in late January and were asked to provide a several-day turnaround to streamline the process. Dass asked how departments overcame the designation of “skills-based.” Durham DeCesaro clarified that most departments added elements to the course that would make them more applicable to all disciplines. Dass asked for the reasons the double asterisks courses were rejected. Durham DeCesaro explained that most of those courses were not explicit enough in the objectives they were assessing. Stewart called for a vote on the proposed list of courses. Wong moved, Dass seconded, and the list was approved with the amendment to fix missing course numbers.

Durham DeCesaro then explained changes included in Senate Bill 25, in which the legislature proposed separating the core curriculum into two sections: a foundational core and a meta-major core. The state defines meta-major as a broad disciplinary area, such as arts or sciences. The proposal is for students at all state public institutions to take the same set of courses in the foundational core, which will likely include the two English Composition and Rhetoric courses, the two American history courses, and the two political science and government courses. The other courses students would take would be specific to their meta-major. Durham DeCesaro explained that the legislative intention is to keep students from accruing excess credit hours by guiding students to core curriculum courses that are more relevant to a specific disciplinary set. The challenge is that students who change their majors after completing the meta-major core curriculum may find that their meta-major core courses are not applicable to their new majors. The state charged THECB to convene an advisory group representative of all the in-state institutions to spend a year studying this proposal. Our representative is Don Topliff, Provost at Angelo State. Chambers asked if there would be a public opportunity to make comments, and Durham DeCesaro explained there should be a 30-day window to submit institutional comments after the advisory group’s report is submitted.

At this juncture, TTU’s Core and Multicultural Curriculum Steering Committee proposed to put a moratorium on submissions for new core and multicultural curriculum courses until a decision at the state level concerning the restructuring of the core curriculum has been made. Uddameri expressed concern that the College of Engineering is revamping their curriculum and specifically asked about the ethics course that the college wants to make changes to. Durham DeCesaro explained that changes to existing core courses is not affected by this new policy. That is, proposals to change existing core and multicultural curriculum courses will still be accepted. Durham DeCesaro called for a motion for the moratorium. Doerfert moved, Chambers seconded, and the motion was passed.

Stewart then introduced another update to the 2025 calendar proposal. Hallowell explained that it was brought to her attention that the proposed fall intersession dates fell outside the approved timeline for financial aid. To remedy this, we needed to push back the intersession by two days, meaning the intersession will end the day before classes start that fall. She mentioned that there is precedent for this action. Durband moved to approve the updated intersession dates, Dass seconded, and the updated calendar was approved.

The next item of business concerned a new template for student absences for university-sanctioned events. Durham DeCesaro introduced the new template to the Council, the final version of which faculty will provide to students requesting excused absences. The proposal requests that the forms have two signatures and includes a list of approved activities. Stewart mentioned that this new form could be routed electronically through STRIVE, and Hughes confirmed that such electronic routing would also be available with the new STRIVE vendors. Uddameri asked about the implications of a college providing a letter to students whose majors are in other colleges. Stewart explained that since the dean's offices must sign off on the forms, there should be some assurance that the events are legitimate, as happens with athletics events. Stewart also clarified that just because students want to attend an event does not make that event university-sanctioned, putting responsibility on the colleges to show discernment in approving absences. Durham DeCesaro asked for feedback on the template and expressed hope that a final version will be adopted before the start of the fall semester.

The last item on the agenda concerned the discussion from the January Council meeting regarding the awarding of posthumous undergraduate degrees. The decision was that eligible students will have been in good academic standing and will have completed 75% of their degree requirements at the time of death. The proposal will allow the university to initiate the process of awarding posthumous diplomas rather than waiting for the families to request them. Sumner asked how the policy was currently being carried out, and Durham DeCesaro explained that there was not currently a set policy. Stewart clarified that the policy had been handled on a case-by-case basis. He also mentioned that having a policy in place does not mean that exceptions cannot be made under extenuating circumstances.

Durham DeCesaro explained that a posthumous diploma is only one way the university responds to student deaths. Elizabeth Massengale explained that other ways TTU responds to student deaths include lowering the flag at the Memorial Circle and presenting that flag accompanied by a plaque to the student's parents, replications of the student's class rings, and certificates of completion from the student's college. Sumner brought up a consideration for parents who might see the language "eligibility criteria *are*" and might be discouraged from requesting a posthumous diploma because of the authoritarian language. Stewart recommended qualifying the "are" with "typically" to prevent any unnecessary discouragement of requests. Stewart then called for a vote to adopt the language with the qualifier "typically are." Koerber moved, Dass seconded, and the language was adopted.

In other business, Stewart brought to the Council's attention the degree audit procedures email that Durham DeCesaro sent to the Associate Deans regarding an Audit Services request from last year for institutional degree audit procedures. The email asks the Associate Deans to revisit the procedures of completing degree audits for students within their colleges. Stewart asked for the Associate Deans to provide those procedures to the Office of the Provost by Friday the 21st. We are required to have a central documentation process, and the Office of the Registrar is helping facilitate this process.

Hughes then offered to the Council members literature on what the academic success coaches do as part of the Academic Life Coaching program offered by the Office of Student Success and Retention.

With no other business or announcements, Stewart adjourned the meeting.