

**Texas Tech University  
Academic Council**

**Meeting of March 24, 2020  
1:30 PM, Skype**

**Attendance**

**Present:** Cindy Akers, Andrea Bilkey, Dennis Arnett, Kathy Austin, Bobbie Brown, Todd Chambers, John Dascanio, Mayukh Dass, David Doerfert, Cathy Duran, Genevieve Durham DeCesaro, Kristi Gaines, Greg Glaus, Jamie Hansard, Melanie Hart, Lindsay Hallowell, Sheila Hoover, Patrick Hughes, Darryl James, Michelle Kiser, Amy Koerber, Mitzi Lauderdale, Justin Louder, Andrew Martin, Pat McConnel, Sukant Misra, Alison Myhra, Dee Nguyen, Reagan Ribordy, David Rivero, David Roach, Brian Shannon, Rob Stewart, Carol Sumner, Annette Uddameri, Janessa Walls, Lesley Nall Washington, Dana Weiser, Aliza Wong.

**Action Items:**

- 1. Associate Deans are asked to remind faculty and staff in their colleges that Monday, April 13th, is a day of no classes.**
- 2. Academic units are asked to refer to the [Academic Affairs resources page](#) for current guidance related to academic affairs items affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- 3. Voting members are asked to note the corrected degree type described in the discussion on program proposals. The M.Arch should have been presented as the MS in Architecture.**

Stewart introduced the Microsoft Word form through which Council members would submit their votes during the meeting. Stewart then presented the minutes from the February Council meeting. With no additional discussion, Chambers moved to approve the minutes, Dascanio seconded, and Stewart asked the members to record their votes in the form.

Stewart then introduced the second item on the agenda, which considered the university's COVID-19 response. At the bottom of the agenda are resources for the Council members to use and share with their areas. This is a new experience for everyone, and during such rapidly changing circumstances, everyone is encouraged to treat others with grace, especially with regard to students who are currently displaced from where they thought they would be and without the resources they would have if they were on campus in regularly scheduled classes. The Provost's Office thanked the Council members and the university as a whole for helping the university through these circumstances. Then Stewart turned the floor over to Hart and Louder for an update on the Online Teaching and Learning Resources.

Hart explained that eLearning has created some websites accessible through the eLearning website with resources to use during the COVID-19 situation. One website is for students, and the other is for faculty. Louder shared the links to the website in the Skype chat feature. They have been providing trainings for Blackboard and are working with Microsoft Teams to allow instructors and students to collaborate for class. They are meeting the needs of students who

already had in-class accommodations before trying to meet other needs for accommodations that have arisen out of this situation. Hart then discussed how there have been concerns about copyright and fair-use and explained that this type of situation is why fair-use exists. Louder mentioned that, in response to the many questions concerning exams and quizzes, there are already two tools in place for lock-down browsers and proctoring services for exams. He also explained that there are many other processes in Blackboard that can limit the possibility of academic misconduct, including randomized questions. One of the trainings eLearning is offering covers exams in Blackboard. They are also concerned with engagement with students, so the team is available to help instructors and students manage the transition.

Louder then discussed the faculty who have tried using the phone feature in Skype or Blackboard Collaborate and have received busy signals. He clarified that such issues are nationwide and not specific to Texas Tech. The system is being overwhelmed with so many schools now turning to online instruction, but there is work being done to increase the service to meet these needs. Austin interjected and informed the Council that Texas Tech will be receiving an expansion of bandwidth to better meet our needs, but she explained that one of the best ways to conserve bandwidth is to only use video when it is necessary for instruction. Information Technology will continue to share information and updates they receive from tech companies.

Next, Stewart asked for James to give an update from SACSCOC. James explained that the U.S. Department of Education and SACSCOC expect instructors to maintain regular and substantive interaction with students regardless of the delivery mode. Instructors are expected to have one hour of instructional content per week per hour of the course. In addition, instructors are expected to maintain the original objectives of each course, though they should be aware that the method of meeting those objectives will likely change. When instructors adjust their syllabi to account for these changes, they should keep equity in mind and be fair to all students. There will be a Qualtrics survey sent to all instructors on which they will communicate what their plan for instructional continuity is so the university will be better prepared to answer SACSCOC questions in the future. Stewart asked James to clarify instructional continuity, and James explained that the survey will ask how the instructors plan to continue meeting the course objectives. SACSCOC wants to see documented evidence of what Texas Tech says they are planning to do, and this survey will accomplish that. The survey will also help instructors communicate these plans to their students.

Hart added that faculty are not able to simply capture their lectures and put them online. They must maintain that substantive and regular interaction, meaning faculty must be engaged in discussion with students. Sumner noted that the VA has suspended their determination of face-to-face versus online courses as that determination affects the percentage of housing allowance veteran students will receive.

Chambers asked whether the faculty will be required to keep track of and report the hours of instruction per week. James clarified that SACSCOC is requiring Texas Tech to submit a Principle of Integrity, signed by the President and by James, which certifies that the university will be performing the necessary hours of instruction. This means that additional documentation of those instructional hours will not be required. However, James explained that the university

needs a plan in place to document that all instructors of record understand that things are changing and know how to communicate that to the Provost's Office and also to the students.

Stewart then turned the floor over to Durham DeCesaro. Durham DeCesaro asked for Council members to review the information on the [Academic Affairs resources page](#) and to verify, as applicable, that the information about their areas is accurate and up to date. The first concern she addressed was whether the university should move to a universal pass/fail grading process for this Spring semester. Durham DeCesaro explained the many implications of changing a course to a pass/fail grade, including that this type of change must take place at the course level, meaning that this change must be made on every section and then all students must be dropped from the sections and re-enrolled. Other implications include the lack of a letter grade in pass/fail courses which could have consequences for academic standing and on courses that are dependent upon letter grades in prerequisite courses. Stewart added that both students and parents should understand the GPA implications of pass/fail courses. He asked that rather than focusing on the end product of a course to focus on the process. He shared from Provost Galyean that instructors should consider where students stood in their courses before the COVID-19 outbreak and consider how their performance may change from March 30 moving forward as evidence of how they are managing the course content, a new course structure, and their own life circumstances. Instructors are urged to take that context under consideration when determining grades.

Durham DeCesaro also mentioned that we have the ability to issue grades of incomplete to students when necessary. She added that the grade of incomplete should not be offered as a blanket solution to this transition to online instruction but should be considered on a case-by-case basis for students who have unforeseen circumstances preventing them from completing the course during the semester. In addition, Durham DeCesaro explained that we have extended the drop date to May 1. During normal situations, students are only allowed to drop 6 courses without being penalized; however, under certain circumstances, the state lifts that restriction. This current crisis meets that threshold. While students will not be penalized for dropping a course during this time, students should contact their academic units before dropping a course to make sure there will not be penalties in terms of scholarships or financial aid. She clarified that undergraduate students who choose to withdraw from the university will have to reapply in order to continue taking courses in the summer or fall. All students should communicate with their academic units before making any decisions about dropping or withdrawing.

Then Durham DeCesaro discussed internships and student teaching courses as part of students' degree programs. Academic units outside of the College of Education who have students in secondary certification programs will continue to be included on correspondence with the College of Education concerning TEA guidance on those students' fulfillment of their certification requirements. Durham DeCesaro then brought the Council's attention to students on internships. The Academic Affairs guidance, which was updated Monday, does not cover paid internships. Academic units that have students who wish to continue working during their internships must be able to separate the course objectives from the paid work and determine whether students have met the course objectives or will be able to do so in a remote setting. Doing so will allow students to be assessed and graded over content that does not require students to be on-site at the internship location. This will allow the students to work out an agreement with the employer if they so choose and removes the university from the equation.

Durham DeCesaro then brought up that some of our students may be called for military service, and she urged Council members to read the Academic Affairs guidance to understand how the university plans to respond to that situation. The university is working on a way for students to self-report whether they have been called to service, which will then be reported to the academic units. Students are encouraged to determine whether they will be able to remain enrolled in and successfully complete their courses while simultaneously executing their military service. If this is not possible, the university will aid the students in either receiving incompletes for their courses or, if necessary, dropping their courses.

The next item Durham DeCesaro covered concerned final exams. So far, the university has not deviated from the original final exam schedule. Exams for synchronously taught courses will occur as listed in the course syllabus and as was published on the final exam website. The university is not, at present, planning to transition any day of no classes into a class day. Stewart interjected that April 13, the day after the Easter holiday, will continue to be a day of no classes as is scheduled.

Louder then discussed final exam delivery for asynchronous courses. Some best practices include giving students at least a 24-hour window to take the exam. If every class chooses the same 24-hour period for exams, students may have trouble taking all their exams; therefore, instructors are encouraged not to schedule all their exams for the first 24 hours of the final exam period. For synchronous instruction, exams can be scheduled on the regular exam day and open at the start of the exam time and close at the end of the allotted time. There are resources for moving exams to an online format, including a lock-down browser and a proctored service. Students were not told that they would need a webcam when they registered for these courses, and although webcams can be purchased fairly cheap, instructors should consider their options for exam delivery to avoid putting any financial burden on students.

Durham DeCesaro then mentioned that the university is not currently putting a hold on the academic standing process. In terms of commencement, we are moving to a virtual ceremony for the spring commencement ceremony. Detailed information is expected to be sent out early next week. At present, students will be invited to participate in the virtual ceremony for spring, or to attend the face-to-face ceremony in August, or both.

Durham DeCesaro then brought the Council's attention to a comment from Hoover in the chat feature regarding students who do not have computers or internet access. Austin clarified that IT is working on getting access for students on campus. Durham DeCesaro also mentioned that some students may now be unavailable during synchronous course times for a variety of reasons. Because of this, she encouraged academic units to create a plan for how faculty members will respond to these types of issues.

With no questions for Durham DeCesaro, Stewart turned the floor over to Hughes to give an update on academic advising. Hughes described the resources for moving advising online that are available to academic advisors. One such resource is Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. While this is not the only option, it is a good fit because there is little startup and setup for students, and it might be more intuitive for students because Blackboard is a familiar format. Student Success

is providing training, and Hughes provided a URL to a training that took place last week for Council members to view and share with people in their areas. Hughes also explained that IT has made arrangements for students to be uploaded to college reception rooms to get them ready for online advising. He mentioned that not only advisors will have access to these resources; any other areas that have interactions with students, such as MVP, PADR, and First Generation can also use these resources. He then shared a wiki page with these resources.

Stewart then asked Duran to share an update for Student Services. Duran discussed that every student service has moved to a virtual office so they can keep an eye on student wellness and engagement. A specific concern is feelings of isolation for students who have already expressed symptoms of depression and anxiety. Existing clients are now set up for tele-counseling, and for now the office is still open for crisis situations. However, Duran mentioned that if the university progresses into Phase IV, they will likely have to close down the physical office and rely on the crisis line and tele-counseling. Student Affairs has moved up the launch of the Therapy Assistance Online and the self-help modules for students dealing with depression and anxiety. Student Affairs is also currently using systems, such as Skype for Business, Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, and Teams to meet students' needs.

All events and gatherings have been canceled, and student organizations have been instructed to cancel all events with 10 people or more. Student Affairs has set up a dedicated website to provide resources and information during this time. The online reporting system for students of concern will function as normal, but meetings with students will be virtual or by phone. The food pantry is currently open, but they are working on how to meet those needs if the university proceeds to Phase IV. Parent and Family Relations has been reaching out to parents to share information and resources with them. Student Conduct is still functioning as normal, so students will still be held accountable for their behavior, but the hearings will be virtual rather than in person. Student Affairs has been working with other divisions to focus on academic conduct and integrity as classes and exams are moved online. They are also trying to move awards ceremonies online.

Misra gave an update on International Affairs. The spring semester started with 109 students studying abroad. Initially, 4 students were brought home, and we have now brought an additional 104 students home to the U.S. One student is still abroad, who is an F-1 international student studying in Europe. International Affairs has advised him to stay in Finland until we can figure out a way to bring him home. As of yesterday, they have not heard of any additional students who have tested positive for COVID-19 besides the one student who has already been reported. Misra explained that because the focus has been on the students, he realized that they had neglected their faculty. By the time he sent emails to the faculty, some faculty had canceled their trips, some faculty had already returned, and some did not plan to return from abroad. All faculty who returned are well. Misra also told the Council that the ICC is open with four staff members performing essential duties, but the passport office is closed to the public. In addition, all public events have been canceled.

Stewart then discussed the faculty implications of this situation. There have been questions regarding an extension of the tenure clock for those faculty on a probation period, considering the implication of this situation on research activities. Another question related to faculty who

have had papers or presentations accepted to present at conferences and professional meetings and how those faculty represent that on their CVs. Stewart recommended faculty should credit those intended presentations on their CVs but make a note that COVID-19 prevented that event from taking place. He noted, however, that many organizations are utilizing a virtual atmosphere for conferences and events. Dr. Heppert spoke about faculty members participating in faculty startup and whether they can carry their current work forward. Stewart said they can anticipate extensions.

Another question concerned the remote work form sent out by HR last week. Stewart explained that any employees who are working remotely need to submit those remote work agreements in addition to the spreadsheet sent out Monday. The university anticipates moving into Phase IV, so all departments need to make plans for employees not already working remotely to be prepared to do so. Stewart explained that Phase IV restricts campus to only necessary activity. Stewart then mentioned that based on section 18 of [OP 70.01, Miscellaneous Leaves of Absence](#), if staff or faculty members are called to active military service, it does not impact any of their other leave. He encouraged Council members to review the policy if they have faculty in their areas who may be called to active duty.

Stewart then discussed the implications of this situation on hiring, to include interviewing processes for candidates. All interviews would need to be remote. For searches in the early stages, the university will have to consider which positions are necessary.

Wong asked for clarification about the remote work agreements. Stewart clarified that any employee who is working remotely needs to fill out a form, not just staff. Stewart sent an update after the meeting that the spreadsheets will suffice for faculty. Sumner also mentioned that anyone not working in their offices will be considered remote.

Iber mentioned that he has had many students asking about assignments being due this week and next. There is a specific concern about an assignment due on Monday, March 30 and a student was concerned about that due date. Dr. Stewart explained that based on normal Spring Break procedures, assignments due the Monday following Spring Break would still be due. However, he recommended that slack be given during this time because of this COVID-19 situation. Rivero asked for clarification on assignments scheduled for this week, and Stewart clarified that no assignments, tests, or quizzes should be due this week, and students should reach out to their professors about it.

Sumner mentioned that Institutional Diversity is working remotely as well as all the divisions within ID. Faculty searches that have already been certified can be processed, and necessary trainings can take place in an online format. Specifically, the MVP team is working remotely to make sure all students are being taken care of, including the military students who need certification for the summer and fall terms to prevent interruptions in their benefits. Institutional Diversity is working with Elizabeth Sharp and Women's and Gender Studies and Research and Innovation to create online communities where individuals can connect with one another. They will continue working on resources within the university and the community to allow people to be connected during this time.

Stewart asked for additional questions to be directed to him or Durham DeCesaro so they can respond to them. Durham DeCesaro said that any questions that had been asked in the chat that had not been answered already would be responded to after the meeting. The Council then transitioned to the usual items of business: the program and course proposals. Two program proposals needed a vote, both of which intend to offer existing programs at external campuses. One proposal requested to offer the M.B.A. at the Costa Rica Campus, and the other proposal requested to offer the MS in Architecture. with a concentration in Historical Preservation at TTU El Paso. Durham DeCesaro pointed out that the remaining program proposals were largely curricular changes.

James asked whether the council needed to vote to make TTU El Paso an off-campus site. Durham DeCesaro said this vote is only intended to decide to offer the program there and not to make El Paso a site. She also explained that she had not seen a proposal to formally make El Paso a site. Stewart agreed that this proposal should only be to vote on offering the Architecture. program at the El Paso site. Durham DeCesaro asked Hart for insight on the creation of El Paso as a site. Hart explained that the prospectus is in progress and once it is completed, the Council will likely need to vote on it. Durham DeCesaro offered that an addendum could be added to the MS in Architecture. proposal that it is pending the approval of El Paso as a site.

Louder asked how we would admit students into the program if it is not approved at the El Paso site. Durham DeCesaro explained that since the degree exists, the students would have to be held at the main campus until the El Paso site was approved. Stewart recommended holding the proposal until a decision on the site is made. James offered an explanation that we can submit the site to be operated with less than 50% of courses offered there so students can be admitted in the fall. Afterwards we can approve it as an off-campus instructional site, which must be submitted by June. Stewart agreed that the Council will proceed as originally intended and called for a motion to approve the proposals. Doerfert moved and Wong seconded. Stewart asked the Council members to use the online form to record their votes.

Durham DeCesaro introduced the course proposals and asked the Council members to only consider the items needing a vote and not the informational items. Stewart accepted the absence of discussion as a motion and thus called for a vote. Durham DeCesaro reminded members to consider the changes to pre- and corequisite courses which may affect courses and students within their units and degree plans.

Durham DeCesaro then introduced the updated calendar layout design. Hallowell explained that this new design is in response to feedback about the current layout for the detailed calendar. Official Publications has worked with Communications & Marketing to create a more use-friendly and engaging design for our calendar, which is attached to the agenda. The new design has separate tabs for each term and a fourth tab for the academic year, which features expandable and collapsible rows for each month.

With no other business or announcements, Stewart requested that members submit their votes on the provided form and then adjourned the meeting.