

**Texas Tech University
Academic Council**

**Meeting of March 16, 2021
1:30 PM, Skype**

Attendance

Present: Cindy Akers, Dennis Arnett, Kathy Austin, Andrea Bilkey, Bobbie Brown, Jaclyn Cañas-Carrell, Todd Chambers, John Dascanio, Mayukh Dass, David Doerfert, Cathy Duran, Dottie Durband, Kristi Gaines, Greg Glaus, Jason Hale, Lindsay Hallowell, Kaelene Hansen, Melanie Hart, Hunter Heck, Sheila Hoover, Patrick Hughes, Wendy-Adele Humphrey, Jorge Iber, Darryl James, Michelle Kiser, Amy Koerber, Mitzi Lauderdale, Justin Louder, Pat McConnel, David Roach, Brian Shannon, Rob Stewart, Carol Sumner, Suzanne Tapp, Nicolas Valcik, Patricia Vitela, and Janessa Walls.

Guests: Nurcan Bac, Eric Bernard, Shannon Bichard, Gerri Botte, Jenn Burns, Scott Burris, Donell Callender, Cynthia Cantu, Kelli Cargile-Cook, Mark Charney, Warren Conway, Jack Cooney, Sean Cunningham, Arthur Durband, Deborah Fowler, Lisa Garner, Mark Gring, Jeremy Herrera, Rattikorn Hewett, Raegan Higgins, Darren Hudson, Catherine Jai, Eileen Johnson, Jeong Hee Kim, Sungwon Lee, Angela Lumpkin, Sreedhar Madhavaram, Shirley Matteson, Yehia Mechref, Diann Merriman, Catherine Morelock, Robert Morgan, Kevin Mulligan, Bryan Norman, Michael Orth, Kuhn Park, Mabry Payne, Carmen Pereira, Eric Rasmussen, Glen Ritchie, Donovan Satchell, Brian Still, Stacy Stockard, Magda Toda, Andy Swift, Marcus Tanner, Elizabeth Trejos-Castillo, Marshall Watson, Channing Wicks, Brock Williams, and Macie Williams.

Action Items:

1. Associate deans are asked to urge faculty members to be aware of and correct instances of students not wearing masks in academic buildings.
2. Associate deans are asked to encourage faculty members to complete the eLearning survey on pandemic instructional resources. Survey can be found [here](#).
3. Associate deans are asked to notify faculty members of the forthcoming messaging regarding the FSSE survey. Information regarding the survey can be found [here](#).

Stewart called the meeting to order by presenting the minutes from the January and February Council meetings. With no comments or revisions, Chambers motioned to approve both sets of minutes, Akers seconded, and the minutes were approved.

For the next item of business, Cañas-Carrell introduced the summary of course proposals. Hallowell explained that item 12, GERM 5322, had been tabled in the fall and needed a vote to be removed from the table and considered with the other voting items. Stewart called for a motion. Roach motioned to remove the course from the table, Brown seconded, and the motion carried. Stewart then called for a motion for the remaining voting items. Chambers moved to accept the course proposals needing a vote, Louder seconded, and the courses were approved.

Cañas-Carrell then introduced the program proposals, starting with the new programs. The first two items were accelerated bachelor's to master's degrees in the College of Engineering: the Chemical Engineering, BS/Bioengineering, M.S. and the Computer Science, BS/Bioengineering, M.S. Bac explained that these programs had been on the books

previously and the college wanted to reinstate them. Stewart asked for clarification that the individual programs currently exist and that these accelerated programs would provide a fast track for students wishing to do both. Bac confirmed that.

Stewart then asked what the total number of hours would be for the accelerated program. Bac said that the BS/MS programs are 150 hours. James clarified that they are colloquially called 150-hour programs but that, since the engineering BS programs are more than 120 hours, the accelerated programs will be more than 150 hours. Stewart asked for clarification that hours would be saved by doing the accelerated approach, and Bac confirmed that 9 credit hours are accepted toward both the BS and M.S. degrees.

The remaining new program was a proposed graduate minor in Agribusiness. Akers explained that the program is a 15-hour graduate minor of existing courses. Hudson added that the minor has been requested from entities like the TTU School of Veterinary Medicine to provide agribusiness training for scientific-based graduate students.

Louder asked if the minor would be offered online or offered in Amarillo if it is intended for SVM students. Hudson clarified that the program is a condensed version of the Master of Agribusiness and most of the courses are currently offered online. Louder asked if the minor was routed in Curriculog as an online option. Akers clarified that since not all the courses are available online at this time, the minor was proposed as a face-to-face program, but once all the courses are available online, the department will submit a proposal to offer the minor online. Hart gave a reminder that any time a program will be offered outside the Lubbock campus, it is considered a distance delivery.

Stewart called for a motion for the new programs. Doerfert moved to approve the new program proposals, Durband seconded, and the new programs were approved.

The next voting item was a title change for the M.Ed. in Bilingual Education to Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language. The final two voting items were CIP code changes for the undergraduate minor and undergraduate certificate in Arts Entrepreneurship. Stewart asked for clarification on the change. Bilkey clarified that either the programs were initially submitted with the incorrect codes or the codes were appropriate at the time, but since then the appropriate codes have been changed. Bilkey added that the THECB flagged the codes as needing correction.

Brown mentioned that changing the CIP code will require a new program code, and Austin mentioned that changing the CIP code will also affect our reporting. Stewart called for a motion. Chambers moved, Doerfert seconded, and the remaining voting items were approved.

The informational items were curricular changes. With no further discussion of the informational items, Hallowell added that part of a proposal had been omitted from the February summary of proposals in error. The Ph.D. in Higher Education Research had a CIP code and degree modality change that were approved at the February meeting. The Curriculog proposal also included a title change to Higher Education, which was left off the summary. As the title change was included in the Curriculog proposal which had been approved, Hallowell wanted to bring it to the Council's attention as an additional informational item.

For the next item of business, Stewart introduced Senators Satchell, Wicks, and Payne from the Student Government Association (SGA). The Council heard a proposal from the SGA

senators to change the time that registration opens. The SGA has found that with registration opening at 3 p.m., students are found registering during class, work, or extra-curricular activities. In addition, registration opening at 3 p.m. allows only two hours for advisors to address student registration needs before the end of the business day.

To give specific examples of issues SGA has noticed, Senator Satchell pointed out that the server that houses the registration platform gets bogged down to the point of crashing at times with so many students trying to register before the end of the business day. SGA believes moving registration to 7 a.m. will spread out the number of students registering at once. In addition, Senator Wicks highlighted that an earlier time for registration would allow advisors more time during business hours to adjust the number of seats or open additional sections in major-specific classes if necessary. Senator Payne also added that the early time should not interfere with students' registering for major- or college-specific classes, as diligent students will take the steps necessary to register for the classes they need to graduate.

The SGA proposes to move registration to 7 a.m. to prevent or alleviate these issues and create a better registration experience for students. Stewart clarified that this would not be an immediate change; rather, the SGA is gathering insights and perspectives from within and outside the university to share with the senate for a possible future resolution. Stewart thanked the senators for their proposal and then asked for Brown to give a perspective from the Registrar's Office.

Brown explained that from the Registrar's Office perspective, there is no restriction on the time at which registration opens. Brown added that the last time this issue was discussed at Academic Council was in 2014, and the discussion focused on finding a time when advisors were most likely to be able to pick up the phone to help students having difficulties registering. Brown voiced support for registration opening earlier to allow advisors more time to assist during business hours. However, Brown also mentioned that if registration opens at 7 a.m., senators should expect for the majority of students to attempt to register at 7 a.m. and still overload the system.

Brown added that there are several divisions diligently monitoring the system daily during registration, and data shows that the system hasn't crashed in quite some time. The system gets bogged down because it has to process every student's prerequisites not because of the number of students trying to register at the same time. Brown concluded by reiterating that the Registrar's Office can open registration at whatever time is best for the university.

Stewart thanked Brown for the insight, then asked the department chairs/area heads present on the call for input regarding potential implications for advisors. Throughout the discussion, various department chairs/area heads voiced support for moving registration to 7 a.m., stating that many advisors would prefer to start work earlier than to work later in the evening. However, many also pointed out that advisors may not respond to requests until after 8 a.m. depending on the volume of requests and the advisors' availability.

Stewart asked for the student senators' perspective on students having to queue up for help from advisors who choose to begin their business day at 8 a.m. rather than at 7 a.m.

Senators Satchell and Payne explained that many students already have to queue up to receive help from advisors, and that having a full work day will make it more likely for advisors to get to those requests before the end of the day than currently with registration opening at 3 p.m. They agreed that students would rather wait a few hours than overnight for assistance.

Sumner added that with registration opening at 3 p.m., students do not expect for advisors to be immediately available, so needing to queue up for assistance at 7 a.m. or at 3 p.m. will not change the current system in practice or the expectations that are likely already in place.

Stewart asked the associate deans for input. Chambers asked what would prevent us from going back to opening registration at midnight as was discussed in 2014. Akers mentioned it might have been related to the system crashing in the middle of the night, and there not being anyone to address the issue until 8 the next morning. Austin explained that the registration system in 2014 was on a different platform that was less stable than the current platform. Now, the platform is more stable, and there are more IT resources and staff available during registration periods to assist with any issues that might arise. Because of this, Austin poses that IT will be able to accommodate any time the university deems appropriate for registration to open.

Stewart summarized the discussion and encouraged the student senators to take the Council's input to the Student Senate for consideration and deliberation.

For the next item of business, Stewart introduced the proposal of increasing the fall 2021 term to 100% classroom capacity. To provide context, Stewart explained that the fall 2020 term averaged about 50% classroom capacity, and then for the current semester we used stricter 6ft social distancing to adhere to CDC guidelines which amounted to about 25%-33% classroom capacity. The decision was made to plan for 50% capacity for fall 2021, which would make it easier to pivot to a higher capacity if COVID-19 conditions improved.

Many factors contributed to the proposal to open to greater capacity for the fall 2021 term, including the availability of and positive response to the vaccines as well as decisions made by our peer institutions.

The goal is to open to 100% capacity for fall 2021 in classrooms and teaching laboratories. In doing so, we will continue to follow ADA procedures to accommodate faculty and students who require medical accommodation due to COVID-19 circumstances. We will also continue to follow the advice of public health experts throughout the summer and fall. It is anticipated that masks will still be required in academic buildings, including classrooms and laboratories. In addition, hand sanitizing stations will remain throughout campus. There is also an understanding that if the COVID-19 situation reverses, we may have to pivot back to online. Burns asked about the implications of opening to 100% on social distancing. Stewart clarified that opening to 100% would reduce social distancing to roughly three feet.

Stewart explained that the President would like to make a decision this week, which will be heavily influenced by the recommendation from the Council. As such, Stewart asked the Registrar's Office representatives to give their perspective on how to change the schedule for registration, which is set to open in a few weeks. Brown explained that the scheduling department can start with those courses with enrollment of 60 students and above and will work with academic units to get those sections rescheduled. The Registrar's Office is committed to assisting academic units with getting their schedules revised for that 100% goal. As clarification, Stewart added that any course that was taught face-to-face pre-pandemic should be taught face-to-face this fall.

Heck asked which universities have decided to increase capacity. Stewart explained that K-State, Oklahoma State, UT, New Mexico State, UNT, and Texas State, among others have all

stated intentions to increase capacity for the fall 2021 term. Stewart asked Heck and the other student senators to share their insights. Heck mentioned that the students are ready to be back in person as much as is possible, with consideration of CDC guidelines.

The proposal to return to 100% capacity with the requirement of face masks, sanitizing stations, and limited social distancing received overwhelming support from both Council members and guests. The support stemmed from the benefits to both faculty and students. A few people asked about the possibility of continuing hybrid instruction in the fall, but many Council members and guests expressed concerns with hybrid instruction. Stewart explained that the concerns voiced during the meeting are concerns that have been expressed by both students and faculty throughout the last year.

Hart explained that what TTU has done for the past year is not a true hybrid model but a hyflex hybrid model. A true hybrid class usually follows one of two models: 1) there is lecture in the classroom and additional instruction or assignments online that make up the remainder of the seat time or 2) there is lecture online and then there are activities done in the classroom for the remainder of the seat time. On the contrary, we have been following a hyflex model where students can either be in class or at home. Hart added that the majority of our classrooms are not equipped to follow the hyflex model. Hart mentioned that if departments want to follow a true hybrid model, that should be fine, but that is not what has been in practice during the last year.

Several department chairs/area heads voiced concern with asynchronous online classes at the undergraduate level and mentioned that synchronous online classes would better serve the students and faculty. Hart agreed but added that we need to continue serving our students who are in online programs with synchronous or asynchronous classes, depending on the needs of the program. Hart reminded the Council that our online classes, especially asynchronous ones, must provide regular and substantive interaction with students. Hart clarified that “regular” means there is a scheduled time when students can expect interaction from faculty members, and “substantive” means that faculty members are doing more than just providing feedback on assignments. Hart also reminded the Council to offer a small TDE section reserved for our true distance students if their online courses are intended for Lubbock students to enroll in, as was suggested for this spring term.

Stewart asked Brown to discuss the implications of room assignments for classes currently set at 50% if we increase to 100%. Bobbie deferred to Operations to discuss the logistics of the capacity increase. Vitela explained that we can add a new configuration at 100% in Ad Astra and Banner. Once that is complete, the academic schedulers can begin making changes to sections. Stewart then voiced a question in the chat about the room implications for increasing to 100%. Vitela explained that the original plan was to drop all room assignments for classes with enrollments of 60 and above, and then they would start over with scheduling those classes. Bobbie added that we have had difficulty accommodating classes at the 50% mark, resulting in the Registrar’s Office needing to get creative with room scheduling and utilizing nonconventional spaces for instruction. Once the capacities are officially increased to 100%, then the Registrar’s Office would like to revisit those room assignments.

Chambers asked if it would be possible to roll over the room assignments from the fall 2019 schedule. Stewart expressed support of that plan if it is a possibility. Brown recommended doing this. Stewart voiced a question in the chat about when we could expect direction on how to proceed. Stewart then clarified that the Provost and President will make their decision pending the recommendation from this group. On that note, Mechref asked if a motion should

be made. Stewart opened the floor for a motion. Mechref moved to increase to 100% capacity for fall 2021 and Orth seconded. Shannon mentioned that this recommendation should be contingent upon the COVID-19 situation continuing to improve. Stewart agreed and confirmed that such is the plan. With the majority in favor of the motion, Stewart will bring forth the recommendation from the Council to increase to 100% capacity for fall 2021.

Stewart voiced a question in the chat about the implications for the summer term. Stewart, the Provost, and the President believe that following the original plan of operating at 50% will be feasible for the summer, keeping in mind face masks, hand sanitizing stations, and social distancing. Stewart added that we have encouraged more than the usual number of online classes this summer, which will help with scheduling classrooms with 50% capacity.

For the next item of business, Stewart invited Cañas-Carrell to discuss the moratorium on core and multicultural courses. Cañas-Carrell explained that we previously put a moratorium on core and multicultural courses because of talk of potential changes from the THECB regarding core requirements. However, as time has passed, it does not look like that decision will happen anytime soon, so there has been discussion to lift the moratorium. The Core and Multicultural Curriculum Steering Committee unanimously agreed to lift the moratorium, so the Council was notified of that decision.

The next item of business concerned the updating and publishing of OP 32.32. Mechref asked when the updates will be applicable based on the published date of March 11, 2021. Stewart explained that it will vary for each individual, depending on where faculty are in the process.

Stewart then mentioned that above-base funding is available for summer 2021, so departments that expend their summer budgets for planned courses can propose to add additional sections if those additional courses have likelihood of making.

The next item of business concerned reminders for faculty to uphold the guidance regarding face masks. Stewart invited Duran to give further insight into the issue. Duran explained that this issue came about at an SGA town hall. The student body would like to finish the semester strong with the use of masks but have noticed that students are getting lax with mask-wearing. The SGA and student body would like faculty members to be aware of and correct this issue.

Stewart then turned the floor over to Louder to discuss a recent survey sent out. Louder explained that a survey was sent out last week asking for faculty input on pandemic instructional tools. eLearning is trying to determine which tools to continue using as we proceed through the pandemic. The survey is due by March 31st. Austin added the link to the survey in the chat. To date, 388 faculty have completed the survey, which is a 32% response rate. IT and eLearning request Council members to encourage their faculty members to complete the survey.

Stewart asked for items of other business. Lumpkin mentioned that the TLPDC and the Teaching Academy have created a new award called the Diamond award for faculty who went above and beyond during the pandemic. The link to the award information can be found [here](#).

Mechref asked about the process of deciding which technologies will be kept. Louder explained that part of the decision will be determined based on the survey feedback. In addition, there are various RFPs forthcoming to help us keep our teaching environment

robust. Austin added that there are seven RFPs that will be released throughout the next academic year.

Louder also mentioned that eLearning is working with various departments to revisit and evaluate the technology in RaiderRooms and other general-purpose rooms based on feedback from a survey from early in the pandemic. Mechref pointed out that in considering renovating the RaiderRooms it might be beneficial to update the rooms with the technologies we were lacking during the pandemic. Louder and Tapp explained that this issue is being discussed with various areas.

In another item of other business, Sumner mentioned that Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is working with areas that would like to offer in-person camps this summer, including those with residential components. Interested departments should contact their office and University Housing to ensure all proper protocols are being followed.

Sumner also noted that the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) are being offered this year and encouraged faculty members to complete the survey. Louder added that eLearning and IT created notifications in Blackboard to prompt students to take the NSSE, so students may reach out to faculty members to ask about the popup notification. Sumner mentioned that the response rate to date is higher than the total response rate in previous years. Information regarding the NSSE can be found [here](#), and information regarding the FSSE can be found [here](#).

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