Senators present were: Arnall, Bak, Baugh, Blum, Brittsan, Calamoneri, Callender, Chi, Collopy, Cox, Darwish, Dye-Reeves, Eko, Faris, Fischer, Gibson, Griffin, Guillemette, Hawley, Hope-Weeks, Huston, Jou, Juan, Klein, Kwon, Ladeira, Langford, Levario, Lyford, Mceniry, Mcnaughtan, Meek, Meyers, Murphy, Niehuis, Novotny, Pal, Pasewark, Perl, Pihlaja, Ritchey, Schmidt, Serra, Shannon, Sharma, Sheng, Surluga, Syma, J., Taraban, Wagner, Weiner, Whitney, Wiseman

Senators not present were: Baker, Bowman, Buelinckx, Farmer, Forrest, Grair, He, Hodes, Hotchkins, Parameswaran

Guests: Parliamentarian Barenberg, Provost Hendrick, Vice Provost Hughes, Seshadri Ramkumar, President Schovanec, Tara Stevens, Senior Vice Provost Stewart, CassiDe Street

Newly elected senators: Scott Baugh, Nick Bowman, Hendrika Buelinckx, Sabrina Chi, Amy Dye-Reeves, Peter Fischer, John McNaughton, Marcelo Schmidt, Brian Shannon, Jake Syma, Alexander Wiseman, and Sarah Wagner

Call to order: At 3:15PM, President Langford called the meeting to order. The meeting was conducted online over Zoom and a quorum was met.

Recognition of Guests: President Langford welcomed everyone to the first meeting for the Fall term. They recognized the attending guests and newly elected senators. Schovanec, Hendrick, Hughes, Ramkumar, Barenberg, Stewart, Stevens, Street

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes from the May meeting was made by Senator Cox, seconded by Calamoneri. The minutes from meeting #385 were approved as presented.

Speakers

Dr. Lawrence Schovanec, TTU President:
- Welcome back for the fall semester
- Academic Freedom: House Bill 397 Governor Abbott signed last summer. Controversial bill on how teachers can talk about history, particularly for things racism. This bill only pertains to K-12 teachers. “Academic freedom is a sacrosanct principle of our university and higher education. I would never try to dictate to faculty what they should teach in a course.” You should all proceed with the full spectrum of academic freedom means and that you will have the full support of this administration.
- Campus Safety: More complicated and controversial. Plans have changed. COVID has had an impact of all areas of life, it’s been politicized and had an impact on mental health. A new mental health initiative has been launched call “Beyond OK.” This program will raise awareness about the prevalence of mental health concerns among our students, help them
recognize signs of mental health issues, educate them about coping strategies and for them to know that there are resources here to help. But most important is to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help with mental health.

- **How we are dealing with COVID thus far:**
  - yesterday 354 total active cases, 306 were students, 389 was highest on Sept 3.
  - 40 new cases today and 30 recoveries
  - Most alarming is the situation in Lubbock, the number of cases and the numbers of deaths.
  - Last year at this time we had over 1100 cases.
  - 70 percent of the classes this semester is face to face and many of the classes are filled to capacity. This is reason for concern. As a result, another memo from the Provost will be sent out to give some flexibility to deans and chairs allowing the option for going to an online format.
  - Impact on students: Retention rate is currently at around 85 percent. Last year at this time it was 88. Why did they leave? 1/3 had a GPA over 3.0. Those that left, most of their classes were online. Students feel that they need the personal experience on campus. We are operating under the laws of this state. I ask for your patience while we operate under a situation where masks are not mandated. However, continue to offer free testing, in some programs testing is mandatory, will continue incentives for vaccinations. And using signage to encourage a safe environment. I want to thank you for what you have done and continue to do. This isn’t about money. We were able to distribute equity/compression funds, merit raises, spousal accommodations and provide money to provost to add new faculty.

**Dr. Ronald Hendrick, TTU Provost:**
- I extend my gratitude for your patience as we work through these issues
- **Updates:**
  - We have several Dean searches going on: Arts & Sciences, VPA, finalizing committee for Architecture, conversations with search firm for Ag Sciences
  - Conversations with academic leadership, priorities have been articulated to me, spousal accommodation, retention, focusing on diversity working w Dr. Sumner, as well as Faculty Senate, we need to be hiring faculty directly into Outreach & Engagement. We want faculty to be the core of our growth.
  - COVID- health is at the forefront, minimizing the presence is a priority. Academic health, psychological health, and social health are also very important. Trying to infuse some flexibility for the campus population to allow for de-densifying the classrooms. Attempting to be tactical in decision making, rather than a blanket approach. Educating the campus is key. Finding ways to be more visible and consistent in our messaging. Testing and contact tracing has been greatly limited by the county. Our focus is on how this impacts our core missions, teaching, research and engagement with others in the community.

**Question from Guest:** May I request that the Dean of Students send messages to encourage students to wear masks? The signs seem to be hidden.

**Dr. Schovanec:** Ron can you follow up on this? (He indicated that he would)
**Question from Chat Interface:** Is it possible to have access to the messaging sent to students on social media to use for our students in our classes?

**Dr. Hendrick:** Yes, some can be found by searching for them on the sites. Will ask Matt Dewey to point us to those.

**Question from the Senate:** Are there funds available to help us teach both face to face and online at the same time?

**Dr. Hendrick:** Yes, some, if there are specific needs route those up through the dean to Hendrick. There might be supply chain issues depending on the item in question.

**Question from the Senate:** Appreciate the opportunity to have flexibility in teaching modalities, with reference to the criteria listed, could they be shared with faculty?

**Dr. Hendrick:** There are no hidden criteria, that is something that has been put out there. I have talked to deans about that and given them the discretion and latitude to make those decisions.

**Question from Guest:** Why is the campus is responding to the delta outbreak as reactionary rather than proactively?

**President Schovanec:** From the beginning, we have provided resources and messaging that supports the students and staff on campus. One difference is the density of students in the classrooms. We meet often with health officials and TTU System with three doctors on those calls. It was felt that this was a reasonable way to begin the semester. We also must address the impact that all of this has on our student’s mental health. Have corresponded with many parents who are concerned with the isolation that COVID has caused.

**Dr. Hendrick:** Message to students was come here with a plan in case you get sick. Reiterated the meetings with TTU System, Governor’s office, etc. Delicate balance on where we can push boundaries.

**Question from Guest:** Many AAUP have contacted me about where is the memo for faculty and staff about mental health assistance?

**President Schovanec:** Our hopes were that the memos would go out at the same time, but that was not the case. I have been told that a faculty and staff memo will be forthcoming.

**Question from Senators:** Has there been any negative pushback on how we have been doing things?

**President Schovanec:** Strong encouragement to remain open.

**Dr. Hendrick:** Trying to remain flexible as we possibly can.

**Question from Senate:** Yesterday I received a late notification from the dean’s office of arts and sciences, will there be swifter notification in the future?

**Dr. Hendrick:** Not sure why this notice was so late, this should not be the case. Should be going out within a day or so. (Seems other had the same thing happen, and they will investigate it)
**Question from Senate:** Could we work with TTUHSC and see what they are doing?

**Langford:** Has a meeting planned with someone from HSC and will ask about that.

**Question from Senate:** Could have been that the students are hesitant to disclose.

**Reports & Updates:**

None to report

**New Business:**

**Committee Assignments:** from Matt McEniry chair for Committee on Committees. 2021-2022 Committee Assignments that was sent with agenda and minutes. Up for approval. Motion passes.

**Ad Hoc COVID Committee:** Create a committee to address issues. Erin Collopy, Courtney Gibson and Miao He will be on this committee. Might have an update for us next meeting.

**Old Business:**

None

**Announcements:**

Summary for new senators from Jyotsna Sharma. Faculty Senate is a advisory body. Our job is to speak on behalf of all faculty on any matter that is of concern. Recently COVID has been most of our concerns. There have been many significant issues that faculty senate has taken the lead on. Any pressing issue faculty welfare, faculty academic functions or freedom (T&P, salary compression, how we process 3rd year review, etc.) Matt brought up the committee memberships. We have 62 senators that represent the colleges based on size. Seven titled committees. And three subcommittees. 25 liaison positions. Prepare to volunteer in any capacity that you are able. Be on the lookout for the next fall for openings on these committees. Revision of OPs. We also recently amended the constitution to allow non-tenure track faculty to the body.

Thanks to Patty for all her help over the years. Welcome the new senators from the Vet school in Amarillo.

Survey sent out mentioned COVID, academic freedom and duty point.

Please send an email to President Langford for any issues that need to be brought up. She will also be sending out another survey to gather possible issues.

Some OPs will be coming forward for discussion and/or revision.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 4:40PM