

Three Motions from the PPC for the Faculty Senate Meeting of October 14, 2020

Motion 1: A Resolution for the faculty hiring process

RESOLUTION

Regarding Faculty Hiring Process

RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

On December 6th, 2017, the Faculty Senate approved a resolution urging the Administration to adopt a clearly defined, standardized, and transparent process in its decisions to hire faculty members. An effort towards establishing such a process was begun by administration at that time, but not completed. The Faculty Senate believes that instituting a more visible hiring process will encourage and support shared governance as an ongoing partnership between the faculty and the Administration, and will further serve to strengthen faculty morale and faculty confidence in the Administration's vision for the future of the faculty and the University at large.

To that end, the Faculty Senate now requests that a transparent process for faculty hiring decisions be formally adopted, including the following parameters:

- A standardized faculty hiring request form to be used campus wide. The standardized request form would describe the faculty position to be filled and would include sufficient space to include the rationale and documentation for the hiring request.
- A standard fall deadline for faculty hiring requests from all departments. We recommend that, beginning in 2021, this deadline be October 15th. Exceptions to this deadline may be made in cases of unexpected faculty departures or unanticipated enrollment growth.
- A standardized response form to the hiring request. The response form would clearly answer either Yes or No. If the response to the hiring request is "No," a brief explanation would be provided by the Administration. The explanation might include the likelihood or timeline for a future successful request. This response would also be made by a defined date. We recommend that, beginning in 2021, this deadline be November 15th.
- An internal database with a history of all faculty hiring requests and the disposition of each request (Yes or No). The internal database would be available to faculty and departments via an easily accessible, permanent electronic means.

Upon approval, the motion will be emailed to VPAA Teresa Golden and VPBA Dennis Westman

Motion 2: On note taking at the chairs' meetings

We recommend that Academic Affairs enlist a designated note-taker for the *chairs' meetings*. The Notes will include topics of discussion and information items from the meeting. The Notes will be emailed to all faculty within 48 hours of each *chairs' meeting*.

Rationale

Lack of reliable communication from the chairs' meetings has been a long-standing concern. This presents a formidable obstacle to transparency, accountability, and most importantly to the meetings' "informational" function.

The current practice is that each of the fourteen department chairs is responsible for gathering information from the meetings, taking notes, and informing their departmental faculty. This unnecessarily complex "system" has resulted in inconsistent and unreliable communication, gaps in communication, misinformation of various stripes, rumors, and confusion. In short, the current practice does not work. Our recommendation offers a simple fix that will improve communication, transparency, accountability, and provide faculty and departments with the reliable information that is essential in the practice of effective shared governance.

Upon approval, the motion will be emailed to VPAA Teresa Golden and President Newsom

Motion 3: A response to the Administration (VPAA Golden) on the proposed partnership with Graduation Alliance

Faculty Senate Response to Vice President for Academic Affairs Teresa Golden's response to the recommendations unanimously approved by the Faculty Senate on September 16, 2020 relevant to the use of Graduation Alliance (GA), a third-party vendor.

Faculty Senate recommendation 1: Prepare a detailed plan indicating potential costs, revenue, and benefits to the University.

Costs

Financial projections for costs are not provided. The response acknowledges that, "Additional students will cost in terms of instruction provided by faculty. There will be additional services required by Admissions, Registrar, Advising, Financial Aid, and CIDT." The "additional services" will be at a cost.

Concerning is that the response noted that a *Growth Committee* has been formed "to examine the additional needs of continued growth" but there is no mention of the intention for this committee to specifically address the known costs of increased enrollment. *Before* engaging a third-party (for profit) vendor, it would be prudent to:

- Examine the *current* number of faculty teaching *currently* enrolled students. Is the current number of faculty adequate to teach the currently enrolled students?
- Examine the *current* class sizes. Are the current class sizes reasonable for faculty to meet the educational requirements of their courses?
- Calculate how much it will cost to hire the additional faculty required to teach 50 students (the number of new students projected).

Revenue

Financial projections are provided, and based on those projections, GA *may* produce revenue.

Concerning is that the projections specify the revenue generated based on faculty rank, making explicit that substantially more revenue is generated by courses taught by adjuncts (\$8,004) than by full professors (\$2,014). Delineating revenue by rank may suggest that decisions about GA favor managing the potential influx of new students by utilizing adjuncts rather than tenured, or tenure-stream faculty.

If a response to increased growth created by GA is to hire additional adjuncts, there are two concerns:

1. An accreditation issue may arise, specifically with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) noted in [HLC Policy](#). 3.C.1. reads, in part, "...oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning," and 3.C.3. "Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures."

Questions exist about whether *current* adjuncts receive regular evaluation and oversight. The possibility of adding adjuncts will exacerbate an existing concern.

2. The University's [mission statement](#) reads "Southeastern Oklahoma State University provides an environment of academic excellence that enables students to reach their highest potential." Will hiring additional adjuncts contribute to academic excellence?

Benefits

VPAA Golden's response notes that "over the past four years, we have learned that revenue sharing is a model that can have financial benefits to the University."

The revenue sharing model referred to is the University's contract with Academic Partnerships, that was entered into during a time of financial crisis. That is not the case now, made explicit by [President Newsom](#), when he said that "From a revenue and budget standpoint, we are fortunate to be in a good position due to our sustained enrollment growth over the last three years."

While it is prudent to continue expanding enrollment, using GA (revenue sharing, third-party vendor) requires clear and convincing evidence that existing concerns previously noted have been addressed *first*.

Faculty Senate recommendation 2: *Indicate how the program can be assessed as to its effectiveness and success.*

Based on a measure of 1st to 2nd and 1st to 3rd semester retention, VPAA Golden notes that "we would expect these students to retain at a higher rate than other adult students *because of the additional support* [emphasis added]."

Additional support assumes an adequate number of faculty.

The number of full-time faculty is declining. According to information from the Common Data Set, in AY 2018-2019 there were 125 full-time faculty, down from 128 in 2017-2018, down from 133 in 2016-2016.

HLC Policy 3.C.2 reads, in part, "The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty..."

Additional support assumes an adequate number of faculty *teaching reasonably sized classes*.

Class size is on the rise. According to information from the Common Data Set, the “all student/full-time faculty ratio” for AY 2018-2019 is 28.46, which is up from 26.71 in 2017-2018, which is up from 23.31 in 2016-2017.

Faculty Senate recommendation 4: *Extend the contract signing date until the Faculty Senate deems that concerns are adequately addressed.*

VPAA Golden notes that “extending the contract signing date past September 15 had been agreed to.”

What is not known is if an agreement has been reached on a contract signing date. Has a decision already been made to enter into this contract?

Summary Based on the response provided by VPAA Golden, the concerns about a partnership between the University and Graduation Alliance have not been adequately addressed. Therefore, the Faculty Senate does not endorse this partnership.

Existing issues, with *current* enrollment have not been included in the response:

- Adequate (“sufficient” in the language of HLC Policy) numbers of *current* faculty teaching *currently* enrolled students
- Consideration of *current* class sizes
- *Current* dependence on adjuncts with the potential for increased dependence
- *Current* oversight and evaluation of adjuncts, and the responsibility to oversee and evaluate additional adjuncts

It would be reasonable to consider a partnership with this – or other third-party vendors – when it is clear that current enrollment and its attendant concerns are seriously addressed.