

**FACULTY SENATE MINUTES - DRAFT
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

September 2, 2021
3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
Remote via Zoom

Senators Present (29).

Samuel Adu-Prah (COSET), Mario Aschauer (CAM), Natalie Baker (CJ), Maria Botero (CHSS), Tim Brown (COE), Patrick Buzzini (CJ), Rhonda Callaway (CHSS), Mona Cockerham (COHS), Tamara Cook (COSET), Brandy Doleshal (COSET), Mandy Duan (COBA), Debbi Hatton (CAM), Damon Hay (COSET), Soo-Yeon Hwang (NGL), Nick Lantz (CHSS), Victoria Lantz (CAM) Sureni Mullegama (COM), Junkun Ma (COSET), , Audrey Murfin (CHSS), Mary Petró (COE), Kevin Randall (COHS), Stephen Rapp (CHSS), Vlad Radoias (COBA), Karen Sherrill (COBA), Aneika Simmons (COBA), Kyle Stutts (COSET), Xiaobo Wang (CHSS), Anthony Watkins (CAM), Rebecca Wentworth (COE)

Senators Not Present (2).

Geraldine Monjardez (CJ), Debbie Price (COE)

Special Guests.

Dr. Alisa White, President SHSU; Dr. Michael T. Stephenson Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Dr. Drew Miller, Vice President of Student Services, Chair of COVID Work Group.

Called to Order.

3:30 PM, Remote via Zoom, by Outgoing Chair Lee Miller. Meeting turned over to current Chair of the Senate, Damon Hay.

Dr. White and Dr. Stephenson thanked the outgoing Senators: Siham Bouamer (CHSS), John Lane (CAM), Lee Miller (CHSS) Outgoing Chair, Carolyn Moore (CAM), Benjamin Park (CHSS), Jan Taylor Morris (COBA), Susan Troncoso Skidmore (COE), Kevin Lord (COM), Jamie Durán (COE), Valencia Browning-Keen (COHS).

Dr. White thanked Faculty Senate for persevering in this challenging past year and encouraged current and outgoing senators to work as leaders, helping the university to move forward. She acknowledges two areas of progress made possible by senate: the initiative on tuition scholarships for Faculty/Staff Dependents, and the Significant Life Events proposal. Dr. White thanked Lee Miller for being a great advocate for faculty and Faculty Senate, and thanked the full Senate body for their work. Finally, Dr White argued that one of the main focuses for the

upcoming year will be the development of the Strategic Plan. Dr. Stephenson also thanked the members of Faculty Senate for their leadership. He explained that, together with the Chief Strategy Officer, their focus is on the development of the Strategic Plan, and, for that purpose, three separate task forces have been created: one devoted to examining excellence in undergraduate education, another devoted to excellence in graduate and continuing education, and finally, one considering the implications for SHSU being designated as “Doctoral Research University” by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. He welcomes faculty feedback on these three areas. Finally, the outgoing Chair Lee Miller thanked the members of faculty senate for the work and progress made the past year.

Q&A with Dr. White, Dr. Stephenson, and Dr. Miller.

Topic 1: Strategies to address the disparities in failing grades exhibited by different groups of students.

An initiative is being developed to explore the causes behind a large proportion of students obtaining a D or a C grade in specific courses. The aim is to start exploring strategies to address this challenge, such as rethinking the curriculum and/or new pedagogical strategies. This initiative will also investigate the disparity among different student groups (e.g., first generation students) and strategies to reduce this gap. Dr. Stephenson emphasized the importance of recognizing that the landscape of education has changed in the past year and that these strategies will play a vital role in the years to come, helping us to provide a valuable education to future students whose academic life has been disrupted.

Topic 2: Mask mandate ban and replacement of faculty who become sick.

Several faculty senators expressed their concern regarding the lack of use of masks on campus, especially for classes where students are in close contact with each other. As part of the answer to the question, specifically regarding the possibility of adopting a mask mandate, it was suggested that Sandra S. Horne, J.D., Associate General Counsel, be invited to a future Faculty Senate meeting to discuss some of the legal issues related to Covid mandates. The differences between higher education and primary and secondary public schools were also discussed as part of the answer to this question. Finally, Dr. Stephenson reiterated that the measures taken to replace a faculty member who is sick during the academic semester must be the result of a conversation that takes place between the Chair and the faculty member.

Topic 3: Collecting data on positive cases and notifications.

SHSU will continue to offer testing to asymptomatic and symptomatic students, staff, and faculty. The Covid Working Group (CWG) is currently exploring strategies aimed at developing more pro-active testing. It was communicated that at the university and state level there has been a decline in the positivity rate. Also, faculty, staff, and student surveys show a high rate of vaccination at SHSU. The CWG, following public health recommendations on notifications, is using the self-report portal to ask questions that help determine the level of exposure, the necessary quarantine/isolation measures, and if possible, who was exposed.

Topic 4: Changes in the Office of Academic Affairs

There have been several changes in the Office of Academic Affairs. The organization chart is

currently under revision, and the aim is to determine the needs, current gaps, and what needs to be prioritized in the upcoming years.

Faculty Senate Committees.

The Chair of Faculty Senate provided an overview of the existing four Faculty Senate subcommittees and proposed a new subcommittee to develop a proposal on shared governance. A survey requesting preferences for serving on these committees will be sent to senators shortly.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 6, 2021, meeting were approved.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 P.M.