***Report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee* Date:**  April 25, 2022

**“x” or circle:**   **Mid-year report X**  **Year-end report**

**Committee Name**: Committee on the Status of Faculty with Disabilities (CSFD)

**Chair or Co-Chairs:** Brea Henson

**Meetings for the term/year:** Electronic meetings held on 9.8.21, 10.7.21, 11.11.21, 01.29.22, 03.21.22, 4.22.22, and 05.TBD.22 Electronic meeting scheduled for 02.23.22 (Cancelled due to University Closure)

**Membership and Attendance** (year-to-date attendance record):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Represented, committee office, if applicable** | **Name** | **Department or administrative unit affiliation** | **Term End**  **(if applicable)** | **Meetings Attended**  **(6)** | **Meetings Absent / # Excused**  **(6)** |
| Chair | Brea Henson (re-elected October 7, 2021) | LIBR | 2023 | 5 | 1 excused |
| Co-chair | Nicoladie Tam (stepped down on October 7, 2021) | BIOL | 2023 | 5 | 1 absent |
| Secretary | Paula Garland (effective November 11, 2021) | RHS | 2023 | 4 | 2 excused |
| Group I | Jorge Aviles-Diz | SPAN | 2023 | 5 | 1 excused |
| Group II | Brea Henson | LIBR | 2023 | 5 | 1 excused |
| Group III | Shuping Wang | EE | 2022 | 4 | 2 excused |
| Group IV | Eric Fritsch (effective November 11, 2021) | DCJ | 2024 | 4 | 1 excused |
| Group V | Mike Sexton (March-October 2021) | Jae Webb (effective November 2021) | MGMT | 2024 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Group VI | Miriam Boesch (effective November 11, 2021) | EPSY | 2024 | 4 | 0 |
| Group VII | Nicoladie Tam | BIOL | 2023 | 4 | 1 absent |
| Group VIII | James Martin | MART | 2024 | 2 | 2 absent, 2 excused |
| At-large | Paula Garland | RHS | 2023 | 3 | 3 excused |
| At-large | Dalia Chowdhury | RHS, | 2022 | 2 | 2 excused, 2 absent |
| At-large | Peter Mondelli | MUCE | 2024 | 5 | 1 excused |
| IDEA Rep | Eraina Perrin | IDEA | n/a | 4 | 2 excused |

Guests:

* Jennifer Lane, attended 2 meetings
* Katy McDaniel, and Kat Van Saaze attended 1 meeting

**The Executive Committee establishes charges for each standing committee and may amend them as needed; alternatively, the standing committee may propose amended charges, composition, etc., by making a written proposal and sending to the Faculty Senate office** [**facultysenate@unt.edu**](mailto:facultysenate@unt.edu)**.) Do your committee charges remain relevant? If not, what changes to the charges do you propose?**

**Accomplishments (including items submitted for review or approval to the Executive Committee or Faculty Senate):**

At the first committee meeting, the Committee reviewed goals and objectives from the previous semester. During this meeting, members discussed the lack of adherence to HR protocols for accommodation requests through the “habitual exclusion of standard HR protocols in handling faculty requests for reasonable accommodations, as well as the concomitant pressure to disclose medical information directly to supervisors (chairs, deans, etc.) rather than to those trained in dealing with medical privacy” in some departments. Related to this concern is “pressure” in policies:

1. the [stop-the-clock clauses in 06.004](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.004Pub_0.pdf), and
2. the [Return to Learn](https://vpaa.unt.edu/return) policies in which “any medically-grounded requests for accommodations (along with supporting documents) go exclusively through the chair-dean-provost line, and not through HR.”

Membership expressed desire that requests should go through a neutral party and to someone who has training in ADA. The Committee agreed that the current process was not clear to all members.

Membership investigated current ADA policy and discovered UNT Policy 05.011 “Employment of Individuals with Disabilities/Workplace Accommodations.” The Committee agreed updates needed to be made and decided to investigate the policy update process. Additionally, membership discussed the

1. need for the current process to be more transparent and equitable for employee needs in a manner that is like the student ADA process through ODA;
2. need for ADA process training for all chairs and deans supervising faculty;
3. need for accommodation funding to come from the university level as these resources can be shared and more equitably distributed. Departments should not be responsible for finding funding no included in their budgets;
4. ability for faculty to contest accommodation denials or alternative accommodation decisions made by HR;
5. need to define what “reasonable accommodation” means and set timelines to complete tasks outlined in ADA Accommodation Letters.

Between the first and second meeting in October, the Committee reelected Brea Henson as Chair, and Co-Chair Nicoladie Tam stepped down from her Co-Chair role. The Committee voted on a Secretary. Additionally, Chair Henson, former Co-Chair Tam, and the leadership of the Neurodiversity Professional Network (NPN) met with HR to address ADA Accommodation concerns. During this meeting, HR outlined the current ADA Accommodation Process and explained certain processes. They expressed interest in making the ADA website easier to locate, revising the process and current policy (which is under review by UNT System Legal Team), and developing training for supervisors, chairs, deans, and administration at CSFD and NPN’s request. HR recently hired an ADA Accommodation Specialist.

Due to a scheduling issue, the second meeting in October was come-and-go. Henson and Tam reviewed their meeting with HR and asked the membership to bring any concerns to the following November meeting. Because the scheduling issue was an error on Henson’s part, members received an excused absence if they did not attend. Email follow-ups were sent to the Committee with a summary of all the discussions Henson and Tam had with membership.

At the third meeting in November, Henson reviewed the outcomes of the meeting with HR and welcomed new members. Committee posed questions about how student employees should receive ADA Accommodation for their jobs and agreed additional follow-up with HR was needed. The membership decided not to hold a meeting in December and instead reached out to HR with questions and offered to review the ADA Accommodation information provided at faculty orientations. The Committee has invited HR Representatives to attend their January meeting to begin collaborations on the ADA Accommodation process and policy revisions as well as training developments.

Chair Henson attended the Faculty Senate Meeting on December 8, 2021, to outline the current ADA Accommodation Process and committee plans for next semester.

In January, the Committee resumed online meetings. They reviewed the 2019 Climate Survey data on disabilities and faculty responses. Committee discusses the data’s finding that faculty did not feel comfortable disclosing their disabilities or seeking accommodations while also reporting that they “feel welcome and respected.” In this meeting, the Committee discussed how narratives of experiences would better convey the experiences of faculty in areas not identified in the survey. HR, IDEA, and Faculty Success have expressed interest in holding focus groups to obtain narrative experiences. The committee discussed the need for a mechanism of sharing experiences with the administration to keep them accountable to make improvements to the campus climate. The Committee agreed that HR, Counseling and Testing, and IDEA need additional personnel to assist in improving services to faculty and staff. The Committee discussed that we would like to brainstorm the kinds of questions we would want on any follow-up surveys or focus groups and resources we would want to improve support and work environments. Mental Health was brought up as an additional area the committee would like to discuss. Brea will prepare a summary of past discussions on Mental Health.

Due to a severe weather closure, the committee did not meet in February. However, the committee had an online discussion on the “Statement on Dan Patrick's Assertions about Revoking Tenure and CRT” issued by The Black Faculty Network, International Faculty Network, La Colectiva, Women’s Faculty Network, and the Neurodiversity Professional Network, and voted to join as the 6th co-signer of the statement. Chair Henson collaborated with the co-signers to draft a “Faculty Senate Resolution in Support of CRT, Academic Freedom, and Tenure” for consideration by the Faculty Senate. The Committee held another online vote to co-sign the “Statement on the Rights of Gender Identity and Gender Expression on Campus.” This vote did not pass. Chair Henson was invited to attend the Senate meeting on March 9, 2022, in which President discussed the issues around the statements as well as the anti-trans event and following protests on campus. She attended this meeting.

During the March meeting, the Committee brainstormed discussion questions for HR to address in their April meeting as well as the role/responsibility the Committee has to ensure faculty with a disability feel supported based as indicated in the 2019 Climate Survey data.

Due to a family emergency, Chair Henson was not able to facilitate the April meeting. Committee members still met with HR representatives Katy McDaniel and Kat Van Saaze to discuss what HR is doing to support faculty and staff with disabilities. HR is

1. Conducting a project to address the stigma associated with seeking support/accommodations. HR expects to end the project on 9/1/22.
2. Revising policies to existing law. Procedures are informed by best practices and can be modified to the needs of the employee population.
3. Looking for new ways to make the connection between services available and the ease of experience of the end-user (de-stigmatization, access, awareness, etc.). Seeking feedback from the CSFD.
4. Developing new training modules to review in May if people are available to review them and provide feedback.

The CSFD will have the opportunity to review upcoming changes to policy/procedure after the meeting via a Teams app. The Committee suggested HR attend ‘college-wide’ meetings to address faculty, make introductions, and foster awareness and de-stigmatization. The Committee and HR representatives clarified what disabilities are and that education is needed at the Associate Dean/Dean of College and upper Administration level. This education could occur at the “chairs academy.” Committee members asked the following questions:

1. What degree of information concerning a disability is required to be disclosed to receive accommodations under University policy?

* *In instances where the disability is not prima facie or clearly evident, medical documentation must be provided to HR.  Does not need to (preferably should not) be provided to the supervisor.*
* *The document needs only to cover the medical reason for the accommodation and does not need to convey the origin or source of the medical reason (e.g. PTSD, car accident, disease, etc.)*

1. What protections of or safeguards for, this information exist in University policy? Applicable law?

* *Health-related information is stored separately from the general personnel file; can only be accessed by HR professionals.  This practice is in line with the legal requirements of the ADA.*
* *Information is not released to any party outside of legal requirements, such as subpoenas or other reasons.*

The Committee is deciding if they will have a meeting in May or not.

All seats on the Committee on the Status of Faculty with Disabilities are currently filled. Chair Henson will be stepping down as chair at the end of this term. Group III and 1 At-large position will be up for election at the start of the next term.

**Ongoing/future projects:**

1. Collaborate with Human Resources (HR) and the Neurodiversity Professional Network (NPN) as needed;
2. Invite guests of various communities to speak about their experiences and how we can support their needs in Faculty Senate;
3. Increase the visibility of committee through collaborations, education programs, and advocacy;
4. Identify resources available through insurance and EAP;
5. Advocate to create change and identify barriers to access and equity;
6. Review Climate Survey Data Review and develop “strategic” planning to address faculty needs; and,
7. Survey what other universities are doing to make their ADA Accommodation process equitable and how other universities ensure their faculty with disabilities are supported.