MEMORANDUM

February 25, 2019

To: Dr. Kimberly Espy, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
From: Dr. Heather Shipley, Sr. Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Dean of University College

Subject: Review Dr. Anita Moss Spring 2019 Classroom Management Concerns

On Jan. 20, 2019, you requested that I investigate the persisting concerns with Dr. Anita Moss’s classroom management and report findings and recommendations for further action, if any, as warranted.

Please find the result of my investigation below:

A. Methodology
   • Interviewed Drs. Shelly Howell, Garry Sunter, Anita Moss and Interim Dean Howard Grimes
   • Reviewed Dr. Moss’s spring 2019 syllabus and syllabus quiz (Document A and A-1)
   • Reviewed Consultation Summaries from the Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) (Document B)
   • Reviewed report from the 2018 investigation by Interim Dean Howard (Document C)

B. Observations
   a. General Observations
      i. The Dean and the Biology Department Chair were to monitor engagement and progress of the TLS meetings and the Dean would determine if she was allowed to return to the classroom in Spring 2019 based on the 2018 Investigation report.
      ii. Interim Deans Grimes in several meetings with Dr. Moss including a Jan. 3, 2019 meeting and through the report on the 2018 Investigation indicated that students putting their feet on the chairs was not a disruptive classroom behavior.
   b. Discussed with Dr. Howell, the meetings and syllabus preparation that she had with Dr. Moss in November through the start of Spring 2019 semester.
      i. They discussed Generation Z and how to better engage and interact with this generation compared to past generations.
      ii. They discussed classroom management strategies.
iii. They discussed the elements necessary for suitable preparation of the syllabus, including that the syllabus should include Dr. Moss’ academic and behavioral expectations of the students. Dr. Howell advised Dr. Moss that she should include in her syllabus behaviors that “bugged her”, along with providing information that would answer common student questions and Dr. Moss could refer students to the syllabus for answers to these questions.

iv. Dr. Howell reviewed the syllabus and didn’t think anything was wrong with it. She did not consider past or future situations just what the students should know based on Dr. Moss’s expectations for the class.

v. Dr. Howell discussed that Dr. Moss was receptive to her feedback and engaged in their meetings.

vi. The TLS views their role as a consultant, to provide best practices and not as an authority to guide faculty on the propriety of the materials being used. They refer faculty for any policies or requirements in the syllabus to their department chair or department policies because of the varying academic expectations by department and college.

vii. Dr. Howell provided reports of her meetings with Dr. Moss to Dr. Mary Dixson to share with Interim Dean Grimes and Dr. Sunter.

c. Discussed the directive that Interim Dean Howard gave to Dr. Sunter and his review of the reports from the TLS on their meetings with Dr. Moss

i. Interim Dean Grimes directed Dr. Moss to work with the TLS individually to understand how internal and external factors negatively affected her classroom management and to develop strategies and incentives to minimize cell phone use in the classroom and students arriving on-time and departing early.

ii. Interim Dean Grimes directed Dr. Sunter to ensure that Dr. Moss was following through on the meetings with TLS and making progress to determine if she was ready to return to the classroom and that classroom observations may be necessary if she returned.

d. Discussed with Dr. Moss the meetings she had with TLS and the process she went through to develop her Spring 2019 syllabus.

i. Discussed with her the topics she discussed in her TLS meetings with Dr. Howell which were Generation Z, classroom management, how to keep students engaged, how to get to know student names in large classes and interact with them privately, and preparation of the syllabus.

ii. She discussed that for the syllabus discussions they talked about what should be in there such as university policies and any department policies, everything students should know to alleviate the number of questions asked to her, include specific behaviors such as but not limited to academic dishonesty, cellphone use, and expectations of how the student should act in the classroom.
iii. Dr. Moss discussed that items she included in her syllabus for classroom civility she considered unprofessional, distracting and casual behavior that was disrespectful to her and disruptive to the learning environment of her classroom. She stated that she included them in her syllabus because these were expectations she had for her students and she also provided expectations that students could expect of her.

iv. Dr. Moss discussed that she did not recall anyone specifically saying that she should not include these items in her syllabus. She did note that Dr. Grimes told her explicitly that putting feet up on the seats was not disruptive behavior. She reported that Dr. Sunter did not agree or disagree with this statement in the meeting.

v. She discussed giving a syllabus quiz but it did not contain questions on classroom civility, she also did not discuss classroom civility in class.

vi. She discussed that she cannot find one place or resources about classroom civility on the UTSA website on what is expected of students in the classroom. She discussed the statement on Student Conduct’s website is broad and not sure if it is for faculty or students.

e. Discussed the meetings that Dr. Sunter had with Dr. Moss and Interim Dean Grimes and review of TLS updates

i. Dr. Sunter was in the meetings that Dr. Moss had with Interim Dean Grimes including the Jan. 3, 2019 meeting about the incident and did witness Interim Dean Grimes telling Dr. Moss his determination that putting feet up on the seats was not disruptive behavior.

ii. Dr. Sunter did not have individual meetings with Dr. Moss. He stated that he did not believe he was charged to meet with her or to review the syllabus by the Dean. Dr. Sunter discussed that the TLS never provided a syllabus for him or Interim Dean Grimes to review and that he did not ask since he did not think this way his responsibility.

iii. Mary Dixson in the TLS provided reports to both Dr. Sunter and Interim Dean Grimes after each meeting with Dr. Moss. These reports to him indicated that Dr. Moss engaged in the process with TLS, no concerns were given in the reports, and that she was going to be monitored in the classroom and continuous improvement would occur. Dr. Sunter implied from the material in these reports from TLS that she was ready to go back to the classroom. Dr. Sunter also stated that he believed she had met the requirements that were laid out for Dr. Moss to meet in the 2018 Investigation report by Interim Dean Grimes to return to the classroom.
iv. Dr. Sunter is currently working on department guidelines for faculty and students to be a part of the syllabus and a separate document that if something arises for faculty in the classroom what they should do. He is working with TLS on these documents.

C. Conclusion(s)
   1. Dr. Moss followed the corrective actions that were required of her to return to the classroom by meeting with the TLS which focused on classroom management.
   2. Despite a) Interim Dean Grimes determination in the 2018 Investigation report that students putting feet on chairs is not disruptive to today’s learning environment and b) Dr. Moss adhering to the plan for corrective action, meeting with TLS several times on classroom management, Dr. Moss still continues to believe that the student behaviors in question, putting their feet on chairs, are disruptive classroom behaviors that negatively affect the learning environment. This persistent belief does not recognize the determination by her Dean who is responsible for the academic programs in the College and the overarching supervisory responsibility for college personnel, and in addition does not indicate appropriate adjustment to today’s classroom environment, and is inconsistent with commonplace practice at UTSA.
   3. TLS staff failed to recognize the academic context and nature of Dr. Moss’ persisting beliefs, and thus did not provide the expected guidance regarding specific requirements (e.g. classroom civility) to Dr. Moss about her syllabus, nor did they raise any concerns to academic administration, i.e., Department Chair or Interim Dean.
   4. Dr. Sunter and Interim Dean Grimes used the reports from TLS to determine if Dr. Moss was deemed acceptable to return to the classroom. They conducted no additional meetings or reviews independently, which should have caused Dr. Moss’s perspectives on student behavior to be observed.

D. Recommendation(s)
   1. During the rest of the Spring 2019 semester, the department could pursue other opportunities to engage her outside the classroom, such as developing virtual/online laboratory courses for biology or other course development needs.
3. By May 1, 2019, the Department Chair and Dean should determine whether or not Dr. Moss will continue as a lecturer in the classroom in future semesters based upon their assessment and programmatic needs of the University. The Department Chair and Dean should consider Dr. Moss's perspectives on student behavior and classroom management as well as her skills and experience.

4. If Dr. Moss returns to instructional duties, online teaching might be a more suitable pedagogy to be evaluated by the Department Chair and Dean.

5. As was done with the 2018 Investigation Memorandum by Interim Dean Grimes, a copy of this memorandum should be put in Dr. Moss’s personnel file.

6. The new Vice Provost of Academic Innovation should define and update the TLS provides, to make more clear what can be expected from TLS staff when they help faculty with teaching matters.

7. If a faculty member is referred to TLS for professional development due to a teaching matter than the Department Chair and/or Dean needs to independently review the faculty member and the activities they conducted with TLS.

8. A task group led by the Senior Vice Provost of Academic Affairs including but not limited to the Vice President of Inclusive Excellence, Dean of Students, a representative from Faculty Senate, representatives from the Student Government Association, a representative from the President’s Student Advisory Council, a representative from Chair’s Council, a representative from Dean’s Council, a representative from Student Success, and a representative from Academic Affairs should be assembled to provide guidance and recommendations to the Provost for students and faculty on classroom management and behavioral expectations.