

Stephen F. Austin State University
REPORT TO THE SFASU BOARD OF REGENTS
Jill A. Dumesnil
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Thank you for this opportunity to report on the activities of the Faculty Senate. After the July Board meeting, the Faculty Senate was offered "indefinite use" of an office in the Steen Library. Thanks are due to the Board, Dr. Angel, Dr. Ashley, and Mr. Al Cage for your assistance in this matter. Once more I have a request for assistance. The Faculty Senate is sponsoring a university-wide blood drive today and tomorrow from 9:00 to 4:00 in the University Center Regent's Suite A and would very much appreciate your contribution of a pint of Regent or Administrative blood.

The Senate has met twice thus far, discussed a variety of issues and passed four resolutions. We are, for the most part, focusing our attention on academic matters. Our first resolution was an endorsement of the report of the Undergraduate Admissions Requirement Committee. There has been much discussion of this report in this body as well as across campus, and there has been much support expressed for the committee's guiding principles as well as its moderate recommendations. It is generally perceived that clear admission to a University indicates expected success at that institution. Our current admission standards admit broad categories of students for whom academic success is not likely. This practice puts faculty members in the unfortunate position of either lowering expectations or experiencing high failure rates, both of which cause us to fall under suspicion. As you are probably aware, the Department of Mathematics and Statistics currently expends a full third of its efforts on remedial (7th, 8th, and 9th grade) mathematics – whether the count is by enrollment or by number of sections offered, and the State of Texas spent \$172 million on remediation at the college level in the last biennium. Although the problem of academically under-prepared students is widespread, the fact of the matter is that the taxpayers of the State of Texas are paying two or three times for the same students to master material that is not being mastered. There do not appear to be easy answers to this problem, but it is incumbent on our University to have clearly stated admission requirements which are indicative of a student's ability to successfully perform academically at the college level.

The second resolution passed by the Senate this year was a resolution of warm appreciation for the Admissions Requirement Committee's "prudent sifting among several options" to compromise between retaining the current admissions policy or attempting an imprudent revision. Furthermore, in accordance with the committee's suggestion that the University "review its GPA policy for repeated courses," the Senate Academic Affairs committee is researching a proposed revision to that policy. Currently, SFA calculates grade point averages by counting only the highest grade a student has earned in all attempts at a particular course. As near as we can tell, this is the most lenient policy in the state, and our policy allows academically unsuccessful students to remain in "good academic standing" while receiving 6 or 8 or sometimes more failing grades in one or more courses. I speculate that the most likely proposal to come forth from the Senate will be to allow a student to repeat any course at most once with only the higher grade counting in the local calculation of the GPA; successive repeats of the same course would cause all grades to be averaged in the computation of the grade point average. This is the policy of both Sam Houston State University and Southwest Texas State University, to whom we typically compare ourselves.

Another resolution was an endorsement of a proposal put forth last year by the Graduate Council for an SFA '03 goal with regard to minimum graduate student stipends and an increase in the number of graduate assistantships. The proposal included a modest plan by which the reasonable goal could be met.

Thank you for your consideration of these delicate, but important, issues which directly affect our academic reputation