

**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**REPORT TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS 8/1/00**  
**KANDY J. STAHL, PH.D., CHAIR**

I would like to thank the Board members for this opportunity to update you on the activities and concerns of the faculty. 1999-2000 was a very productive and rewarding year from the perspective of movement toward achieving the mission of SFA. Higher academic standards will be realized as a result of policies initiated in the Faculty Senate and approved by the Board of Regents. For example, beginning in the coming semester, GPA calculation will more accurately reflect the performance of students currently enrolled. Additionally, today you have passed revisions to the policy on Probation and Suspension making it more stringent. This will address retention of students whose performance meets minimum acceptable criteria. Further, a change in admission standards will help to ensure the acceptance of qualified students.

The Faculty Senate also passed revisions to several policies that have yet to reach the Board of Regents, but are in the Administrative process. The policy on Cheating and Plagiarism was reviewed, and modifications were made allowing faculty to assign a grade of WF to students identified as having cheated between the time of the 12th class day and the final course drop date. At the present time, students in such a situation can withdraw from the course, and faculty have no mechanism for assigning a failing grade.

A second policy change recommendation that is currently in Administrative channels is the Sick Leave policy. As you know, faculty members do not accrue vacation time, and a number of faculty find themselves in situations in which they need time off, but the situation does not qualify under the current policy. As it stands, departments handle this in different ways. The proposed modifications would change the name of the policy to the Sick Leave/Emergency Leave Policy and would permit use of sick days for leave with demonstration of good cause.

A wide variety of issues are before the Senate during the 2000-2001 academic year. Obviously, of primary concern is the Presidential Search process. The faculty is steadfast in their position that our next president be someone with a commitment to academics and continuing to improve the academic reputation of SFA. Such an individual would also be committed to improving the conditions at SFA for faculty so that we may attract highly qualified persons and retain those we already have on faculty. Over the summer, staffing conditions have worsened in several departments. In one department, 3 faculty members have resigned, and one faculty member in my own department resigned. This trend, should it continue, will result in more and more adjunct faculty and graduate students teaching courses. We must do all that we can now to prevent the crisis many faculty foresee on the horizon.

I am aware that the Board of Regents has provided an opportunity for the faculty to meet and interact with the final three candidates. However, there is not a clear and convenient mechanism in place for the Board to obtain faculty opinion on these candidates subsequent to the interview and prior to the Board's selection. If it is possible, a scheduled meeting of the Board and the faculty would be greatly appreciated, and would provide a forum for our thoughts on the candidates. I am certain that the Board will make a well-informed decision and will seek all sources of input that are available.

The issue of SFA becoming part of a system continues to be a priority. We will continue to schedule meetings with the faculty as we meet with faculty from other institutions that have joined a system. Presently, the faculty seem split in their opinion, but much more first-hand information is needed before we can offer a unified opinion on such an important issue.

Other items before the Senate include improving standards for provisional admission during the summer, blocking registration for courses when prerequisites have not been met, the appointment of a faculty Ombudsman, intellectual property rights and compensation for distance learning courses, course enrollment deadlines and requirements for a course to be offered, and

our responsibilities and obligations in responding to the Nacogdoches or University Police Department when they show up in our classrooms.

I am looking forward to the coming year and working with the Board to further the mission of SFA. We have a great opportunity before us as we select a new president. As we look to the future, it is my hope that the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty may work together to improve the academic reputation of SFA. To echo a comment made in yesterday's session, "We're awfully nice." Though we have begun to make progress toward higher standards, in many instances we remain quite lenient. Our policies could be modified further such that SFA may garner the respect and interest that the quality of education offered deserves.