The meeting began at 3:15 in the afternoon in room 273D of the Ferguson Building. The chairs present at the meeting included the following:

Chairs:
Dr. Brian Murphy
Dr. Kandy Stahl
Dr. Freddie Avant
Dr. Ann Doyle-Anderson
Dr. Troy Davis
Dr. Rick Abel
SFC (P) Brent McConnell (for LTC Reichert)
Dr. Wanda Mouton (for Dr. Darville)

Dean Brian Murphy opened the meeting by distributing the timeline for becoming a certified online instructor at SFA. The timeline was prepared by the Office of Information Technology to inform faculty that the certification process was not as time-consuming as generally assumed on campus. The chairs were not convinced that the timeline, as constructed, adequately dispelled the interpretation that the certification procedure was overly long.

Dean Murphy raised the issue of establishing a list of peer institutions for benchmarking purposes. The chairs preferred to identify peers at the departmental level since institutional comparisons are not always relevant across departments. Each chair agreed to consult with departmental faculty to formulate an appropriate list of peers. For the College, the Dean’s Office will generate a list of peer institutions for comparisons at the college-level.

Dean Murphy discussed new Math placement scores that determine which entry level course is appropriate based on student performance. Students currently have eight exams that can be used for placement but, in the past, the exams were not normed consistently. The revised standards, approved by the Deans’ Council, remedy this inequity.

A draft of a possible immigration policy for the hiring of new faculty was circulated. The draft proposes two optional models that SFA could adopt when hiring non-U.S. citizens for tenure-track positions. The proposed policy is a response to a recent change in federal law that imposes new legal obligations—and financial costs—on universities. One model, utilized by the University of Texas, begins the process of sponsoring a “green card” application for permanent residency immediately upon the hiring of an alien into a faculty slot. The benefit of the approach is that the university does not have to re-advertise the position if the application process is not started within 18 months of the initial hiring, avoiding a substantial economic expense. The model employed at Texas A&M University delays initiating “green card” sponsorship until after the faculty member has gone through a first-year review to determine if s/he is a person whom the university wishes to retain. This approach has the benefit of pushing back legal costs until a university has confidence in the capabilities of the instructor. It has the negative consequence of requiring a costly new advertisement in a printed professional publication. After discussion, the chairs believed that the Texas A&M option is preferable (since it provides an assessment opportunity on the instructor) and they also expressed a belief that the second advertisement ought not be an issue because the first year review of the alien faculty member could be completed within the federal time limit to commence the “green card” procedure. The chairs further recommended that contracts for alien faculty
members include a stipulation that s/he will have a minimum commitment (3-5 years) to SFA after the award of tenure in return for its sponsorship. In terms of the institutional authority responsible for sponsorship, the chairs were unanimous in recommending that the Provost should assume the role on behalf of the entire university. Finally, the chairs recommended that the cost of sponsorship for permanent residency should be paid from a university budget rather than an academic budget.

Dean Murphy distributed a new policy that allows departments and faculty to submit travel requests in an online fashion. The policy is not mandatory but allows departments an opportunity to use this paper-less method if desired. Training on the system is provided for any department electing the option.

Dean Murphy provided copies of the process and responsibilities associated with the annual Bright Ideas Conference. It was decided that each department in the College should forward the names of faculty to the Dean’s Office who wish to participate in the poster session by February 10, 2008. Additionally, nominations of faculty to represent the College as a “spotlight speaker” should be forwarded to the Dean’s Office by February 10 as well. The selection of the spotlight speaker will be made by the committee responsible for reviewing faculty research grant proposals. The committee’s decision is due no later than February 14, 2008.

Dean Murphy discussed the state-wide College Readiness Project designed to align high school courses with university entry-level courses. The College of Liberal & Applied Arts has eight courses designated as “reference courses” for purposes of the project: ENGL 1303, ENGL 1302, ENGL 2332, HIST 1303, HIST 1302, GOVT 2301, GOVT 1302, PSYC 2301. An instructor of each course must be nominated to Ms. Debbie Kiesel by January 15, 2008. Faculty involved in the project will be paid a stipend of $500. Departmental chairs are responsible for selecting appropriate faculty and informing Ms. Kiesel.

Dean Murphy circulated the text of three revised policies approved by the Deans’ Council: E-6A (Academic Chair/Director Appointments), A-XXX--pending (Effort Reporting and Certification for Sponsored Activities), and A-XXX (University Awards Programs).

Dean Murphy expressed concern over the physical condition of classrooms among the departments. He noted that quality varies substantially, especially in terms of furniture, and that a poor impression is sometimes made on students and parents. Dean Murphy asked chairs if they would have an interest in coordinating the purchase of new furniture to assure quality and to achieve a reduce price through the size of the order. Additionally, the chairs unanimously agreed that a recommendation should be made to the Deans’ Council about creating a “rational rotation” on the painting of classrooms.

Dean Murphy opened the floor to discussion on whether a formal avenue for student input should be created at the college-level. It was agreed that a mechanism should be considered and Dr. Freddie Avant will provide the model used in the School of Social Work for review. The precise role of the student forum, however, will require further deliberation.

Dean Murphy presented an opportunity available through the U.S. Department of Commerce for arranging affiliations with universities abroad. Called the “Gold Key Service,” the U.S. Department of Commerce can establish contact at the highest administrative level with a foreign university that matches the profile of SFA. The basic service carries a cost of $700; additional services can be purchased, such as organizing an event abroad. At the moment, the greatest demand overseas is for programs in the areas of Public Administration, Criminal Justice, Psychology and Social Work. The countries with active interest in affiliating with U.S. universities are India, China, and Vietnam. Dean Murphy requested that chairs bring this opportunity to the attention of faculty to determine if any desire exists to go forward.

In terms of the general education core, it was discovered that two courses (PHY 241 and 242) were added in the undergraduate bulletin as options for students within the College of Liberal & Applied Arts without discussion by departmental chairs. Although no chair objected to the courses themselves, concern was expressed over the process by which a curricular change was adopted without chair involvement. It was decided that all future revisions to core requirements will be fully vetted by the chairs.
Kandy Stahl and Jerry Williams circulated the draft of a college policy for determining adjunct pay on a uniform basis across departments. The proposed policy establishes two scales of pay, one for adjuncts holding a master's degree and one for those with a doctoral degree. It was agreed that the term "contract renewal" should be replaced with "reappointment" and that full-time adjuncts receive 30 days notice about renewal but without any mention of a guarantee of future employment. The chairs requested clarification on whether full-time faculty teaching a large section overload should be paid on the basis of a flat rate or 1.5 or twice the rate of salary (based on enrollment). A revised policy will be provided at the next meeting for approval.

Jerry Williams, Rick Abel, and Kandy Stahl distributed a proposal on the criteria that should be used in awarding release-time to faculty. After much discussion, it was agreed that any request should be accompanied by a list of responsibilities negotiated by the faculty member, chair, and dean. The list of responsibilities must be substantially equivalent to work involved in teaching a 3-credit hour course for each release. The chair will use this list in evaluating a faculty member's performance in accomplishing the goals of the release-time assignment. A revised policy will be provided at the next meeting for approval.

Troy Davis produced the draft of a policy statement defining the role of the College's chairs' council. The draft outlined three responsibilities: providing advice to the dean, assisting the dean in the interpretation of policy, and disseminating information. It was agreed that a fourth role should be included: advising the dean. A revised policy will be provided at the next meeting for approval.

Dean Murphy delivered a brief summary on the status of the College's ad hoc committees. He indicated that the reports of the various committees will be presented to the faculty at the Spring Semester meeting on January 10. The goal of the presentations will be to solicit faculty input.

Dean Murphy announced that a new College website and newsletter will be launched early Spring Semester. He requested departments to submit items for inclusion in the newsletter. Dean Murphy further noted that all curriculum changes have been forwarded for approval.

Dean Murphy discussed the concept for an undergraduate research conference to be sponsored by the College. The chairs expressed support for both the concept and the process for selection of papers. At the conclusion of the meeting, a discussion ensued about how faculty are evaluated by students for their teaching performance. It was agreed that the current online system does not generate a sufficient return on which to base a reasonable assessment of teaching effectiveness. It was decided that the College will explore reverting to a paper-based system to ensure adequate student feedback.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25