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Faculty Senate

To: Members of the Faculty Senate
From: Jere Jackson, Secretary
Date Submitted: February 9, 1994
Subject: Minutes for Meeting No. 235
December 8, 1993 - 2:30 PM
Mildred Wyatt Room, Steen Library

MINUTES

I Call to order

Chairperson Suzy Weems called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM, in the Wyatt Room of Steen Library.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion

On a motion by Senator Jones, seconded by Senator Mace, the Senate approved with minor corrections the minutes of Meeting #234, November 10, 1993.

III. Old Business:

A. Safety Standards - Dr. Robert Gruebel

Dr. Robert Gruebel, formerly on Safety Committee of the University, explained the process of how things are channeled through the safety communications network. The Committee, a rotating body, has had a communications network since 1984, whereby information flows from students, faculty, staff through divisions, departments, colleges to the Committee. It has worked fairly well. There is a chain of command for the resolution of safety problems, and the committee or committee members individually work to resolve the problems. The accident rate has fallen from 7.8% in 1980 to 2.4% in 1992. He discussed the need for a better network for getting suggestions from students on problems of safety.

Gruebel expressed concern the excessive time taken to correct safety problems. For instance, the problem of the toxic air in the Chemistry building; it was finally corrected, but it took too long time. Resolution of problems once detected should be shortened. While he recognized the problem of air pollution in many buildings and shared the concern of faculty, he stated that there was no mandate to fix these. Most of the organisms in the air, while not dangerously harmful, were causes for concern and irritation. Identification was the first step. Usually the university just stumbled from one temporary fix to another.

Senator Mueller said some of this might change with the implementation of the American Disabilities Act. He asked why the university did not clean up the problems in the various buildings to make them healthy before someone with extreme allergies forced them to do it?

Senator Dahmus raised some questions about air in Liberal Arts North and expressed how difficult it was to get the hierarchy of the university interested in dealing with this problem. What about the bat problem in Liberal Arts? How was this being addressed?

B. Admission Standards - Dr. Judd Staples

Dr. Staples first explained the new administrative combination of the Registrar, Admissions, and Financial Aid into one department under his authority. When asked by Dr. DiNucci if the reorganization was set in stone, Dr. Staples promised that there would be an on-going evaluation of the recently reorganized structure.

Under the old admissions standards, standardized test scores (SAT, ACT and class rank) were used but no combination of evidence compiled. Abilities which were not indicated by test scores or the variations in programs from school to school were not taken into consideration. Ability is not enough to measure how a student will do in a classroom situation.

Under the new standards, approved last July, the approach is more sophisticated and is based on models from other Texas schools. The new standards take more information into consideration; a combination of test scores, class standing, letters of recommendation and essays. More effort is being made to take each applicant personally. The summer provisional model for students with low SATs and low ranking in class is now being extended into the fall semester (whereas before it was limited to the summer).

Concerning the honors admission category, when asked by Senator Benoit for statistics, Dr. Staples said that the breakdown for each of the admissions categories would be approximately the following:

Honors:	5%
Regular admissions:	75-80%
Restricted admissions:	15-20%

PREP admissions: 1% In the PREP program, of the 120 to 150 students who entered in the summer program, only about 35% persist into the fall; the numbers in this fourth category are still very small.

Senator Mace asked a series of questions of Dr. Staples:

How many university scholars there were and how many full academic scholarships were being offered at SFA this year? Were good students being recruited avidly?

Was the emphasis in the new standards being placed more on class rank than on test scores? While a more sophisticated approach is always welcome, is the university on solid ground basing its decision on class rank given the grading policies of public schools in Texas?

If students in the PREP program can earn admissions this way, are they required to have a "C" in every course before being transferred to regular status?

Do we collect inflated fees from students who enroll under these special programs?

What is the university doing with the data collected which tracks undergraduate students on special admissions standards? Is there any policy contemplated on the number of drops and adds which a student can have? What about the number of "Withdrawals" on a student's record?

Why does someone not consider the painful experience and the terrible disadvantage students are placed in when they do not have the preparation necessary to compete with their classmates? Is it moral to take their money when we know they cannot do the work?

Dr. Staples admitted that the university has a moral obligation to admit only those who have some reasonable chance of success. He also said the number of "withdrawals" needed to be limited. He also said if the provisional admission program extended from the summer to the fall does not produce an acceptable percentage of successes, the program should end.

Senator Jones raised the problem of how easy it was to gain admission by transfer; with no test scores and only six hours, a student can transfer. Under NCAA rules, the irony exists that athletes have tougher admissions standards than transfers.

Senator Clark mentioned the new high school requirements and ask what this meant for SFA?

Senator Turner complained about the students transferring grades into SFA on courses they are repeating. He advocated stronger standards. (Dr. Staples said they should be required to

have a C or better in all prerequisites.) Dr. Turner thought the GPA should be raised to 2.25 or 2.5 and that the "W" should be cast as a punitive grade.

Senator Ford said the PREP program was an exploitation of the dreams and aspirations of students; must share with these entering students the track record of those who have failed to succeed when test scores and grades were so low.

Senator Barton also asked a series of questions:

Will students in the PREP program be counted in the retention rates? What about students who are on financial aid who are on probation? Has the new admissions policy caused confusion among high school councilors? Is there a limit on the number of PREP students? Dr. Barton also pointed out that East Texas State University in the late 1970s went down the road of lowering standards, and this proved disastrous.

Senator Clark asked if SFA collects any information on why students who considered SFA ended up choosing other institutions?

Dr. Staples admitted that there was confusion among the high school councilors and that a more rigorous policy was needed to explain the new system. He also recognized the need to make more investments in merit-based aid to students (i.e., more scholarships). He certainly did not want the public or students to perceive of SFA as an open admissions institution. Staples answered that there was a limit on number of prep students to be admitted (150); this number he felt was small enough to handle. Concerning the collection of information raised by Senator Clark, Dr. Staples admitted that more data need to be requested.

Senator McCune asked how the university evaluated its prestige. Is it by the number of entering students who graduate, the number of faculty in departments, the teaching of undergraduates, the scope of the library, etc.? Do we really help the students to fit into the campus or feel comfortable? Why do we not have more information on faculty evaluations available or vitas on the professors in the library?

Senator Waits raised the question of the criteria used to judge the admissions and the consistency of the criteria and the group that are making the decisions based on the standards?

Senator Dahmus stated that his opinion that many students who should be in group 4 were being given deferred admissions; they should be extensively reviewed like group 4.

[Secretarial Note: Due to an argument between Senators over old business (having nothing to do with the admissions standards), Dr. Staples in the interest of time was allowed to move on to the subject of financial aid even though the earlier questions raised by Senators were not answered.]

C. Financial Aid - Dr. Judd Staples

Dr. Staples, in his capacity as the head of financial aid, said the system was "broke". The 30% increase in applications for financial aid had overloaded the system: 7,595 applications last year and 10,000 this year. Seven positions had been added since last year. He said the department had gone through 3 audits, Federal and State, and that the reports had said the staffs were fine, that they were courageous in working under difficult conditions, and that students were not unduly displeased with their service. He did admit the need for more training, however. Part of the problem came from the incorrect or incomplete applications submitted by students themselves. 7 out of 10 reports (SAR) tend to have mistakes. We need more student workshops.

D. Merit

Senator DiNucci argued for divorcing the subject of merit pay from the subject of base pay. He advocated parts A & B of the proposed statement by the Senate and thought these would aid faculty. There should be some provision for an across the board raise and then the awarding of merit pay. He asked that the last part of the statement be tabled again so that it could be a main topic on the Senate's agenda rather than a minor topic.

Senator Jones wanted to see people placed on some kind of equal footing before the distribution of merit money; then merit would truly be merit.

E. Student Attendance Standards

Senator Mueller asked that the question of student attendance standards be referred to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Senate and be placed on the agenda for the February meeting.

IV. Reports by Officers

Senator Weems reported on various university committee meetings that she had attended representing the Faculty Senate. From the Graduate Council, she reported that two faculty development leaves had been granted for the spring: Drs. Franklin and Abernathy. In 1997, the GRE exams will be given exclusively by computers. Graduate enrollment was down, graduate faculty renewal applications were being undertaken, and the deadline for Faculty Research grants was February 7.

From the Academic Affairs Council meeting, Dr. Weems reported on recommendations concerning changes in course fees, the Prep program, the reduction in ports on the CP6 main computer to save costs, and the installation of a computer subnet throughout the university to cut down on network traffic jams. The recruitment of a new department head for administrative computing would be completed by mid-January.

The pros and cons of voting rights for the Senate's representative on the Academic Affairs Council was then discussed at some length. The matter was placed on the table for another meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

With the unanimous consent of the Senators present, Chairperson Weems declared the meeting adjourned and wished everyone a happy holiday season.

Absent

Senator Rulfs for medical reasons.
Senator Hearell had a class conflict.