

**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**  
**March 8, 2000 Meeting #291**  
**(Subject to approval at next meeting)**

***CALLED TO ORDER by Chair Jill Dumesnil at 2:34 PM***

Absent:

R. Abel (excused); R. Alston (excused); E. D. McCune (excused); A. Sementelli (excused)

***GUESTS:***

Dr. Janelle Ashley, Vice-President for Academic Affairs;  
Mr. Chuck Lopez, Director of Disability Services.

Dr. Ashley answered Chair Dumesnil's question about ExCET results:

Test results for February will soon be reported, and we hope they will be better than past scores. In September we were "Accredited, under review." SFA has addressed the ExCET problem in two ways: we have established new requirements for students who take the test, and we provide additional instruction to help students meet the new requirements. We intend that only students who are prepared for the test will take it. Among the changes: now a student must make a "C" or better in Ed. Psyc. 380 before taking the test. Visitors from the Governor's Council on Education who were on campus last week thought this requirement is good. Also, because there is a correlation between scores in the TASP reading test and ExCET scores, we will require those who take ExCET to be able to score 260 instead of 230 on the TASP test, and we will offer developmental courses to move students from the 230 level to at least the 260 level. And now the academic departments that teach content will issue the bar codes that admit students to the ExCET test. We hope April and July test results will improve enough to avoid any need for the State Board for Education Certification to appoint a conservator over our teacher education program.

Chuck Lopez, who recently became Director of Disability Services, explained his office's activities and discussed how faculty can help disabled students. He suggested asking textbook sales representatives about the availability of alternate formats for their textbooks and about teaching aids that publishers may offer. He recommended that faculty note the existence of Disability Services on their syllabi. Sen. Devine asked about peer note takers: how can there be confidentiality if students are asked to volunteer to be a note taker? Chair Dumesnil asked about the perception that Disability Services recommended certain faculty to disabled students, but Mr. Lopez said there is not such a policy. Sen. Sullivan recommended that Disability Services consider the problem of disabled students who lack the ability or the training to safely control their motorized chairs.

***MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING were approved with these corrections: absences of Senators Hostetter, Scharff, and Sullivan should be excused; CTAC are the initials for the committee mentioned on p.3.***

## **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

Chair Dumesnil: The Senate Executive Committee nominates people to serve on university committees. Senators should solicit faculty who are interested in serving on those committees and submit their names to Dr. Dumesnil. The Senate's Election Committee will help in this. A list of openings on committees can be found on the university's web site.

On March 7 the chair and Chair-elect Stahl met with Dr. Smith and Dr. Ashley. It seems likely that with the money available raises will be mainly in the range of only 3-4%, and any raise above that will be capped at 4.5% except for promotions and changes in duties. Raises will come from a salary fund pool that is up only 3%. Dr. Ashley noted the harmful effect of an enrollment decrease in the Fall which was followed by another decrease this Spring. Normally Spring enrollment is 91% of the previous Fall enrollment, but this year it is 89%.

These reports inspired a lengthy discussion of faculty salaries. Sen. Sullivan asked will we ever be able to tell our constituents they are valued at least as much as the lowest paid football coach? Another senator asked about coaches' academic credentials. Dr. Ashley reminded the senate that coaches are not hired on the basis of their academic degrees, and, in reference to the whole question of what emphasis should be placed on intercollegiate athletics, said there is a reality that we must just live with. Sen. Howard expressed dismay that the university's chief academic officer would say we had to accept that reality. Sen. Spall and others lamented that SFA's low salaries make it difficult to attract and keep new faculty. In response to questions from Sen. Howard about how the university budget is made and about the budgeting roles of administrators and the Regents' Finance Committee, Dr. Ashley said the Finance Committee meets with the president and the chief financial officers of the university to review the budget; the committee's meetings are open, and the meeting times are posted on the state web site. Several senators commented that the budgeting system was not sufficiently open.

After this discussion, Chair Dumesnil continued with her report.

April 26-28 there will be a workshop on grants writing presented by a team from the state government.

The suspension policy the Senate recommended at its last meeting is being considered by a committee of the Academic Affairs Council and action may be taken at the Council's next meeting, but not in time to recommend anything for the Regents' April meeting.

Chair-elect Stahl: There will be a Faculty Forum on Wednesday, Mar 22, at 2:30 PM in Regents Suite A. The meeting will be open only to faculty. The primary issue will be the systems question, but there should be time to discuss other issues.

The Graduate Council was told that changes in residence requirements have been approved by the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Treasurer Betty Alford reported \$3,895 in the Senate account.

Parliamentarian Larry King reported on the Texas Council of Faculty Senates meeting in Austin on Feb. 25-26 and distributed a written summary of the meeting.

Rep. Rob Junell, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee said that recent increases in higher education appropriations exceed increases in enrollment. Attendees rebuked him for not adjusting for inflation. The legislator said that at universities about 42% of appropriated funds go to faculty salaries, but in public schools the comparable

figure is about 80%. He does not advocate returning the appropriation system to designated lines.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Academic Affairs:** Sen. B. Oswald submitted a resolution on cheating and plagiarism (seconded by Sen. Howard):

BE IT RESOLVED:

Whereas, almost all students do their own work honestly and few are guilty of plagiarism or cheating, nevertheless because a small number do cheat or plagiarize, a university must have a just and consistent cheating/plagiarism policy. Because the Faculty Senate believes some changes and clarification are needed for the present policy, the Faculty Senate recommends these changes to the current policies on Cheating and Plagiarism (A-9.1) and Add/Drop (A-5):

The first paragraph in the current Procedure (A-9.1) suggests that the faculty member who accuses a student of cheating must also be the one who informs the accused student of his or her options for appealing the accusation. The Faculty Senate recommends that the wording of this section be changed to reflect students' responsibility to know what the University Policy and Procedure Manual and the SFA Student Handbook say about cheating and plagiarism. Whether cheating or plagiarism have occurred can be a complicated question; the Senate believes it unwise to add to the fundamental issue of whether academic misconduct has occurred the second issue of whether the instructor has explained the appeals process to the accused student.

The senate recommends addressing the problem of students who have cheated and who then withdraw before the drop day with a "W" and receive no penalty. Presently, the "W" a cheater gets is no different from the "W" given to another student innocent of any cheating. The current policy states that if a student withdraws from a course prior to the awarding of a grade, mention of the infraction can be placed in his/her student record. We feel this is a meaningless sanction because only the diploma and the transcript are likely to be seen by third parties such as potential employees or professional school admissions officers. Therefore the senate believes there should be an option to place an "F" or "WF" on the transcript of an offending student.

Present policy states that cheaters' grades must be withheld, but also states that a student can withdraw from the course. A contradiction exists because an instructor cannot "withhold" a "W" which has already been assigned in the drop process. To end this contradiction, the Senate proposes that from the 12th day until the drop day, the instructor should have the option of awarding a "WF" instead of a "W" to a student guilty of cheating or plagiarism. The drop system should be changed so that from the 12th day until the drop day the instructor will be notified that a student intends to withdraw, and the instructor would then assign the W or WF; the policy would be to assign WF only because of cheating or plagiarism, not because of poor grades. An added benefit of this change in drop policy is that it would save faculty members the time and effort of preparing material for students who have withdrawn from class without any notification to the instructor.

These proposed changes would not diminish students' present rights to appeal any sanctions or penalties for cheating or plagiarism.

Sen. Sullivan was bothered by the suggestion that a WF, which usually means a withdrawing student was failing for academic reasons, could now also mean failure for misbehavior. She thought the two types of withdrawing in a failing condition should not be conflated. The appeal process could take several weeks. Why not, if it is determined cheating occurred, change any grade that had originally been granted, to an F?

Sen. Devine: At the Senate's last meeting, Council Clark said a W could not be changed to F, and under current policy no matter what a student did before drop day, only a W could be assigned, which was why the Academic Affairs Committee was suggesting a new policy. Sen. Howard suggested, as a friendly amendment, that a cheating student withdrawing before the drop day be given an F, not a WF as the committee proposed, but the committee did not agree to accept the friendly amendment. After more discussion, Chair Dumesnil recommended, and the senate agreed, that the resolution be sent back to the committee for further consideration before next month's meeting.

**Professional Welfare:** Sen. T. Oswald and her committee have studied the proposal for personal leave days. Glenda Herrington, of the personnel office, does not believe our Regents would agree to such leave days unless other universities grant them, and the committee has not found other universities that have a set number of "personal leave days." However, other universities are also aware of the problem. UT-Austin is studying its sick leave policy, and Texas A&M does have a policy for emergency leave with pay. (The A&M policy can be found at the A&M web site as "Emergency Leave Policy.") Interim President Smith told Drs. Dumesnil and Stahl that while we cannot add on "personal leave days," we should try to do something with sick leave policy. The committee will continue to study the question.

The Professional Welfare Committee is also working on the requirement that evaluations of deans and chairs be signed. The policy the Senate drafted last year was rejected by the Academic Affairs Council, and this year, not surprisingly, deans continue to oppose anonymous evaluations by faculty while continuing to approve anonymous evaluations of faculty by students. The committee believes that presently Policy E-10A (see the SFA web site), which calls for confidentiality, is not being followed. (Several senators, without endorsing signed evaluations, noted that "confidentiality" and "anonymity" are not the same.) Sen. King: At the meeting of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, faculty from other universities were amazed that we must sign our evaluations of deans and chairs. Chair Dumesnil: An AAUP representative whom she consulted said SFA's practice seems incompatible with proper academic procedure. Sen. T.Oswald said her committee was considering circulating a petition among faculty in the hopes that seeing a host of protesting signatures would have a salutary effect on the Academic Affairs Council, but several senators said such a petition would not be signed by untenured faculty for the same reasons why they are unhappy about signing evaluations: they fear retaliation when they come up for tenure.

This question moved the Senate to a lengthy, wide ranging discussion of university governance, and the matter of budgeting was revisited. One senator complained about an attitude of resignation that would stifle interest in a petition; another complained that the Senate's actions can be vetoed by the administration whereas at many other universities faculty senates' decisions are submitted directly to the governing regents. Some wondered whether governance would be better under a system. One senator

thought if we joined a system our students would no longer be assessed \$400 p/a to support intercollegiate athletics.

In response to Sen. T. Oswald's request that the Senate tell her committee what it wanted to do about signed evaluations, Sen. Devine moved that the committee resubmit last year's resolution on signed evaluations; Sen. King seconded. Sen. Scharff added a friendly amendment to include information and faculty comments from last year when the committee resubmits the resolution. The motion passed, 13-1, with 3 not voting.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Campus Pipeline: senators were confused about whether SFA has committed to the system. (Dr. Ashley, whom we might have asked, had been obliged to leave the meeting beforehand.) Sen. Scharff said Dr. Smith has decided we will adopt it. The advisory committee will be advising only on implementation.

Sen. King, as he had promised in February, submitted a draft for a survey of faculty opinion about the presidential search. The senate agreed to distribute the survey with slight modifications. Chair Dumesnil asked the Elections Committee to send it out later this semester to tenured and tenure-track faculty.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Authorization of new hires: some faculty have asked whether the process has been halted. Dr. Dumesnil has been told there has not been a general halt.

Graduate Student Stipends: The Graduate Council has recommended an increase of \$500 p/a for each of the next three years. Sen. B. Oswald moved that the senate endorse these raises as we did last year. Second: Sen. Sullivan. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ADJOURNED: 4:55 PM**

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Devine, Secretary