

**Stephen F. Austin State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Meeting #354
January 24, 2007**

Subject to approval at the 355th meeting.

Senators present were: Norjuan Austin(1), Julia Ballenger(2), Joe Ballenger(3); Chair, Chris Barker(4); John Boyd(5), Deborah Bush(7), Linda Calvacca(8), Warren Conway(9), Deborah Dunn(10), Jeannie Gresham(11); Chair-elect, Marc Guidry(12); Gina Haidinyak(13); Secretary, Kayce Halstead(14); Kevin Langford(15), Perry Moon (16), Wanda Mouton(17), Anita Powell(20), Elton Scifres(21), Sally Ann Swearingen(22), Mark Turner(23), Dan Unger(24), Brian Utley(25), Michael Walker(26);

Excused: Mary Nell Brunson(6), Debbie Pace(18), Jeana Paul-Urena(19); Treasurer, Elizabeth Witherspoon(27)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. by Chair Chris Barker at the Tracy Pearman Alumni Center.

Guests

Associate Provost and VP of Academic Affairs, Dr. Ric Berry

Dr. Berry addressed the following information items:

- Drs. Pattillo and Young are unable to attend because they are away at meetings.
- Dr. Evans, Dean of the Library, resigned effective February 1, 2007. Ms. Shirley Dickerson, Associate Director of Information Services, has agreed to act as interim director as a national search is organized. A notice of her appointment has been broadcast. Senator Dunn asked about the position remaining as a dean's position. **A:** Dr. Berry thinks it may go back to being a director position.
- A search should get underway soon to fill the VP for University Advancement vacancy now that we have a permanent president.
- The president has appointed a committee to begin the process of creating a new strategic plan. We are currently working under the '08 plan. There is a need to build in a regents' connection—not veto power—which will help them understand how university governance works. The president wants to determine 3-6 concrete ideas that can better move the campus forward. The tentative broad timeline is as follows: spring '07 will be a time for committee members to do some fact finding through such channels as engaging in educational workshops on state finance, legislative issues, faculty/student demographics, higher education issues across the state, etc.; fall '07 will be time for data gathering on campus and formulating maybe 5 initiatives, which will be compiled and vetted through open forums for all campus constituents. Everyone will have a chance to provide input. Summer '08 will be used to distill the information into 3-5 concrete initiatives. The plan will be written with implementation, assessment, budgetary,

and other elements incorporated. The new plan would be announced in the fall of '08.

- The trend is in the direction of assessment. The question arises as to whether we will need to assess every course or just core courses. At present it is not required that we assess every course, but accrediting associations are feeling pressure by the federal government to do a better job. SACS is shifting away from looking at what has been done in the past; and instead is wanting some proof that an institution is meeting basic competencies now and can demonstrate how competencies will be met in the next 10 years.
- The work needed for SACS will mesh quite well with the strategic plan process. Preparation for SACS is underway now and the core curriculum assessment mandated by the coordinating board will be data needed for re-accreditation as well. The last time we underwent reaffirmation preparation, the amount spent was about half a million dollars, so that element will need to be budgeted in also.
- The two documents we are required to prepare for SACS are the *compliance certification*—which contains certain basic standards we are required to meet; and (2) *the quality enhancement plan (QEP)*, which is a document developed by the institution that includes: (1) a broad-based institutional process that identifies key issues emerging from institutional assessment, and (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning in accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals in the plan to assess their achievement.
- There will be a total of three reviews. First, an off-site peer review of 8 to 10 evaluators will look at the two documents discussed above, and review data we will make available online. They will be stationed in Atlanta, GA. Next, there will be an onsite review by a committee, and finally, a full commission on colleges will review the material twice—once in the summer, and again in December. We are looking at receiving affirmation in December of 2011.
- Salary issues will be left for the president to discuss. Although, on the academic affairs side, they are making an effort to do two things: (1) break down barriers between the academic side and the finance and administration side in order to improve communication and the decision-making process between them; and (2) show the university administration that we can be responsible with the budget we are given to manage, with the idea that efficiency should allow us to keep any savings gained. It may take time to make this happen, but already, there is openness being shown to this idea.

Senator Moon had a salary question: when professors about to retire are replaced by new faculty making much less, the money has to go back into general budget. Is there a possibility to see this change? **A.** We are trying to do this. We shouldn't have to make an argument to keep the money realized from the salary differential. In addition we never really budgeted summer school adequately because we always counted on

savings from salaries, and there is never enough. We should be budgeting up front the amount we need to get through summer school.

Chair Barker asked if there is any hope of seeing better academic salaries? **A:** Yes, he is optimistic. He has been working on salary increases for years while in other positions. Six years ago he was appointed to head the salary equity committee, and they came up with a good 3-year plan. One year was implemented, the rest never occurred. That being said, he is optimistic. There are some possibilities for restructuring debt according to Ms. Baisden, so there is a chance for some relief, but it may or may not happen. Also we need to look at the power of the strategic plan and get regent buy-in. Finally, we need to make some hard choices about what we are going to be as an institution—we can't be everything. One reality is that we may have to teach bigger classes.

Senator Langford wondered why the BOR and the administration seem to be able to see the need for new facilities, but don't seem to recognize the need for better faculty salaries. There is no mention in SACS about sports, it is all about academics. Is there some better way to educate them regarding this matter? **A:** Dr. Berry understands the frustration surrounding this issue, and explained that all the new buildings have a revenue stream that pays for them (state revenue bond), so the BOR is quick to take advantage of those opportunities; whereas, money for faculty salaries are paid for with dedicated tuition which is a revenue stream that has nearly reached its limit. We need to take a hard look at the programs we offer now and make decisions about which ones should be expanded and whether low producing programs should be continued or not. Senator Julia Ballenger wondered how we can change the stereotypical perception that professors don't work many hours per week, and therefore have "easy" jobs. **A:** He doesn't know the answer to that, but suggests that anyone who thinks that is the case should just follow a faculty member around for a week and see what the job entails. Senator Guidry remarked that SHSU has larger classes which translates into having more money to pay better faculty salaries, but our current strategic plan emphasizes in *Initiative F* the personal attention given to students and mentions our modest class sizes; while *Initiative M* deals, in part, with improving faculty/staff compensation. Will one of these initiatives have to be sacrificed in the new strategic plan? **A:** Dr. Berry can make no predictions about the new plan. He does feel we must face reality about how many small classes we can continue to support—although some have to be small due to necessary limitations, etc.

Senator Moon stated that if we increase class size, another factor is course load—which is higher here than other places—at least in some disciplines, and there doesn't seem to be any attempt to address that issue. **A:** In Dr. Berry's opinion there won't be any attempt to address that. At present, our policy says 24 TLC. Academic Affairs will look at teaching load policy this semester, so there may be some attempt to edit or revise it. His guess is that research requirements would be higher with fewer classes taught. He is not opposed to it, he just doesn't see it being changed.

Announcements

Chair Barker announced that Dr. Pattillo is the sole candidate for the office of university president, which on balance should be a good thing. Also, there has been a salary increase since the last meeting which Dr. Pattillo worked hard to get implemented. The next BOR meeting will be this Monday and Tuesday, (January 29th-30th), so it will overlap with the weekend. Anyone who can be present, please come to observe, converse, etc. There may be an interesting announcement made.

Approval of Minutes

There are some minor corrections Chair Barker wants to address—he will send them to the secretary. A motion to approve the minutes as they will be amended was made by Senator Boyd and seconded by Senator Swearingen. Motion carried.

Officer reports

Chair's report:

On Dec 15th, Chair Barker had a productive and cordial meeting with Valerie Ertz, Chair of the BOR. Although they discussed many issues, the main concern was inadequate funding for academics, especially manifested in faculty salaries.

They discussed inadequate funding for graduate assistantships, and Ms. Ertz asked for additional information. He expressed concern about the annual operating costs for the baseball and equestrian programs, and how those costs impact funding for other needs. He also expressed concern about the proposed baseball complex, and how SFA will bear 75% of the cost. Although she listened intently to what he had to say, she thinks baseball is in best interest of SFA.

He talked about a proposal for faculty representation on the BOR. Her understanding was that the provost provided that. The meeting was very pleasant and provided a good opportunity for the exchange of concerns.

Chair-elect report no report

Treasurer no report

Secretary no report

Academic Affairs

Senator Walker intended to compile a report, but had computer problems. He will plan to get that done through email or at the next meeting.

Professional Welfare Senator Utley outlined the committee's charge and mentioned the report had been distributed through email. The charge is as follows:

First-year faculty members at SFA do not get paid until October 1, thus working approximately 5-6 weeks before receiving a paycheck. Our charge was to examine the financial hardships encountered by first-year faculty due to this, study the commonality of this pay schedule at other institutions, and to come up with recommendations to remedy the problem

Senator Joe Ballenger mentioned that this issue had been brought up before and there is no reason not to offer moving expenses from departments. It can be done, but just isn't. Senator Dunn said it seems to be an issue that is done differently depending on the department. Senator Moon says it can come out of travel funds. Senator Dunn doesn't know why a 13-month plan wouldn't work—it may require modifying payroll software. There was discussion as to how to proceed. Dr. Berry mentioned that as he understands the law, in Texas, one can't be paid for work before it's done. Our contracts state that work begins Sept. 1 even though we start working in mid-August, but faculty are paid until the end of May even though the semester ends in mid-month. Senator Guidry recommended that if it is a state law, it should be cited. The committee should investigate the legal aspect and then make a recommendation.

Another recommendation was that Senator Utey contact Ms. Baisden and Mr. Gallant to see what information they could offer.

Ethics no report

Election no report

Administration and Finance no report

Faculty Governance and Involvement

No report

Old business There had been earlier discussion about inviting speakers to provide their views concerning the university systems issue, but after further consideration, it was felt it may be a good idea to wait awhile and see how things go now that so many changes have occurred. Discussion points were:

- Consider some kind of follow up action on the faculty survey done the previous year.
- Suggest inviting a legislator if we do have an open forum on the issue. The attention of a legislator might make the BOR consider the possibilities.
- Entertain views from both sides of joining a system in a panel discussion—not a debate.
- Host a frank discussion about the process—maybe with representatives from their faculty senates. Consider having 1-3 senate reps from schools that have joined a system—maybe the senate chairs who were there when the switch took place. Have them come to a senate meeting or a special meeting one evening. Could even stream the discussion on campus through a teleconference. Timeframe would be as soon as possible.

Chair Barker assigned the academic affairs committee to consider some of the suggestions made and start making plans to bring in some speakers.

New business Senator Bush revisited the issue of faculty representation on the BOR. According to some research she did, a student rep was put on the BOR because the state law changed, so there may need to be a law change for a faculty representative to serve on the BOR. Senator Guidry stated that every BOR in Texas has student representation, but no BOR has faculty representation. In fact, it may be seen as a conflict of interest.

Chair Barker mentioned that TACT has items on its agenda to discuss with the legislature, and one issue is implementing faculty representation on BORs.

Adjournment

Senator Swearingen moved to adjourn. Seconded by Senator Bush. Meeting adjourned at 4:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Kayce Halstead,
Secretary