

**Stephen F. Austin State University
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Meeting #356
March 07, 2007**

Subject to approval at the 357th meeting.

Senators present were: Norjuan Austin(1), Joe Ballenger(3); Chair, Chris Barker(4); Mary Nelle Brunson(6), Deborah Bush(7), Warren Conway(9), Deborah Dunn(10) Jeannie Gresham(11); Chair-elect, Marc Guidry(12); Gina Haidinyak(13); Secretary, Kayce Halstead(14); Wanda Mouton(17), Debbie Pace(18), Anita Powell(20), Elton Scifres(21), Sally Ann Swearingen(22), Mark Turner(23), Dan Unger(24), Brian Utley(25)Michael Walker(26); Treasurer, Elizabeth Witherspoon(27).

Excused: Julia Ballenger(2), John Boyd(5), Linda Calvacca(8), Kevin Langford(15), Perry Moon (16), Jeana Paul-Urena (19)

Guests: Andy Kesling, Dr. Larry King

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

Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, Dr. Marlin Young

Dr. Young reported on the following information items:

- The Academic Affairs office is working on tenure and promotion packets; course fees; the summer budget; new courses and course revisions.
- There are three vacancies for which searches are underway--two deans and a new library director.
- The three finalists for the Dean of Liberal and Applied Arts position will be visiting campus soon. Their bios will be on the web.
- The Library Director search committee met for the first time. They hope to have someone hired by fall semester '07.
- We are beginning to fill faculty vacancies

Senator Joe Ballenger asked if the university is cutting back on summer classes. **A:** No, however, summer enrollment is steadily decreasing. We need to be more efficient in all 3 semesters, and put any savings into a merit pool. Faculty contracts do not assure summer teaching. Senator Ballenger thought that the school makes more money in summer. **A:** Maybe, but we need to look at increasing distance learning courses so students won't take classes at home at local community colleges, etc.

Senator Scifres asked if the faculty/student ratio is considered in summer courses. **A:** No, it is only calculated in fall and spring courses.

Chair Barker wondered whether some classes have to be smaller due to the nature of the course? **A:** There are some like that. We asked deans to determine if there are any programs

needed this summer that were not offered previously and only one dean responded. Things like field programs, or anything proposed has been approved.

Senator Guidry described an program that was tried in Liberal Arts where faculty in some departments were given the choice of an experimental teaching load of 3-3 instead of 4-4. The option was lost because not enough additional research was being done to justify the reduction. However, new faculty who had been doing the work are now talking about going back on the job market, which creates a problem with recruiting and retention.

Sam Houston State University has a program that is more flexible and lets people make a choice. All new faculty are automatically getting a 3-3 load and can decide if they want to remain with that or go to 4-4. Could we have a more flexible policy? **A:** The university policy was last revised 2 years ago. The deans were told to look at the policy and think about offering new faculty a different course load. If no extra work is done, such as research or publishing, then they have to move to a greater teaching load. Our policy is more informal than the SHSU policy.

Senator Guidry stated that the SHSU policy is a 2-tier system. Faculty may choose which course load to carry, and they must produce research if they choose a lesser teaching load. It would seem that the 3-3 load would be an attractive recruiting tool for new faculty who prefer the research and publishing environment.

Dr. Young supports the idea as long as there is proof the work is being done. The existing policy would need to be modified.

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

Dr. Berry reported on legislative issues:

While in Austin, there were several provisions that university representatives were hoping to achieve. Among them were:

- Restoration of the 10% budget cut—looks good
- Tuition and revenue bonds had been authorized with no money appropriated—full funding is being pushed and they are relatively optimistic. Funds would be used for the Education Research Center and projects in deferred maintenance.
- Budget relief for insurance
- State committee is reworking the funding formula –what does it really cost to deliver instruction. What we can anticipate to receive will be a loss due to credit hours and how it is weighted with matrix formula—but they may not hold us to that. Other thing that may happen—deadline for filing bills however it looks like they will put more money in the formula if it does happen.

Drs. Pattillo, Berry, and Ms. Baisden met 15 times overall with legislators. Three items were of special importance: A special request to issue tuition revenue bonds for improving property given to SFA from the Dewitt family which will be earmarked for the nursing program; exceptional items, also called special line items—things we are proposing that will become special items—money for a start up program for an Early Childhood Research Center in the amount of \$1.2 million over the biennium; and the expansion of a pilot program in forest resources inventory managed by the School of Forestry. The expansion would increase from 4 counties to a 42 county region.

Dr. King asked if SFA would lose money, because he recalled that when the formula was being redesigned we were to receive around \$2 million in additional funds. **A:** In terms of new money, we should be ahead—the loss is not all due to the reworked formula.

Senator Walker asked about the revenue bond for deferred maintenance. What is it? It seems to imply we haven't planned for maintenance. Are we not the only university doing this? **A:** No. Dr. Berry then addressed the issue of assessment. Twenty-eight courses within the core curriculum still lack assessment reports. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requires that we develop assessment tools that measure objective outcomes. This mandate comes from the Federal Government, and is based on information from the Spellings Commission report, ***A Test of Leadership; Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education***. <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/final-report.pdf>

SACS also requires that we meet certain basic criteria and show a proven record of success, as well as demonstrating how competencies will be met in the future.

Senator Walker remarked that other universities have assessment centers. What do we have? **A:** We currently have the Office of Institutional Research but there is thinking that we should have a center for a variety of purposes, including accreditation issues.

Andy Kesling, Executive Director of marketing in the Office of Public Affairs

Mr. Kesling described his newly created position, and felt his background in marketing for the travel services industry in Ft Worth was good training for his current job. One of his new areas of responsibility is the Web Development Office which transferred from the library.

He has ideas for marketing the university which include establishing communication channels to larger media outlets such as Dallas or Houston; using faculty expertise for commentary on current news events; utilizing new media outlets such as u-tube and blogs, as well as our web presence to connect with prospective students; and establishing a unique image for the university. He invites faculty input and participation.

Senator Joe Ballenger wondered what High School counselors are saying about SFA? Also what's being said by students or faculty who leave here. Word-of-mouth is very important. Have any studies been done on that topic? **A:** There is one research study which indicated that SFA is fairly unknown compared with other Texas universities. More research needs to be done and our graphic identity needs to be consistent

Chair Barker introduced Dr. Larry King whose ad hoc committee was asked to examine various university systems in the state and see how SFA might fit within those systems. Dr. King emphasized that the committee was not to recommend a particular system, but identify advantages and disadvantages of the various systems. The comparisons of key measures were generated by information available from the Texas Coordinating Board. He stated that there was not universal agreement about whether to join a system, or which system would be the best fit for SFA.

Chair Barker asked if SFA would have a choice as to which system to join if such a path was pursued. **A:** Historically, schools are in either financial or administrative trouble when they become part of a system. The ultimate decision is made by the legislature.

Chair Barker mentioned that reports were not as in depth for a couple of systems which might be logical matches for SFA. Dr. King said that he could go back to the committee and ask for additional work, but that the information they used is available on the web.

Senator Turner wondered if there had been a flashpoint with the Lamar experience that had galvanized the legislature, and whether we were in a similar situation? **A:** We are not in financial trouble. There is always discussion in the legislature that the independents will join a system. It is possible that if Texas Southern joins a system, that the remaining three of us will be placed in systems in one fell swoop. But it hasn't happened yet.

Announcements

Chair Barker mentioned an email he distributed from TACT regarding House Bill 894, authored by Jim McReynolds, which would study faculty salaries relative to comparable schools in other populous states.

Senate elections are coming up. A memo will be distributed identifying the colleges that have openings for new senate representatives. Please talk to colleagues about running for the senate.

Approval of minutes

Motion to approve minutes of meeting #355 was made by Senator Utley and seconded by Senator Haidinyak. Minutes were approved.

Committee reports

Chair's report Chair Barker reported on a meeting with Drs. Pattillo and Young. Items included:

- The proposed baseball complex. They are about half way toward raising the funds needed to go ahead with the project.
- Dr. Pattillo mentioned that he heard that all debt was co-mingled in university systems, so that it is very difficult for one university to leave a system. He also pointed out that if we were in a system, we might wind up helping to pay for a building at a different university -- a building we would never get to use.

Chair-elect—Senator Guidry passed out a questionnaire he created and sent to Lamar, Angelo State, A&M Commerce, and A&M Kingsville. He will report on any responses he receives after Spring break week.

Treasurer—no report

Secretary--Ms. Halstead reported a volunteer is still needed to take minutes for the April meeting. Also the digital recorder used at the meetings should be replaced.

Academic Affairs—Senator Walker has names of people from Lamar who are interested in coming to talk to us. He emailed someone at A&M Commerce, but got no response. Discussion followed about whether to set a date for this year, when a good meeting time would be, and finding representatives with alternative points of view. It was decided that Senators Walker, Guidry, and Barker will hash out the details and inform the senate.

Welfare—Senator Utley had to leave early. Chair Barker said that plans are to talk with Mr. Gallant about the suggested ideas for relieving financial hardships experienced by first-year faculty who have to wait 5-6 weeks for a first paycheck.

Ethics—no report

Elections

Administration and Finance—no report

Faculty governance—no report

Old business

None

New business

Chair Barker will invite Jill Still to next meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Senator Walker and seconded by Senator Bush.
Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kayce Halstead,
Secretary