

**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**REPORT TO THE SFASU BOARD OF REGENTS**  
**by Jill A. Dumesnil**  
**on January 25, 2000**

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to address you on behalf of the faculty. I am accompanied by Dr. Kandy Stahl, Associate Professor of Psychology and Chair-Elect of Faculty Senate.

The fall semester was a very good one from a faculty perspective. Faculty Senate issues and initiatives were, for the most part, well received by the Administration and Board.

- We have relocated to our "permanent" office in Steen Library;
- we strongly supported the increase in admission standards which you approved in October; and
- the just-approved GPA policy originated in Faculty Senate.

A few initiatives are still in the administrative pipeline. The Senate has requested a change in the University grants policy stipulating that a faculty member who receives an SFA grant must either return to SFA for at least one semester following the grant period or repay the grant. The Senate also passed a resolution requesting that the Board consider naming the Liberal Arts North building in honor of former History Department faculty member and SFA benefactress, Dr. Vera L. Dugas. We will submit this request in accordance with the newly revised policy D-22 on Naming Facilities. A Senate issue not favorably received by the University Academic Affairs Council was the request for a separate signature sheet for faculty evaluations of Department Chairs. This issue is likely to be revisited in the coming academic year.

Our immediate concerns involve searches. First, although we recognize the selection and hiring of a new President as a Board responsibility, we desire input in the process. As we indicated in our letter to you, we feel that faculty have a unique stake in the institution, being those who carry out the primary instructional mission of the University. We agree that SFA is on the verge of greatness and believe we are in need of a sustained focus on academics in order to improve our academic reputation and increase the quality of the education we provide. We further agree that before it can be decided who should lead us as President, it must first be decided where we are and where we want to be. Another closely related concern involves faculty searches. Campus-wide our faculty searches seem to be hindered by three factors.

1. The funding of faculty searches is accomplished primarily by raiding departmental travel budgets. No additional money is available for defraying the cost of a search. For example, the Math Department is currently conducting three searches, the money for which is derived entirely from the travel budget for current faculty.
2. Our basic salary offerings are too low. Our students deserve the best and the brightest faculty, and you don't get them or keep them at bargain basement salaries. Recently, the Psychology Department was forced to conduct three searches, making six offers, to fill one position due to offer refusals credited to a combination of low salary and number
3. limited research support. We have high teaching loads coupled with high research expectations and very limited support for either. If we are primarily a teaching institution, then our internal reward structure should reflect that. This year the Biology Department had a job offer refused due to the candidate's perception she couldn't be as productive as she desires in this environment.

Finally, we need to make every effort to keep our talented young faculty. We no longer have the luxury of saying ``if they don't like it, they can leave." There is too much competition for the highly desirable faculty. Two quick examples ....

1. A colleague of mine has been contacted every year by another school requesting his application for vacancies there, and
2. Just last week, when a Physics faculty member gave an invited address at Texas A&M (concerning last summer's asteroid discovery at SFA), he was immediately offered a job there.

We owe it to our students to make SFA as attractive as possible to this caliber of faculty.

Overall, we are very pleased with the recent strides made to improve SFA's academic reputation. More is needed in this regard, and we look forward to working with the Administration and Board to achieve our mutual goals.