

Stephen F. Austin State University
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS 1/30/01
Faculty Senate
KANDY J. STAHL, PH.D., Chair

I would like to again thank the Board of Regents for this opportunity to report on the activities and concerns of the faculty of Stephen F. Austin State University. This past quarter has focused on two long-standing issues. The first is policy issues such as Administrative Evaluations and Cheating and Plagiarism. Both policies are now being rewritten by subcommittees of the Academic Affairs Council, and I am hopeful that they will be presented for your approval at the April meeting. I have been very pleased with the Council's interaction with me during discussions of these two very important policies and the general receptiveness of the deans.

Second, as you likely are aware, the Senate has focused a great deal on the search for a new president of the university. This is a matter of critical importance to the future of the institution, and I believe more faculty members have been involved than in previous searches, whether it has been behind the scenes or on the front line. At the last quarterly meeting of the Board, I expressed my desire to improve the communication between the faculty and the Board. Following that meeting, several of you expressed an interest in meeting with faculty members or with the Senate to hear our perspectives in more detail than you are able to receive in this brief report. However, we have not arranged such a meeting to date. The Senate has passed several resolutions with regard to the presidential search, which I have either faxed or hand-delivered to members of the Board. With regard to those that were faxed, I received no feedback or acknowledgement of receipt. Two of these resolutions have addressed areas of great concern to members of the Senate; the request to reconsider hiring a search firm to continue this search, and the request to appoint a second faculty member to the Screening Committee. Neither has been discussed in Board meetings to my knowledge. I mention this as a prelude to a question I was asked in a recent interview with a reporter from the Daily Sentinel, the Nacogdoches newspaper.

The feature article he was writing was about sentiments and issues surrounding the possibility of SFA joining a university system. He asked me to speak about faculty morale. As I have always been with each of you, I was honest and stated that I don't know if morale is lower or whether more faculty members are simply speaking out now. I do hear more faculty members expressing their belief that it may serve SFA well to be a part of a system. As one aspect of that opinion, they have voiced that they do not believe the Board hears our concerns. The Chair of Senate may relate these concerns, but there is no discussion or action taken by the Board. Today, in an effort to open the lines of communication, I extend an invitation to each of you to attend the March meeting of the Faculty Senate. It will be held on March 21, at 2:30 p.m., in the Hall of Honor in the Alumni Building on campus. I will reserve the first hour of that meeting for an open dialogue among the Senators and those of you who are able to attend.

I believe that SFA is at a crossroads in terms of its future. We can choose to actively work together to further the mission that the faculty firmly uphold. Alternatively, we may choose to sit back and allow our future to be determined for us. The first steps in our attempts to work together may be a bit rocky simply due to the fact that we will embark on new territory, communicating in ways with which we are unfamiliar. However, I sincerely believe that if we can move beyond those first steps, the journey we take together will be well worth the effort, and the university will be stronger as a result.