

Introduction

For the record, the Faculty Senate as a representative body of the Faculty, wishes to extend sincere thanks and appreciation to Ms. Susan Roberds, Ms. Penny Butler and Mr. Mike Enoch for their service and dedication to Stephen F. Austin State University as outgoing Board of Regents members. I had the pleasure to work with Ms. Roberds and Ms. Butler on search committees for the President and Provost, respectively. Their insightful analysis of candidates helped the university to select Dr. Guerrero and Dr. Cullinan who are proving to be outstanding leaders and proponents of making Stephen F. Austin State University a campus ready for a bright and successful future.

In addition, the Faculty welcomes Ms. Ertz, Mr. Pond, and Mr. Green to the Board that has demonstrated through its actions a sincere desire to make our university among the best. The position of a campus in having an independent Board of Regents is becoming a rarified privilege in Texas. Moreover, as Regents, your leadership is extremely important to SFASU at this time, as higher education in Texas is reeling from budget constraints, yet the costs of providing our students a quality education are on the increase; insensitive to economic conditions. Thus, we anxiously look to you for guidance in meeting the challenges that lie ahead as the legislature pressures for fiscal restraint and accountability grow.

Faculty Senate Business

The Faculty Senate serves as an advisory body to the President. In particular, the Senate is charged with bridging communications between the Faculty at large and the Administration by examining Faculty issues, arriving at consensus from our constituencies to articulate resolutions that are presented to the President for review and discussion which at times reach you as items for adoption as University policy. This opportunity to be part of the shared governance of SFASU is appreciated by the Faculty Senate.

During this academic year, the Faculty Senate has been engaged in efforts to explore ways to help Stephen F. Austin State University recruit and retain students. We fully understand the critical importance of these issues to the academic integrity and economic health of our university. To this point we are supportive of programs that demonstrate excellence in giving students opportunities to enrich their education. In particular, we support the decision of the Administration to broaden campus involvement in the School of Honors as a university-wide environment. We also see promise for the innovative program of using under utilized dorm space as a form of currency to help students attend the university. In addition, I want to point out the Academic Assistance Resource Center (AARC) directed by Ms. Robin Wright. Besides being a nationally accredited program to support student success, Ms. Wright's program was nominated as a finalist for the prestigious STAR award given by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Further, we recognize that the Geospatial Service Centers Concept that also was a finalist for this award and a year ago was instrumental in responding to the Shuttle Columbia disaster its component units have brought in millions of dollars of external funding. Thus, two SFASU innovative programs out of 80 entries were deemed to be outstanding in Texas. Moreover, the recent specific funding for Dr. Clack's Biotechnology program and Dr. Shiyou Li's efforts with *Campotheronica acuminata* further prove that SFASU is an emerging center, not only for quality instruction, but a recognized research entity.

Tenure and Promotion Issues

In my last report, I pointed out that the Faculty Senate was in the process of compiling recommendations concerning tenure and promotion policies across campus. We are now in the final stages of analysis of these data. At this point, the Senate has identified some key areas where the university can potentially come together to improve the understanding and articulation of requirements for faculty seeking tenure and or promotion. We hope to continue to work with the Provost's office to clarify and codify the most useful recommendations into University Policy so that all members of the university community can clearly understand and have access to the processes, procedures, practices and guidelines

used to make these critical decisions in faculty lives. The Faculty Senate wants to recognize Dr. Cullinan for her leadership in furthering this endeavor.

Faculty Salaries

Although this topic may seem somewhat untimely to brooch under the current climate in higher education funding, we feel it must stay in the conversation of moving SFASU towards a higher level of academic excellence. Dr. Guerrero has identified salaries as an important issue in building for the future growth of our university. We support this position while recognize that raising salaries means finding millions of new dollars for the budget. We have seen that, almost without exception across campus, administrative positions have been offered at or above national average salaries to attract qualified candidates. The same competitive environment exists for attracting faculty as well. But let me emphasize that the salary structure at SFASU has persisted as being among the lowest in the state for decades. Even though there have been positive movements to raise incoming faculty salaries to more competitive levels and incremental steps to improve established faculty salaries, searches across campus are experiencing competition in attracting pools of qualified applicants and an apparent rise in the number of applicants opting to take other positions. To this point, we ask the Board to work diligently with the Administration to use the avenue provided by the Legislature through tuition deregulation as a means of addressing this situation. We firmly feel that a quality institution with a quality student body will be more fully enabled by recruiting outstanding faculty to lead into the future.

Classroom Technologies

During my first term as Faculty Senate Chair, modernizing classroom instruction utilizing technology was in motion to help faculty carry their message to students. This has proved to be a positive but unfinished initiative. Seven years later, we still have not finished equipping classrooms across campus while some classrooms are nearing the point of needing to be upgraded. Again, we encourage the Board to look carefully at institutional plans to maintain and keep current technology in classrooms so

that students leave our campus prepared to become competent professionals AND remember the university that allowed them to excel!

Lastly, our participation in the Internet2 community at the national level has been important. Currently, the state consortium of high speed, broadband technology is upping the ante to be involved in its development and deployment in Texas. I ask, as a Faculty member, that you continue your support in this area. My position is based on the facts that medium allows SFASU to be on the national playing field of recruiting faculty attracting extramural funding and delivering advanced education. Continued support for this technology also will position SFASU well to join the next generation of high-speed technology, the NLR that is currently being implemented across the nation. Further, advanced technology will be a useful tool in faculty development as the concept of a Teaching Excellence Center moves towards reality.

Darrel L. McDonald
Faculty Senate Chair
2003 - 2004