

Faculty Senate Report to the Board of Regents

January 18, 2006

Thank you again for the opportunity to present to you some of the activities and concerns of the Faculty at SFA.

The Senate has sent to the Administration a proposed revision of the current Faculty/Staff Traffic Appeal Policy. This proposed revision was written to bring the policy more in line with actual procedures. I understand that the Administration has presented to you this revised proposal for your approval.

The Senate is also working with the Provost in developing an improved Faculty Handbook. With the website-located policy manual, it is anticipated that the new handbook will be more of a survival guide for faculty rather than an official policy manual. We will be also be working with the New Faculty Orientation Committee on this since they have a new faculty manual.

The Senate is concerned with the current method of funding faculty searches. At this time each Department is responsible for providing its own funding out of their O&M funds for bringing in candidates, thus reducing available funds for current faculty. The lack of institutional support contributes to frustration on the part of the faculty and they look for other employment opportunities. When they in turn leave, the cycle continues. The President has stated that he and the vice presidents will try to build into the budget for the coming year an amount of funds that can be used as recommended in the resolution. Of course, what SFA will be able to do will depend on our financial situation.

The Senate is interested in what conclusions were reached by your committee looking into faculty salaries. If a copy of whatever report was developed could be sent to me, it would be greatly appreciated. The faculty has an obvious self-interest in salaries, and if the material the Senate provided to this Board last April is incorrect, incomplete, or has changed dramatically in the last year, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to so inform the faculty in our respective colleges and departments.

In the past few months, the Senate heard presentations from our new Associate Vice-President for Alumni Affairs and the new Director of International Programs. The new Library Director, Dr. Evans gave us a good overview of the structure of the new SFA webpage. While some departments and faculty have a number of reasons they are hesitant about shifting into a new webpage structure, it is apparent that a new webpage will enhance our image to the outside world and assist those of us working on campus. In the next few months the Senate will hear presentations by the Director of ITS and the Athletic Director. I believe the presentations we have had this year have greatly improved knowledge of parts of campus faculty often have no direct connection with, and have contributed to a greater understanding of the challenges at SFA.

As reported in our last report, the Senate is responding to a request by a number of past-chairs to conduct a survey of the faculty as to their opinion on whether SFA should be part of a system. The survey instrument will contain questions on why the faculty member thinks we should/should not be part of a system, what system we should join if we could choose one, as well as general information on the background of the faculty member completing the survey. Senate bylaws require us to consider such a request. The Senate debated and then voted to proceed with such a survey. We have taken our time to do this survey correctly, with every effort having been made to not lead anyone in one direction or another. The survey is being released to the faculty this month. They will have 2 weeks to complete it and then a committee from the Senate will compile and analyze the data. Once analyzed, we will be forwarding the results to the administration.

No matter what the results of the survey are, the information obtained from the survey will be of value to SFA. The reasons the faculty provide on why or why not we should be part of a system will assist the Senate, the administration and this Board in determining potential action items since the comments will act as a "sense of the faculty" on what SFA is, where it should be, and why we think we should go in one direction or another. Do I know the motivations of those who made the initial request? No. Do I know what the results will be? No, but I have a guess. Do I have an idea on what the reasons for a yes or no vote by the faculty will be? Not at all. I will make the major part of my April report to this Board be the results of the survey.

I again invite any of you to attend our Senate meetings. We look forward to working with you to improve SFA, increase enrollment, and enhance academics.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Brian P. Oswald, 2005-2005 Chair