

## **Memorandum**

### **FACULTY SENATE SURVEY ON BO PILGRIM PARK, FALL 2007**

This summary comprises 5 parts:

- I. An overall summary of the results
- II. The survey instrument
- III. A summary of the quantitative results
- IV. A summary of the written results
- V. Sample written comments from survey respondents

#### **I. Overall Summary of the Survey Results**

The Faculty Senate ran an online survey on whether SFA should construct a baseball complex (Bo Pilgrim Park) via surveymonkey from September 24-October 1, 2007. The survey was available to all faculty members at SFA (continuing and adjunct faculty).

The survey reveals overwhelming faculty opposition to building Bo Pilgrim Park at this time. While there is a small percentage of the faculty in support of building the facility, the vast majority of the faculty believes that building it in its current configuration would be a misuse of limited resources, which could be better spent on faculty salary equity and other pressing academic needs, such as educational facilities and student scholarships. A significant percentage of the faculty is concerned about the location of Bo Pilgrim Park due to the adverse environmental impact it will have on a wetland site, the cost of construction in an undeveloped area, and the perceived threat of flooding associated with the project. Repeatedly, respondents to the survey cited the projected \$14 million cost of Bo Pilgrim Park as too expensive for a non-academic facility. Many respondents are deeply concerned that, rather than making money, the ballpark will drive SFA deeper into debt and unnecessarily raise tuition at a time when it has already experienced a series of tuition hikes and enrollment remains flat. The facility would not, in their view, be an effective recruiting tool for students. Finally, many respondents feel that Jaycees Field (the municipal baseball facility where the baseball team currently plays) is an adequate location for baseball and could be upgraded for far less money than it would take to build a new facility on campus.

## II. Survey Instrument

Following are the narrative and the options that composed the baseball complex survey:

You may be aware that the SFA Board of Regents wants to build a \$14 million baseball and softball complex at the corner of East Starr Avenue and University Drive in an area that contains approximately 3 acres of wetlands. While 25% of the cost of the facility must be paid for by private donations, the rest of the cost of the facility (approximately \$10.5 million) will be funded by bonds paid for by the University. According to the administration, the only discretionary revenue source currently available to service the debt on those bonds is designated tuition, one of the sources for faculty raises. The Faculty Senate has also been informed that according to a study done by the University's architectural consultant, 3DI, there is no other feasible on-campus location for a baseball/softball complex. The baseball and softball teams currently play at the municipal baseball facility located on the northwest loop in Nacogdoches. The Faculty Senate has not taken a public stance on the proposed construction of Bo Pilgrim Park. Before we do so, we would like to get a more informed view of the faculty's opinion on this issue. Therefore, we are asking you, as an SFA faculty member, to complete the following survey on Bo Pilgrim Park. We are using Survey Monkey in order to ensure that the results are anonymous. We know your time is valuable, and we wish to thank you in advance for filling out the survey.

\_\_\_ I support the construction of Bo Pilgrim Park at the proposed cost of \$14 million at the corner of East Starr Avenue and University Drive.

\_\_\_ I do not support the construction of Bo Pilgrim Park at the proposed cost of \$14 million at the corner of East Starr Avenue and University Drive.

You may provide additional comments in the space below . . . . .

## III. The Quantitative Results

The quantitative results of the survey are as follows:

- 367 or 53% of the faculty voted  
(According to SFA's online Fact Book, in 2006—the latest year for which Institutional Research includes statistics—the University employed 696 faculty members including part-time faculty.)
- 311 or 85% of respondents voted not to support the construction of Bo Pilgrim Park
- 56 or 15% of respondents voted to support the construction of Bo Pilgrim Park

#### IV. Thematic analysis of the Written Comments

Of the 367 faculty members who took the survey, 201 chose to write in comments. Of the written responses, 189 express opposition to building Bo Pilgrim Park, and 12 express support for building it. Some of the comments are a single sentence giving only 1 reason for opposing or supporting the project. However, most responses cite multiple reasons for supporting or opposing the project, with some of the negative responses running the length of a newspaper-style editorial. While both the positive and negative responses express varying levels of support/resistance in regard to the project, it is fair to say that as a whole the negative responses are strongly against it.

The written comments can be analyzed according to key themes. The themes are listed below in descending order based on the number of responses that touch explicitly on each theme.

- Raising faculty salaries is more important than spending money on a baseball facility—71.
- Urgent academic funding needs (e.g. more support for student scholarships and graduate assistantships, new/renovated academic facilities, more books for the library, etc.) need to take precedence over a baseball facility—70.
- The location for the ballpark is wrong due to the adverse environmental impact to wetlands, the added cost of having to develop a site that is below grade level, and the potential for flooding—52.
- A baseball facility is nonessential to the operation of a university and will not attract students to the university in the same way that the new student center and recreational center will—46.
- Bo Pilgrim Park is too expensive, especially when compared to other ballparks in the Southland Conference—36.
- Jaycees Field is an adequate site for baseball games and could be improved, if necessary, at a much cheaper cost than building an on-campus baseball park—29.
- Bo Pilgrim Park will not be self-sustaining and will add unnecessarily to SFA's debt load—28.
- Tuition has risen dramatically since de-regulation and should not be raised again without asking students if they support spending their tuition dollars to pay for Bo Pilgrim Park—23.
- Bo Pilgrim Park will enhance SFA and serve to recruit students to the university—6.
- The decision to build Bo Pilgrim Park was made by the Board of Regents without appropriate input from other stakeholders (such as the administration, faculty, students, and the athletic department)—2.
- Building the park has no correlation to faculty salaries, so there is no reason to oppose it—2.
- Resisting building Bo Pilgrim Park will cause the Board of Regents to resent the faculty, and therefore it should not be opposed by the faculty—2.
- Building or not building the baseball park is not a faculty governance issue, and, therefore, it should not be opposed by the faculty—1.

- Bo Pilgrim Park will pay for itself and, therefore, should be built—1.
- Bo Pilgrim Park is necessary to compete with Sam Houston State and other universities in Texas—1.
- The proposed site for Bo Pilgrim Park is not a “natural wetland,” and building it will improve the area—1.
- The loss of wetlands at the construction site will be mitigated by the preservation of wetlands in the Naconiche Bog area; therefore, Bo Pilgrim Park should be built—1.

## V. Sample written responses

Following are 20 written responses from the survey (approximately 10% of all written responses). They are fairly representative of the types of written comments that were made. They are quoted in their entirety:

“Faculty salaries are second lowest in the state, which makes it very difficult to hire quality educators; science departments are teaching in decades old labs and lack cutting edge research equipment; many departments are severely overcrowded and need new facilities and additional faculty; graduate stipends are much lower than at most other universities. And yet it has been proposed to spend \$14 million on a baseball complex. This is a sport that most students care little about and will support even less than they do football. It would be a sad mistake to squander our limited funds in this manner. The complex will have to be paid for largely by designated tuition, which will result in an added burden for our students and their families—and probably drive many more of them to community colleges. And since designated tuition is a major source for faculty raises, that means I and the rest of SFA’s faculty will be paying for this complex for years in the form of raises we do not receive. I deeply resent being forced to pay for a baseball complex we don’t need and can’t afford.”

“Faculty Salaries are more important than the construction of a baseball park. I support fully the recent construction of much needed student housing and the new student center, as this construction attracts new students. Some may argue that baseball will attract students, but not at the rate housing and new buildings on campus such as Chemistry, Nursing, etc. will attract students. The NUMBER ONE concern in my opinion for the Board of Regents should be faculty salaries!”

“Faculty salaries need to be raised first. We’re near the bottom in the state.”

“I am not against baseball, but this is not the time for this project considering that faculty salaries are far behind the state average. If the Regents can get faculty salaries to the state median, I’m sure many on the campus would feel differently about the issue.”

“I am not against baseball; in fact, I’m a huge Major League Baseball fan and plan to attend an SFA game or two. I am against raising students’ tuition yet again without getting students’ input on whether or not they want to pay for a new baseball complex. I think a better recruitment tool would be to ensure faculty stay on campus so programs do

not have to turn away students because they do not have the room or the faculty to teach the classes.”

“I do not support the spending of such an incredible amount of money for non-academic purposes. Additionally, I am adamantly opposed to the destruction of federal wetlands for ANY reason.”

“I would rather see \$14 million invested in academics!”

“I would support any other location.”

“I believe SFA needs a baseball/softball facility on this campus; however, I would like to know why Sam can build one for close to \$5 million and SFA needs to spend \$14 million. Can we have a breakdown of the proposed costs?”

“I do not like the location of the proposed baseball park. The fill needed to create a level area will be very expensive. Nearly always a project will cost more than projected. The university needs to look for a more appropriate site. The baseball park should not be built if it takes away from faculty salaries. The university must have money to hire qualified faculty—teaching is the purpose of a university, and the quality of the faculty greatly impacts the students who choose to come to SFA.”

“Looks too expensive for the likely usage.”

“The future use of this park will pay for it. If we are going to have a baseball program, we should have a state of the art park for it.”

“The land is not suitable for the project.”

“This baseball complex would not enhance the academic experience of the institution, would not produce appreciable revenue, and would have a negative impact on the environment.”

“This may be an important part of the package for recruiting and retaining students. In addition, mitigation for this urban wetland will ensure the protection of a valuable wetland/bog in the Naconiche Creek watershed.”

“I do not support it if there will be a negative effect on faculty salaries.”

“We have so many needs in academics—buildings, program support, faculty salaries that are not being addressed! Building a multimillion dollar baseball facility will do little to meet these needs. Having served on many search committees to replace faculty that have left, I have found that it’s almost impossible to recruit new faculty because our salaries (science) for new hires are so low. Losing potential raises for more competitive salaries to baseball bats does not make any sense.”

“We shouldn’t be known for destroying protected wetlands so that we can build a ball park. We won’t be setting a good example for future generations.”

“While I am very impressed with the recent physical growth on our campus, I believe this park is not needed. I do not believe it will help with recruitment or long-term revenue. We have amazing women’s volleyball and soccer teams, but nobody comes to the games—and they’re FREE. Football and basketball, the popular men’s sports, also do not draw large crowds. We are in dire need of faculty equity/raises and we are in dire need of new and/or renovated academic buildings. This money should be spent elsewhere for the benefit of the entire university.”

“I love baseball, but I think the municipal baseball facility is adequate for the present and near future. I would rather the administration concentrate on academic improvements, one of which is faculty salaries.”