

Faculty Senate Chair's Report  
Le'Ann Solmonson, Ph.D., Faculty Senate Chair 2017-18  
Address to Board of Regents  
January 30, 2018

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman, Board of Regents, Dr. Pattillo, Dr. Bullard, Colleagues, and Guests:

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the faculty. I am honored to be the faculty voice and provide information to you about the work of the Faculty Senate and our contributions to shared governance.

As I reported to you in October, the Faculty Senate planned to host a faculty forum for the purpose of gathering information on current recruiting activities in which faculty are engaged and gather ideas on how faculty can contribute to these efforts, while still remaining focused on our primary responsibilities related to teaching, student retention, scholarship, and service. The forum was held on December 1 and we were pleased with a turnout of 72 faculty members. The forum provided the opportunity for representatives from each college to highlight a few of the recruiting activities currently in place among the departments and programs in the college. In addition, faculty members had the opportunity to connect with each other and offer feedback. The salient points from the forum include:

- Many faculty members are actively engaged in recruiting activities
- We currently have many missed opportunities when high school students are on campus for extracurricular activities. Faculty would like to have a mechanism for increasing awareness of these activities in order to capitalize on the opportunity to engage with these students. One example was summer camps. The organizers of these camps are often seeking out evening entertainment activities. Those activities could be utilized to give students information on programs offered at SFA.
- Several faculty members identified a lack of funding as a barrier to engaging in recruiting activities. One faculty member was reported to have used personal funds to print and mail recruiting materials to potential students.
- Faculty wanted data to understand longitudinal program growth across the University.
- It was suggested the programs that are growing be highlighted and information provided as to how the growth was achieved.
- It was recommended that programs have a point of contact for recruiting to ensure a consistent and cohesive response to inquiries and assistance through the admissions process. One suggestion included providing course release time for a faculty member in each program for the purpose of coordinating recruiting efforts.
- The lack of scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as limited graduate assistantships was identified as another issue in recruiting. Several anecdotal reports were given of potential students selecting other institutions because our financial incentives were not competitive with other offers students received.
- Faculty present believe that our greatest contribution to recruiting is to focus on retention of students. When we develop quality relationships with our current students and are

committed to their success, we believe that is the best recruiting tool we have. Students who have had positive experiences with faculty members tell their friends and family and that is powerful in getting students interested in SFA.

In addition to the recruiting forum, we also hosted a Financial Forum on Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. Despite an 8 am start time, we had approximately 125 faculty and staff present. That is about 100 people more than we had last year. We were very excited to see the number of individuals who were interested in the financial status and decision-making processes of the University. Dr. Gallant answered a number of questions submitted by the faculty and has committed to providing written responses to questions that required more research. The questions focused on the increase of administrative positions over the past 5-10 years, the Athletic budget, and faculty salaries. The same question was asked last year and again this year and there seems to be no answer available. That question is related to summer pay for teaching, which was significantly reduced several years ago in what we were told was a temporary move in a financial crisis. The question was will we ever return to the former summer pay system. A return to the previous system would correct what resulted in many faculty experiencing a loss to their annual income. We were also very pleased to hear Dr. Gallant say he was willing to take another look at the travel reimbursement policy that requires the use of a rental car and which requires additional time and effort for faculty and staff who are traveling as a part of their university responsibilities. Both of these issues would be a positive movement toward the goals of the strategic plan in the areas of recruiting and retaining high quality faculty and staff and improving campus culture.

In my last report, I referenced a survey that was completed by the Dean's last spring. At my request, the Deans made the survey results available to me and also to Dr. Robbie Steward, Chair of Chair's Forum. Dr. Steward and I reviewed the results and then met with Drs. Childs and Murphy to discuss our next steps. There had been a recommendation that the survey be revised and administered again at a time in which the response rate would likely improve. However, upon reviewing the results, we determined they were congruent with the themes that were identified in the strategic planning process and in the University Culture Survey. The four of us agreed that it is time to move forward rather than continuing to collect more data. Our goal is to define academic excellence at the program, department, college, and university level in order to be able to speak with a unified voice in advocating for academic excellence being the highest priority of SFA. The Faculty Senate supported engaging in this effort with the understanding that it be a faculty driven initiative. In our communications, Drs. Child and Murphy have been extremely supportive of this work. In a university system of shared governance, the curriculum belongs to the faculty and it is appropriate that the individuals who are responsible for the delivery of instruction to lead this initiative. In the discussion of this in the Faculty Senate meeting, I sensed an energy and excited about the work. We hope to move quickly on this and have a report of significant progress at the April meeting.

And finally, I am pleased to present to you 21 pages of faculty accomplishments that have occurred since October. I took a different approach to obtaining this information for this report. Normally, I email the Deans who then email the Chairs who email the faculty. In that process, I was certain that we were not collecting all of the information about faculty accomplishments. I would have very thorough lists from some departments and little to no response from others. This time, I emailed the faculty directly. Great ideas sometimes have a great cost. I admit that I

did not thoroughly think through this idea and the impact it would have on my inbox. However, I am very pleased with the response that I received. As you can see, our faculty are doing some amazing things. I love that I get to be the one to present this report of faculty productivity to you and get to see for myself the work my colleagues are engaged in.

This concludes my report and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.