

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY  
Faculty Senate  
Meeting #169  
April 9, 1986

1. Chairman Speer called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes:  
The minutes of meeting #168 were approved as distributed.
3. Officer Reports:
  - a. Senator Graves reported the following as of February 28, 1986:

Balance in

Student Assistant Account	\$ 825.61
O&M	1,804.23
Travel	(24.53)
	<u>\$2,605.31</u>

- b. Senator Speer reported his monthly meeting with the President. The budget for academic year 1986-1987 is nearing completion. The sentiment is that the Governor will not disapprove the budget. In fact, it is not expected that the Governor will contact SFA at all. A general faculty meeting likely will be called as soon as the Board approves the budget.

Dr. Speer presented a draft copy of a proposed policy for selecting Deans to Dr. Johnson and Dr. Brophy. Dr. Johnson said he acted swiftly in appointing a Dean of Liberal Arts out of fairness to Dr. Brophy. The President said he consulted with the Chairpersons in the School of Liberal Arts. Concerning the draft, Dr. Johnson affirmed his objection to elected members of search committees for Deans.

The following was reported as a result of the last Deans' Council meeting:

- (1) The Graduate School will be reorganized with the V.P.A.A. assuming the duties and title of Graduate Dean.
- (2) Academic Deans will be given additional work and responsibility relating to graduate education.
- (3) The Graduate Council will continue to function.

- (4) The University Research Council will continue to operate.
- (5) The University's commitment to graduate education was re-affirmed.

4. Old Business:

- a. Senator Reeves distributed results of a questionnaire recently conducted relating to commencement procedures. Senator Howard moved, "The report and comments of Senators be forwarded to the President and to the University Commencement Committee." The motion was approved. A transcript of comments is attached to the minutes.
- b. Senator Shows, Academic Affairs Committee Chairperson, reported the recommendation made at the March meeting of the Senate concerning the last day a student can register for a class is already University policy. If problems arise, they are often the result of exceptions being made to the policy. No further action was taken concerning this matter.

5. New Business:

- a. The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of nominees:

For Chairperson, Dr. Raymond Eastman or Ms. Sharon Graves  
For Vice-Chairperson, Dr. James DiNucci or Dr. James Howard  
For Secretary, Dr. Mary Ella Lowe or Dr. George Thompson  
For Treasurer, Dr. Joe Ballenger or Dr. R.G. Dean

- b. Senator Wright reported the Grievance Panel election is completed. If the Senate's proposal to increase the number of members is approved, two additional members from the School of Applied Arts and Sciences and one additional member from the Library will be chosen.

Senator Wright noted Senate elections are currently being conducted. The School of Applied Arts and Sciences is not electing a Senator this year. There will be eleven new Senators elected. In addition, Senator Kellerhal's successor will be chosen by the 1986-87 Senate.

The Senate expressed thanks to Ms. Wright for her accomplishments this year. She noted the help she had gotten from Tammy Simmons. The Senate expressed thanks to Ms. Simmons.

- c. Speaking for the Executive Committee of the Senate, Senator Dahmus presented a letter addressed to President Johnson expressing concern relative to the manner in which the new Dean of the School of Liberal Arts was appointed. Also presented was a proposed procedure for selecting Deans. Dr. Dahmus moved, and Senator Eastman seconded, the acceptance of the letter and the proposed selection procedure.

It was emphasized that the issue was not Dr. Brophy's qualifications. At this point the Senate recessed for five minutes to allow members to read the letter and the proposed selection procedures.

When the meeting resumed, Senator Russell presented an alternate proposal for selecting not only Deans but for filling all academic administrative offices.

Following a brief discussion, Senator Dahmus and Senator Eastman withdrew their motion.

Senator DiNucci moved, "The letter drafted by the Executive Committee of the Senate, after deletion of any mention of an attachment, be forwarded to President Johnson."

Dean Reese, who was involved in the discussion to name a new Dean, then outlined the series of events, beginning two weeks prior to his appointment as V.P.A.A., leading up to the announcement of his selection and appointment of Dr. Brophy as Dean of the School of Liberal Arts. Dr. Reese said he suggested there was little choice but to name a successor from within and President Johnson agreed. Several possible candidates were mentioned and it was agreed that Dr. Brophy would be the strongest candidate and that appointing a committee to select a Dean would be playing games. The President said he would not play games with the faculty.

The motion to send the letter was approved. The vote was 15 for, 1 against, with 3 abstentions. (Some Senators had left the meeting to meet other responsibilities.) The sentiment of those abstaining or voting against the motion was with the language of the letter rather than its intent.

It was strongly affirmed once again that Dr. Brophy's qualifications were not being challenged.

The Faculty Government Committee was asked to consider the two proposed procedures for selecting administrators and to report at the May meeting.

6. Unscheduled Items:

- a. Senator Arscott reported a problem being experienced by some members of the custodial staff. Since they work from 9:00 a.m. til 6:00 p.m., custodians report many rooms are occupied and therefore not available to be cleaned.
- b. Senator Dean, noting the Coordinating Board's recent defining of mathematics, was concerned about students transferring credit in math to SFA. It was determined that students can continue to transfer credit and the University will evaluate and assign the appropriate value.
- c. Dean Reese reminded the Senate of the Wedgeworth Lecture by Dr. A.C. Greene.

7. The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Absences:

Lt. Col. Kellerhals

Ex-Officio Members:

Dr. James Reese

Dr. James Standley

Visitors:

Dr. Calvin Hines

Ms. Rosemary Huff



Frank Smith  
Secretary, 1985-86 Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Meeting #169, April 9, 1986

The following is a partial transcript of the discussion concerning commencement exercises at SFA. Not all comments made at the meeting were audible on the tape recording.

Senator Reeves, "... Basically we had a pretty good response by students. We had about 370 students that responded to our poll and about 83 faculty and librarians. I feel this is a pretty good representative sample. There is one thing that I can say without fear of contradiction in this report, I think, is that the present system of commencement is unsatisfactory. Changes have to be made. It's a matter of what type of changes and whether or not we want to recommend certain changes. As you can see on the table...there was a definite majority of faculty who are unhappy with the present system of having one large graduation ceremony with everyone walking across the stage. The summary sheet indicates roughly 78% of our faculty and 44% of the students that have attended a commencement exercise are unhappy with the present type of ceremony that we have.

"Whether or not there are substantive changes, I think, would be up to the Administration and Commencement Committee, maybe. But, I think that something needs to be done. So, our Committee wanted to open it up to you people and let you give us some input and if we feel there is a consensus here sufficient to make a definite recommendation, why we will be happy to make one. The only thing that I have in mind right now, as we discussed this this morning when two or three of us got together, is a least a copy of this report needs to go to the Administration and to the Commencement Committee. I would welcome comments anyone wishes to make.

"... We took all the returns we had and tried to summarize the comments that were made and those that were, that seemed to add something, or at least were mentioned one time, we did include. Some of these, as you can see, such as 'too long' and 'too boring,' were mentioned over and over again. As far as the faculty is concerned, the major criticism is the disruptive behavior of the audience. This may well be due to the, as some people mentioned, the type of surrounding in which we hold commencement exercises. We are expected to act like a baseball or basketball fan when we go into a coliseum. It's hard to have a solemn ceremony in a place like that. But maybe there is some other approach that would be favorable to calm down the disruptive behavior other than having Security run up and down the aisles. I'd like to hear any discussion about the problem.

Senator Mace, "I want to know how the faculty can improve its dress code when everyone is wearing a cap and gown."

Senator Dean, "Wear shoes rather than tennis shoes or sandals."

Senator Thompson, "Or wear shoes rather than go barefooted."

Senator Dahmus, "Do you feel you got any idea of what the parents thought? I know when you were first doing this your intent in polling students was the hope they would reflect the parents' view. Do you have any feelings that this was so? That the students' responses reflect their parents' feelings?"

Senator Reeves, "I think so. I think students pretty much represent their parents' feelings and by this, of course, many of them voted for a traditional ceremony, pretty much as it is now. About 50% say they would like to have it as it is. Of those that have attended a ceremony, about 40% are unhappy with the way it is. So, maybe our students are not as blindly traditional as many feel they are."

Senator Dahmus, "I agree with you that the setting is part of the explanation for the boisterous behavior. But I think another explanation for the boisterous behavior is simply the length of the ceremony--that one way to end it would be to make the ceremony much shorter."

Senator Reeves, "One way to make it shorter would be an en masse awarding of degrees. But my Dean, and a lot of other people I have talked to, say parents are going to insist that their children walk across the stage when their name is called out."

Unknown, "Is this type of behavior common to other schools?"

Senator Carr, "I have attended ceremonies at three other universities where the ceremonies are held in an auditorium or outdoors and I have never heard anything like the yelling or shouting and rowdiness we have at ours."

Senator Russell stated he had witnessed this at another institution but his exact comments were not audible on the tape.

Senator Todd, "One way to cut the length of the ceremony might be to have two people calling names. I've noticed a long pause between names--I don't know why we have to wait so long. We could have one person at each end of the stage calling names and avoid the pause."

Senator Arscott, "I think it is part of our obligation. I don't like to sit there that long any more than anyone else but it is part of our obligation. As the parent of six children myself, I know their mother enjoys having the names called and seeing them walk across the stage. I don't think saying it any faster--doubling up the names--would be good. I think parents enjoy it. So I think we should leave it as it is. Seriously, I do wonder if this is an indication that some feel education is a joke. I wonder if they paid money for an education that was really hard if they would still do it--they might, I don't know. I have just wondered about that but I think we should leave it as it is."

Unknown, "One suggestion I think has merit that would reduce, not the length of the ceremony, but the number of man hours involved. That is have a representative number of faculty from each school, two or three, represent the faculty rather than 50 percent of the faculty. You would still have some faculty there who are in their regalia."

Senator Arscott, "I think that's part of my obligation--to sit there. My mind thinks other things but I'm there physically. It's an obligation."

Senator Parr, "I agree with Senator Todd. I think that's an excellent suggestion. Because in theater or music, with a big production, the worst thing you can do is have slow pacing. I think if it takes forever to call each individual diploma, why not speed it up? So if you can find a way to do that, I'm all for that. It would go twice as fast."

Senator DiNucci, "I agree that the ceremony should be speeded up. The disruptive nature of the ceremony is the problem. I think we need to look at, or someone needs to look at, ways to remedy the problem. I think one possible way is to speed up the process--there is a delay between names that could be shortened. The commencement address, which is often very long and boring, could be cut in length. It doesn't appear we are going to be able to change the setting. It appears that students and faculty like the traditional type of setting. So, I think what needs to be looked at are ways to speed up the process so we don't give people an opportunity to cause this type of disruptive behavior."



STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY  
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SCHOOL OF FORESTRY

P.O. Box 6109  
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MEMO TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Faculty Government Committee  
W. Arscott  
J. Howard  
M. Lowe  
H. Reeves, Chairman  
P. Sharp

DATE: April 8, 1986

SUBJECT: Commencement Procedures

The attached table is a summary of a questionnaire survey made of faculty and upper division students. It seems obvious that changes need to be made in our commencement exercise. About 78 percent of faculty and 44 percent of students who had attended commencement expressed a negative feeling for the way it is presently conducted. Considering the three choices on the questionnaire, 33 percent of faculty and 40 percent of students polled prefer the current practice. Forty-eight percent of faculty and 11 percent of students prefer an enmasse awarding of degrees and optional School receptions. Nineteen percent of faculty and 28 percent of students chose smaller type ceremonies such as by School or grouping of schools.

Comments also were summarized. Twenty-four percent of faculty who had attended commencement were critical of the noise and disruptive actions of the audience, and 20 percent expressed negative feelings toward the length and conduct of the service. More than 26 percent of the students who had attended commented on the excessive length and boring nature of commencement. Some faculty and students expressed support for the traditional type ceremony, in spite of the disruptive behavior of certain individuals in the audience. Two supporters of the traditional ceremony said stern measures should be taken to assure the proper decorum during commencement.

HR/bm



	<u>Faculty Attended</u>			<u>Students Attended</u>		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Check your preference from the following options of Commencement (Graduation Exercise) at SFASU.						
One large ceremony where every graduate from all schools walks across the stage (our current practice)	26	1	27	81	98	189
One large gathering for Commencement Address and an enmasse awarding of degrees, then individual School Receptions, if desired	35	5	40	25	26	51
Ceremonies by school or a combination of schools, e.g. Liberal Arts, Education, Business or grouping of smaller schools	14	2	16	45	85	130
If you have attended commencement, were you satisfied with the current practice?	15	52		77	60	
Comments:						
Too disruptive (audience)	18		18	5		5
Long and boring	15	2	17	40	6	46
Traditional, as present, is best	6		6	9	8	17
Get rid of "gauntlet"	4		4			
Like receptions	4		4			
More "honored" seating for faculty	4		4			
Too impersonal				3		3
Shorter speeches	2		2			
Gym atmosphere is bad	2		2			
Do away with commencement	2	2	4			
Only representative faculty required to attend	1		1			
Give students real diplomas	1		1			
Graduate degrees <u>only</u> for individuals	1		1			
Special music for the band or performers	1		1			
Shorter and humorous speeches by SFA administrators	1		1			
Improve dress code of faculty attending	1		1			