

Stephen F. Austin State University

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS, Oct. 22/23, 2001

**from Dr. Joseph A. Devine,
Professor of History
Faculty Senate Chair, 2001-2002**

Thank you for the opportunity to report on faculty concerns.

Low salaries remain a major problem, for appropriate compensation is necessary for morale, retention, and recruiting. There is a connection between good faculty morale and spirited, enthusiastic teaching. Retention of young faculty requires higher salaries. It is distressing to see bright, able young faculty come here and then after just a year or two leave for higher paying positions, and that happens too often. Recruiting new faculty is done in a national market, and we must be able to compete better. According to figures from the Coordinating Board, SFA salaries at each rank place us near the bottom compared to other public universities in Texas.

We must not assume that Nacogdoches enjoys a low cost of living that justifies low salaries. It is true that living costs here are below those in urban areas like New York or Chicago, but there are many other college towns where living expenses are comparable to those in this town.

Faculty and staff are heartened by Dr. Guerrero's appointment of a Salary Equity Steering Committee to study faculty and staff salaries. (I am one of the faculty on the eight person committee.) By January or February the committee hopes to have data showing inequities and deficiencies. Correcting them will be the big challenge. Everyone understands that these problems have developed over time and cannot be corrected instantly, but we do hope the administration and regents will begin improvements soon.

Admissions standards are being studied by a committee of the Senate. It is likely the Senate will recommend that high school graduates in the second quartile of their class have SATs of 930 or ACTs of 19. Presently we have clear admission for the top two quartiles. Raising admissions standards too much would hurt enrollment, but not improving them admits too many students unable to stay in college and discourages good students from enrolling here.

In recent weeks there has been much discussion about how we handle remedial courses and the developmental program (the two are not precisely the same). The Senate voted unanimously this month that the three departments that teach remedial courses (English, Math, and Elementary Education) should retain control of the remedial curriculum and supervision of instructors in remedial courses. Faculty can see the wisdom of some reorganization of the developmental program and related programs like advising undecided majors, but I worry that reorganization may absorb money needed for rectifying our salary deficiencies.

Last year a Senate resolution asked for increased funding for the Library's materials budget (for books and journals); the Senate is pleased that Dr. Guerrero is trying to arrange for better funding. As SFA adds "distance learning" courses, the university needs a new intellectual property policy. The Senate recommended one last year, but a policy has not yet been approved by the administration for submission to your board. Traditionally, the instruction that faculty give students in a fifty or ninety minute class is over and done with when the class period ends (except we like to think the instruction lives on forever in the students' minds). But with "distance learning" often the instruction is preserved on a video tape after first delivery. What are the respective future rights of the university and the faculty member over that instructional material? It is a complicated question.

The Library has revamped its web site over the last year to make it much easier for students and faculty to use indexes and web sites in their disciplines. Faculty are very appreciative of the

electronic resources the library now offers, and the help librarians afford in the use of those resources, but the Senate at its October meeting emphasized that each instructor must be the judge of how and to what extent the web and other electronic resources are used in his or her class.

A few words about a non-academic “nuts and bolts” matter: parking. Most faculty do not believe SFA should build a parking garage; most think difficulties in the two most congested lots could be much reduced if present regulations were better enforced.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.