Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
October 17, 2008

Attendance: Jennifer Anderson, Mary Bantell, Bilaye Benibo, Kent Byus, Kirk Cammarata, Niki Changchit, Bryant Griffith, Louis Katz, Karen Loveland, Margaret Lucero, Ian MacDonald, Ahmed Mahdy, Michael Moody, Mary Kay Mortimer, David Moury, Marvarene Oliver; Karen Paciotti, Mark Pfeifer; Nancy Rogers, Elizabeth Sefcik, Sharon Talley

Ex Officio: Provost Anantha Babbili, Christine Silliman

Guests: David Billeaux

I. Speaker Lucero called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

II. Speaker’s Report

• System Teaching Evaluation Update – Lucero provided handouts related to the resolution passed at the previous meeting and the Chancellor’s response.
• Task Force on the Flour Bluff University Preparatory High School Program – The task force has been created. Lucero, Talley, Oliver, and Hartlaub are members. The task force has requested a meeting with the provost to discuss concerns that faculty weren’t included in the planning as promised. Students in the program are already on campus and faculty have not been given information related to the progress of the program.
• Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS) Meeting – Talley and Lucero will be attending (next Friday/Saturday). The conference will include statewide meetings and system meetings. Lucero asked for input on specific items she should address at the meeting.
• Revisions of policies – there are an enormous number of university and system policies under review and update. Many don’t impact faculty. Oliver, Talley, and Lucero are meeting to discuss and identify those of interest to faculty. Anyone that wants to review the policies, please contact Lucero, Talley or Oliver to request copies of the proposed changes.

III. Approval of minutes from September 19, 2008. Oliver moved to accept as corrected, Moury seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice assent.

IV. Open comments regarding academic calendar issues – Talley reported receiving a written request from faculty member to return to Monday start for semesters. The faculty member identified two problems with Monday classes related to the current Wednesday start: (1) it encourages students to blow off first week, and (2) Monday classes don’t meet until the third week of classes due to the Monday holiday during the second week. Bantell expressed concern that changing the calendar would require faculty return to work even earlier (the previous Friday) for faculty meetings. An added concern is that faculty contracts don’t start until September 1. Oliver requested we work out a solution to avoid requiring faculty to start work another week earlier. Suggestions included allowing classes to begin Monday night or to have a compressed Monday schedule.

V. Committee Reports

1. Academic Affairs Committee – Griffith (representing Hartlaub) reported that the committee met last Friday to discuss workload issue including issues related to teaching online classes and supervising independent studies. The committee is working on a questionnaire to solicit faculty input. They plan to have the survey ready before the December break.
2. ABE Committee – Anderson reported that the committee has compiled a list of concerns from the retreat. The committee is planning to send out requests to the senate for more information about the specific Instructional Technology issues they need to address. This request should go out via email by Monday.
• Awards – Christine sent email inviting participation in the Piper Awards. The deadline is November 10. The committee just learned about the availability of an outstanding first year student award. The deadline is...
October 27. The committee is working to ensure more timely notice in the future.

3. Committee on Committees – Rogers reported that the committee has met twice to work on a survey to collect data from faculty. Specifically, they plan to identify areas of concern or missing elements in university services that affect teaching.

4. Faculty Affairs Committee – Oliver reported that the committee is working on the following:
   • Revision of Designation of Graduate Faculty. Oliver provided handouts detailing the changes to the policies.
     – Oliver proposed that we accept the changes. Talley seconded.
     – Oliver accepted a friendly amendment to change 2.1.1.2. and 2.1.2.2. by dropping the words “doctoral/dissertation”…and deleting “Texas A&M University” from 2.1.1.2. The senate voted on the motion by a show of hands. The motion passed with 21 votes for, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.
   • Revision of Required Employee Training. Oliver provided handouts detailing the changes to the policies. Following the addition of information on page 21 of the documents, the senate agreed to make the issue an action item at next meeting. Byus reported that some faculty were concerned about the lack of notification about individual training required.
   • Campus safety. Lucero and Hartlaub will be contacting people to collect information. Please share safety issues with Oliver via email. MacDonald mentioned traffic speed on Jefferson St and the existence of a single crosswalk on that side of campus. Others expressed concerns about pedestrians crossing the street into gated parking without looking, pulling out of parking lanes without looking and the number of dark areas around campus buildings. Another concern related to the process and the amount of time required to dispatch ambulance and paramedic services to campus locations.

5. Budget Committee- Bantell reported that the committee has met to discuss its charge.
   • Salary compression issue -- The committee is currently reviewing working definitions of salary compression, examining factors that contribute to salary compression, and reviewing the methods for calculating compression. Bantell and Katz met with Paul Orser to obtain current and historical salary data. Awni Zebda will meet with the committee next week to provide historical information and advice related to last round of compression studies six years ago.
   • Pay and benefit issues – Bantell has contacted the Human Resources (HR) department to discover why some new faculty are not told about the first pay date and the requirement to pay for first 90 days of medical insurance coverage. HR said this information was stated in the offer letter from the Provost and provided during campus visits if the hiring agent requested an HR overview. The tentative recommendation of the committee is that this information should be available on the HR Web site and that all candidates should receive this information early in the hiring process (specifically, that deans should include this information in beginning of contract negotiations. The committee will collaborate with HR to address these concerns.

VI. Other issues
1. Changchit asked us to remind people about developmental leave.

VII. Provost Comments –
1. Major issues
   • Preparing for SACS -- Provost Babbili will keep us updated on the process of preparing to write the report. He will appoint task forces for each standard to prepare report. He is currently compositioning these task forces and once formed, they will meet with the president to receive their charge.
   • Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) -- Provost Babbili reported that the QEP is related to SACS in that some major universities have lost accreditation due to QEP-related issues. The QEP committee is discussing where to put our focus. Currently, they have narrowed to focus down to the first year experience program and the identification of barrier courses that cause students to leave the institution without graduating. Specifically, they are focusing on the 11% of freshmen that don’t come back for the second semester. One problem is 85% need to work to support themselves and/or their families. Math, history, and composition are some of the barrier courses that contribute to the problem. The committee will finalize focus and processes/resources required to achieve focus later this year.
2. Developments
   • UT Austin is investigating giving students free access to e-books. He will provide us with more information
as it becomes available.
• A new system initiative seeks to ensure that all campuses are military/veteran friendly. We already compare favorably to some of the other system institutions.
• The Ph.D joint program in Nursing with Texas Womens University has been authorized.
• The MSN geospatial engineering degree was authorized.
• The mechanical engineering degree is on the October 23 agenda.
• Provost Babbili extended his thanks for the senate’s work on the mission statement. The revised mission statement is on the December 5 agenda for approval. The president’s cabinet said we should be complimented for our revisions.

VIII. Lucero adjourned the meeting at 3:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Karen Loveland