FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Minutes
April 30, 2012
3:15 p.m., 301 Rudder Tower
http://facultysenate.tamu.edu


Call to Order:
Speaker Benedik called the meeting to order at 3:18 P.M.

Speaker Comments:
These past two weeks have been quite troubling to most faculty, there is no way to sugar coat that. I have heard a wide spectrum of thoughts and opinions from many Senators and many faculty, and I always appreciate your comments. I’ve tried to respond to most.

Yes we are upset, and justifiably so, at a variety of events these past months, most notably the outsourcing initiatives to the recent Finance Committee hearings. Both are particularly disturbing for very different reasons, one for reasons of governance, one for reasons of the future of the university at the appropriate level for the mission it is trying to accomplish.

It is disappointing in that all of us, faculty and staff, were looking forward to finally getting a merit increase. I do appreciate the efforts of the Deans and administration to ensure that at least some merit and bonus pool will be made. Little is better than nothing, although more would be better still. I am disappointed that the cost unfortunately will be born by the units and are likely to have some impact on our ability to continue to enhance the academic programs we value.

We did invite President Loftin to address us today, but he is away at a Homeland Security Committee meeting. He will be here at the next meeting and has agreed to address us. The EC has not had a chance to meet with him this past week either. So I don’t have a lot to tell you.

We can all second guess what might have happened last week. I am sure that the President intended to put forth a tuition increase, it is an easy leap to suggest that this was not allowed. That is why I believe, and I think the EC agrees, that the fault here lies strictly with the BOR who sent the message to us, and possibly out of the the entire state of Texas only we, will not gain an increase. Yes I’m peeved.

So you have all seen the resolution that the EC is putting forward. We did so because we believe it is really the BOR is culpable for these events, and secondly by strongly pushing this editorial back into the public eye it may gain more visibility and credibility hopefully with the Former Students. I believe that only in partnership with them can we make a significant difference.

Lastly, I hope we can get to the main item of business the Core. There is a time constraints to this. We need to submit our proposal to the Coordinating Board in the Fall for their approval. I strongly think this should not be done over the summer months when so much of campus is missing. That is why this special meeting was called.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Approval of candidates for graduate and undergraduate degrees to be conferred May 11-12, 2012, subject to completion of all requirements.
Secretary Daugherity moved approval of Attachment A. The motion passed.

Emergency resolution from the Executive Committee regarding System and University leadership
Secretary Daugherty moved approval of Attachment A1. The Faculty Senate urges the President to explicitly state his stand on the recommendations provided by the tuition committee.” Chris Mathewson (Geology) spoke against the amendment. The amendment failed. Attachment A1 passed.

Speaker Benedik announced that the Executive Committee is in the process of drafting a cover letter to the Board of Regents to accompany Attachment A1.

Unfinished Business

CORE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

New Core Curriculum for 2014
Secretary Daugherty moved approval of Attachment B. Chris Mathewson (Geosciences) offered the following amendment:
A core course shall be any lower or upper division course that does not have an academic prerequisite but may have a minimum class standing requirement that has been approved by the corecourse authorization and review committee.

The amendment was seconded and discussed. Speaker Benedik noted that 85% of students satisfy the current core curriculum requirements taking only lower level courses. Andrew Klein (Geosciences) spoke against the amendment. Ed Harris (Liberal Arts) said that this is about 50%. Dale Rice (Core Curriculum Council co-chair) replied that the difference was in counting transfer, AP, and dual credit courses. He said the provost has assured us that there will be the same number of seats in the new core as in the current core, and he also said that new core courses are being developed, e.g., in political science, which will increase the number of seats available.

Ray James was recognized and spoke in support of the amendment. He also questioned whether or not the CCC report under discussion included language barring core courses from being upper level or having prerequisites. He said UT and Texas Tech have approximately 45% upper level core courses. Beth Tebeaux (Liberal Arts) spoke in favor of the amendment. Ira Greenbaum (Science) said that the resolution would appear to rule out the second semester of a two-semester sequence, but was assured that two-semester sequences are allowed in the core.
The amendment failed.

Ed Harris (Liberal Arts) moved a new amendment:
Neither upper division courses nor courses with prerequisites shall be excluded from consideration for approval in any core curriculum areas.

Jorge Alvarado (Engineering) suggested that the number of upper division courses be limited. A friendly revision was offered (accepted by Ed Harris) to limit upper division courses to 25%.

Doug Biggs (Geosciences) asked to drop the cap to 15% but this friendly amendment was not accepted by Ed Harris.

Karan Watson was recognized and said that the 85% number is from the degree audit but there is wide variance among colleges, and that any effect on subvention from no longer allowing upper-level courses in the core should not determine what goes into the core, but rather that transfer students who have taken core courses elsewhere should not have to take additional core courses.

Chris Armstrong (Education) expressed concern about allowing core courses to have prerequisites.

Jonathan Coopersmith (Liberal Arts) moved to amend the amendment and drop the cap to 15%; the motion was seconded. Ray James spoke in favor of a 15% cap. The amendment to the amendment failed.

Karan Watson added that the state is now requiring core courses to list and assess learning outcomes; Clint Magill (Agriculture and Life Sciences) noted that the political science learning outcomes do include teamwork! The amendment failed.

Mark Clayton (Architecture) called for rethinking graduation requirements versus core courses, emphasizing the land grant mission of the university to help American industry, and moved an amendment to change three math and three science credits to be six interdisciplinary credits emphasizing teaching, research, and experience.

Kevin Hines (Agriculture and Life Sciences), a member of the Core Curriculum Council, said that two-semester sequences are allowed under the proposal. Mark Clayton said the purpose of his amendment is to align with the "Aggies Commit" initiatives.

Dale Rice said the Core Curriculum Council was clear in deciding that Aggies need more math and science in the 21st century.

The amendment failed. The question was called, which passed, and Attachment B passed.

There being no further business to come before the senate, Speaker Benedik turned the chair over to Speaker-Elect Stallone to convene the Committee of the Whole.

Jorge Alvarado (Engineering) asked if anyone knows where the president stands on tuition. Speaker Benedik replied that President Loftin will attend the next senate meeting, May 14, 2012.

Guido Kanschat (Science) gave his personal experience of being at A&M for the last six years but he has decided to leave this summer, not due to lack of raises, but because the Board of Regents did not value what faculty such as he are doing, and so he is going to a more stable university. Chris Mathewson (Geosciences) said in 1971 A&M had a goal to be a world-class land-grant university, but that has declined over the years; he is retiring, but he reaffirmed TAMU’s land-grant mission.

Paulo Lima-Filho (Science) expressed great concern about Guido’s and others’ leaving, and affirmed TAMU’s tier-one research university status.

Antonio Cepeda-Benito said attrition at A&M has been very low since 2008, and even now is still below 3%. He plans to conduct exit interviews with faculty who have announced they are leaving. Jorge Alvarado (Engineering) suggested that Antonio Cepeda-Benito survey all the faculty.

Jose Fernandez-Solis (Architecture) opined that top-down decision making from the Board of Regents has for the moment triumphed over leaving decisions to the appropriate level, but such decisions will have to be continually modified.

Jonathan Coopersmith (Liberal Arts) said President Loftin told the Tuition Fee Advisory Committee that something changed suddenly, so he did not ask for something he thought he would not get.

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole, Speaker-Elect Stallone turned the chair back to Speaker Benedik, who thanked all senators for their respectful participation.

Adjourn
The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.