FACULTY SENATE MEETING
MINUTES
July 11, 2011
3:15 p.m., 601 Rudder Tower
http://facultysenate.tamu.edu


Call to Order:
Speaker Benedik called the meeting to order at 3:20 P.M. There were three senators from Galveston present via videoconferencing.

Speaker Comments:
Speaker Benedik gave a summary of what was discussed at the Executive Committee retreat. He talked about the newsletter that is being implemented to help improve communications with the senate and faculty. He explained how there will be changes to the committee structure with all of the Faculty Senate committees. He stated the Executive Committee will be generating more charges for the committees. Benedik discussed how the Executive Committee will be proposing to merge the Diversity Committee into the Personnel and Welfare Committee. Speaker Benedik then discussed the meeting he had with the new Interim Chancellor Kimbrough. He then announced that university and system contributions to retirement will not change; also, there has no been change in the state requirements for teaching loads.

The June 13, 2011 Faculty Senate meeting minutes were approved as submitted. Motion Passed FS.29.12

Consent Agenda
The consent agenda was approved as submitted.

GRADUATE COUNCIL
New Courses - June 2, 2011
CVEN 740 Advanced Constitutive Behavior of Cementitious Materials

Motion Passed FS.29.13

Special Consideration - June 2, 2011
College of Architecture
Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
Request to change the title of the Master of Science in Land Development
Request for minor curriculum modification

Motion Passed FS.29.14

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
New Course - June 10, 2011
VIBS 204 Food Toxicology and Safety
VIBS 401 Developmental Neurotoxicology

Motion Passed FS.29.15

Change in Courses - June 10, 2011
LBAR 181 First-Year Seminar in the Liberal Arts
PSYC 351 Survey of Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Motion Passed FS.29.16

Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Honors and Undergraduate Research
Request for a new Honors Fellows Distinction
to replace current University-level Honors distinctions

Motion Passed FS.29.17

Attachment E
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Revisions to Student Rules 19.2.3 and 34

End of Consent Agenda

Committee Reports

New Business
Speaker Benedik then introduced Provost Karan Watson, who recently returned from China. She addressed two questions raised by faculty: (1) the 2011-2013 budget cuts and (2) how to restore a climate of trust [between faculty and administrators]. Regarding (1), she reiterated that two kinds of budget cuts were prepared last year: $39 million in state funds, mostly in college budgets, and $21 million of other funds, which a committee last fall considered how to reallocate. The legislature actually cut less than $39 million but the full amount is needed to cover total state cuts.

The president approved the committee’s principles for reallocation of the $21 million and allocated $3.3 million for custodial needs for new buildings, security, and environmental safety, and $7 million for deferred maintenance. The president had already raised the deferred maintenance budget from $4 million per year to $8 million, so with the additional $7 million there is now $15 million for deferred maintenance, but even this still falls short of the needed $25-26 million per year. Another $500,000 will be reallocated for staff development and $200,000 for faculty support such as the Center for Teaching Excellence and Instructional Technology Services.

The committee had recommended reallocating the remaining $10 million of the $21 million as follows: $4 million to support timely progress to graduation and $6 million for high-impact learning experiences. The president decided to use $2 million immediately for graduate student support and combine the remaining $8 million with around $4 million in Academic Master Plan funds designated for teaching, learning, and engagement. The president has asked the provost to develop a plan to allocate $6.5 million of this $12 million to the colleges, in proportion to the number of majors, to address three issues:

1. “high-impact learning,” which can be international, service learning, or other pedagogical approaches so undergraduate and graduate students learn more deeply;
2. improving advising and implementing the new legislative requirement that students have an approved degree plan on file or be blocked from registration; and
3. developing and implementing the ten-year Quality Enhancement Plan required by SACS, to improve student learning and enhance each student’s ability to make commitments and stick to them.

Another $1 million per year will be allocated for interdisciplinary (across colleges) experiences for students; groups of faculty can apply for $100,000 per year for one to three years for initial funding, but the projects need to be sustainable thereafter. $750,000 will be allocated for core curriculum enhancements using instructional technology (not necessarily distance learning). The balance of the reallocated funds will go to PK-12 outreach, continuing education, competency credit, software tools for advisors, the Center for Teaching Excellence, etc.

Provost Watson invited all faculty and deans to respond; she said the president wants to hear big-dollar proposals, standards, and metrics by early August, preferably long-term enhancement proposals so as not to have to restart every year.

Kim Hill (Liberal Arts) asked about the $2 million reallocated to the Office of Graduate Studies this spring. Karan Watson replied that it is being used for scholarships and fellowships. Kim Hill then asked about the Action 2015 strategic plan and Vision 2020. Karan Watson replied that these reallocations are very much aligned with both plans.

Regarding restoring a climate of trust, she said she remembers being treated as a faculty member and colleague even as Dean of Faculties, but when she became provost an amazing number of people no longer treat her as faculty but as an administrator, and speculate about what she “must be thinking” or “must be doing.” She said the Faculty Senate has a similar problem, and both administrators and the senate need to work on building more trust. She said too many faculty at large seem to feel the senate does not represent them, and although when it began, the faculty senate had many contested races, now it is hard to find one candidate for some seats. She called for us to get past the “us vs. them” mentality, get ahead of the criticism of higher education, and lead other universities in what to do and how to do it.

Judith Ball (Veterinary Medicine) said too many faculty are evaluated on how much money they bring in, but more service (e.g., on the faculty senate) is actually counted against them. Karan Watson replied that it is hard to measure the quality of service and not just the quantity.

Clint Magill (Agriculture and Life Sciences) said his dean said summer teaching funds don’t flow to teachers. Karan Watson replied that summer school money goes to colleges, and changes are made slowly over three to five years to reflect changes in enrollment; the legislature also periodically changes the formula funding per weighted student credit hour. She said she is trying to make sure all deans know the funding picture.

Speaker Benedik thanked Karan Watson and seconded her call to make the faculty senate more central. He then opened the floor for questions. Kim Hill (Liberal Arts) asked about senate executive committee meetings with regents; Speaker Benedik summarized the last such meeting and characterized it as mostly discussions. Karan Watson encouraged the executive committee to remember that the regents are regents for the system and must represent all the schools. Past Speaker Bob Strawser reported on a recent meeting of representatives of the faculty senates of all the system schools; they discussed Chancellor McKinney’s resignation and the Texas Public Policy Foundation’s proposals. He also recounted the history of executive committee meetings with regents, and also his personal meetings with them.

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Committee of the Whole

Speaker Benedik then turned the chair over to Speaker-Elect Stallone to convene the Committee of the Whole. Speaker-Elect Stallone added his summary of the executive committee’s meeting with some regents after the last board meeting.

Past Speaker Bob Strawser then addressed the issue that was raised when he introduced Jakie Sandefer to the president of the Brazos Animal Shelter, but said this was not a conflict of interest and that he had nothing to do with Jakie Sandefer’s subsequent contribution.

Speaker Stallone raised the issue of “term limits” for deans and department heads in university rule 12.99.99.M6 regarding their evaluation and retention; the rule specifies a term of four years, or eight years if renewed. He said his department has an excellent head who has the support of the faculty for additional term(s), and asked for senators’ input on changing the rule to allow more than eight years.

Chris Mathewson (Geosciences) said that department heads serve at the pleasure of dean with the approval of the faculty, so that principle could be applied to longer terms; Kim Hill (Liberal Arts) agreed. Speaker-Elect Stallone suggested perhaps requiring the approval of seventy-five per cent of faculty for longer terms. Judith Ball (Veterinary Medicine) expressed reservations about computerized evaluations of department heads and deans since they can be tracked by IP address to an individual faculty member’s computer, and said she thinks paper ballots are more confidential. Karan Watson gave a history of the changes to this rule.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole, Speaker-Elect Stallone returned the chair to Speaker Benedik, who adjourned the meeting at 4:47.