TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE
ROUNDUP REPORT

Texas Council of Faculty Senates Fall Meeting
February 17-18, 2006

We continue to be generally satisfied with the relations between faculty and administration at Texas A&M University. In fact, our worst problem in this regard is with faculty apathy, bred by a lack of problems. We have instituted a policy of replacing Faculty Senators who fail to attend full Senate meetings three times without excuse, and we hope the problem will be alleviated somewhat by this policy.

We are not up for re-accreditation for several years yet, so we are not gearing up for that. However, during our last accreditation it was noted that we needed to develop student learning outcomes and measures of those outcomes for our syllabi. Pursuant to that and our need to look carefully at our core curriculum, we have just passed a requirement that all core curriculum courses will be examined and recertified for the core based on new syllabi giving student learning outcomes and assessment measures. This process should produce a cadre of faculty skilled at writing such syllabi who can then provide expertise for rewriting the remaining syllabi at the university. The first requirements, those applying to the core curriculum courses, were passed by the Faculty Senate on Monday, February 13.

There is significant pressure on all colleges and universities in Texas to increase their enrollment. Much of this pressure is coming directly from the Legislature, and more in the long run indirectly through the Legislature from the serious demographic consequences of rapidly growing cadres of college-age students coming our way. As a partial response to this, we are presently considering a plan, which would increase our enrollment of transfer students by 500, of first-time-in-college students by 350, and graduate students by 1000. We recognize the challenges this would cause, including the need for even more new faculty, scholarships, offices, and classrooms/labs. Because of these challenges, the changes cannot be done overnight. Instead of suddenly expanding, we will ramp up to these levels over a five-year period. The plan is ultimately going to be a joint work of the administration and the faculty.

In October 2005, the Faculty Senate passed a consensual relations rule (33.03.01.99) which provides guidance for people who find themselves in consensual relationships with subordinates or students. We make it quite clear that such romantic relations constitute unprofessional conduct, but we recognize such relationships do occur. In this event, we require, "The individual with the power or status advantage in the relationship to bear the burden of accountability. As such, that individual will:

A. Inform her/his superior

B. Take action to ensure unbiased evaluation or supervision of the other person involved."
We add that, "Failure to follow this procedure may result in accusations of unprofessional conduct."

Several years ago, our Faculty Senate passed a requirement, to be imposed on all students beginning their studies at TAMU in or after 2006, that they should take one course (and later two courses) having a 1-credit writing content. These courses are to be in the students' major departments or closely related departments and count as credit toward the degree in their subject matter. They are called "W-courses," and are designated by a "W" after the course number. Although not every department has prepared a W-course, many have and we are on track toward offering the courses required by students entering for the first time this year. In almost every meeting of the Senate, a group of new designations as W-courses are approved.