Texas A&M University is one of the larger universities in the country with an enrollment of approximately 45,000 and growing. We are dedicated to serving the state and the nation with our strong research programs, and to serving the people of Texas with demanding instructional services and useful extension work. We have recently added a branch campus in Qatar; its new 450,000 square foot headquarters, teaching, and research building is scheduled to open next year, and it will be graduating its first class next year, in May 2007.

Our Faculty Senate consists of 95 Senators, made up of at least two Senators from each College, including two from the Qatar Campus and four from the Galveston Campus in Qatar (2) and Galveston (4). Reapportionment periodically is done to keep the Senate fully representational of the faculty. Membership is by election of the faculty and is open to all faculty, including lecturers. The Senate is supported by an Assistant to the Faculty Senate a substantial budget, and dedicated office space including a meeting room sufficient for a meeting of 15 or so people, which suffices for most of our committee meetings.

Except in the summer, our meetings typically begin with a brief talk by an invited member of the university administration. In the past six meetings of the Senate, we have had the following speakers:

- President Robert Gates (twice);
- Dr. Emily Ashworth, the Assistant Provost for International Programs (speaking on the current status of international programs at Texas A&M University);
- Ms. E. Jill Pollock, Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer (speaking on increased minimum wages at Texas A&M University (n consequence of a Senate initiative;
- Charles Sippial, Vice President for Facilities/Administration and Bruce Karr, System Civil Engineer (speaking on a major utility lines renovation project).

Several years ago, we initiated a “W-course” program, in which certain courses in each of the disciplines are designated as "writing-intensive" and have one credit of their grade dependent upon the quality of writing that the students perform. This program has been quite successful, and we are adding 20 to 40 new W-courses to the catalog each year.
This past September, we approved the University Studies Degree, a new kind of degree program in which there is no major, and instead there are requirements for an area of concentration (21 to 24 credits) and two standard minors with at least one in a college other than the area of concentration. It is hoped this degree will serve two disparate groups of students: Students in good standing in the university who have been unable to qualify for their chosen majors, and students with broad-based interests, as it would permit them to shape a unique degree program. We will be watching the results of this new degree program very closely to see if it meets its objectives.

In our most recent meeting, last week, we passed revised rules for faculty participation in the selection and retention of department heads and deans. While we already have faculty participation in these areas, the new rules clarify some issues that have arisen.

There was briefly a concern about the output of security cameras in classrooms being available on non-secure websites. Not long after this issue was brought up in our Committee of the Whole, the system was changed and such images are no longer on non-secure websites.

We have a very satisfactory structure of shared governance at Texas A&M University, ranging from regular meetings between officers of the Faculty Senate and the Provost and President, through regular presentations by the President and other officials to the Senate as a whole, to faculty membership on all University committees, including the Presidential Councils; such as the Council on the Built Environment, which is engaged in planning future construction on campus and relocations of departments and service offices to new and newly emptied buildings).

We are joined with President Gates in wishing to institutionalize shared governance as much as possible. To that end, a task force has been formed to examine the problem and make recommendations.

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