THE FACULTY SENATE

June 22, 1998

Dr. Ray M. Bowen
President
Texas A&M University

Dear President Bowen:

At our regular June 8, 1998 meeting, the Faculty Senate approved these recommendations and procedures for addressing concerns related to the proposed statewide core curriculum. We are submitting these recommendations for your formal approval with the knowledge that you have already accepted them informally and that the Academic Programs Council (APC) endorsed them at their June 10, 1998 meeting.

Sincerely,

Diane S. Kaplan
Speaker, 1998-99

Enclosure

pc: Dr. Ronald G. Douglas, Executive Vice President & Provost
    Dr. William L. Perry, Associate Provost & Dean of Faculties
    Senator Thomas E. Wehrly, Chair, Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Proposed Statewide Core Curriculum
REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE
PROPOSED STATEWIDE CORE CURRICULUM
(Ad Hoc Committee of the Executive Committee)

The Ad Hoc Committee met several times during the week of May 25, 1998 to review the statewide core curriculum proposed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The committee met with Dean Woodrow Jones of the College of Liberal Arts. Dean Jones was a member of the statewide committee to advise the Coordinating Board on the statewide core curriculum. The major concerns of the Ad Hoc Committee follow:

1. The limit of 45 hours in the proposed statewide core curriculum presents a problem to Texas A&M University because our Core Curriculum currently contains 48 credits (not including the foreign language and computer proficiency requirements). This limit, or cap, is not part of the law mandating the development of a common state core curriculum, nor did it appear in the original statewide advisory committee report of February 20, 1998. There appears to be some opposition to raising or eliminating the limit, but this committee judges that we may be able to overcome the opposition.

2. There is an inconsistency in the text of the proposed core curriculum that could adversely affect our curriculum. Under paragraph 5.402(B), the text reads "Each institution's core curriculum ... must include only lower-division courses included in the 'Texas Common Course Numbering System.'" This is not the same as allowing courses that are "consistent with the 'Texas Common Course Numbering System'" as defined in paragraph 5.400 (3). Using the latter text, we could still include 300- and 400-level courses in the core curriculum. This is important because most categories in the core curriculum at TAMU include 300- and 400-level offerings. With the restriction to lower-division courses, certain courses (e.g., ENGL 301, Technical Writing) would no longer satisfy core curriculum requirements.

3. The math requirement of 3 hours of College Algebra is much lower than that required in the TAMU Core Curriculum. This has previously been communicated to the statewide advisory committee and the Coordinating Board. The upgrade to finite math or calculus was voted down. A suggestion by this committee to remedy this partly is that Chart I (required semester credit hours) be changed in the mathematics component area to read "Mathematics (logic, or college-level algebra equivalent or above)" and Chart II (additional 6 hours of courses above the mandated 36 hours) be changed in the mathematics component area to read "Mathematics (finite math, calculus, or above)" instead of "Mathematics (college-level algebra equivalent or above)." Our rationale is that the wording with college algebra appeared in Chart I (mandatory 36 hours in the statewide core curriculum).
4. The law enabling the statewide core curriculum also mandates that the Coordinating Board develop field of study curricula. Each curriculum comprises a block of courses that can be taken at any institution in the state and transferred as a block meeting the lower-division requirements for the field of study. This is a concern because the lower-division requirements developed by the board could differ from those already existing at TAMU.

5. When a student enrolls at a university at which the student is pursuing a baccalaureate degree, the core curriculum requirements of the university take precedence for all courses taken subsequent to the enrollment date. Thus for a course taken after the point in time to be acceptable to fulfill the core requirements for graduation, whether during the summer or while co-enrolled at another institution, the course must satisfy the degree-granting university’s core curriculum.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

- First, we recommend that the officers of the Texas A&M University Faculty Senate, working in consonance with Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald Douglas and President Ray Bowen, should meet with members of the staff of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, to discuss the above concerns about the 45 hour cap, the exclusion of upper division courses, and the mathematics requirement. To the extent possible, they should also coordinate this effort with corresponding efforts of faculty from the University of Texas and other four-year higher education institutions across the state, and with efforts from leaders of industry, mothers' clubs, and alumni.

- We ask that individual faculty members should write letters to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (addressed to Commissioner Don W. Brown, Dr. Julie Leidig, Program Director, THECB, and Catherine Parsonneau, Program Director, THECB, all at the address Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, P. O. Box 12788, Austin, TX 78711) and to editorial pages of newspapers, protesting the adverse effects of parts of the proposed statewide core curriculum and pointing out that it can only have the effect of reducing the quality of education of students of Texas A&M University and other universities across the state.

Approved by the Faculty Senate June 8, 1998 (FS.16.019)