Academic Affairs Committee
2013-2014 Report

This is a brief summary of the business conducted by the Academic Affairs Committee as presented in the edited meeting minutes.

OCTOBER 2013
Student Government Academic Affairs Chair, Brody Smith, attended our meeting to give us some updates on items being discussed in Student Senate that would be relevant to us. He had one item that he asked for the endorsement of our committee and that was the Equivalency Exam Bill that would make changes to Rule 7 in terms of makeup exams. The actual changes he was suggesting would have to go through the Rules and Regulations Committee for approval and then through FS, but he is trying to build support for the change before going to R&R. He has taken it to EC who endorsed it with a couple of changes. The crux of the bill would state that students had to make up missed exams (due to excused absences) within 5 days of their return to class, and that the makeup exam would be of equal or similar or format and scope of information as stated on syllabus. He acknowledged that if a prof gave a 100 question multiple choice test, it would be very difficult to make up another different 100 multiple choice question test, but that perhaps the makeup format might be short answer, fill in the blank, essay, etc. The purpose of this bill is to try to reduce making make-up exams punitive in nature. Brody is going to send me the original rule and then their requested change so that we can all see the exact wording, and I’ll send it out to you. We will then vote electronically on whether we want to “endorse” this rule change or not. The Student Senate is trying to get this taken care of in a timely manner in hopes of perhaps having it implemented next semester if it passes FS, etc. Since we won’t meet till late Nov., I felt that this might be a quicker way to deal with this. Brody also discussed possible changes in email servers for students, to go from Zimbra to possibly Google or Exchange. There are pros and cons for each. He has spoken with Pierce Cantrell and others regarding this topic……he’ll have more for us in the future. Brody’s last item for discussion was concern for increased hours of usage (2 extra hours M-TH evenings) for Evans Library and West Campus library, along with additional services to be available at West Campus with the growing expansion of students and student housing on West Campus

NOVEMBER 2013
Our meeting opened with a visit from Dean of Faculties Michael Benedik, bringing us a new charge regarding the use of plus/minus grading at the Law School and potentially other professional or graduate schools (apparently the Law School currently uses +/- grading as does the Pharmacy and Dental schools and possible other HSC entities). As this charge was just issued by the EC today, this topic was set for discussion at our Dec. AAC meeting. I will get any info together and invite any “guests” who might be able to provide some insight or direction on this topic to our meeting. (I have attached the charge again FYI. Please feel free to discuss with your colleagues in your colleges) We also briefly discussed the topic for our January meeting. That topic will deal with possible proposed academic calendar changes, i.e. Thanksgiving Break and Easter Break. (Discussion about how to get Wed. before Thanksgiving off, and getting Easter Monday off instead of Good Friday off……these have to do with being able to travel. We have asked SGA to bring a specific proposal to us so we can discuss it. There are numerous factors that come into play when messing with the Academic Calendar!) Again, we will make sure that all interested or relevant parties are present to aid in our discussion. So as you can see, we are picking up steam! As I get info, I’ll forward it on!
Our action item today was to discuss the proposed change to TAMU Rule 7.5 regarding quality of make-up exams which was brought to AAC via Student Government (thanks for being there Brody to give us input!). SGA has brought this item to both the EC and AAC for information and for endorsement in an
effort to enhance the chances of acceptance and passage by the TAMU Rules and Regulations Committee and, if passed there, for passage by the full Faculty Senate. After discussion about the proposed changes brought to us by SGA, Angie Hill-Price made a motion to amend the presented rule change by eliminating the change in time allowed for makeup (reverting back to original language in current rule) (see green highlighted area on attachment), eliminating the paragraph that had been inserted by SGA (see red highlighted area on attachment) and replacing it with the single sentence at the bottom of the rule (see yellow highlighted area on attachment). The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. SGA will now need to present this request for a rule change to the Rules and Regulations Committee for their approval. If it passes R&R, it will go to the full Faculty Senate for approval.

DECEMBER 2014

Our singular item for discussion will be the charge brought to us at our last meeting regarding Plus/Minus grading for the professional schools (see attached charge information). I have invited Vanessa Heidick (Registrar), Dr. Anne Kennimer and Dr. Karen Butler-Purry of the Office of Graduate and Professional Programs to attend in order to provide insight on how this topic would impact their offices. We have representation on our committee from both HSC (I hope you will be able to attend this meeting in person as it is much easier to communicate this way vs. electronically) and the Law School (our reps are coming from Dallas for this meeting) that will be able to provide insight as well from their perspective on this topic, as well as to explain the need for this option. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this meeting as I am headed to North Carolina to visit my elderly mother who took a spill and fractured her pelvis recently, and this just happens to be the best time I can make that trip. I apologize for bailing on y’all for this meeting, however, Dr. Angie Hill-Price has agreed to convene this meeting and lead the discussion, as this topic needs to be addressed quickly and decisively in the best interest of all involved. I did not want to cancel the meeting because of personal issues, so my thanks to Angie, ahead of time, for her leadership. I will look forward to seeing you all again in the New Year! By the way, your attendance is very important for this meeting……and, please remember to get feedback from your constituents on this topic to assist in making a better, well-informed decision! Thanks!

FEBRUARY 2014

In 2007 the topic of royalties for textbooks and class notes and potential conflicts of interest was brought to AAC to discuss and act on. The attached resolution was passed and sent to FS where it was passed and then sent on to the President’s Office where it sat. It was never signed. We learned that Resolutions do not have to be signed by the President, which may explain why it never happened. But, it seems that this issue has come to light again and AAC was given a charge to address this once again.

- A motion was made, seconded, to once again endorse this recommendation that was sent forward in 2007, and send it to the floor of the FS for their approval. It was suggested that if we want there to be some “teeth” in this recommendation, that there needs to be changes to existing SAP’s, or creation of an appropriate SAP that would deal with this topic and require approval by the President’s Office. Until this is done, this topic will continue to resurface. If FS feels this is necessary, they can extend a charge via EC to investigate the procedure for creating this SAP, and involve the appropriate individuals for guidance.
- This motion passed with 8 ayes and 2 abstentions.

The second charge on our agenda dealt with University Residency Requirements for RN-BSN Program students. (See attachment) This program is a way for non-traditional students who already have an Associate Nursing Degree to come back and get a BSN (Baccalaureate Prepared Nursing degree), which makes them better prepared and more highly valued nurses. It is one of 3 programs offered by the Nursing School to receive a BSN. This program has been in place since 2009 and this request to modify
the university residency requirement from 36 to 30 hours has come about as a result of the HSC merger with TAMU. To get a BS at TAMU, students are required to complete at least 36 hours of upper division course at TAMU. Nursing is requesting a variance to reduce this number to 30 hours for the Associates Degree to BSN. To be accepted into this program, students must have a specific GPA, completed necessary pre-reqs, have an earned Assoc. Degree, and have passed their Boards. These student would then be enrolled in an accelerated program that would address topics such as public and community health, research (Evidence based treatment), management classes, and critical thinking in an effort to create lifetime learners and to enhance clinical experiences (Assoc. degree nurses are often times more technical based in their programs) In regard to the request for the variance in University residency, the trend around TX and nationally for this type of program is 30 hours. We have seen other programs engage in this variance already, i.e. 6 hours of study abroad, and also a program that benefits veterans. Allowing this 30 hour variance would allow for a seamless transition for these Associate Degree to BSN candidates, it would save these student money (tuition and fees for 6 hours which can be a hardship for these students who may be working and raising families, etc.), and it would make our nursing program more competitive with similar existing programs at other TX schools. Currently, 44 schools in TX have nursing programs, 27 have RN to BSN programs, and of those 20 have residency requirements of 30 hours or less. (ex.: TX Tech, UT Arlington, UTHC – Houston, and UTMB). (There is a drive to have 80% of nursed to be Baccalaureate Prepared nurses by 2020. We are currently at about 30%. This program would be a huge boost to this effort).

- It was moved and seconded that this 30 hour university residency requirement variance be approved for the TAMU Nursing RN-BSN, and that it would follow current exceptions in existence at TAMU. This motion was approved unanimously.
- The AAC has requested that this item be placed on the April agenda as an Informational item and then put to a vote on the May agenda.
- A last minute addition to AAC’s agenda was the EC’s re-wording and editing of the motion passed by AAC regarding +/- grading (alternative grading) that AAC had asked to be sent to the FS floor for consideration. On January 24th, EC made some editorial changes to AAC’s motion and returned it to AAC today, Feb. 17. AAC asks that this motion be placed on the April FS agenda as an informational item for discussion, and then placed on the May FS agenda for the approval of the full Faculty senate.
- The next agenda item that AAC has chosen to address is the issue of Student Evaluations. This topic will be discussed at the April AAC meeting and the necessary and appropriate individuals will be invited to provide information, feedback and guidance to the committee.