2013-2014 annual report of the TAMU Health Science Center Caucus.

The component colleges, Baylor College of Dentistry, Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and the School of Public Health elected to caucus together following the merger of the Health Science Center with TAMU. Members of the HSC caucus participated on both the TAMU Senate executive committee as well as on the Health Science Center Executive committee. Caucus activities have received support from the office of Dr. Vernon Tesh, Vice President for Academic Affairs.

General Activities: The HSC caucus met once every month to discuss issues relevant to HSC faculty. Additionally, the HSC caucus had the opportunity to meet with the CEO of the HSC, Dr. Brett Giroir, with the vice-president for finance, Dr. Barry Nelson, and with the Assistant Vice President and CIO, Mr. Scott Honea, and with the Dean for the College of Medicine, Dr. Paul Ogden. These meetings provided a venue for frank and open discussions about administrative, financial and information technology issues and challenges. The following are highlights of HSC caucus activities.

1. HSC faculty were concerned that there was a lack of transparency about merger discussions between the HSC and TAMU. In response, Dr. Giroir, Dr. Vernon Tesh, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the leadership of the HSC held a general meeting for faculty and staff that was highly attended, to discuss progress made with integration of faculty, student services, and information technology. Members of the leadership answered faculty questions following the open presentation. Faculty were particularly concerned that students should be able to take courses anywhere at TAMU without any impediment. The HSC leadership explained that student services were now integrated with TAMU, and financial memorandums were being signed to allow for this process to take place. At that time and subsequently, Dr. Giroir has also informed the caucus about ongoing discussions at the HSC, and at TAMU generally, related to streamlining and cost-savings in administration.

2. The Caucus requested that the HSC conduct 360-degree reviews of department heads and deans. The HSC has taken important steps towards instituting this program. Several department heads have been subject to 360-degree reviews and review of deans is to be implemented.

3. There was specific focus on information technology issues related to course grade entry, support for Blackboard and retirement of computers running unsupported operating systems. The HSC caucus also wanted information about faculty representation on the HSC information technology advisory committee. Mr. Scott Honea provided met with the caucus twice and provided written descriptions of policy and a membership list of the advisory committee. He also provided the caucus with a proposal to integrate HSC courses into the TAMU blackboard system.

4. Dr. Paul Ogden, Dean of the College of Medicine met with the caucus to provide an overview of opportunities and threats to medical education. He
discussed student performance on board exams, issues related to residency program matching and the need to change curriculum and grading systems to bring them in line with licensing body requirements and national best practices. This was an extremely informative meeting for the caucus. It would be useful to have a similar ‘opportunity/threat’ assessment from other deans from the caucus components.

5. HSC caucus members have been involved with the approval process for faculty development leave requests.

6. The Caucus leader, Dr. Rajesh Miranda, represented the caucus and the senate at commencement ceremonies at BCD, COM, CON and SPH.