

Approved Senate minutes
May 17, 2006

APPROVED MINUTES

ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING May 17, 2006

PRESENT: Mark Anderson, James Bartlett, Kurt Beron, Gail Breen, Cy Cantrell, David Daniel, Gregg Dieckmann, Juan González, Joh Gooch, Gopal Gupta, Muhammad Kalam, Marilyn Kaplan, Robert Kieschnick, Murray Leaf, Dennis Miller, Shun Chen Niu, Simeon Ntafos, William Pervin, Ravi Prakash, Ashutosh Prasad, Beatrice Rasmussen, Young Ryu, Liz Salter, S. Venkatesan

ABSENT: Mohamed Abdelsalam, Phillip Anderson, Poras Balsara, Dinesh Bhatia, Tom Brikowski, Duane Buhrmester, John Burr, Anthony Champagne, R. Chandrasekaran, Jeff DeJong, Santosh D'Mello, Warren Goux, Jennifer Holmes, D.T. Huynh, Sumit Majumdar, Homer Montgomery, Ramachandran Natarajan, Ivor Page, Sheila Pineres, Balakrishnan Prabhakaran, Tim Redman, Thomas Riccio, Richard Scotch, Mary Urquhart

VISITORS: Priscilla Beadle, Richard Huckaba

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Daniel called the meeting to order. He began with an announcement that the Board of Regents has given their approval for preliminary authority for two new graduate degrees to be proposed in Arts & Humanities. One is a Ph.D. in Translation Studies and the other is a Ph.D. in Arts and Technology. Asked how many people might be expected to participate in the Translation degree, Dr. Daniel said it would probably be a small group, but it would be a strong program. He sees these two degrees as a chance for UTD to be a leader in fields that are growing.

Next, he announced that the legislature has put in place the law to fund the new Natural Science and Engineering Research Building (NSERB), as per the commitment between the State of Texas, U. T. System and Texas Instruments. UTD received more than asked for. The money will come out of the General Revenue Fund instead of Tuition Revenue Bonds (TRB), so it will be a line item in the budget, which is good. This way we will not have to fight for it next time since it is easier to keep something in our budget rather than having to add it. UTD got \$5.3 million in appropriations this biennium to cover debt service on NSERB starting in August. U. T. System negotiated a favorable bonding arrangement that was helpful. The university also received funding on the Animal Care Facility. In all, it came to about \$102 million in funding.

Dr. Daniel remains optimistic about prospects on capital projects. There is still PUF money available. It is earning better returns on interest, now that the stock market is back. U. T. System did well in the TRB round, getting \$800 million. Since U. T. System

Approved Senate minutes
May 17, 2006

did well with the TRB money, it will probably take the heat off the PUF money. I hope that this will argue well for UTD.

The third announcement was that the beautification project is moving forward. They are in the final stages of securing the services of a landscape architect. Dr. Daniel pointed out that the small improvements happening around campus currently, are not part of the bigger project. We will be engaging the campus community in the future for their thoughts and ideas.

On a down note, he said the budget is not particularly good for next year. We are going to run a \$5 million deficit and will intentionally mine the reserves for around \$5 million. He believes the school is still reeling from the impact of cuts in state funding several years ago. On the positive side, by using reserves this coming year, in the next fiscal year, 2007-2008, UTD should be ahead. Assuming there are no major strains on the Texas economy, we should be out of the deficit and debt for '07-'08.

The school has budgeted for a 3% pay raise across the board. Dr. Daniel felt this was an essential move. We will be cutting administrative costs wherever possible, trying to save wherever possible. For the short-term, things will be tight, but he doesn't see it lasting much longer.

In answer to the question on whether the surcharge put on students in SOM & EE is having an impact on the deficit, Dr. Daniel responded that it is having a positive effect in the long term, but not enough to bring the school out of the hole. Part of the reason for the deficit is that the academic costs of the school, especially the graduate programs, ended up being much higher than had been budgeted. Student growth was expected to be higher than is being realized.

Dr. Daniel said the search for a Vice President for Communications is moving ahead and he is excited about finding the right person to tell the UTD story as it deserves to be told. He is hoping to start a search for a Diversity Officer in the fall, but will want to get feedback from the Senate on what they believe the duties and responsibilities of this position should be.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Dr. Daniel requested a change be made regarding his email to Dr. Wildenthal in the section on decoupling the Latin Honors from the senior thesis. On page three, section three of his recommendations, it should read "Establish a program that will make the thesis process more attractive to students and faculty" instead of "Honors process."

Dr. Ntafos added that the section on Certification of Spring Graduates should be changed to read:

UNDERGRADUATE

These students have applied for graduation and have been reviewed by the Office of Records. The Office of Records declared that all of these students will be eligible for graduation upon the completion of the current semester's work at the necessary levels. I request, therefore, that the Academic Senate certify these students to graduate upon receipt of final grades, and notification of completion of other requirements, provided that the grades are consistent with the standards for graduation prescribed by this University. I also request that the Academic Senate certify those students designated as eligible to graduate with honors upon completion of coursework and requirements consistent with the standards for honors at the levels offered by this University.

GRADUATE

These students have applied for graduate degrees and have been reviewed by the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean certifies that all of these students will be eligible for the degrees indicated upon satisfactory completion of the current semester's work. I request, therefore, that the Academic Senate certify these students to receive the degrees as indicated upon receipt of final grades and notification of completion of other requirements, provided that the grades received are consistent with the standards for credit prescribed by this University.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes with the noted changes. The motion carried.

3. SPEAKER'S REPORT

The feedback from graduate students on the +/- issue has been 2:1 against it. More informal feedback from students is needed. A survey will be put in the student newspaper, the Mercury.

Three replacements for the Committee on Committees will be needed for the summer.

The report from the Provost on faculty appeals of promotion and tenure decisions has been postponed until later this summer.

The Off-Campus Bookstore has complained that they are not getting the list of required books that is given to the UTD Bookstore. The Senate voted once before to require that faculty send their lists to both stores, but some departments are not cooperating. The campus bookstore will not share their list. It was recommended in the Academic Council meeting that Off-Campus Bookstore send their grievance to Business Affairs for Dr. Terry to review. Basheer Benhalim, the Student Government Association President, relayed a 'Thank-you' on behalf of the student body for the Academic Governance taking a part in resolving this problem.

4. FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr. Leaf went to the executive committee meeting of the FAC, but was not able to attend the regular meeting in May. He will attend the June meeting in Austin.

The first item was the policy on faculty participation in searches for higher-level administrators. The Regent's Rules require that each U. T. System component have a policy. Several years ago, the Senate at that time drew up a good policy, which is still in place. Dr. Leaf's suggestion was that the Senate may need to review the policy and make a statement for the files that they believe the policy is still acceptable.

There seems to be an approaching impasse between the SACS and the General Legal Counsel for the U. T. System. SACS requires a grievance policy that applies to all full-time faculty, including senior lecturers and non-tenured instructors as well as the tenured faculty. At present, the UTD policy does not include them. The General Legal Counsel is opposed to including anyone in a grievance policy who doesn't absolutely have to be included. Their view is that the more people who are included in a grievance policy, the more lawsuits U. T. System may face. The feeling at the FAC meeting was that they must provide evidence for the Legal Counsel that it is very difficult to hire faculty, other than tenured, if there is not a grievance policy to cover them. Otherwise, the Legal Counsel would probably not approve the policy.

The next item from Dr. Leaf was that no replacement had been found yet for Dr. Terry Sullivan, the U. T. System Executive Vice Chancellor. This was unfortunate for the faculty of U. T. System because, as an academic, she was sympathetic to the faculty issues. She helped formulate many policies that benefited faculty, such as linking together different U. T. campuses for better communication and support. Her leadership helped make the System a stronger academic organization. Dr. Leaf said she will be hard to replace. The search committee is facing a difficult challenge. So far they have found no one that can match her ability.

The Board of Regent's continues to have the subject of graduation rates high on their radar. They seem not to be pressuring as strongly as they were, and the issue may be gone by next year.

Dr. Bartlett has been nominated to run as a replacement secretary of the Executive Council of the Faculty Advisory Committee. The term will be for one year.

5. LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT

The report was submitted by the Chair of the University Library Committee. It reviewed different areas of operation in the library and summarized the findings. The Speaker asked for a motion to accept the report. The motion was seconded and passed.

6. PRIORITIES OF THE 2006-2007 SENATE

The list of the projects from the 2006-2007 Senate Caucus was presented to the current Senate and President Daniel. Dr. Leaf asked for some clarity on a couple of the topics. One was the “Show & Tell versus substance” item. Dr. Ntafos explained that it involved the marketing of UTD and ties back into the Strategic Plan. Some of the faculty believe it does not have enough substance and specifics, and they are concerned about what effect this will have over future growth.

Dr. Daniel said “the Plan” is really the nuts and bolts for where the student growth is going to occur, in what way will the faculty be doubled in the next ten years and in which areas, what buildings will be needed and what is the business plan going to be to support this plan. The substance is not really in the plan yet. He said he hoped to have it completed by summer and start to work on it in the fall. Two of the biggest issues will be where is the growth going to be and where is the money going to come from?

Dr. Wildenthal is forming a campus committee that will advise on beautification and Dr. Daniel expects that will involve faculty, staff and students. He expects the landscape architect to work with that group. Everyone should have an opportunity to look at the plan and comment on it because we will all live with it.

Dr. Leaf added that this plan will be much more ambitious and detailed than past plans. This one will tie together many projects.

The testing center was mentioned, and it was added to the priority list. Dr. Cantrell said that a central testing area had been talked about before, but was overshadowed by issues that are more urgent. He felt UTD would be well served by such a facility and that it would enhance the integrity of our grades and our students.

7. POLICY ON FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN UPPER LEVEL SEARCHES

Dr. Ntafos reviewed the main points in the document, noting that a policy such as this is necessary to satisfy a SACS requirement. The Speaker asked for a motion to pass the document.

Dr. Daniel asked to say a few words before a vote was taken. He said he would be agreeable to passing the document as is, but he wanted to comment on the last sentence in Item 6, where it says that “provided the number of candidates to be recommended shall not be greater than three.” In his experience as an administrator, he said, he would rather

Approved Senate minutes
May 17, 2006

not constrain the search committee so they may do their best to find qualified candidates. If the committee were to find more than three candidates they feel are qualified, he would allow them to present the ones they find. One Senator pointed out that he thought the passage meant that the President would specify the number of candidates that the Search committee could recommend. Dr. Daniel concurred with the statement as written.

The other issue he expressed his concern over were Items 2, 3, and 4 with regard to having ten members on the committee. Again, as an administrator, he found that committees work better when they are kept under ten. He was in favor of limiting the number of members from faculty, staff or student, so that the total number on the committee is ten. He recommended changing the number of students from three to two, one graduate and one undergraduate.

Student Body President Benhalim agreed, adding that it is hard to find students to commit to a committee and finding convenient times that work for all the members.

Dr. Ntafos called for another motion to pass the policy with the recommended changes to Items 2, 3 and 4, limiting the number of members, which include lowering the number of students to one graduate and one undergraduate student. The motion was seconded and passed.

8. CHARGE TO COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION – HONORS POLICY

Dr. Ntafos began the discussion by reviewing the charge, which is divided into short and longer-term goals. The first of the goals is to develop a plan for putting the new policy in place, with a target date of the July Council meeting for presenting the initial draft of guidelines and procedures. The longer-term goal is to develop the plan with consideration to the types of honors and their differences. A framework for beginning discussions was provided in the Agenda packet for that meeting.

Dr. Leaf stated that he would have significant concerns with this issue and will want to push it through the Senate in as timely a manner as possible. He foresees at the next Council meeting a discussion over sending the policy back to the Council on Undergraduate Education (CUE), or even sending it back to the Committee on Educational Policy for more elaboration. He wants to see it settled by September.

Dr. Leaf added that, unless someone felt otherwise, he believed this to be a ‘dual Honors’ policy, with equal weight and importance given to both GPA and the thesis options. Dr. Kaplan asked if the Senate wanted to add the division of GPA percentages for the honors levels to the charge to the CUE. Dr. Ntafos said that would require a new policy.

A motion was made and seconded to send the policy to the CUE for more detail. The motion passed.

9. FORMATION OF SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEES

Dr. Ntafos discussed the charges of two ad hoc committees: Graduation Rates and Scheduling Issues. An ad hoc for the graduation rates issue was formed once before, and several people volunteered to be on it, but the time expired and nothing came of it. Several members expressed their worry that students are not getting their academic needs met in terms of understanding their course work and the availability of faculty to interact with them. Dr. Daniel said he believed that if all concerns are addressed and met, the overall ranking of the school, as well as graduation rates, will be better.

A Scheduling committee will address the scheduling of classes with regard to the timing of final exams and the deadline for grades to be turned in. It is becoming a big issue with the faculty since they have little time to get final grades in after the last exams.

The discussion turned to the issue of graduation ceremonies. Dr. Daniel said that the number of ceremonies will increase to four in Spring '07 because the number of students graduating has grown so large. He is concerned about how to space out the ceremonies so that staff members are not too overtaxed. Dr. Leaf suggested the Commencement Committee should be involved with the problem and that the Calendar Committee be asked to review the issue. Basheer Benhalim said that, from the student's perspective, it is important that the ceremonies stay on campus.

A motion was made and seconded to add the formation of two ad hoc committees to the Senate agenda, one for graduation rates and the other for scheduling of final exams and grade deadlines. The motion passed and the items will be added to the Senate agenda.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Dr. Daniel adjourned the meeting.

APPROVED: _____
Speaker of the Faculty

DATE: _____