

ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING
April 19, 2006

PRESENT: Mark Anderson, James Bartlett, Kurt Beron, Gail Breen, Tom Brikowski, Cy Cantrell, Gregg Dieckmann, Gopal Gupta, Marilyn Kaplan, Nasser Kehtarnavaz, Robert Kieschnick, Sumit Majumdar, Dennis Miller, Homer Montgomery, Ramachandran Natarajan, Shun Chen Niu, Simeon Ntafos, Ivor Page, William Pervin, Ravi Prakash, Ashutosh Prasad, Young Ryu, Liz Salter

ABSENT: Mohamed Abdelsalam, Phillip Anderson, Anthony Champagne, DJuan Gonzalez, D.T. Huynh, Muhammad Kalam, Kamran Kiasaleh, Murray Leaf, Balakrishnan Prabhakaran, Thomas Riccio, Richard Scotch, Mary Urquhart, S. Venkatesan

VISITORS: Abby Kratz, Basheer Benhalim, Iris Kwong

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Wildenthal called the meeting to order in the absence of President Daniel. He began his announcements with the financial state of UTD heading into FY 2007. If state surpluses do not evaporate in the next year, he said, there is reason to be optimistic that higher education in general will do better in 2007 than in the last 2 sessions. FY 2008 should be even better than the coming year. He said there is a lot to do before September 1. Although UTD will be spending more than it will bring in during the 2007 fiscal year and things will be a little tight, he did say that the school would remain solvent. There will be merit raises, but they may not be as big as in past years. Someone mentioned a statement made last year that in this coming fiscal year UTD would catch up. Dr. Wildenthal responded that the plan to catch up did not materialize due to necessary expenses. FY '08 would be better, he said, for several reasons, including the completed payment of one-time expenditures, continued enrollment growth, continued tuition increases and the expectation that the state will be in a better financial situation.

Dr. Wildenthal elaborated on the tuition impact, saying that, although the legislature is expected to grant a 2.5% increase in tuition per credit hour, more freshman enrollment is needed to put UTD in a much more positive stance. The graduate student rates are up, but the freshman enrollment is flat. He said UTD must do a better job recruiting first

time, continuing freshman. A big push in recruiting is planned that will require more than just Enrollment services to implement and maintain.

When asked about the school spending more than it will bring in, the Provost explained

that UTD built up a surplus over the past years and will use up some reserve to keep the school running.

To the question of bond raising, Dr. Wildenthal explained that UTD is a “creature of the State of Texas and the Board of Regents” who have a certain amount of control over UTD’s independence by way of jurisdiction over our actions. A bond issue would affect the school’s financial situation and be considered a debt. The school is constrained not only by its own consensus, but also by Regent’s policies.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of March 15, 2006 as distributed. The motion carried.

3. SPEAKER’S REPORT

The Safety council is back to full membership. The Committee on Scholarships needs three replacements that are able to start serving in Summer 2006 (most of the committee’s work is done in summer). The issue of +/- grades at the graduate level is still pending as student feedback is collected.

4. FAC REPORT

No FAC report for April

5. REVISED LATIN HONORS POLICY

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) voted to decouple the thesis requirement from the Honors requirement. Dr. Wildenthal read an email he received from Dr. Daniel in which in asked the Provost to convey to the Senate his opinion on the issue:

“While I respect the value the thesis process has provided UTD and its students who receive honors, I believe it is now time to decouple the Latin honors and the thesis. Most top universities do not couple the two....Students who demonstrate excellence through their course work should be awarded Latin honors to recognize their outstanding achievement. Students who are motivated to write a senior thesis should be encouraged and supported in this work, as should their faculty advisor. But the motivation should be the love of the work, not of administrative rule.”

Dr. Daniels’ recommendation to the Senate was:

1. Decouple Latin honors from the thesis.
2. Consider increasing, at some point, the minimum requirement of hours for Latin Honors to 60.

3. Establish a program that will make the thesis process more attractive to students and faculty.

Discussion opened on the motion to accept CEP's recommendation to decouple the thesis requirement from Latin Honors and accept the resulting catalog copy. The discussion soon focused on the proposal to raise the current requirement of 45 credit hours to 60 in order to receive Latin Honors which was still pending at CEP. Several senators felt that all the issues needed to be considered together. The Student Government Association President, Basheer Benhalim, said the students are opposed to the thesis requirement.

Dean Coleman was present to provide, again, the results of his research on how the decoupling would affect each department. Taking away the thesis requirement would allow more students in some departments, such as management and engineering, to be awarded Latin honors. At present, these departments tend to have lower numbers of students graduating with high honors. Decoupling would even the field for students who do not want to write a thesis, but have the grades that reflect outstanding class work. Dean Coleman also added that it was important that the Senate decide because the deadline for the next student catalog was fast approaching.

After considerable discussion, a motion was made and seconded to table the motion and wait for CEP's recommendation on the residency issue and their view on the whole Latin Honors policy. The motion to table was approved.

6. LATIN HONORS POLICY – SPECIAL SENATE MEETING ON 4/26/2006

After the 4/16/2006 senate meeting, the Speaker confirmed with the CEP chair that the CEP vote on decoupling the thesis requirement from Latin honors was taking place fully within the context of the previously passed rules on basing Latin honors on the GPAs corresponding to the 5% (summa), next 10% (magna), and next 15% (cum laude) within each school and a 45 hour residency requirement. The Speaker asked for CEP's recommendation on the proposal to raise the residency requirement to 60 hours. The Speaker called a special meeting of the senate to take place on Wednesday, April 26, 2006 and consider the tabled motion only. The Speaker urged senators to attend; those that could not attend, were asked to vote by email.

On Monday, April 24, 2006, CEP voted to keep the residency requirement at 45 hours and this was communicated to the Senate the same day together with a call to attend and to wait until Tuesday for email voting. The senate met on Wednesday, April 26 and picked up the tabled motion. After 90 minutes of debate, the question was called and the senators remaining at the meeting voted. In parallel, email votes were received (all before the voting at the meeting took place). The paper ballots were double-checked right after the meeting and the email votes were re-checked and confirmed by the Academic Governance Secretary on Thursday morning.

The result was that the senate voted to accept CEP's recommendation to decouple the thesis requirement from Latin Honors and accept the resulting catalog copy on Latin Honors.

7. REVISED POLICY: OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARDS

Earlier this Spring, the UT System Chancellor decided not to continue the award for outstanding teachers. Dr. Daniel decided to establish UTD awards to honor excellence in teaching. Shortly afterward, the Chancellor announced he would continue to fund the Outstanding Teaching Award. The issue voted on was to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Teaching Awards to have two UTD Outstanding Teaching Awards, one for senior lecturers, and the other for teaching assistants, along with the Chancellor's Outstanding Teaching Award.

A motion was made and seconded to keep all three teaching awards. The motion passed.

8. CHANGES IN BS-CS CATALOG POLICY

Some changes were made to the BS in Computer Science degree plan. These included the addition of a class that would raise the required credit hours to 125 from 121, the addition of a minor in Information Assurance, and the addition of a Certificate in Information Assurance. The recommendation from the Committee on Educational Policy was to accept the changes. No further discussion was requested. A motion was made and seconded to accept the changes. The motion passed.

9. REVISED POLICY ON REPEATING COURSES

The policy of repeating courses at UTD was reviewed by the Committee on Undergraduate Education (CUE) and the Committee for Educational Policy (CEP). The current policy states that a student that fails a class at UTD can not take it elsewhere and get credit for it. CUE and the CEP recommended that the policy be changed to allow a student to retake a class that he/she failed here at another institution of higher education and let the course satisfy the degree requirement at UTD. This is a less restrictive policy that will benefit some students. Note that there is still an advantage to repeating the failed class at UTD since the grade in the second attempt will overwrite the original grade in GPA computations (while a transfer does not over-write the original grade).

The motion before the Senate was to accept the recommended changes. The motion was made and seconded. The motion was passed.

10. CORE OBJECTIVES FOR SACS

The Committee on the Core Curriculum and CEP reviewed and approved common

objectives for the core categories. These must be included in the list of objectives for each course that satisfied the corresponding core category requirement (additional objectives specific to each class can be added). A motion was made and seconded to accept the list of common objectives for the core. The motion was passed.

11. STANDARDIZED SYLLABI

The motion before the Senate was to accept the four templates for course syllabi to meet the SACS requirements. A motion was made and seconded to open the floor for discussion. The motion passed. Discussion was minimal. Each instructor could choose the template that would best suit his/her needs. They could post the syllabi on the website, hand it out in class, or do both. The main purpose of the templates, Dean Coleman said, was to satisfy the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the templates. The motion passed.

12. STRATEGIC PLAN

The motion before the Senate was to approve the current Strategic Plan as a vision for the future of UTD. A motion was made to vote on the plan. It was seconded. The motion passed to accept the Strategic Plan.

13. CERTIFICATION OF SPRING 2006 GRADUATES

The list of students who applied for graduation were sent to the faculty in the Senate Agenda packet prior to the meeting. The Speaker made the following motion for undergraduates:

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.

The motion was seconded. The motion carried.

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The Speaker made the following motion for the graduate students:

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.

The motion was seconded. The motion carried.

14. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: _____
Speaker of the Faculty

DATE: _____