APPROVED AND CORRECTED MINUTES

These minutes are disseminated to provide timely information to the Academic Senate. They have been approved by the body in question, and, therefore, they are the official minutes.

ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING
October 20, 2010

PRESENT:  

ABSENT:  
Hobson Wildenthal, Dinesh Bhatia, Gregg Dieckmann, Kelly Durbin, Kamran Kiasaleh, Phillip Kisunzu, Syam Menon, Dennis Miller, Steven Nielsen, Richard Scotch, Robert Stern, Lucien Thompson, Mathukumalli Vidyasagar, Yexiao, Xu, Zhenyu Xuan, Harold Zhang

VISITORS:  
Andrew Blanchard, Grace Bielawski, Lewis Chang, Chris Parr

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS
Speaker Leaf called the meeting to order and announced that President Daniel is delayed on his way from an off-campus meeting. The Senate will proceed with the meeting agenda but return to President Daniel’s announcements and question and answer time when he arrives.

President Daniel reported that he had been asked to adjudicate what he considers to be a faculty governance issue that he would like the Senate’s help with. The question is this: A professor hands back homework, exams, term paper assignments, etc. to students in a class. In the next semester or at any future time, a student takes those materials that were handed back and shows them to a student in that same class in a subsequent semester. The student in the current class copies something from this material. The student from the current semester is clearly guilty of plagiarism, but is the student from the prior semester guilty of academic dishonesty? Right now, our rules state that the student from the prior semester is guilty and should not share those materials. There are two schools of thought: Many professors encourage students to look at old exams. Others feel that when materials are given back to students this material should never be shared with anyone.

In President Daniel’s opinion, this is a faculty matter and not a decision that should be made by administration.

Cy Cantrell stated that this is an issue that should be addressed by the Academic Integrity Committee.
There was general discussion regarding this issue. Speaker Leaf asked Dr. Cantrell to have the Academic Integrity Committee review the current rules and determine what changes need to be made. President Daniel specifically requested a clear statement on what the faculty expectations are with regard to materials handed back from a previous semester. May those or may those not be shared with students in subsequent semesters?

President Daniel was asked when the State of the University address will be held and if a notification would be sent to the entire faculty. The address will be held November 3 at 1:00 p.m. in the Conference Center. It will also include brief reports from the Student Government president, the Speaker of the faculty and the president of the Staff Council. President Daniel will ask Judy Snellings to send a notice of the State of the University address out to all staff and faculty.

Kurt Beron asked President Daniel to address the negative response we received in our recent application for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. President Daniel replied that he felt that our mission statement did work against us. This is an area where our lack of language offerings hurt us as well. Another area of concern for attaining Tier One status is gaining Association of Research Libraries status. President Daniel feels that we should be striving for ARL status and hopes that we will move aggressively toward doing what we need to do to be Phi Beta Kappa qualified as well. He acknowledged that it may take some time for us to accomplish this but we need to maintain a consistent methodical approach.

2. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
Speaker Leaf had one additional item to add to the agenda – recommendation from the Committee on Committees regarding the membership of the Sustainability Committee. Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Tim Redman seconded the motion. The amended agenda was approved.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve the minutes as circulated. Mustapha Ishak-Boushaki seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

4. **SPEAKER’S REPORT**
Speaker Leaf reported the following:
1) Additions to Committee on Faculty Mentoring. The Senate has amended the charge of the Committee on Faculty Mentoring to authorize and the committee to add members at their own discretion, without having to depend on the Senate appointment process. In accordance with this charge, Dr. Hlaing Minn, the Chair for this year, has notified me that the committee has added two new members: Dr. Mehrdad Nourani (ECS) and Dr. Cy Cantrell (ECS). I have interpreted the amended charge to imply that the governance secretary should send the appropriate letter of confirmation upon notification by the committee chair, rather than having to wait for Senate confirmation. I am also interpreting the charge as implying that including this action in the Speaker’s Report is an appropriate way to recognize the action in the minutes, if the Senate agrees.

2) John Wiorowski has resigned as chair and member of the Academic Calendar Committee. The Committee on Committees is considering recommending a replacement as member and as chair, but according to the charge the chair does not have to be a faculty member, and Dr. Wiorowski’s appointment was as
administrative representative, not as faculty representative, so we are not really required to deal with this either. But we will try to be helpful.

3) The Academic Council had a fairly extended discussion of remarks attributed to Bruce Gnade in an article on UTD’s progress toward “Tier One” status that appeared in the first issue of the new UTD Magazine. The article discusses the importance of research, and then asks what it is. By way of an answer, Dr. Gnade, as VP for Research, is paraphrased as saying in part that research “is not an English professor looking into the finer points of Chaucerian prose.” (p. 20).

Many members of the Arts and Humanities faculty have taken exception to this. Among those bringing this to our attention was Dr. Jessica Murphy, Assistant Professor of Literary Studies. We asked Dr. Murphy to participate in the Council’s discussion.

The reactions reflect three main concerns. First, it seems to suggest a break from UTD’s historic and often repeated position that we want to be a research university across the board, not something like an engineering school with other divisions merely in a service role. Second, that it might imply that research in the humanities was neither not taken seriously in the Office of Sponsored Projects. And third, that research in the humanities, even though faculty may engage in it, was simply not valued. A fourth issue is that there is actually almost no such thing as “Chaucerian prose.” Chaucer was a poet. A university should know this.

The discussion was wide ranging. One aspect was that while UTD does not in fact have the attitude toward research in the humanities that the article suggests such an attitude is often attributed to us. It is also what some of those in the community around us would actually like us to have, and this, in turn, actually can affect our becoming what we want to be. Provost Wildenthal noted that one of the criteria for a “Tier One” university under the initiative is to have a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. When we applied for admission, however, we were turned down quite flatly and firmly. The reason was their perception that we have substantially this same attitude. Their evidence was not the article, of course, but rather our mission statement, which can read as reflecting much the same emphasis.

The result of the discussion was that the Council agreed on three major initiatives. First, there should be more faculty interaction with, and involvement in, the work of the news and information office. When articles are published paraphrasing or quoting faculty or officials, the articles should be regularly referred back to those individuals to check the attributions. Speaker Leaf would convey this concern to President Daniel. Second, the next issue should have a very substantial article on research in the Humanities at UTD. And third, we would revisit the UTD mission statement with a view toward revising it to make our conception of our self clearer. This last will be a long-term undertaking. Changing a mission statement involves going through many levels of approval. We will have to think of how to organize it. Given these commitments and the firmness of the basic policy and intellectual agreement underlying them, the Council did not think it was necessary at this time to place the item on the Senate agenda for further discussion.

4) The Academic Integrity Committee will meet with Dean Fitch on Friday, October 22. Among other things, the meeting will discuss the content of an annual report to the Senate.
5) All other items are on the Council agenda.

5. FAC REPORT
David Cordell gave a report of the September meeting. Speaker Leaf was unable to attend this meeting and Richard Scotch attended in his absence.

The FAC was addressed by Steve Collins, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations, who spoke about issues in the upcoming legislative session.

The state is looking at a $12 to $21 billion shortfall. There is $8-$9 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. Higher education is being asked to cut an additional 10% from next year’s budgets. The UT System employs approximately 88,000 people, including 17,000 professors.

Sandra Woodley, the Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives, presented some of the types of institutional research that her office is conducting. This includes a lot of modeling with benchmark comparisons. Ms. Woodley emphasized that the benchmarks are not aspirational; they are based on other institutions that are similar.

Texas A&M has done a type of faculty productivity research by counting the number of students in each professor’s course. The results were posted online then quickly removed because this particular study did not do a thorough job of evaluation. However, there was a sense that all of our institutions need to address this with some concise way of evaluating exactly what is faculty productivity.

Other topics to be addressed by the Strategic Initiatives Office in the future will be the cost of a degree, tuition affordability, financial aid trends compared to other states, and funding adequacy of institutions.

Regent Robert Stillwell addressed the group. He seemed to have the University’s interest at heart. He was easy to talk with and genuinely interested. The topic of having a faculty regent was brought up. Regent Stillwell was amenable to this idea and it will be addressed again in the future.

Senator Kirk Watson also spoke. He is very worried about higher education because the state budget shortfall is so large. A two-thirds vote is required to touch the rainy day fund, and the state is currently running a deficit which is larger than this fund.

The criminal background check issue was discussed again. Each campus will write its own policy that is specific to their campus but will still be consistent with the policy at the System level.

6. STUDENT GOVERNMENT LIAISON REPORT
Ms. Bielawski reported that Student Government will be sponsoring a series of Town Hall meetings with each Dean so that students can find out what is going on in their schools. They continue to discuss ways to hold down textbook costs. President Daniel praised the Student Government for its work in the past. He cited the new Student Services Building and the consolidation of all student services in a central location as an example of a suggestion from student government that was put into action.

7. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY
Speaker Leaf reported that the draft policy was approved by the Senate and went to the HOP Committee for review. The HOP Committee had some concerns and the same
concerns arose at the Faculty Advisory Council meeting. These are addressed in section eight of the draft and concern the idea that self-reporting, which is required now under Regents’ rules, includes reports of charges as well as convictions. The rest of the policy now only deals with convictions. The discussion at the System level is to take charges out of the self-reporting requirement as well. Speaker Leaf agreed at the Academic Council meeting to rewrite this section to remove the need for self-reporting of charges.

An issue that was not involved in the Academic Council discussion was how this affects applicants versus current employees. The revised draft before the Senate leaves in self-reporting for applicants but includes language specifying these be serious matters. The section regarding current employees is worded only to ask for self-reporting of criminal convictions.

The other major issue in the draft previously approved dealt with self-reporting records. In the previous version these records were, following Regents’ rules, treated as personnel records and maintained according to those records retention schedules. The revised version states that these are merged with other reports for criminal convictions and handled under that policy.

Tim Redman made a motion to approve the revised policy. Simon Fass seconded. The motion carried. Ms. King will now send this to OGC.

8. CEP PROPOSALS

(A) UNDERGRADUATE CATALOG COPY CHANGES
Cy Cantrell presented this proposal. This is information for the 2011 catalog. Dr. Cantrell distributed a revised version of the information from what was distributed in the agenda packet. The amended information is attached to these minutes.

In the revision the language has been cleaned up regarding eligibility for the Fast Track option. This still requires school-level approval and in some cases approval of the Graduate Dean.

The second change is in respect to the approvals required for grade changes. It was not clear why a grade change made in a relatively short period of time after the end of the semester required the approval of the Undergraduate Dean. The current wording requires the signature of the Undergraduate Dean for all grade changes. This language has been changed so that only really late grade changes require the approval of the Undergraduate Dean.

Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve these amendments. Simeon Ntafos seconded the motion. The motion carried.

(B) NEW PROGRAM REQUEST – MS IN MARKETING
Dr. Cantrell asked if anyone from the School of Management would like to address this. Dr. Murthi presented this proposal. He stated that this degree is primarily for students who know they want to specialize in marketing. There is high interest in the industry for this type of program and they have already received offers for internship positions from many local corporations. Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve this degree proposal. B.P.S. Murthi seconded. The motion carried.
(C) ACADEMIC CALENDAR PROPOSAL
Dean Piñeres presented this proposal. She reported that for the past few years we have averaged 24-48 hours between the time grades were due and the beginning of the next semester. Consequently, the Registrar’s office does not always receive grades in a timely manner. Financial Aid can’t run their reports until all grades are in, which holds up refunds from the Bursar’s office. This short time frame also causes problems when students fail a prerequisite course and have to be pulled from a higher level class.

The current calendar was developed based on a very strict interpretation of Coordinating Board rules. The calendars of all the major universities in the state have been reviewed and the proposed calendar is in line with what they are doing. It has also been reviewed and approved by the Coordinating Board. Dean Piñeres stated that the new calendar also meets the demands of the students, who would like more time between semesters. The new calendar maintains the scheduling of spring break to match with UT Austin’s schedule.

Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve the proposal. Jessica Murphy seconded.

A question was raised asking if the mid-term grade due dates could be moved. Dean Piñeres replied that this was not possible as it would not allow enough time to address issues with students who needed to withdraw from a class.

Grace Bieclawski noted that the student body feels that it is critical to have the calendar set up with reading days occurring during the week and not on weekends.

After further discussion the motion carried.

9. DISCUSSION ON COST CONTAINMENT PRINCIPLES
President Daniel stated that in his upcoming State of the University Address, he will be addressing the financial challenges facing UT Dallas as a result of the 5% state budget reduction this year, and proposed 10% (additional) cut next year. While the challenges are not overwhelming they are still significant and will require some additional actions that will focus heavily on administrative expenses. He presented the following cost containment principles and asked the faculty to discuss and give a response in the next month.

- Preserve and strengthen educational and student experience (no delay in anyone’s time to graduation; key courses available; strong emphasis on quality of instruction and instructional support; this is our No. 1 priority)
- Continue improvement of graduation rates (strengthen student success in first-year courses, especially math, physics, chemistry, biology, and rhetoric)
- Continue strong financial aid policies (no major reduction in financial aid offered to students as this would impede access at a time when access is more important than ever)
- Continue on course for Tier One (we’ve built momentum and need to continue acting in the way that we have planned, expanding enrollment and the size of the faculty, adding new degree programs, expanding research, and building excellence at a nationally competitive level)
• Improve administrative efficiency (find ways to save money on core administrative overhead costs)

• Consider eliminating activities that do not score highly in their relationship to principles articulated above, that is, “nice to have” but not “mission critical” activities, including community engagement programs, non-critical internal programs, small enrollment elective courses that are not part of a major growth plan, etc.

• Develop new sources of revenue, such as gifts, corporate or community support

Speaker Leaf stated that he did not see these issues as big expense items. His opinion is that maintenance and upkeep is a bigger issue and raised the question of deferred maintenance and how best to cycle maintenance to minimize long-term costs. President Daniel replied that he thinks the biggest cost of the University is the top priority – the faculty and courses are the single biggest costs of the University. It may be necessary to eliminate some low-enrollment elective courses. Dr. Chandrasakaren noted that it was important for us to maintain flexibility and not to automatically eliminate all low-enrollment courses.

President Daniel was asked if our per capita costs are increasing because we are hiring more established faculty in our push to attain Tier One status. He acknowledged that might be one reason for an increase in the cost and stated that one of our strategies in the future may be to focus on more entry-level faculty as a way to continue to grow but in an immediately less-costly way. He feels that our costs are going up as well because we are recruiting in a more nationally competitive way.

Dr. Jamison stated that we have tried to be as conservative as possible throughout the budget process, but as we move forward we will need to find ways to cut costs in streamlining processes while “beefing up” the academic side.

President Daniel expressed concern that the legislature may move financial resources from graduate programs to incentivize undergraduate programs in some identified key areas. This would have a significant negative impact on UTD.

10. DISCUSSION ON NOTIFICATION POLICY FOR ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Speaker Leaf noted that the Council had asked President Daniel to discuss the change in policy for notification by email of oral examinations for dissertations.

President Daniel reported that over a long time he has received many complaints regarding too many mass emails and the fact that anyone could send a mass email with no filters. He decided that we needed some type of control over mass emailing and did not see the need to email every faculty member about every Ph.D. exam and asked for alternative ways to send notifications of these exams to be developed. He also noted that there is nothing in the new guidelines to prevent the schools from developing their own email list and sending notification of the exams to their faculty.

Speaker Leaf reported that he has not received any complaints about the amount of mass emails being sent but has received several complaints regarding the fact that mass notifications regarding oral examinations are no longer being sent. Dr. Cantrell pointed out that one problem in just emailing notification in a single school is that this does not address joint-appointment faculty who may be working and supervising interdisciplinary
students. He feels this is taking another step towards compartmentalization and away from an interdisciplinary focus.

It was suggested that Dr. Cunningham’s office create an email list with a subscription option. This would allow everyone who wants to see the notices to receive this information and those who do not want these emails can opt-out. Announcements of the oral examinations would still be posted in other areas as well.

President Daniel asked that the Information Resources Planning and Policy Committee meet with the staff in the Office of Communications to review this problem and report back to the Senate in a couple of months. An announcement of this meeting should be sent to the Senate as well so that anyone who is interested in attending may do so. Another item for discussion in this meeting will be how does the Office of Communications receive and channel suggestions for better communication?

11. **APPOINTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**
Speaker Leaf presented the following names for appointment to the University Sustainability Committee:

Babak Fahimi (ECS), Chair
Mustapha Ishak-Boushaki (NSM)
Francisco Szekely (SOM)

Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve these appointments. Gregg Dieckmann seconded the motion. The motion carried.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**
There being no further business, President Daniel adjourned the meeting.

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**APPROVED:**

Murray J. Leaf  
Speaker of the Academic Senate  

**DATE:** 1 Dec 2010