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 21, 2009

PRESENT: Dinesh Bhatia, Kurt Beron, Denise Boots, Gail Breen, Cyrus Cantrell, R. Chandrasekaran, David Cordell, Gregg Dieckmann, Kelly Durbin, John Hoffman, Shayla Holub, Karen Huxtable-Jester, Mustapha Ishak-Boushaki, Joe Izen, Marilyn Kaplan, Murray Leaf, Dennis Miller, Tim Redman, Richard Scotch, Tonja Wissinger

ABSENT: Titu Andreescu, John Burr, Jay Dowling, Jennifer Holmes, Nanda Kumar, Syam Menon, B.P.S. Murthi, Steven Nielsen, Simeon Ntafos, Ravi Prakash, Mark Rosen, Young Ryu, Chelliah Sridararajah, Robert Stern, Lucien Thompson

VISITORS: David Daniel, Hobson Wildenthal, Diana Kao, Chris Parr, Mary Jane Hurst, Daniel Calhoun, Joseph Picken

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Daniel called the meeting to order. He stated that the Board of Regents had approved a $10 million matching fund for the four UT System universities that were identified as emerging research institutions. UT Dallas is eligible for $2.5 million of the fund.

Dr. Daniel indicated that the final fall enrollment numbers had not yet been determined, but it appeared that the enrollment had increased by about 1,000 students. However, he stated that the university must exercise caution with finances, and that administrative costs were being scrutinized. However, he had told the Provost not to reduce faculty hiring.

Dr. Daniel stated that he was not prepared to report on the budget, but that he would report at the next meeting and the picture is good. Dr. Redman stated that he could provide a copy of an older budget in the format that had been requested at the last Academic Council meeting. He also noted that the President’s State of the University report would be given on November 4 to both the faculty and the staff.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Dr. Leaf asked for approval of the agenda for the October 21, 2009 Senate meeting.
Dr. Redman made the motion to approve the agenda as circulated. Dr. Cantrell seconded the motion. The agenda for the October 21, 2009 meeting was approved.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dr. Leaf asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of the September 16, 2009, meeting. Dr. Bhatia indicated that he had not been absent as indicated on the minutes. Dr Leaf accepted the correction. Dr. Redman made the motion to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2009 meeting as amended. Dr. Holmes seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

4. SPEAKER’S REPORT

Dr. Leaf stated that the Provost’s office is seeking to hire a full-time staff person for support of the Academic Senate and Staff Senate and to help with governance issues. He also indicated that help with the website was a priority. Discussing this item, Dr. Blanchard said the Senate should circulate the notice that the position was available without waiting for the Provost’s office to make its own hire. Dr. Leaf agreed to do so.

Dr. Leaf noted that UT Austin’s faculty governance organization has decided to have their colleges create bylaws. They requested a copy of UT Dallas’s bylaws as a template and we have provided it.

Dr. Leaf mentioned that several Academic Council members had had a productive meeting with Regent Stillwell. He expressed his belief that Regent Stillwell was receptive and would be an excellent advocate for faculty. Dr. Leaf urged Senate members to attend other such meetings in the future.

5. FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT

Dr. Leaf stated that the Faculty Advisory Council met on October 1-2 and was addressed by State Representative Dan Branch, Regents Chair James Huffines, Chancellor Cigarroa, Vice Chancellor Pryor, legislative liaison Larry McBee, and the assistant vice chancellor for intellectual property matters. Discussions were open, cooperative, and constructive. Some of the highlights were:

Several speakers noted in the discussions at the FAC meeting that criteria for Tier 1 status are somewhat subject to interpretation, allowing the individual universities to make their own case. For example, research output can be based on a total number, or on output-per-tenure-track-faculty. This ambiguity is evidently intentional on the part of the Coordinating Board; they are leaving it to the campuses to argue their cases. The effect, therefore, is to underline the importance of campus level strategic planning, including sequencing of steps within the plan, as we have been discussing.
Another recurrent topic was HB 2504. It requires universities to post syllabi and faculty curriculum vitae online, as well as the cost of instruction, presumably including faculty compensation, associated with a given course. The Coordinating Board is now working out rules for implementation. It does not look like it will be revoked. Whatever the rules will be, however, we are probably going to be in good shape since we have already been implementing most of the provisions for our own reasons.

Dr. Leaf also explained that the Chancellor’s Task Force on Exigency Policy had held its first meeting. Task Force members were in agreement concerning events at UTMB, and Dr. Leaf was named to a drafting subcommittee. The Committee will focus on Regents’ Rules, probably defining exigency in financial terms and addressing the definition of “faculty” in the Rules in two different ways. First, it will make sure that the faculty committees are made up with the involvement of the governance system. Second, for medical campuses in particular, it will find a way to define crucial faculty in addition to the idea of being tenure/tenure track. The differences between academic and medical campuses may make it difficult to develop a single definition of exigency and of faculty that will be equally appropriate for both; if it cannot be done the Rules will have to have two sets of definitions.

Meanwhile, the FAC is working on the problem from the campus perspective. The template from the FAC, and our adjustments to it, met with no objections from the Academic campuses and we will go ahead with it. MD Anderson, however, raised interesting and challenging concerns from the point of view of the health campuses. For them, two central features of the policy are not appropriate. The first is using the need to fire tenured faculty as the main trigger for an exigency process, and the second is the criteria for deciding who should be retained to minimize the damage to the institution and to its prospects for rebuilding. They have many crucial faculty who are not tenured, and they have important mission activities, such as patient care, that cannot be curtailed or interrupted in the way teaching might be. We have agreed that the health campuses with use the MD Anderson revision of our template as a basis for discussion and come back to the next FAC meeting with the results.

Dr. Leaf also noted that Some FAC members had indicated an interest in designating all campuses as smoke-free. After some discussion, Dr. Daniel noted that he would not address this issue unless the impetus came from the Academic Senate, Staff Council, or Student Senate. There was concern expressed that any effort to go smoke-free should be accompanied by some sort of program to help smokers to kick their habit.

6. RECOMMENDATION FOR ACADEMIC SENTATE VOLUNTEER TO SERVE ON CAMPUS HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Leaf noted that an Academic Senate member was needed to volunteer to serve on the Campus Housing Authority. Ravi Prakash, who served in the role last year, volunteered and was reappointed.

7. POLICY ON EXIGENCE
The discussion focused on 2.A. Declaration of Financial Exigency. The consensus of the Senate was that the statement should leave out the part of the definition of exigency that from “threatens” to “and.” It should include a definition that is more financial, more practical, and more objective. The policy should apply to full time faculty, understood to include Senior Lecturers and clinical titles as well as tenure-system faculty. There was discussion about different definitions of faculty, including general faculty and voting faculty.

In response to questions pertaining to the relation between this policy and our present policy on closing programs for academic reasons, Dr. Leaf expressed the view that the definition of exigency should drop “changes in educational needs” as a reason for financial exigency. It comes under the latter policy. Dr. Leaf noted that the policy for financial exigency is campus-wide only, meaning that it was not intended to apply to departments and schools in isolation. The academic closure policy applies to sub-units. The Senate agreed. Dr. Leaf also noted that the overall goal of the policy is to reduce the pain of cuts as much as possible while making rebuilding as efficient as possible.

8. CEP – APPROVAL OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The proposed new degree of Master of Science in Motivation and Entrepreneurship was discussed, and program director Joe Picken answered questions. Concern was expressed that the proposal was brought to the Senate on rather short notice. It was explained that no additional funding or courses were required. Dr. Cantrell moved for approval or the program. Dr. Kaplan seconded, and the motion passed.

9. REQUEST TO CREATE A NEW POLICY: FITNESS FOR DUTY

Several Senators expressed the concern that the policy as stated involved serious undermining of the checks and balances that presently secure faculty against arbitrary removal from duty and dismissal. Dr. Cantrell moved to refer to the policy as proposed to the Committee on Faculty Standing and Conduct. Dr. Holmes seconded. Dr. Scotch, as chair of the Committee on Faculty Standing and Conduct, noted in discussion that the committee would take it up and try to meet before the next Senate meeting. The motion to refer passed.

10. PROVOST’S REPORT ON PROGRAM REVIEWS AND DEANS’ REVIEWS

Dr. Wildenthal discussed the 2008-2009 program review of electrical engineering and related programs. It was indicated that the departmental structure would likely change over time. There was some concern about tuition and fee costs, but this was taken on as a central expense by the president. Budgetary independence was viewed as a worthy goal.
Dr. Wildenthal also reported on the upward review of Dennis Kratz, Dean of Arts and Humanities. The review was very positive, but there was some concern about the size of the unit and dividing into smaller units was discussed.

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Speaker Leaf proposed to take up committee reports for approval one by one, particularly since the report of the CQ included several innovations that the Senate should be aware of. CQ intends to try out these innovations this year and then consider including them in their bylaws. Several Senators expressed disagreement with reviewing the reports one-by-one. Dr. Cantrell moved to accept all the reports. Dr. Scotch seconded the motion.

In discussion, Dr. Chandrasekaran stated that the description of the procedures adopted by CQ departed from our long-standing policy of reporting only the votes and not how individuals on the CQ voted. A representative of the Provost’s office now sits with the Committee and since votes are taken by voice or show of hands, the representative sees who has voted and can provide a personal report in addition to the written report on the vote by the CQ chair. The other way the committee has voted is by email, which is also not anonymous. Dr. Leaf noted that under current rules the CQ can take its votes during meetings by secret ballot, and for email votes it should not be a difficult programming problem to set up a site that allows one-time access for voting but records the votes apart from those who cast them. Dr. Wildenthal concurred and agreed to set up such a voting procedure for the electronic voting. Dr. Leaf will advise the Chair of CQ of the view of the Senate that votes in committee should use a secret ballot.

With this agreed to, Dr. Leaf called for a vote on the motion accepting all the reports. The motion passed.

12. APPOINT DINESH BHATIA TO CHAIR LEARNING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Dr. Cantrell moved to appoint Dinesh Bhatia as chair of the Learning Management Committee. Dr. Kaplan seconded, and the motion passed.

13. APPOINT LARRY REITZER TO REPLACE GREGORY EARLE ON CQ

Dr. Leaf announced that Dr. Gregory Earle has resigned from his position on the CQ. Dr. Earle had been unable to attend meetings as required last year, and expects to be even busier this year. The Committee on Committees recommends Professor Larry Reitzer as his replacement, and further recommends that Dr. Reitzer be appointed for a two-year term. At present, the terms of both of the members from the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics are due to end in the Fall of 2010. This will restore staggered terms for this school.

Dr. Cantrell made the motion. Dr. Scotch seconded, and the motion passed.
14. APPROVE AMENDMENT TO CHARGE OF DISTANCE LEARNING COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LIBRARY

Dr. Izen moved to amend the charge of the Distance Learning Committee to include a representative of the Library. Dr. Kaplan seconded, and the motion passed.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjournment there was discussion of problems issuing grades with the new software. Some senators expressed a desire to be addressed by Jim Gary again.

Dr. Leaf asked for a motion to adjourn the October 21, 2009 Senate meeting. Dr. Cantrell made the motion to adjourn. Dr. Redman seconded the motion. The motion passed and the October 21, 2009 Senate meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED:  
Murray J. Leaf  
Speaker of the Academic Senate  

DATE: 27 Jan 2010