MEMORANDUM
November 30, 2010

TO: Academic Council*

COPY TO: David Daniel
Hobson Wildenthal
Andrew Blanchard
Calvin Jamison
John Wiorkowski
Sheila Amin Gutierrez de Piñeres
Austin Cunningham
George Fair
Serenity King
Abby Kratz

FROM: Office of Academic Governance
Vicki Carlisle, Academic Governance Secretary

SUBJECT: Academic Council Meeting

The Academic Council will meet on Wednesday, December 1, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. in the Osborne Conference Room, ECSS 3.503. Please bring the agenda packet with you to the meeting. If you cannot attend, please notify me at vicki.carlisle@utdallas.edu or x6751.

Attachments

2010-2011 ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Cy Cantrell
R. Chandrasekaran
David Cordell**
Murray Leaf*
Dennis Miller
Tim Redman
Liz Salter
Richard Scotch

Grace Bielawski, Student Government President
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PRESIDENT DANIEL

DR. LEAF

DR. LEAF

DR. LEAF

DR. CANTRELL

DR. LEAF

PRESIDENT DANIEL
These minutes are disseminated to provide timely information to the Academic Council. They have not been approved by the body in question, and, therefore, they are not the official minutes.

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEETING
November 3, 2010

PRESENT: Murray Leaf, David Cordell, Cy Cantrell, R. Chandrasakaren, Dennis Miller, Liz Salter, Richard Scotch

ABSENT:

VISITORS: President David Daniel, Hobson Wildenthal, Andrew Blanchard, Grace Bielawski

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS & QUESTIONS

President Daniel called the meeting to order. He stated that his remarks were made earlier in his State of the University address but asked if anyone had questions or would like clarification on any items. He noted that we are facing $4 million in budget cuts. At this time it is not known precisely how these cuts will be accomplished. A specific “formula” is not in place yet, but President Daniel did say that the reductions in costs in the administrative units on a percentage basis will be significantly more than the reductions in the schools. His number one priority is to protect the educational mission. To the greatest extent possible, we will look at core overhead and administrative costs and see what can be done there.

There was a brief discussion on power consumption and what cost savings might be realized if we were more diligent in turning out office lights when leaving and turning off computers and monitors. Dr. Daniel stated that he had raised the issue of turning off computers at night during the last Cabinet meeting. He received significant opposition to this idea since so many people access their hard drives from remote locations to work from home. In light of this it would not be practical to make a rule stating that all computers must be turned off at the end of the day, but Dr. Daniel did recognize that not everyone needed to leave their computers on and some energy savings might be realized if computers and monitors were turned off when possible. Not all of the buildings on campus are metered, but Dr. Daniel would like to begin collecting and reporting energy use in those buildings that are metered. He is hopeful that seeing energy use in a specific area will prompt positive behavioral changes for those people working in that area.

President Daniel has formed a small, very informal advisory group regarding budget and has asked Speaker Leaf to serve on this group.

Dr. Daniel noted that the shooter incident at UT-Austin a few weeks ago was managed very effectively by the campus authorities and one of the components of it functioning well was their emergency notification system. UT-Austin switched to an opt-out only system, wherein every student who registered for classes had to provide their emergency contact information. The UT Chancellor wants all institutions to move quickly and aggressively toward that type of system. Currently we do not have that capability because we do not have everyone’s cell phone numbers (faculty, staff and students.) We are trying to move very quickly to create an aggressive opt-in system for everyone. Negotiations are underway to work out contractual issues with this system, but President Daniel is hopeful that in the next ten days we will be able to send an urgent email to all faculty, staff and students urging them to opt-in to the system. This will be done by going to a website and entering your emergency contact information. It will take several months to develop an opt-out system. Dr. Daniel noted that the current opt-in system has not been well-used in part
because it has not been aggressively advertised and it did not have a website to make it easy to opt-in. There are still some FERPA issues that are being worked out.

Speaker Leaf suggested that this issue be referred to the University Safety and Security Council so that they can work with President Daniel in the creation of this system. President Daniel asked that they be notified immediately so that work can proceed. Dennis Miller, chair of the Safety and Security Council, had to leave today’s meeting for a previous commitment, but Speaker Leaf will contact him to advise him about this issue.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
David Cordell added the discussion of electronic voting for senate elections to the agenda. 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. Tim Redman seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

4. SPEAKER’S REPORT – MURRAY LEAF
Speaker Leaf reported that discussions are ongoing on the exigency and criminal background check policies mainly because the FAC committee concerned with this did not reach a resolution on either issue. Our UTD drafts are with the Office of General Council now and Speaker Leaf expects these will become the de facto standard for the System. There is a question on the exigency policy back from OGC, but Speaker Leaf feels that this should be settled within a few days.

5. FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT – MURRAY LEAF
Speaker Leaf and David Cordell attended the Texas Council of Faculty Senates meeting last week. About twenty-eight campuses were represented. There were three speakers/panels.

The first was Rich Parsons, formerly a legislative aid with Lt. Governor Dewhurst and now running his own lobbying/consulting business. Mr. Parsons framed his remarks by noting that the impending budget shortfall is now projected at anywhere between $21 and $25 billion, but also that sales tax receipts are coming back a little faster than initially projected. So we will not have a clear picture until April or May. But it seems certain that there will be some shortfall, and it will be substantial. Secondly, in a recent survey of public opinion on what to cut to meet the shortfall, conducted by five major newspapers, the most favored target was higher education. 28% gave this as the first priority. 12% said to cut public safety. Parsons noted, however, that such responses have a lot to do with how the questions are framed, and that a counter-survey could have very different results. This was the sort of thing his firm could do for us—and he would not say much more because he expected eventually to have to put his daughter through college. In part because of the budget problem and also because of redistricting, Mr. Parsons predicted that the upcoming session would be a “train wreck,” much as the last session developed into over the voter identification controversy. Little else would get done, and even the budget and redistricting may not be dealt with decisively.

Mr. Parsons’ remarks were followed by a panel consisting of two reporters who cover higher education, two news and information directors, and Joe Kotarba as moderator. The reporters were Jeannie Kever from the Houston Chronicle and Ralph Haurwitz from the Austin American Statesman. In addition, Robin Gerow is the assistant vice president for Public Affairs at UT, and Alexis Patterson is the Media Relations Coordinator for the Austin Community College District. The purpose of the panel was to give the Council members a better sense of what kinds of higher education events made “news” in the senses of something
that a paper might want to pick up and print. The news and information panelists seemed to assume that the only kind of stories faculty would be interested in seeing printed were stories about themselves. The Council members were rather more concerned with stories about events that affect higher education policy, such as the “summit” Governor Perry organized for regents last year to provide a forum for the claims and policy recommendation of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. To us, these are important and threatening. Our question is what can convey this concern to the public at large? The answer seemed to be that there was no answer. Reporters get many more story suggestions than they can print from news and information offices, and what they do print comes from many sources and covers a wide range of topics. The most definite piece of advice concerned how to contact a reporter dealing with higher education, if you did not already know one. The answer is call the “city desk.” The city desk, in any newspaper, is the general coordinator that will know who is assigned to what kind of story.

Mr. Haurwitz maintains a higher education blog with the Statesman: The Lowdown on Higher Ed. It includes many news items that do not make it into the print edition.

The third presentation was by Lucy Heston, from the Coordinating Board, describing their new initiative on low producing programs. The idea itself is not new. The main change is that the thresholds have been doubled and there will be periodic audits. The underlying idea is that by eliminating low producing programs, the state will avoid wasting money. At the margins, this may actually happen—in the sense that there may in fact be programs in which faculty have positions which are teaching few students in small courses and in areas for which there is little to no demand. But the more likely result in most cases will be that courses will be regrouped and relabeled and a great deal of time and effort will go into the bookkeeping that this will involve, with no actual change in what is taught or by whom—because what is taught is actually necessary and it is actually being taught by those who can do it.

Robert Nelsen, now President of UT Pan American, in Edinburg, was the dinner speaker. As Robert had been an important leader in faculty governance here at U T Dallas, so he was as well in the TCFS. In recent years, he was particularly prominent in providing guidance in dealing the very intrusive turn that SACS accreditation took under pressure from the Bush Department of Education. His topic was whether and how being a President had changed him. His conclusion was that it had; he now thinks about numbers. A lot. But of course underneath this is because the numbers mean things for people, students and faculty. Pan Am is especially vulnerable to the present budget crisis, and Robert did a fine job of explaining these vulnerabilities in human terms.

The Roundup Reports are now being submitted digitally and should be on the TCFS website. The verbal reports are brief highlights from the written reports. Members were asked to report on two specific issues. The first was their use of student evaluations for merit raises, on the pattern of Texas A&M. The second was what their campuses were doing to prepare for the budget crisis.

With respect to the first, the representative from A & M noted at or near the beginning other presentations that the administration itself had now abandoned the idea. I reported that as a policy matter we have left merit increases up to our schools, which in turn have largely left it up their deans. But we have established a Budget Committee and its charges include looking at equity and merit policy. Most campuses seem to have a more formulaic approach to allocating merit increases, or raises in general.

With respect to the budget crisis, reactions vary but generally seem fairly severe. Hiring freezes and travel restrictions seem common; some terminations are being anticipated.

Another theme of particular interest to us was response to the Tier 1 initiative. Texas Tech, in particular, seems to be taking the Coordinating Board metrics very literally and the administration is pressing hard to
get the faculty to reach the stated benchmarks whether it makes fundamental educational and research sense or not: mainly increasing research funding and PhD output. Former U.S. attorney general Alberto Gonzalez is helping with the legal side of the effort. The other “emerging” research universities were also concerned with the benchmarks, but apparently not this superficially or aggressively.

All in all, the program turned out to be interesting and cohesive, with a major theme being the eternal struggle between doing the right thing internally and creating an accurate and helpful public appreciation externally. Speaker Leaf’s takeaway message was that UTD is absolutely right not to have football. He does not see how we can show how efficient we are in the use of public funds and how even small cuts can hurt our educational programs while we pay millions of dollars to football coaches, build enormous stadiums, and hold an annual series of bacchanalia. The most common view among the members, however, was that the publicity is valuable and helpful.

President Daniel noted that we need to be sensitive to the perception that faculty don’t teach enough. He encouraged the Provost to look at teaching loads. He is often asked what fraction of freshman classes are taught by tenured/tenure track faculty. At UTD this is approximately 40%. We need to pay more attention to details such as this. He stated that one of the unintended positive consequences of the Tier One discussion is that people have a better understanding of what great research universities mean for communities and the value that they add economically and socially. He feels that more focus needs to be placed on those positive values.

6. REPORT ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY CASES – MURRAY LEAF
Speaker Leaf reported that he and Cy Cantrell met with Linda Thibodeau, chair of the Academic Integrity Committee and Gene Fitch, Dean of Students. They have agreed on a format for a report from the Dean of Students to the Senate regarding academic dishonesty cases. This format will be used for this year and will possibly be revised in the future. Liz Salter made a motion to put this report on the Senate agenda. Richard Scotch seconded. The motion carried and the item will be placed on the Senate agenda.

President Daniel stated that he met with the deans over breakfast this morning and Dean Fitch asked the academic deans how satisfied they were with the whole academic integrity process. There was a high level of dissatisfaction expressed from the point of view of the faculty. The academic deans reported that they hear from their faculty that they feel like that whatever recommendation for penalty they might make is utterly ignored and lost and that they are rather irrelevant to the whole process. This discourages people from bringing cases forward. President Daniel told Dean Fitch that this is a faculty issue and he needs to get the Senate involved.

Speaker Leaf noted that the Academic Integrity Committee has been charged with reviewing the current rules and especially look at the feedback relationship between faculty, the Dean of Students and back to faculty.

President Daniel said that another issue the dean’s brought up was a huge complaint about grading appeals. Apparently if a student complains about grades there is a nine-step process including a tribunal panel of three deans. Speaker Leaf stated he was just discussing this issue with Austin Cunningham. This is a set of rules that did not come through the Senate for approval. Dean Cunningham will send Speaker Leaf the documents he has regarding this issue so that the Senate can review.

7. APPROVAL OF CANDIDATES FOR GRADUATION – DAVID CORDELL
Cy Cantrell made a motion to place this item on the Senate agenda. Richard Scotch seconded the motion. The motion carried and the item will be placed on the Senate agenda.
8. **Cisco Telepresence Technology – Tim Redman**
Dr. Redman reported that he had the opportunity to use this technology at Cisco three weeks ago as the Chess Team played a match with a team from India. He was extremely impressed with the technology and wanted to bring the issue up to make sure President Daniel was aware of the technology and to ask if this held potential for UTD. President Daniel has had the opportunity to use the technology before and feels that there could certainly be applications for its use here. However, the system is quite expensive and we must have a sound business plan in place before the purchase of this type of system could be made. It is premature to consider this at this time and no action needs to be taken by the Senate.

9. **Discussion of Cost Containment Principles – President Daniel**
President Daniel requested that the information he presented in his State of the University address regarding the cost management principles be placed on the Senate agenda for further discussion. Tim Redman made a motion to place this on the agenda. David Cordell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

10. **Electronic Voting for Senate Elections – David Cordell**
David Cordell reported that he has investigated several options and the one that has the most promise is a system that Simon Kane in the Provost’s Office has set up that is currently being used for polling and collecting responses on candidate searches for deans and other campus applications. This format can accommodate electronic nominations as well as the actual voting. Dr. Cordell will ask Simon if he can give a demonstration of the system and how it works in the next Senate meeting. David Cordell made a motion to place this item on the Senate agenda. Cy Cantrell seconded the motion. The motion carried. David Cordell will contact Simon Kane to ask if he can set up a type of mock election demonstration for the Senate meeting.

10. **Agenda for November 17, 2010 Senate Meeting**
The agenda for the November Senate meeting is as follows:

1. Electronic Voting for Senate Election (Simon Kane)
2. Academic Dishonesty Report
3. Approval of Candidates for Graduation
4. Discussion of Cost Management Principles

Cy Cantrell made a motion to approve the agenda. Richard Scotch seconded the motion. The agenda for the November 17 Senate meeting is approved.

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

APPROVED: _______________________________ DATE: _______________________________
Murray J. Leaf
Speaker of the Senate