
ABSENT: Mohamed Abdelsalam, Kurt Beron, Tom Brikowski, Anthony Champagne, Gregg Dieckmann, D. T. Huynh, Muhammad Kalam, Kamran Kiasaleh, Dennis Miller, Homer Montgomery, Ramachandran Natarajan, Balakrishnan Prabhakaran, Ashutosh Prasad, Young Ryu, Mary Kelly Urquhart, S. Venkatesan

VISITORS: Charlie Arnett, Priscilla Beadle, Basheer Benhalim, Abby Kratz, Iris Kwong, Sandee Goertzen, Richard Huckaba

CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Daniel called the meeting to order and began his announcements with updates on the Strategic Plan and the budget for Fiscal Year 2006-2007.

Dr. Daniel told the Senate approximately 150 responses to the Strategic Plan were received. Comments ranged from enthusiasm for starting a football program to concern on the lack of emphasis given to some schools at UTD. On the subject of a football team, Dr. Daniel says the overwhelming response from the community and donors is to forgo a football program. The general vagueness and lack of ‘hard-hitting’ substance were prominent remarks. There is concern that the plan does not include specific steps needed to reach the goals outlined in the document. President Daniel added that the Strategic Plan is a “living” document. As the school grows and goals change, the Plan will be updated and revised to reflect those new objectives. It is not meant to be an outline of specific actions to become a top-ranked university.

The second topic was the budget for next year. Dr. Daniel said that, regrettably, next year would be a bit tight since a great deal of available funds was spent this year on long needed upgrades to infrastructure and imminent safety concerns. He is not troubled by the scarcity of funds, but is a little disappointed. However, he is gratified by the improved appearance and safer environment he sees.
APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

SPEAKER’S REPORT

Poras Balsara joined the Senate replacing Robert Nelsen, who resigned from the Senate after accepting a position as Associate Provost.

A UTD response on plans to improve graduation rates will be ready to send to U.T. System by the middle of April. An ad hoc committee will be formed to look into best practices, strategies for improving graduation rates.

The debate on honors designation at graduation continues and will return to the Council for further discussion. The issues involve the requirement of credit hours earned at UTD as a transfer student, the requirement of a thesis, and the equity within the schools on the method for obtaining honors.

The Chancellors’ Council Outstanding Teaching Award may be changing names to the University Outstanding Teaching Award. More on this will be discussed at the April Senate meeting. Dr. Daniel would like to have an award to honor teaching at all levels, including non-tenured track faculty and teaching assistants.

The Safety Council committee lost the Staff Council Representative who was also the Vice-Chair. Zeke Barrera has accepted the Vice-Chair position and will serve until the end of August.

CEP passed the proposal to introduce +/- grades at the graduate level; the Council decided to delay bringing the proposal to the Senate until graduate students have a chance to provide input on it.

4. U. T. SYSTEM FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC) REPORT

The Academic Governance saga at Texas A&M-Kingsville continues. It all started with 20 of 24 tenure case recommendations denied by the President as part of shifting towards a research university. The senate approved a vote of no confidence on the president and the president dissolved the senate. The A&M Board of Regents stepped in and recommended that a committee be appointed to formulate new procedures for Academic Governance. Charges, countercharges, and even threats were flying back and forth. The committee did come up with a new Academic Governance document that was approved by the faculty (57%) in February 2006. It remains to be seen if this will serve as a starting point for a return to normalcy. The president-elect of the previous senate predicted that the same people that were in the old senate will end up in the new senate a
couple of years from now. Dr. Daniel reaffirmed his support of faculty involvement in decision making regarding academic policies at UTD.

Texas A&M plans to increase enrollments by 350 freshmen, 500 transfer, and 1000 graduate students.

UT-Austin is continuing to look into the issue of student comments on teaching evaluations. A faculty committee has proposed to the administration that only statistical summaries be made part of the official record while comments should be treated as the property of the faculty (the comments become part of the official record if used in annual/tenure/promotion reviews). Faculty are concerned with legal liability if they are viewed as custodians and the recent FERPA ruling by OGC found that student comments cannot be treated as private property. It is expected that UT-Austin will eventually align with the OGC ruling.

Bill 1227 included a charge to the Coordinating Board to look into the feasibility of automatic admissions for Community College students. The bill did not distinguish between academic courses and workforce development courses in requiring the acceptance of transfer credit. There is some danger that the Workforce Development (training) classes may find their way into university degree requirements. The Coordinating Board’s report to the legislature is due in October 2006.

The policy requiring 120-hour degree programs is supposed to go into effect in Fall 2008. If the policy is not repealed, it is expected that it will only affect programs with degree requirements that are not in line with similar programs elsewhere. Exceptions can be justified, but if one university is requiring 130 hours while all others require 120, then, that can be a problem.

The status of policies on faculty participation in searches for upper level administrators was a topic of discussion at the March FAC meeting. New language in Regent’s rules may be forthcoming.

Regent Colleen McHugh discussed the “graduation rate” initiative. Many concerns were expressed regarding the metrics used. The message remains that universities should do their best to improve graduation rates. The Academic Affairs subcommittee plans to recommend to the regents that they charge the Coordinating Board with developing better metrics to measure effectiveness and fund such a project.

B.S. IN COMPUTER ENGINEERING PROPOSAL

The B.S. in Computer Engineering came to the Senate for a vote. Dr. Dinesh Bhatia was present to answer questions since he was one of the faculty members who helped develop the degree plan. The reasoning behind this proposed degree was a need in the job sector
for graduates with specific training in computer engineering, rather than electrical engineering, which does not include the instruction that many computer companies require today. The point was made that graduates with this degree would have a better chance of finding jobs. These two points would help to make UTD more competitive with institutions known for their computer engineering programs, and thus enhance this school’s attraction to high school seniors who graduate in the top of their class. Dr. Daniel added that it would help stabilize enrollment, and Dr. Cantrell said he believed enrollment levels would grow.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend approval of the proposal.

ELECTION CALENDAR

Thirty-four nominations were received for the 2006-2007 Academic Senate. Since the bylaws state the Senate should be composed of 10% of the General Faculty, which is 362 at present, we did not have as many nominations as needed. As such, all nominees were automatically elected to the 2006-07 Senate. A motion was made and seconded to accept a senate of 34 members of the general faculty plus four senior lecturers for 2006-07. The motion was approved.

COMMITTEE ON QUALIFICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISIONS TO POLICY MEMORANDUM 75-III.22-3 PROMOTION AND TENURE

Dr. Ntafos noted the changes to the Policy Memorandum on Promotion and Tenure were predominantly to incorporate the long standing practice of utilizing above-rank faculty for reviews and evaluations. The changes were requested by the Committee on Qualifications. A motion was made and seconded to recommend the proposed revisions to Policy Memorandum 75-III.22-3 on Promotion and Tenure.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: __________________________ DATE: 6/6/06
Speaker of the Faculty