Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2006

Attendance:
Li-Chin Ho, Accounting
Ken Price, Business
Ernest Crosby, Civil Engineering
John Priest, Ind. Engineering
Leighton McWilliams, Art/Art History
O. Elmer Polk, Criminology & CJ
Johanna Smith, English
Joyce Goldberg, History
Toni Sol, Liberal Arts
Samuel Savage, Liberal Arts/Music
Raymond Eve, Sociology
John Bacon, Biology
Merlynd Nestell, Earth & Environment
Michaela Vancliff, Mathematics
Becky Boles, Architecture
Davis Stader, Education
Lorrie Hegstad, Nursing
Sharon Judkins, Nursing
Richard Hoefer, Social Work
Josh Sawter, Student Congress President
Edmund Prater, Information Systems
Xueming Luo, Marketing
Wei-Jen Lee, Electrical Engineering
Seiichi Nomura, Mech. Engineering
Tom Ingram, Liberal Arts
Dan Levine, Psychology
Laurie Porter, Liberal Arts
Mark Ouellette, Linguistics
Graham Hunt, Liberal Arts/Music
Joe Kongevick, Theatre
Dan Formanowicz, Biology
Rasika Dias, Chemistry
Christopher Kribs-Zaleta, Math
Suresh Sharma, Physics
Mary Lynn Crow, Education
Jennifer Blevins, Education
Mary Weber, Nursing
Norman Cobb, Social Work
Gerald Saxon, Library - ex officio

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:37 p.m. by Senate Chair Dan Formanowicz.

Approval of Previous Minutes: Motion by Senator Bacon and second to approve minutes from the March 8, 2006, meeting. Approval vote was unanimous.

Remarks by the Chair of the Faculty Senate: Senate Chair Formanowicz stated that both President Spaniolo and Provost Dunn were unavailable.

Senate Chair Formanowicz shared the following information regarding Research Enhancement Program Grant Awards for the Academic Year 2006-2007:

• There were 48 applications; 16 were funded, the same number as last year; all those funded were Assistant Professors.

• The awards were distributed as follows:
  o COBA – 1
  o CLA – 5
  o COS – 3
Committee recommendations were followed such that there were no deviations in the awards from the rankings proposed by the committee.

• In addition to the REP seed grant program, 2 new programs were offered this year—one for joint research with faculty members at UT Dallas (12 were funded), and another for joint research with faculty members at UNT Health Science Center (5 were funded).

Dr. Formanowicz also gave the following information regarding Faculty Development Leave Awards for Academic Year 2006-2007:

• 14 out of 20 applicants were funded. In comparison, 14 out of 22 were funded last year.

• The awards were distributed as follows:
  o SUPA – 2
  o CLA – 7
  o COE – 4
  o COS – 1

• 4 of the 20 awardees are junior faculty.

• Committee recommendations were followed such that there were no deviations in the awards from the rankings proposed by the committee.

Committee Report of Operating Committee: Dr. Priest submitted a resolution for a change in the Faculty senate Bylaws for discussion at this meeting and a vote at our next scheduled meeting in the fall. The purpose is to reduce the number of Faculty Senate Committees. Many of these committees have been inactive for years. There are three committees that are proposed to be eliminated by members of the Operating Procedures Committee. Those are Research and Development, Student Liaison, and Ethics. The Research and Development responsibilities would be divided into all committees. Student Liaison would be rolled over into Academic Liaison and renamed Academic and Student Liaison Committee. Ethics would be rolled into Equity and renamed Equity and Ethics. The Operating Procedures Committee resolves to eliminate three committees by making changes to the Faculty Senate Bylaws.

Report on the Campus Master Plan: John Hall, V.P. for Administration & Campus Operations; Sarah Lewis, Ayers Saint Gross; and Bryan Floth, Carter and Burgess, gave a presentation on the Campus Master Plan. Ms. Lewis gave a slide presentation showing long-range plans for developing the campus into a “college town” atmosphere. There was discussion regarding future capacity of the campus, parking for students, staff, and faculty, construction timelines, etc.

Campus Computer and Internet Security: Sean Lanham, Information Security Officer, and Suzanne Montague, from the Office of Information Technologies were present at the meeting. Sean Lanham gave a slide presentation on campus security and what measures are being taken to ensure that security breaches are controlled.
UTA Conversations Program: Senator Laurie Porter reviewed the new program that is designed to engage students, faculty, and staff in a campus-wide, year-long discussion of a theme related to a significant issue. The theme for the '06 Conversation’ is “Power.” The cornerstone of this program will be a common reading experience, called OneBook, shared by all freshmen in their ENGL 1301: Freshman Composition and EDUC 1131: Freshman Seminar courses. Departments, faculty, and staff are encouraged to join the Conversations by incorporating the theme into their classes, programs, and special events. The book chosen by the OneBook Committee for next year’s common reading experience is *The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini. Contact persons for the UT Arlington Conversations program and co-chairs of the Conversations Team are Dr. Laurie Porter, English professor, and Dr. Dawn Remmers, Director of University Advising and Student Success.

Post-tenure Review Guidelines: Dr. Dan Levine advised that it is time to revisit the post-tenure review procedure. The Periodic Cumulative Evaluation of Tenured Faculty instituted in 1998-99 and known more widely as Post-tenure Review (PTR), has been largely perfunctory and automatic up to now. The PTR system was originally instituted at the request of the Board of Regents and the Legislature, and now there appears to be an effort by the state institutions to make the system more meaningful and the evaluations more detailed than they have been so far. Yet, the cases that have arisen during 2005-06 in the College of Science illustrate some other points that should also be considered if UTA makes any changes either in the formal statements of the PTR procedure or in its actual application.

In the Senate, it is not our role to comment directly on the merits of specific decisions made by administrators or committees regarding any specific PTR cases that have already been decided or are under consideration. However, it is our role to attempt to draw lessons from what we know about such cases. I believe it is possible to make changes that will address the legislators’ and Regents’ concerns for the seriousness of the PTR process, while at the same time addressing other concerns that are of importance to our community, the integrity of “tenure as we know it,” due process and fairness to faculty members undergoing evaluation, and performance standards that truly reflect our academic values.

As for the integrity of tenure, it is important to remember that a post-tenure review evaluation is not comparable to an evaluation for tenure, or even for promotion to full Professor. While non of us endorse the idea of tenure being a “free ride,” PTR ought to differ from a tenure or promotion evaluation in that the burden of proof should fall on those giving a negative evaluation in any of the three areas of research, teaching, and service. The wording of the PTR document states that the determination is whether the candidate is meeting minimum standards in each of these areas, unlike tenure or promotion in which the candidate expects and is expected to undergo a rigorous assessment of his or her merit.
As for due process, early drafts of the PTR document stated that the candidate would first be evaluated by a committee of faculty members in her or his department and later by the department Chair before the case goes outside the department. However, the document that was finally adopted and is still in effect, states that the department committee will meet only after the Chair has made a determination, and only if the candidate wishes to contest this determination. Having the departmental committee meet first, as originally drafted, would promote due process, ensure that the committee was well informed about the candidate’s record, and able to be participants rather than advisors in the determinations.

As for standards, there is no university-wide determination of what “minimum standards” are in each area, providing extensive discretion for both departmental committees and administrators. In each of the three areas of research, teaching, and service, university-wide guidelines would facilitate the PTR evaluation process, but there are also cogent arguments against having uniform standards. Hence, it would be appropriate for the Senate’s Academic Freedom and Promotion Committee to discuss this question over a period of several months to a year. In particular, the numerical teaching evaluations need to be discussed thoroughly. Among my colleagues there is considerable doubt about whether those scores do, in fact, measure teaching effectiveness, or whether a different set of questions (and/or a different timing of the evaluation) would provide a more accurate measure of teaching effectiveness. Yet even assuming that the scores on these evaluations are meaningful, we should attempt to decide which questions should be most weighted and what numerical score is minimally acceptable.

Dr. Levine’s tentative recommendations as regards to PTR are:

1. The university’s PTR document should clearly state, early in the document, that this evaluation is unlike the evaluations for tenure or for promotion.
2. PTR cases should be considered by a departmental committee before determination by the Chair.
3. The Senate’s Academic Freedom and Promotion Committee should attempt to make recommendations on the nature of minimum standards in the areas of teaching, research, and service, and concurrently make a determination on the usefulness of the current teaching evaluation questions and how and when they are administered.

It is Dr. Levine’s position that these measures will facilitate meeting the state’s requirements for careful and detailed periodic review of faculty members, while preserving the benefits of tenure and promoting collegiality and fairness.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.