Minutes Faculty Senate
The University of Texas at Arlington

The Faculty Senate met in regular session Wednesday, January 29 1997 at 2:30 p.m. in Conference Room 4, Davis Hall. Chair Rod Hissong presided.

ATTENDANCE
Present were President Witt, Provost Wright, Chair Hissong, Senators Master, Boone, Bradshaw, Bright, Burquest, Cantwell, Chrzanowski, Crowder, Ellwood, Fairbanks, Gaupp, Harvey, Ingram, Matthys, McDowell, McKinney, Moore, Payne, Rodnitsky, Roemer, Rome, Rycraft, Walker, Wang, Watkins, Weems, Wilmore, Wright, Wyers, Yardley and Young. Also present were Student Congress Representative Wayne Huddleston and Director of Libraries Wilding.

Chair Hissong called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
The minutes of the December 4, 1996 Faculty Senate meeting were approved.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT:
President Witt began remarks by commenting on the various topics of importance including a recent meeting of the Legislative Budget Board in Austin. He said the main topic of discussion at this meeting was the regulation of tuition for state schools, particularly its calculation. President Witt commented that State Sen. Moncrief was beneficial in helping to get UT Arlington tuition recalculated. He then commented on “Back to Basics”, a recently proposed program to increase both enrollment and retention in state schools. He cited statistics which conclude that, if drastic measures are not taken soon, the numbers of both high school graduates and college graduates will decrease significantly by the year 2003. Therefore, it was concluded, K thru 12 and Higher Education institutions need to find a way to work together.

President Witt continued his discussion of the importance of “Back to Basics” and increased retention by saying that, if “Back to Basics” passes, the University of Texas at Arlington would net a profit of more than $3 million by the year 2003. He also said that if it does not pass, other measures will have to be taken to secure the financial future of the institution. But, he assured, in spite of the recent budget cuts, every precaution has been taken to conserve money without endangering the jobs of faculty members.
In reference to enrollment, President Witt reported that as of the last day of admissions for the Spring 1997 semester, enrollment was down 5.9%. Eighty-five percent of the decline, he said, was comprised of returning students. There was, however, only a 13-student difference in the number of enrolling new students from Spring 1996. He again reiterated the importance of retention, saying that many ideas are being explored, including forming cohort groups and developing assigned departmental supervisors.

Other issues of concern raised by the President were a need for a budget for the 9-month session and a move to a more uniform method of course evaluation. President Witt said he would like to see the course evaluation methods improved this semester. He suggested that a small set of questions - no more than 4 or 5 - be used to ask students to supply information which is accessible to them in terms of effective evaluating the course. He also said that the University is at a point that, probably as of next year, no one will be considered for a promotion or merit raise without teaching evaluation information.

Provost Wright began his comments by echoing the sentiments of President Witt concerning retention. He said, however, exploration of the content of often-dropped or failed courses may be an area which, if corrected, may increase retention. President Witt commented that in no way does this imply that University standards should be lowered.

Questions were then allowed and discussion was held. Senator Young posed questions regarding the retention issue, including UT Arlington's performance as compared with other universities. President Witt responded by saying that UT Arlington is performing at a slightly lower level than other state schools. He said statistics show that of the Freshmen who entered Fall 1995, 23% did not return for Spring 1996.

The Provost commented that perhaps an effective retention tool would be for the faculty to periodically offer words of encouragement to students. He recounted his experiences during his college years in which he was often verbally encouraged by his professors. This positive treatment, he said, gave him the desire to perform well in school and helped him to become successful today.

Senator Ellwood asked if there had been any consideration as to the efficiency of the Admissions Office as a possible source of retention problems. He cited instances in which problems and/or miscommunication between students and the Admissions Office have deterred some students from continuing their education at UTA. President Witt said that an Admissions Committee is being formed.
Witt answered that significant improvements have been made, but more can and will be done to improve the admissions process. He agreed that information needs to be more accessible.

Senator Rodnitsky asked about the retention rate of community college students. President Witt said that he did not have those figures at the meeting, but supply them at a later time.

Senator Amster commented that she too thought a cohort program of some sort would be beneficial in retention. She suggested that perhaps the implementation of lockers or a special, reserve place of seating within a department would provide a friendlier, more "homey" environment for the "immature" and first-year student. She also commented that scheduling conflicts tend to foster retention problems for continuing, non-traditional students. She suggested that, to remedy this problem, perhaps student work schedules should be obtained to determine when they would be available to take classes in the upcoming semester. She also said that modularity may help.

Senator Young suggested that at the end of every semester students should be given a brief survey in which they are asked if they plan to attend UTA in the upcoming semester and, if not, why. President Witt agreed, saying that perhaps that question could be added as a 5th question to the proposed 4-question evaluation.

Senator Cantwell said that, in light of the potential financial ramifications of declined retention and enrollment, he would like to see the Budget Liaison committee making reports on a regular basis. President Witt said there is absolutely no reason to be thinking about faculty layoffs. In fact, he said, he is 100% sure that we have under control the ability to deal with even the worse case scenario.

Senator Crowder said that in his department, retention is important. He suggested that perhaps the university look at factors outside of the university as possible deterrents including well-paying employment opportunities. He said that perhaps a recession might be good for enrollment. The President agreed that an abundance of employment opportunities present a challenge to retention.

Provost Wright encouraged faculty members to visit his office at any time to discuss ideas to improve retention.

Senator Bradshaw suggested that perhaps students are taking fewer courses because, with the SAM system, as a popular class fills and closes, comparable classes are not
suggested and students do not realize that they may enroll in other courses. President Witt noted that this is indeed a problem and in the Fall, the SAM system will begin logging phone numbers of students who have attempted to take a closed course.

GUEST SPEAKER - PAUL PAULUS, SACS

Paul Paulus presented a brief presentation on the upcoming Accreditation Meeting, Feb. 10 through 13. He presented a handout and said the faculty members are asked to a Teach-In - a lecture about the accreditation. He also cited the importance of effective planning to be prepared for the accreditation proceedings. Accreditation, he noted, may ask to meet faculty in their capacity as members of the Faculty Senate.

Senator Ellwood asked about the second item on the handout, Recommendation 4.8.2.2-1. Specifically, he questioned the use of the word “must”. Paulus said that this particular wording was not the choice of the SACS, but was standardized in the Accreditation manual.

Senator Dunn asked about the possibility of having well-experienced professionals teach classes, even though they may not possess all of the educational qualifications required by the Accrediting board to teach. Paulus deferred to SACS member Mary Ridgway who said that professionals are allowed to teach courses if their professional qualifications and experience can be proven.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Tenure and Academic Freedom and Responsibilities:
Promotion and Tenure Policy Document

Chair Hissong noted that this report would be reviewed in the departments and voted on at the March 5, 1997 meeting. Committee Chairman Senator Walker passed out two documents and noted that the report in question is a prototype. He then discussed various components of the document. The Committee agreed to accept questions.

In reference to a question asked by Senator Cantwell, Chair Hissong suggested that he and anyone else who was interested, submit a Friendly Amendment via e-mail.

Senator Bradshaw asked if anyone had suggested that ambiguous language be taken out of document. Senator Walker noted that although no one had previously made this suggestion, Senator Bradshaw could feel free to do so and to forward the proposed changed to him via e-mail.
Ad Hoc Committee Report on Periodic Evaluation of Tenured Faculty

Chair Hissong noted that will be a Special Session of the Faculty Senate convening on 2/19/97 at 2:30 p.m. He also expressed the President's gratitude for work done on the report, as the President had to leave early.

Senator Ellwood motioned to amend the agenda so that the Equity Committee report would precede the Ad Hoc Committee Report on Periodic Evaluation of Tenured Faculty. The motion passed.

Equity Committee Report

In revisiting the Equity Committee Report the following motions for amendments were made by Senator Ellwood and passed:

1. Section 3.1 - Changed first sentence to read, "To initiate the Formal Faculty Grievance Procedure, a faculty member who is unwilling to accept the response of the Provost in the Informal Consultation process must, within 30 days after notification by the Provost, request the administrator, who made the decision or took the action that is the subject of the grievance, for a written explanation of the reasons for the decision or action.

2. Section 7.8 - In the first sentence, insert the phrase "and made available to the faculty member bringing the grievance" immediately after the word "Senate".

3. Section 9.1 - Correct a typo.

4. Section 11.3 - Reworded to read, "If a faculty member does not.....Administration."

Discussion was held and various senators including Senator Dunn, Bradshaw and Cantwell concurred that, because minutes were received two days prior to meeting, more time was needed to access the changes made to the document. Therefore, Senator Dunn said, he would like more time to review the document with changes and table the vote to accept the document until the next meeting. Senator Moore noted that the document with changes had already been accepted in the previous meeting and was so documented in the minutes. Senator Dunn said that there was an apparent misunderstanding at the last meeting and he would like to wait until the next meeting to approve the document.

Senator Moore made a motion to approve the minutes with changes. Discussion was held and the motion was amended to note that if anyone wishes to introduce any changes, they should notify Chair Hissong prior to the meeting and he will place the
item on the agenda. The motion passed.

Ad Hoc Committee on Periodic Evaluation of Tenured Faculty

It was motioned to table the vote of "Review of Faculty" until the Special Session meeting of Feb. 19, 1997. Each senator was instructed to obtain input from his or her department to present at the next meeting. It was motioned and seconded.

Discussion was held and input was offered. Chair Hissong said that suggestions for changes need to be sent to Senator Moore via e-mail no later than Feb. 10, 1997. The Committee will meet on 2/12 and revise document; changes will be made and the document with changes will be faxed to all senators no later than 2/13.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution by Senator Bright

Senator Bright withdrew resolution to revise language. She will resubmit the resolution at the next meeting. She asked that suggestions for changes be forwarded to her via e-mail.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

The motion for adjournment was made and seconded.