Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

November 28, 2007

Attendance:

Dan Formanowicz – Chairman
John Priest – Engineering (Chair Elect)
Toni Sol - MODL (Secretary)
Bill Crowder – Economics
Peggy Swanson – Finance/Real Estate
Ken Price – Management
Taramilio – Marketing
Ryan Sikora – Information Systems
Leonidas Fegaras – Computer Science
Kambiz Alavi – Electrical Engineering
David Hullender – Mechanical Engineering
Rhonda Dobbs – Criminology & CJ
Chyng-Yang Jang – Communication
Lauren Porter – English
Joyce Goldberg – History
Aimee Israel-Pelletier – Modern Language
Lewis Baker – Philosophy

Raymond Eve – Sociology
Joe Kongevick - Theatre
Paul Chippindale – Biology
Merlynd Nestell – Earth & Environment
Michaela Vancliff - Mathematics
Suresh Sharma – Physics
Perry Fuchs - Psychology
Joe Guy – Architecture
Mary Lynn Crow – Education
David Stader - Education
Jennifer Blevins – Kinesiology
Mary Weber – Nursing
Cheryl Anderson – Nursing
Maria Martinez-Cosio – Urban/Public Affairs
Gerald Saxon – Library (Ex Officio)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:42 p.m. by Senate Chair Dan Formanowicz.

Approval of Previous Minutes: Motion and second was made to approve the minutes, as amended, from the 10-10-07 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Remarks by the President: The president informed us of the current state of affairs with respect to the drilling on campus that has begun on the southeastern part of the campus. “They started on Monday. The site is well contained and is rather quite over there compared to any kind of major construction project. The drilling is 24 hours a day. They will drill five or six wells on this one site. The drilling machine is a state-of-the-art, quieter, more sophisticated piece of machinery. There will be twenty to twenty-five days of drilling per well. They will begin the production part of the process after the wells are drilled. Things have been going very smoothly, so far. That is the only site we will drill at this point. We will assess the whole process and decide whether there are any other sites where we will drill after the first site is in production.”

The president went on to say that the administration would be submitting a proposal to UT System to be reviewed on tuition and fee and that the inclusion of students in the tuition review committee along with faculty has been well received.

Remarks by the Provost: The provost informed the senate of the progress made on committee appointments for the review of the deans of the College of Education, Graduate School, and the School of Social Work. “The committees have been completely formed in
accordance with the Handbook of Operating Procedures and are now in the process of doing their work.”

President Spaniolo added that the Provost search committee met last week and they are on track. He said that the major part of that process would take place in the first couple of months of spring semester.

Remarks by the Senate Chair: The senate chair reminded the senators of the changes to student registration and payment policies. “It is important that everybody be aware that it is the 9th of January. If students don’t get paid before January 9th, they will be dropped from their courses. Everyone needs to be aware of that. When students are dropped, those spaces fill up in a hurry and there could be a lot of students in trouble. The students have to be re-approved in order to register. The administration is making efforts to be sure the students get notified.”

He then said that John Priest and he were on the Provost search committee and a review of the candidates had begun. He urged the senators to help identify potential candidates and to give their names to Dr. Priest. The internal as well as external search has identified six to eight top candidates out of twenty-five or thirty applications.

The fact that the search is being handled by a professional firm and the advantages afforded by this method was brought out, one of which is immediate contact with the candidate.

The Senate Chair announced a new internal search is to be launched for a new Honor's College Dean when the current dean steps down in August.

In addition to the announcements on search committees, a reminder was issued: The procedures of reviewing academic administrators needs to be reviewed. “There are some issues that we need to address. We have asked the committees who are doing the reviews to provide feedback to us on what they think works and what they think doesn’t work…. One of the things that we have heard that doesn’t work is the survey instrument.”

An upcoming university enrollment management exercise was brought to the attention of the senate president by Dr. Elsenbaumer. One of the issues concerned is retention, specifically spring retention.

Dr. Formanowitz informed us of the recent recognition UTA earned relative to the graduation rate for Hispanic students. “The American Association of State Colleges and Universities has recognized UTA as a trailblazer in closing the gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in colleges.”

Two more announcements were made with regard to the Faculty Development Meeting Committee to be held in January. will begin to meet in January and staffing issues. He suggested that if anyone was interested, that they should contact him otherwise he would assign senators to the committee.

Chair-elect Priest then spoke about the survey on how the potential proceeds from the gas drilling should be distributed that was sent out electronically. The upper administration supports the survey and would like the feedback as to what we as a faculty think our priorities are. He had received some emails but anything that anyone has to add would be appreciated. “The idea of the initial survey was to do a priority review. We have since decided to go to a 1-5 similar to the security survey we did. Unless you tell me differently, that is what the actual electronic survey will be. We have two sections. One is non-salary list of priorities and one is salary
priority. I think the general consensus is to not do a bunch of demographics and try to get the biggest turnout. I would like to get it out by January 15th.

Senator Porter and Senator Alavi asked for clarifications on the method and weighting of the priorities. Also how widely was the survey to be distributed. Senate Chair Formanowicz reponded that the distribution was campus-wide and if there was no opposition, then they would go forward with the survey and send the results to administration in the spring.

The discussion then turned to Teaching Evaluations: Dr. Formanowicz stated that he had sent out “a request for input on a website that would be recommended by the ad hoc committee consisting of Mary Lynn Crow, Toni Sol, Tom Ingram, and myself.” He wondered at the lack of response from the faculty and surmised that the lack of response was either due to general fatigue and despair with the current instrument or to apathy. However, when speaking to people about the topic they express the opinion that they are ready for a change.

Senator Eve asked if it was sent to the entire faculty and Senate Chair Formanowicz responded that yes, it went to the whole faculty and it was sent directly after the last meeting about two weeks ago.

Senator Alavi proposed that we visit each department but Senator Hullender wondered why each person here couldn’t take care of informing their own department.

Senate Chair Formanowicz agreed and said that the senators should take the information to their respective units and ask for feedback. The current instrument does no one any good and we need to look at the proposed evaluation system on the website and “determine if this is the instrument we want to use. The ad hoc committee looked at several instruments. There is not that much difference among them. This is the one we thought would be a better fit. We are asking that you go to your units and ask them what they think.” He then stated that he would send the email again.

Senator Alavi asked that “If we agree in the Senate and the Provost agrees, would that be a uniform instrument to be used by all departments or do we use that as a guideline to create our own independent means of review?”

Senate Chair Formanowicz responded that to his knowledge all units use it and add things to it if they wish. “I think it needs to be mandatory for all units to use the same instrument in order to have some standardization as it goes up the line. There are two functions to this. One is to get feedback from our students on how they feel. Maybe the more important thing for many of us is regarding tenure and promotion. Very little information goes forward about teaching. We talk about research and service, but often times, very little is said about teaching. Some units add a great deal to that. We are hurting ourselves by using an instrument that doesn’t send forward enough information.”

Senator VanCliff asked what would be done with the data collected for the units.

Senate Chair Formanowicz said to send the data to him.

A discussion was then held about the fact that the student surveys on teaching are never correlated with anything and exist if a sort of vacuum. The suggestion was made that before
adopting a new instrument, we should see if “there is any correlation between peer evaluations and what the students think.”

**Senate Chair Formanowicz:** I know that some units do use peer evaluations. I question how many do and whether there would be enough information to answer that question. The important difference between the old instrument and this one is that this instrument gives us more feedback about student learning. The faculty information form that the faculty fills out at the first of the semester indicates what that individual thinks the learning outcome should be for that particular course. That is a very important point if you are using this system. If you screw that up, you are going to look bad in the end. Once that is done, you ask a series of questions about what the students are learning and how they are learning it.

**Senator Eve** remarked that “From a testing point of view, you never escape the problem of “teaching the test.” If you specify objectives that are easy to achieve so you look good at the end of it….This is a problem that plagues education psychology day in and day out about can you do this at all. I am tempted to think we might want to consider something like taking two or three of the best sociology and psychologists on campus who are experts at testing and ask them for some opinions about the best way to go about this.”

**Senator Hullender:** I think when you review the form you will be convinced that someone has already done that. I looked at that form and I thought it was very well done. One fear I have is that a lot of the faculty would look at that and see how they are going to be rated and vote it down because they aren’t doing enough of a lot of the stuff that is on there.

**Senate Chair Formanowicz** acknowledged that this is a problem and an issue with any instrument. However the one under consideration was designed carefully. The advantage of the one proposed is that it is currently in use on a trail basis in the QEP courses this semester for the first time therefore we will have some feedback on how it is working out

**Senate Chair Formanowicz:** “Can I ask everyone to go back to your units and talk about this. I will re-send the email with the link. Hopefully, by the time we get to the first meeting in February, we can decide how we move forward.”

**New Business:** None

**Old Business:** None

**Announcements:** Dr. Priest presented Senate Chair Formanowicz with a plaque of appreciation.

With no further business, meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.