Attendance

Call to Order
Rod Hissong, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes
The Chair called for the approval of the minutes of the September 24, 1997, Faculty Senate meeting. A motion was made and seconded. The motion carried.

Remarks by Faculty Senate Chair Hissong
Chair Hissong reported that the University of Texas System Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) had met October 2 and 3. Representatives of the system components reported faculty merit raises that averaged approximately three percent. The FAC, in the upcoming year, will address the evaluation of academic administrators, distance education, and retention of students.

The chair announced that senators should have received the distribution of merit raises by academic rank and percentage increase at the university level. The administration was preparing a similar report for senators for their respective college. The chair will receive a report for each academic unit.

Remarks by President Witt
President Witt announced that the Coordinating Board had allowed that students currently enrolled in the Humanities Ph.D. program had until 2001 to earn their degree.

The President stated that the administration is finalizing the logistics of implementing the Post Tenure Review policy. The administration expects to learn the beginning date of the process within a month. Reviews will begin no earlier than fall semester 1998.

The President briefly discussed issues related to distance education. They included the impact of distance education on the university community, the protection of faculty, and development of course material.
Remarks by Provost Wright

Provost Wright announced the approval of several proposals for improving student retention that will take effect in the spring semester. He encouraged all departments and units to host receptions for their new students in an effort to build a positive close relationship with students.

Discussion with the President and the Provost

Senator Maizlish requested clarification on the decision of the Coordinating Board regarding students currently enrolled in the Humanities Ph.D. program.

Senator Bradshaw questioned what was included in proprietary rights in distance education. It included initial preparation but how would intermediate work be protected? Discussion also included faculty member availability for interaction and grading after initial presentation.

Senator Cantwell asked if there were any numbers regarding student retention that would be helpful with this issue. The administration is currently collecting information from non-returning students.

Discussion also included UTA's efforts in recruiting beyond Tarrant and Dallas Counties, including statewide.

President Witt addressed an issue related to retention. He stated that this semester over 500 students each paid fifty dollars for reinstatement after not paying their fees and tuition by the deadline. These students would have not been included in formula funding in a base period. Students who do not pay on time adversely affect the University. The University is considering alternatives that will educate students about paying on time.

Senator Nelson suggested that perhaps the campus environment does not encourage students to stay. More on-campus employment opportunities might be a consideration.

Senator Young commented that students want more than just somewhere to go to class. He suggested that sports be utilized to attract and retain students; particularly soccer.

President Witt responded that the students with whom he has spoken regarding sports are not really talking about sports, but about a feeling they have about what should be college life. The University needs to package those experiences and feelings about what being in college means to them.

The process of workload assignment was discussed. Workload decisions are made at the departmental level. Significant scholarship and university service are key factors.

Other suggestions for improving student retention included courting students while they are in community colleges, providing child care during the day and the evening, and the ongoing surveying of students. It was noted that recruiters are working with the community colleges.
Committee Reports
The Budget Liaison Committee reported the election of Pam Beehler as chair. The Special Projects Committee reported the election of Charles McDowell as chair. The Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom and Responsibilities reported the election of Bill Crowder as chair.

Senator Young Report on Texas Council of Faculty Senates
Senator Young noted colleges and universities across Texas were addressing similar issues. He reported that faculty should expect greater legislative involvement in higher education. Don Brown, the Commissioner of the Coordinating Board of Higher Education, was the keynote speaker. He discussed three important trends in higher education: increased enrollment of minorities, no major long-term increase in funding, and increased emphasis on performance-based funding. Commissioner Brown reported that Texas universities lag other schools in distance education. Texas A&M is the most aggressive in this area.

Speaker: Burl Henderson (Computer Technology Update)
Burl Henderson, Vice Provost of Computer Information Technology, reported on the resources currently available and the computer needs for the coming year. UTA is in the process of upgrading all software, personal computers, servers, internet access, and wiring. Plans include the completion of wiring before the end of spring semester. Student access is the highest priority; followed by faculty and staff access. Student access to computers will continue to be looked at on an ongoing basis. Ransom Hall has already been over subscribed and another facility is needed. The budget for improvements was discussed, as well as other areas that might require improvement. Three information technologists have been hired and placed at the disposal of the deans. This is an experiment that, if successful, could result in additional information technologists.

President Witt noted that Dr. Henderson's work is considered to be on the forefront and is recognized by the UT System. He is moving the University forward very rapidly and the University deeply appreciates his contribution.

Old Business
None.

New Business
Senator Cantwell suggested further discussion of performance-based funding and distance education.

Announcements
T. J. Barber, Student Congress President, was introduced to the Senate.

Adjournment
Chair Hissong asked for and received a motion for adjournment.