

# **\*\*TSU FACULTY SENATE MEETING\*\***

**7 April 2011**

## **Minutes**

**Howard Beeth, Secretary**

**Members Present:** Edieth Wu (Chair); Lalita Sen (Vice Chair); Howard Beeth (Secretary); Rasoul Saneifard (Treasurer); Alexis Brooks de Vita (Editor, *The Faculty Speaks*); C.J. Tymczak (Parliamentarian); Macaulay Akpaffiong (Pharmacy & Health Sciences); Thorpe Butler (COLABS); Kiran Chilakamarri (COST); Robert Ford (COST); Daniel Georges-Abeyie (SOPA); Doris Jackson (Pharmacy & Health Sciences); Anna James (TMSL); Wei Li (COST); Emlyn Norman (COLABS); Byron Price (Graduate School); Sara White (COLABS); Mammo Woldie (Business); Zivar Yousefipour (Pharmacy & Health Sciences). **Total: 19.**

**Members Absent:** Demetrius Kazakos (Asst. Secretary); Andrea Shelton (Pharmacy & Health Sciences). **Total: 2**

**Guests:** Provost Sunny Ohia and staff; Dr. James Opolot (SOPA); Dr. Johnnie Williams (Business).

### **Agenda Items**

#### **Call to Order & Chair's Announcements**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:08p when a sufficient number of Senators were present to constitute a quorum. She immediately introduced Provost Ohia, noting that he was always available to her as Faculty Chair and helped made her life “tolerable” in that position, even if they did not always agree. After this introduction, the Senators greeted Provost Ohia with a polite round of applause.

## **Senate Conversation with Provost Ohia**

Provost Ohia began by announcing that the University's Chief Financial Officer, Jim McShan, who'd also been invited to address Senators about recent, important University financial news, could not be present because he'd been called away on an emergency. In response to a query from Vice Chair Sen, however, he said that "the entire University budget" was available on TSU's website. He added that since all financial matters were within McShan's purview, he would not discuss them and restrict himself only to a discussion pertaining to his purview, which was academic affairs. This elicited a murmur of discontent from assembled Senators, who plainly expected to discuss pressing issues in both spheres. Nevertheless, subsequent discussion in fact involved both financial and academic issues. Some of the discussion had to do with broad questions and some of it involved more particular matters. Highlights of both follow.

With respect to broad issues, Dr. Johnnie Williams pointed out that both academic as well as financial matters at our university and other public universities legally require that a policy of "shared governance" be followed with respect to overall management of university affairs. On this point, Senate members Beeth, Norman, and Tymczak all noted that without any input from faculty, faculty summer salaries nevertheless had been cut and capped by administrators, who exempted themselves from any similar reduction.

Provost Ohia responded by saying flatly that budget matters were "an administrative issue" and not subject to "shared governance" policy. "Shared governance", he said, merely meant that faculty "are in the know of what's happening". Requiring him to consult with faculty extensively, he said, would mean "that this university would grind to a halt". This raised a few eyebrows among Senators. More specifically, he explained that no contract salaries of either faculty or administrators were cut or capped, and that summer faculty salaries were optional add-ons to regular faculty salaries and thus could be adjusted to meet current budget shortfalls. Nevertheless, he said that staff, faculty, and administrative cost-cutting would be done "equally" among the three groups. He informed Senators that final summer financial decisions had not yet been made and that faculty "should be part of this process". He said that deans and their respective college faculty should take action to propose other summer salary options and should feel "free to go back to the old ways for now", but "a larger conversation has to be had about what would be fair". In this regard, he said that the action of the faculty of the JHJ School of Business in rejecting a proposed summer pay schedule by threatening not to teach summer courses at all was "jumping the gun" and "truly unfortunate". He expressed surprise that some deans had not explained the budget process and the role of the faculty in it clearly to their respective faculties and promised to instruct deans who had not done so already to call meetings forthwith for this purpose. In the meantime, he urged faculty "to put deans' feet to the fire" when it appeared deans were not adequately including faculty in "discussing" University affairs. His goal as provost, he assured Senators, was to be as "open" as possible. The goal of faculty should not be to grow rich but to serve students, even if this involved sacrifice.

Several Senators raised the issue of academic policy re: students. Editor Brooks de Vita said that in her opinion, TSU policy was driven by low-achieving students and this meant that it was more difficult to recruit and retain high-achieving students who were relatively neglected. Adding to this, Senator Woldie mentioned that the recruitment of top students was further limited by the lack of scholarship money for them. Senator Georges-Abeyie lamented that many low-achieving students refused to read books, thus making elaborate, time consuming, and costly tutorial programs essentially a waste of time. This, he said, also discourages the recruitment and retention of talented junior faculty who prefer a more intellectually rigorous campus culture than that of TSU. Senator Norman suggested that low retention and graduation rates were probably tied to low admissions standards.

Provost Ohia agreed with Senator Norman and the criticisms voiced by other Senators. He said TSU's low graduation rate--"lower than most universities in this country"-- was the biggest threat to the survival of our university and caused the greatest continuing damage to our university's reputation in Austin and elsewhere. He said if we didn't improve our graduation rate, it "will take us down". Accordingly, he said TSU was currently in the process of gradually raising admissions standards. Recruitment is now centered on leading high schools in Houston Independent School District. Partnerships have and are continuing to be made with junior colleges to facilitate the matriculation of their students to TSU. Admission procedures have been systemized to focus on new students, transfer students, and international students. Grants have been written to help the university improve student retention. To recruit, retain, and graduate top students, TSU has transformed its Honors Program into an Honors College and recently hired a new dean to hasten and enlarge this transformation. Provost Ohia reported that the Board of Regents is fully committed to improving the academic program at TSU. Dealing successfully with SACS recently, he said, would assist in this process. "Everything", he concluded, "is in a state of repair".

Senators also shared with Provost Ohia some criticisms of department chairs and deans. One was worried that top students were discouraged when they were given the run-around by deans, sub-deans, and chairs, many of whom sent students hither and yon to resolve their issues rather than treat with them directly, immediately, and helpfully. Another complained that chairs were weak and that deans were not scholars. Two noticed that buildings were in poor shape, especially a newer building housing the School of Business that lacked the equipment to function as a "smart building". Others noted that the behavior of chairs and deans often discouraged good faculty, contributing especially to the loss of talented, productive junior faculty. One senator charged that faculty in his college are retaliated against by administrators if they persist in advocating for improved administrative service. Another complained that administrators are not reliably available in their offices during working hours. Yet another said that compared to other institutions, TSU seemed to be top-heavy with administrators, many of whom appeared to be related in some way to others. Still another complained that TSU is largely ignored in national

rankings, apparently because administrators don't bother to submit required data and information.

In response to these comments, Provost Ohia reminded Senators that faculty have the collective power to cause the replacement of ineffective administrators. He further reminded Senators that he had inherited an administrative infrastructure that was "rotten" and in thirty months on the job had worked to make significant improvements, which would continue. One thing he said he recognized was that he needed to follow up more effectively on orders that he issued to deans, chairs, and other administrators to make sure that they were in fact followed. He promised to do this. In the meantime, he asked the faculty to be patient.

Following his extensive conversation with Senators, which lasted for most of two hours, Dr. Ohia accepted the Senate's invitation to continue meeting with Senators in their May meeting, whereupon he and his staff departed to polite applause.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Secretary Beeth submitted draft copies to the Senate's March 2011 meeting, which Senators approved without change.

### **Senate Elections**

Senator Doris Jackson reported that she and the hardworking members of the Election Subcommittee had the election on track to be professionally and effectively run. She said that universal emails to all faculty would reiterate to all the date/time/place specifics of the election as well as who was eligible to vote. Voting, she said, would utilize regular voting machines, and non-TSU poll watchers as well as Precinct Judges would be in place and on duty throughout election day, as would police. As well, she and her committee planned to sponsor a "candidate forum" wherein candidates would have an opportunity to explain their platform and respond to questions from attending faculty. Following her presentation, Senators gave Senator Jackson and her committee members a hearty round of applause for their hard, important work, after which they adjourned their April 2011 meeting at 5:10p.

**From:** Ohia, Sunny  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2011 1:01 PM  
**To:** Beeth, Howard O  
**Cc:** Labrie, Lori A.; Wu, Edieth Y. (TMSLAW)  
**Subject:** FW: TSU Senate Minutes

Howard:

I will add the following corrections to the Minutes:

- On the issue of faculty governance and the budgeting process, the provost believes that while faculty should be encouraged to participate in the overall budgeting process at the Department, College/School and Provost's level, the executive administration of the university led by the president still makes the final decision on the university's budget. Of course, the input from faculty is crucial in the final decision made by the executive administration.
- On the issue of infrastructure in the Division of Academic Affairs and Research, I was referring to the fact that I inherited infrastructure that was 'rotten/rotting in some areas.'

Thanks.

Sunny

Sunny E. Ohia, Ph.D., FARVO  
Provost and Vice President  
for Academic Affairs and Research  
Texas Southern University  
Hannah Hall, Suite 340  
3100 Cleburne Street  
Houston, TX 77004  
Phone: (713) 313-1133  
Fax: (713) 313-1999