

****TSU FACULTY SENATE MEETING****

3 November 2011

Minutes

Howard Beeth, Secretary

MEMBERS PRESENT: Macaulay Akpaffiong (Pharmacy & Health Science); Howard Beeth (Secretary); Chris Beineman (COLABS); Alexis Brooks de Vita (Editor, *The Faculty Speaks*); Jafus Cavil (COE); Robert Ford (COST); Daniel Georges-Abeyie (SOPA); Vera Hawkins (School of Communications); Sharlette Kellum (Graduate School); Emlyn Norman (COLABS); Jane Perkyns (COLABS); Byron Price (Chair); Rasoul Saneifard (Vice Chair); Lalita Sen (Treasurer); Karma Sherif (JHJ School of Business); Sara White (Parliamentarian); Mammo Woldie (JHJ School of Business); Zivar Yousefipour (College of Pharmacy & Health Science). **Total 18.**

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bettye Desselle (JHJ School of Business); Lila Ghemri (COST); Cassandra Hill (TMSL); Mohsen Javadian (COST); Linda Johnson (COLABS); James Opolot (SOPA); Samuel Osueke (COE); Monica Rasmus (College of Pharmacy & Health Science); Holim Song (COE). **Total: 9.**

GUESTS: Provost Sunny Ohia; Faculty Ombudsman Andrea Shelton; Dr. Laura Solitare, Chair, TSU Online Teaching Task Goup. **Total: 3.**

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Price was not able to call the November 2011 Senate meeting to order until 3:15p because a previous meeting in the room did not conclude on time. Once he was able to call the Senate meeting to order, the chairman introduced an invited guest, TSU Provost Sunny Ohia, who attended the meeting to address any questions Senators might have.

Secretary Howard Beeth queried the Provost about progress regarding a possible university buy-out of senior faculty to lighten our institutional budget in difficult economic times, a policy adopted by some other public universities in Texas. Provost Ohia replied that the matter was still under study, although he said President Rudley was “committed to the idea”. Secretary

Beeth suggested that the administration send a short email questionnaire to senior faculty to determine exactly how many of them might be interested in accepting a buy-out; this, he said, would be easy and quick to do, and would provide a data base for an informed policy decision. Provost Ohia thought the idea a good one and appeared to make written note of it. He said the next step in the process would be for the task force studying the issue to make a recommendation to President Rudley, which he hoped would be done soon.

Senator Robert Ford had comments and questions regarding the possible loss of the physics undergraduate major and other programs in his college. As a consequence, he reported that several professors were talking about leaving TSU to work at schools that gave more support to science. Provost Ohia reported to the Senate that he and President Rudley recently had been in Austin to present to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in defense of endangered programs at TSU. Professional physics associations, he said, also had written the Board in defense of the six endangered physics programs in Texas. Furthermore, Provost Ohia reported that the chairs of some physics departments around the state are meeting to try to coordinate a common defense of physics education in Texas. Ultimately, he said, the Coordinating Board will decide. A major problem is that the six physics programs targeted as deficient have only produced a total of 14 physics majors in the last five years—a total of only 1.7% of the physics majors produced state-wide during that time. Still, Provost Ohia said he remained hopeful that the Coordinating Board would allow endangered physics programs a 2-year grace period to develop growth plans before making a final decision about their survival.

Chairman Price wondered how the Faculty Senate and the administration could improve their relationship. Provost Ohia replied that being invited to sit with the Senate every month for a time was of value. He mentioned that at some nearby schools, university presidents, provosts and sometimes even deans routinely attended Faculty Senate meetings, a practice he suggested that the Senate might consider for TSU. He added that his office door was always open. Secretary Beeth observed that the on-line publication of the minutes of various administrative bodies as well as those of the Faculty Senate contributed mightily to improving overall transparency—a good thing.

After a bit more discussion about related topics, Provost Ohia thanked Senators for the opportunity to meet with them and left the room.

Committee Report re: Online Compensation

Invited guest Dr. Laura Solitare, the chair of the TSU Online Teaching Task Group, distributed copies of an undated document, “Online Teaching Task Group Preliminary Report”, to assembled senators. She began by saying that the charge to the committee was to develop an overload policy as well as an on-line course policy. The committee is beginning its work by

collecting the policies of some peer universities to see what common and best-practices might be. Questions the committee will ask and answer include defining what exactly an over-load is and what incentives might be formulated to encourage faculty participation in teaching on-line courses. She promised that the committee's final report would be sent to the Faculty Senate first and then onward to the university administration. Senator Sharlette Kellum commented that payments to faculty who develop on-line courses should be substantial because such courses could be used over and over for years.

Academic Integrity

Opening a discussion of this topic, Chairman Price recounted that a student recently had committed plagiarism in on-line coursework. The professor wanted to flunk the student for this egregious dishonesty, but an administrator decided instead merely to let the student withdraw from the course. This raised, to Chairman Price, the question of what should be done to such students and who had the authority to make a decision about a matter of student cheating—professors, departmental chairs, or deans? The Chair believed that a Senate subcommittee needed to be formed to interrogate this issue.

Vice Chair Rasoul Saneifard commented that the *TSU Student Manual* defined student misbehavior and punishment for various offenses. He asserted that administrators had no right to interfere with classroom matters, which would be a violation of academic freedom and the integrity of faculty. Editor Alexis Brooks de Vita agreed that classroom management should be the prerogative of instructors, as stipulated in their course syllabi. She also worried that allowing dishonest students merely to drop the course would result in no record being made of their dishonest behavior. However, Senator Chris Beineman said that while the *Student Manual* did indeed comment on various possible student offenses, it gave deans the final authority to adjudicate such matters. Senator Vera Hawkins added that professors could bring instances of student dishonesty to the attention of TSU's Dean of Students. Finally, the Chair called for volunteers to study this problem some more, and Senator Daniel Georges-Abeyie volunteered to do so.

Chair's Updates

Chairman Price discussed three updates: the Faculty Senate budget, TSU President Rudley's testimony to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the President's recent comments to the TSU Board of Regents.

Concerning the Faculty Senate budget, Chairman Price reported that the budget was about \$13,000, and he distributed a handout that broke the budget down into consumables, office

supplies, and food. His plan was to spend about \$4,000 per the three academic semesters, with larger purchases to be approved by the Senate.

Concerning President Rudley's comments to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in Austin, Chairman Price took strong exception to the President's description of TSU as a "ghetto" and to the comment of a Board member that the campus resembled "a prison". The Chairman indicated that he intended to write a public op-ed newspaper article criticizing and refuting these slanderous images of our university. In the meantime, he suggested that President Rudley needed "media training". Senator Macaulay Akpaffiong, like Chairman Price a TSU alumnus, said he was "insulted" by such a negative characterization of our university, and suggested that the TSU alumni organization might be contacted to also respond to President Rudley's disparaging, public comments about our university. Several other senators voiced similar concerns about the President's unfortunate behavior.

In his address to the TSU Board of Regents, Chairman Price reported that he spoke of the much ignored policy of "shared governance" between faculty and administrators wherein administrators set policy and faculty merely implement them. Further, he said that he complained to the Board that TSU administrators ignored emails and other efforts to communicate to them requesting information and to let the faculty become more involved in governance and salary issues. He reported to the Board that the major reason the faculty Senate recently cancelled the proposed revision of *The Faculty Manual* was precisely because faculty had had insufficient participation in the revision process itself.

Chairman Price also mentioned to the TSU Board that President Rudley had also received a new contract after being assessed by an outside agency. Chairman Price wondered what the criteria for his evaluation was. He said the President had made scant progress on two major issues—the poor student graduation rate of 13% and fund raising. He argued to the Board that any evaluation of President Rudley should include evaluation by the faculty. He also maintained that faculty should participate in evaluation of Board members and that Board meetings should be televised.

In conclusion, Chairman Price told the TSU Board of Regents that on campus, 1% of the employees receive a disproportionate share of the budget funds allocated for salaries and that as a consequence there should be an "Occupy TSU" action. He cited some secretaries with fancy titles who were paid more than faculty members with PhDs. He indicated to the Board that he and the Faculty Senate would continue to request information about administrative as well as faculty salaries. He also noted that the Faculty House at TSU had been razed but not replaced, as promised.

Chairman Price reported to Senators that President Rudley, who was in attendance at the Board meeting, did not take kindly to his remarks, warning Chairman Price that he had “pulled the Tiger’s tail once too often”. However, President Rudley also promised to give priority attention to faculty concerns in the near future and promised to meet with Chairman Price about them—which, according to Chairman Price, he subsequently in fact did.

In the discussion which followed, Treasurer Lalita Sen recommended that Chairman Price’s presentation to the TSU Board be posted on the Senate’s TSU website, and *The Faculty Speaks* editor, Brooks de Vita, said that it should also be printed in that publication. Senator Ford additionally suggested that prior to TSU Board meetings, a Senate subcommittee review Board agendas, minutes, and other public information about the Board so that Chairman Price would have accurate, up to the minute information when he appeared at future Board meetings. Senator Ford and Chairman Price also noted that while a student representative sits on the Board, no faculty representative does. Chairman Price noted that this may help explain that while the annual operational budget for the Student Government Association is \$20-25,000, the Faculty Senate budget is less than \$1,500.

Approval of Minutes

Secretary Beeth distributed draft copies of the Senate’s October 2011 meeting, which senators approved as submitted.

Salary Inequity Committee Report

Committee Chair Mammo Woldie reported to the Senate that the committee recently had its meeting and had made progress. He said the committee had the advantage of talented members who had been provided with valuable salary data to study by Treasurer Sen that allowed the committee to compare earlier salaries with current ones. One problem, he said, that needed to be resolved was a confidentiality form that he and Chairman Price signed regarding some data. However, Chairman Price noted that other members of the committee had not signed a confidentiality document and so were not bound by it. Senator Ford and Treasurer Lalita Sen stressed the importance of handling the salary data in an effective way. They mentioned that salaries may vary between institutions as well as between disciplines. Discussion also involved the salaries of those who served serially as faculty and administrators, and how their salary should be determined. Senator Ford, as one such person, said that the law required that returning faculty members have a salary that was “in the range” of those faculty in their academic unit. Senator Ford added that there is a state-wide move to quantify and make public the work that faculty do in order to scrutinize and rationalize their salaries. Chairman Price said that if this is so, the same should be done for administrators. He reported that he had required voluminous salary data from the administration, including that of staff

members, so that the Senate would have a comprehensive view of the campus salary structure. He indicated that he would take his request for such information to the TSU Board of Regents, if necessary.

Clarification of an Administrator for the Purpose of Serving on a Committee

Chairman Price briefly recounted the case of a person serving as an Assistant Dean who nevertheless served on an important faculty committee. The justification for this was that although he was an administrator, he did not have authority over personnel, salary, or budget matters, and so was entitled to service on this committee. Vice Chair Saneifard read a section of the *Faculty Manual* that excluded administrative faculty from faculty committees who had input on reappointment, tenure, and promotion, although such persons could be present during committee meetings to serve as resource people, as long as they were not present during the committee's deliberations and voting. Senator Ford noted that the language in the *Manual* could be changed, and Chairman Price suggested that the Senate's Faculty Manual Revision Committee take another look at this section of the *Manual* to clarify the language used. Treasurer Sen, who heads this important committee, said the committee would do this.

Increasing Investments in Faculty Shared Governance Capacity

Senator Ford began a discussion of this topic by saying that in research he had done, he found no instance of an institution that paid faculty Senators or officers. Furthermore, he said that he was unaware of any work done by TSU Faculty Senate officers over the summer. He suggested that in the future Senate officers submit a report detailing the Senate work in which they'd been engaged during the summer.

Several members of the Senate responded directly to Senator Ford's observations. Treasurer Sen commented that the administration is very busy in the summer when faculty conveniently are dispersed from the campus. She said that in earlier years she'd attended numerous summer meetings as a representative of the faculty and as Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate. The problem, she said, was that on those occasions the few Faculty Senate officers were overwhelmingly outvoted by the many administrators who composed the vast majority of the membership of such committees.

Vice Chair Saneifard remarked that the Chair and Vice Chair worked every day "in front of the bullet" and that Senators and others did not fully appreciate this because they couldn't see "behind the scenes". Picking up on this, Editor Brooks de Vita said she'd personally witnessed Chairman Price's brave performance at the recent TSU Board of Regents meeting, for which he received a spontaneous round of applause from Senators.

After more conversation, Senator Ford said that he was satisfied that he'd raised the issue for consideration, and the discussion ended.

Faculty Senate Awards Criteria (for December 2011)

The Senate agreed to host a party with diverse music and food for the entire faculty at the end of the semester. Senators tentatively agreed on 8 December, around 6p in the Student Center, when gift certificates could serve as door prizes and especially distinguished faculty could enter a drawing for an IPAD.

Distinguished Professor Discussion

In a brief discussion about Distinguished Professorships, Chairman Price reported that the Deans Council had discussed establishing criteria for such a position. He noted that there are other possible problems to be resolved about such life-time positions, including the question of whether people named to such positions were subject to Post Tenure Review and to what extent the faculty should be involved in the nomination and selection process for such Professorships.

Faculty Concerns

Senator Sharlette Kellum was concerned about administrators who enter classrooms unannounced to evaluate professors and question students about course matters. Editor Brooks de Vita commented that such actions by administrators was threatening. Other Senators suggested that departments needed to establish clear, written procedures for evaluating the teaching of faculty members. Chairman Price invited Senator Kellum to email him details of the event in her department. University Ombudsman Andrea Shelton invited involved faculty to contact her for further discussion.

In a related matter, Vice Chairman Saneifard reported that a committee is soon to start working to refine the form used by students to evaluate faculty. He and Senator Emlyn Norman requested permission to serve on this committee, which the Senate approved.

The Senate adjourned its November 2011 meeting at 5:05p.