

TCU Faculty Senate Meeting  
Sept 1, 2005  
Justin Board Room, Kelly Alumni Center

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## Minutes

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**Senators present:** Arnie Barkman, Donelle Barnes, David Bedford, Bonnie Blackwell, Art Busbey, Carolyn Cagle, Dennis Cheek, Lyn Dart, Sharon Fairchild, Blaise Ferrandino, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Andy Fort, Sally Fortenberry, Rob Garnett, Elizabeth Gillaspay, David Grant, Charles Hannon, Jack Hill, Jack Jones, Paul King, Nadia Lahutsky, Charles LaMendola, Steve Levering, Suzy Lockwood, John Lovett, Ed McNertney, Joel Mitchell, Linda Moore, Helen Morrison, Sheri Neill, Robert Neilson, Dianna Newbern, C. A. Quarles, Dick Rinewalt, Mags Rittby, Ranae Stetson, Becky Taylor, Carol Thompson, David Vanderwerken, Keith Whitworth, Dan Williams, Stuart Youngblood

**Senators excused:** Joan Aker , T. J. Walsh , Melissa Young

**Senators absent:** Joe Butler, Alan Dettlaff, Jennifer Engler, Don Nichols, Greg Stephens, Molly Weinburgh,

**Guests:** Ashley Barr (Student Affairs Committee – Student House), Ross Bateman (TCU Skiff Reporter), Chancellor Victor Boschini, Ray Brown (Dean – Admissions), Melissa Canady (Director - Assessment), Nowell Donovan (Provost), Brian Gutierrez (VC for Finance), Leo Munson (Associate VC Academic Support), Jason Radigan (Student Affairs Committee – Student House), Catherine Wehlburg (Director – CTE), Don Whelan (VC – Advancement)

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Chair Andy Fort called the meeting to order and welcomed returning senators. Secretary John Lovett introduced and welcomed new senators. The Chair recognized and welcomed the guests.

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### Approval of minutes

The minutes of the 05 May, 2005 Senate meeting were approved with no changes or corrections.

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1. Chancellor Victor Boschini addressed the Senate. He discussed the effects of Hurricane Katrina on TCU, saying 11 students from hurricane-affected schools have been admitted so far. He thanked Ray Brown, other TCU administrators, and the faculty for accommodating and welcoming the new students. He invited senators to a orientation/dinner on September 7 to welcome the new students. Chancellor Boschini also reminded the Senate to think about and actively support the 54 TCU students from the New Orleans area.

Chancellor Boschini also discussed the Vision in Action plan (VIA). He reminded the Senate that one goal is to benefit students who are already here. More faculty have already been hired (16 this year versus only 6 three years ago) and the student faculty ratio is falling.

Chancellor Boschini pointed out that for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year TCU has set a new record for number of applicants. Retention data also looks better than last year's although final semester data is still pending

On-going Physical Plant improvements were overviewed by the Chancellor. These include the Grand Marks student housing complex, DEMA's new building, the School of Education's future building, and Veterans' Plaza.

Chancellor Boschini closed by saying that TCU is truly giving students "world class quality". Always a great institution, TCU has, according to the Chancellor, changed for the better and will continue to change.

Senator Ranae Stetson thanked the chancellor for getting names of the students affected by Hurricane Katrina, out to faculty.

Chair Andy Fort concurred, stating that, he and others have been very impressed with TCU's rapid and thorough response to students, including his own daughter, affected by Hurricane Katrina.

2. Ray Brown, Dean of Admissions was greeted and recognized for all his work in helping admit and support TCU's newest students.

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## **Old Business**

1. Senator Ed McNertney (Director, TCU Core Curriculum) addressed the Senate regarding the new core. He expressed relief, and even some wonderment, that the core is now in place. He thanked those who made it possible.

Ed McNertney provided a two page handout on the core. TCU Core Curriculum Workshops were announced (5 for the fall). HMMV Committee meetings were also made known. The handout, and Senator McNertney's presentation also made note of the due dates for courses to be approved (vetted) in time for a semester.

Senator David Grant asked a question regarding whether the syllabus used has to be the same, excluding minor changes, as the syllabus submitted for vetting. Ed

McNertney confirmed that this is the case. This rule is stated on the “effective date” handout and the TCU Core Curriculum website.

Senator Jack Hill asked if students can retake a course to replace a grade in courses that have been given a different course number due to the Core. Senator Hill said the new course will replace the old, but students have to contact their departments and the registrar to make sure it happens.

2. Senator David Grant took the floor to address the proceedings of the Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) and Senate regarding the +/- grading motion from the May 2005 Senate meeting. Senator Grant made a motion that a new version of the motion presented to the Senate at the May 2005 meeting be placed on the floor for Senate consideration. The motion to consider the substitute was seconded and carried. Senator Grant pointed out the differences between this new version and the original motion from the May 2005 Senate meeting. The primary differences are:

- The effective date would be Fall 2007 instead of Fall 2006
- The AEC be charged with; *“promoting campus discussion of this proposal among faculty, students, and administrators, with the goal of presenting a fully detailed proposal for catalog changes to the Senate in spring 2006 for final approval before being sent through the University’s curriculum approval process (Undergraduate Council, University Council)”*.
- The AEC be charged to work with the Graduate Council to explore implementation at the Graduate level.

A motion to discuss the substitute motion instead of the original was brought forth, seconded, and carried. The substitute motion was handed out. A discussion ensued.

Senator Sharon Fairchild asked how this would affect students currently enrolled. Senator Grant stated that is something to be examined by the AEC and other (non-Senate) decision makers. An answer to the question of whether this should be implemented all at once for everyone, or just for the incoming class is not specified in the motion.

Senator Ranae Stetson asked for clarification on the grading scales. In particular, she asked if this motion was specifying standards for assigning a grade. Senator Grant said that only the grade points are specified. The specific standards for assigning grades are, as under the current system, up to the individual faculty.

Senator Ranae Stetson asked if a straight letter grade policy would be an option. Senator Grant replied that the AEC and other (non-Senate) decision makers would examine this as the proposal goes through. His impression was that straight letter grading would be allowable. Senator Dick Rinewalt stated that some schools specify that all grades be used. Senator Arnie Barkman recommended choosing carefully between the language of “not required” and “not expected”. Senator David Bedford also had some questions requiring implicit and explicit expectations.

Senator Nadia Lahutsky asked about how the Senate would be expected to contribute to the continuing process. Senator Grant stated that the tentative plan was for the AEC to come back to the senate in the Spring with a proposal that has “ironed out” more of the details.

Chair Andy Fort suggested that an important question, his primary concern, is whether the Senate is generally supportive of +/- and wishes to give support to the process, while leaving some details to be worked out by affected parties and relevant decision makers.

Senator Dick Rinewalt expressed concern that faculty cannot always assess as finely as the plus/minus grading scale allows. He also raised the concern of more grade complaints by students. Senator Rinewalt referred to a Clemson study of changes after the school switched to a +/- system and a University of Maryland report which quotes the UCLA Registrar. Both reports indicated that +/- is inflationary in practice.

Senator Rinewalt also mentioned that according to one of these reports, the number of faculty not using +/- was 18% in the first year adopted, but increased to 25% in the second year.

Senator David Grant mentioned a Wake Forest report that concluded there was a drop in GPA. Further, Senator Grant point out that at least 75% of faculty, based on the study Senator Rinewalt mentioned, do want and use plus/minus.

Both Senator Rinewalt and Senator Grant concurred that “that the devil is in the details” in determining whether there has been grade inflation. Studies of +/- systems must be examined carefully for their details and differences.

Senator Grant stated he did a survey of his past 4 semesters and that his overall GPA fell .05. He also stated that even if there is an effect on GPA it is minor, and the other positive attributes of plus/minus grading swamp any GPA effects.

Senator Donelle Barnes mentioned that she was initially indifferent towards +/- grading until she considered the positive effects it likely has on study effort at the end of the semester. Under the current system, many students have little incentive to study hard in many of their classes if the next highest solid letter grade is out of reach. Senator Barnes stated that the increased reward/incentive to study in all courses, including those for which a student has a solid letter grade (under the current system) going into the final, is her reason for supporting +/-.

Senator Grant mentioned that of the 13 schools in TCU’s most relevant peer group, only TCU does not use +/- . Senator Blaise Ferrandino asked about the top 100 schools. Senator Grant replied that about 85% use plus/minus grading.

Senator Ferrandino mentioned that national surveys indicate that about 2/3 of students express more satisfaction with +/- than with straight letter grade.

Chair Andy Fort brought a motion to approve the proposal (the “substitute” proposal) on the floor. The motion was seconded and a vote by show of hands was called. It passed with 9 “nay” votes from the 42 Senators present. The number of “yea” votes

were not counted, but were clearly a majority of those present. The plus/minus motion as passed is shown below.

*Resolved,* That beginning in fall 2007 TCU adopt an undergraduate grading system that includes plus and minus grades as follows:

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>	<b>Grade Descriptions</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>3.67</b>	
<b>B+</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>3.00</b>	
<b>B-</b>	<b>2.67</b>	
<b>C+</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>2.00</b>	
<b>C-</b>	<b>1.67</b>	
<b>D+</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>1.00</b>	
<b>D-</b>	<b>0.67</b>	
<b>F</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>Failing</b>

Furthermore, that the Academic Excellence Committee be charged with promoting campus discussion of this proposal among faculty, students, and administrators, with the goal of presenting a fully detailed proposal for catalog changes to the Senate in spring 2006 for final approval before being sent through the University's curriculum approval process (Undergraduate Council, University Council).

Be it further resolved that the Academic Excellence Committee be charged to work with the Graduate Council to explore implementation of plus/minus grades at the graduate level.

Passed by the TCU Faculty Senate, 9/1/2005

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## New Business

1. Vice Chancellor for Finance Brian Gutierrez addressed the Senate. He spoke of his interest and enthusiasm regarding working with the Senate. In particular, he stated a profound appreciation and respect for what TCU has done regarding hurricane Katrina. In addition to the effects of the hurricane, TCU faces many challenges. Vice Chancellor Gutierrez discussed what TCU offers students, how this has changed over the past decade or so, and how TCU is continuing to change for the better.
2. Don Whelan, Vice Chancellor for Advancement, addressed the Senate. He stated that he is looking forward to working with the TCU faculty and Faculty Senate.
3. Chair Andy Fort talked about the possibility of forming a University Compensation Advisory Committee. This committee would subsume the Retirement, Insurance, and Benefits Committee as well as examine compensation issues.
4. Chair Andy Fort introduced the chairs of the Faculty Senate committees. Each briefly mentioned the major charges and roles of the committee they chair.

Senator David Grant mentioned the charges of the Academic Excellence Committee.

Senator Sally Fortenberry discussed the Committee on Committee's initiative, in conjunction with student government, of improving the method by which students are appointed to various university committees.

Senator Keith Whitworth of the Academic Excellence Committee briefly mentioned retention and calendar issues, namely beginning vacation the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Senator Suzy Lockwood also addressed the proposal to have the Wednesday before Thanksgiving off and how it was moving forward.

Senator Stuart Youngblood, chair of the Tenure, Promotion, and Grievance, talked of implementing the new Faculty Conflict Resolution policy.

Senator Nadia Lahutsky discussed the Faculty Governance Committee's goal of reworking Article II section 2 of the Faculty Senate by-laws.

5. Provost Donovan addressed the Senate regarding TCU's Vision in Action (VIA). He expressed appreciation for the many students, faculty, staff, and members of the Fort Worth community who provided input.

The goal of the VIA initiative is to make TCU an increasingly significant and well-known academic university. Provost Donovan stated that the Board of Trustees approved 3 very important targets to better achieve this goal. These include:

- a) Holding undergraduate enrollment steady at 7,200 through 2009-10
- b) trying to have 2/3 of undergrads in university housed in TCU owned or managed housing. In the past few decades, enrollment has increased faster

than residential spaces. TCU is only at approximately 40% currently, lower than where we want to be and where our peers are.

c) selectively looking at new graduate programs

Additions to the physical plant were highlighted. These include new apartments, the new Union, and refurbishing of existing Student Union for faculty space. The refurbished Student Union is likely to become a “home nest” for Add-Ran.

Provost Donovan stated that a reduced (below 14:1) faculty ratio and new endowed chairs are also being sought.

The Provost also said that more venues for creative undergraduate activities are being pursued through VIA. Finally, more emphasis on preparing students for their post-TCU career is being sought. The Strategic Initiatives Grant program (approximately \$1.1 million) will be offered by TCU in the near future. Details and calls for creative ideas will be forthcoming soon.

Wise financial stewardship is necessary to achieve these goals. Since the budget is largely, but not wholly, tuition driven, Provost Donovan put forth the following ethical question; “Are we doing our best with the students’ and parents’ money?”

Senator Dan Williams asked if the VIA grants are for 5 years. Provost Donovan confirmed this was the goal, but did mention that this is based on current budget projections and could change if budget conditions change.

6. An election, by paper ballots, for the University Advisory Committee Election was held to replace Andy Fort. Andy Fort became ineligible to serve on the University Advisory Committee when he was elected Chair of the Senate. Senator David Vanderwerken was the winner of the election.

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## Announcements

1. Chair Andy Fort mentioned that the summer school pay policy, namely paying 6% for classes below a certain enrollment versus the regular 8%, might be an issue to examine. Provost Donovan stated there is already a group that is examining summer class cancellations, pay, and how the decisions are made.
2. Provost Donovan mentioned that there will be committees formed to search for a new Library Dean and the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences.
3. Senator Suzy Lockwood briefly mentioned recent progress on the new Brown-Lupton Union.

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The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lovett