

**TCU Faculty Senate Meeting
May 5, 2005**

Minutes

Senators present: Joan Aker, Arnie Barkman, Donelle Barnes,* David Bedford, Bonnie Blackwell,* Joseph Butler, Carolyn Cagle, Dennis Cheek,* David Cross, Alan Dettlaff, Sharon Fairchild, Blaise Ferrandino, Andy Fort, Sally Fortenberry, Rob Garnett, Elizabeth Gillaspay,* George Gilbert, David Grant, Charles Hannon, Jack Hill, Jack Jones, Paul King, Nadia Lahutsky, Steve Levering, Suzy Lockwood, John Lovett, Ed McNertney, Joel Mitchell, Linda Moore, Robert Neilson,* Don Nichols, C.A. Quarles, Ranga Ramasesh,* Dick Rinewalt, Magnus Rittby, Bill Ryan, Ellen Page Shelton, Ranae Stetson, Carol Thompson, T.J. Walsh,* Peggy Watson, Molly Weinburgh, Dan Williams,* Melissa Young, Stu Youngblood.

*excused

Senators absent: Tom Guderjan, Gene Smith, Keith Whitworth

Guests: Provost Nowell Donovan, Catherine Wehlburg, Melissa Canady, newly elected Senators

Chair Blaise Ferrandino called the meeting to order and welcomed the guests. Assistant Secretary Rob Garnett announced the names of the newly elected Senators and welcomed them to the Senate. Chair Ferrandino expressed a special thank you to the outgoing Senators for their work and service on the Senate.

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the April 7 Senate meeting were approved with no changes or corrections.

Old business

1. Motion to approve amended version of the Faculty Conflict Resolution Policy

Chair Ferrandino gave the floor to Senator Stu Youngblood to discuss the revisions that had been made to the Faculty Conflict Resolution Policy. Senator Youngblood distributed a comparison sheet and explained the changes that had been made at the Provost Council, which he stated were mostly cosmetic. He explained that the goal of the approval process was to educate those involved. He then displayed a chart that he and Greg Stephens had worked on, which showed five years of data related to mediation contacts at TCU since 2001. This data related to conflicts that had been resolved under the current staff Conflict Resolution Policy. The graph revealed that, since the introduction of the staff Conflict Resolution Policy, resolution of most problems took place informally. In addition, the graph showed that with conflicts that were pursued to the level of mediation, fewer of them went to the level of peer review than had in the past. In the last five years, only two peer reviews have been done. The data shows that, with the new Conflict Resolution Policy, problems are now resolved early in the process.

With a second chart of data showing number of litigation cases, Senator Youngblood showed that, prior to the existence of the staff Conflict Resolution Policy, there was no way to resolve problems and, therefore, there was a larger number of litigation cases. After the year 2000, cases were resolved through mediation. Since then we have been able to resolve most cases through mediation. One case is still pending this year. He further explained the benefits of mediation in regards to TCU's insurance policy. When we resolve disputes internally, our insurance policy doesn't count such conflicts against our cost for insurance. The faculty Conflict Resolution Policy should give TCU the ability to resolve conflicts before they become costly in terms of time and expense. Senator Youngblood reminded Senators that this policy resolves only disputes that are non-tenure and promotion issues and that it will be an Academic Affairs policy, not an Human Resources policy. He then answered Senators' questions about the definition of "days" in the document, explaining that they are defined as business days.

Senator David Grant suggested a clarification in the paragraph entitled "Definitions." Discussion ensued concerning the statement that Step 4 of the policy applies only to non-tenure track faculty members. As a result of the discussion, the final sentence of the "Definitions" paragraph was revised to read: "Issues related to faculty tenure, promotion and/or reappointment are not considered for tenure-track faculty under this policy."

The motion to approve the amended version of the faculty Conflict Resolution Policy passed unanimously. Chair Ferrandino stated that the policy would be brought to the Faculty Assembly in the fall, and then to the University Council to become finalized.

2. Report and recommendation from the Academic Excellence Committee.

Senator Grant brought forth a resolution from the AEC leading toward a recommendation to establish a plus/minus grading system at TCU. He explained that this resolution would be put on the floor at the first Senate meeting in September. The resolution represents the bulk of the committee's work this year. The committee brings it to the Senators now in order for them to consider it before a motion is made in September. Senator Grant presented the results of a survey that he sent out this semester to TCU faculty. These results show that a majority of the responses received were favorable toward a plus/minus grading system. The AEC will take this up again in the fall and will bring it forward for discussion and approval. The committee members are looking forward to a good discussion of the subject in the fall.

Senator Grant then answered questions. Senator Arnie Barkman asked if the committee had discussed what the cut-offs for grades would be. Senator Grant answered negatively, stating that such decisions are the prerogative of each professor. Other questions concerned the definition of grades, such as the term "satisfactory" and what it would signify in such a system. Another issue discussed was how grade points would be divided in the plus/minus system. Senator Grant suggested that such questions would be discussed over the summer and next semester. These are some of the issues that will need to be explored. Senator Grant also pointed out that, in the research that the committee conducted to determine practices at other universities, they discovered that almost no universities used the word "excellent" as a grade definition. He also added that it is important that TCU be consistent with practices at other universities in order to facilitate comparisons between universities.

The system that the committee talked about was consistent with what other universities are doing.

Additional discussion concerned the procedures for approving such a policy. It would have to be approved by the Undergraduate Council and any other channels required for curriculum changes. Discussion could also take place at the Faculty Assembly. In response to Provost Donovan's question about graduate-level grades, Senator Grant explained that the committee's proposal applies to undergraduate grades only. Senator Rob Garnett inquired as to whether or not a faculty member would have the choice of giving plus/minus grades or not. In the opinion of Senator Grant, this would be possible, provided that the grading policy is clearly stated in the course syllabus. Senator Andy Fort stated that, in his role of Chair of the Senate next year, he would be committed to having this issue discussed at length so that the majority of people have the opportunity to express their opinions. Senator Peggy Watson pointed out the impact that a plus/minus system would have on students with scholarships. Various Senators expressed the desire to include students in the discussion. Senator Grant confirmed that the Academic Affairs Committee of the Student House has already been consulted as well as the President of the student body. Senator Watson said that she and Professor Phil Hartman spoke up to oppose the plus/minus grades in order to give a voice to those students who will be particularly impacted. Senator Grant asked Senators and faculty to send him or the Executive Committee their comments on this question in the forthcoming months.

3. Motion concerning Article II, Section 7 of Senate By-laws, from the Faculty Governance Committee.

Chair Ferrandino reminded Senators that we approved Article II, Sections 5 and 6 of the By-laws at the last Senate meeting. Senator Carolyn Cagle took the floor and reviewed what had transpired at the last Senate meeting related to this motion. The FGC was asked to bring the revisions for Section 7 back after the April 7 discussion on the Senate floor. She explained the need for this new section and the paragraphs A, B, and C, due to the introduction of new Senate committees. She noted that the language in part C captures potential committees that may be formed in the future.

Section 7 was approved unanimously, with the removal of the comma after the word "needed" in part C.

4. Report on April Joint Assembly

Senator Suzy Lockwood took the floor to report on the April Joint Assembly. The subject under discussion at the Assembly was the new university/student union; nearly 100 people attended. Senator Lockwood explained that the participants were divided into smaller groups and each group reported the results of their conversations to the larger group. A six-page report that summarizes these ideas was generated. Senator Lockwood summarized several of the more commonly shared ideas. Discussants proposed that the union have performance spaces and a place for the Senate, Student Government and Staff Assembly to share. There was a general desire to have the union serve as a "pass-through" on campus, that is, it would be the "front door" of the university, where all entities and personnel of the university would be together. It was also suggested by students that there be a place for the display of all the various trophies and recognition awards. Further suggestions included the introduction of display cases, an art gallery, a space in which to hold

forums on various topics, the sale of a variety of food. Senator Lockwood stated that the summary of the Assembly discussion is available to all Senators; she will send a copy to anyone who requests it.

Chair Ferrandino thanked Senator Lockwood for her work on the Student Relations Committee. He also took the opportunity to thank all Senate committee chairs, Ed McNertney as Director of the new Core Curriculum, and Linda Moore for her service on the COIA. He expressed special thanks for their role as an advisory committee as well as their work on their individual committees.

New Business

1. Election of new Executive Committee

Chair Ferrandino took the floor to present the slate of the new Executive Committee and to conduct the election. He asked for nominations from the floor. Since there were no nominations from the floor, Chair Ferrandino explained that the nominees could be approved by acclamation. The following Senators were elected by acclamation: Senator Suzy Lockwood as Chair-elect, Senator John Lovett as Secretary, Senator Elizabeth Gillaspay as Assistant Secretary.

Senator Andy Fort, who will be the new Chair of the Senate, asked Senators to fill out a form indicating what committee they prefer to serve on.

Senator Rob Garnett took the floor to explain that the Senate needed to elect a representative from Fine Arts to serve on the University Advisory Committee. He distributed a ballot for this purpose, asking Senators to vote for one of the eligible candidates on the ballot. At the end of the meeting, he announced that Professor Sheila Allen was elected to the committee.

2. Election of new HMOV members. Chair Ferrandino announced that two people have already agreed to serve on the HMOV committee. The new Senate representatives on the committee will be Senator Bill Ryan and Senator Molly Weinburg.

3. Motion concerning election of Senators, changes in By-laws

Senator Cagle again took the floor to present the motions of the FGC proposing changes in the Senate By-laws related to the size of the Senate and the election of Senators. She reminded Senators of the previous discussions that took place at the April 7 Senate meeting regarding the size of the Senate. She explained that Motions 1 and 2 would be taken together first. She explained the choice of the word "normal" that is used in Section 2 A. This motion eliminates the idea of the previous standard of a 11 to 1 ratio. Senator Fort objected to eliminating the 11 to 1 ratio and questioned why the number 45 was considered to be the "normal" number and why the number of committee members needs to be set at a fixed number. Senator Don Nichols pointed out that the other proposed changes provide for proportional representation. The intent is for the entire university to be represented, the proposed system is flexible enough to allow for changes. Senator Grant pointed out some of the difficulties that would result if the number of Senators were fixed. Since the number of faculty in the university is not always even, there would almost always be a need to adjust the number of Senators. It was suggested that Section 2, part A 2 addresses this question.

It was also suggested that the term “full-time faculty” be added to this paragraph. In answer to a question on the definition of the term “full-time faculty,” Senator Nadia Lahutsky pointed out that the definition is found in the Senate Constitution. Senator Fort also objected to eliminating “at-large” members. There was extended discussion on proportional representation. Senator George Gilbert pointed out that, if ever the TCU faculty increased considerably, we could end up with an extremely large Senate.

Motions 1 and 2 were withdrawn; motions 1 through 5 were then placed on the floor as a whole so that the Senate could consider the entire section and discuss all related paragraphs. Discussion ensued concerning part A 3, which allows the Election Committee to fill open positions. In such cases, Senator Fort asked what the term of office would be. If it were a three-year term this would effectively take away the representation of the unit whose position had not been filled during that time. At-large membership would solve the problem of losing a slot for three years. Discussion continued; Senator Gilbert maintained that a unit would lose its representation for only one year because the following year the proportion would be re-determined for the elections in the next year. Senator Paul King stated that at-large membership tends to favor larger units. Senators then discussed the question of whether or not Senators represent their units or whether they represent the university as a whole.

Finally, it was the general sense of the Senate that these changes represented many implications that needed further reflection. Since people had concerns that couldn't be answered by simply sharing opinions, it was suggested that it would be better to analyze the impact of the proposed changes and to see data based on past experience. Senators would need time to reflect on the changes and their impact. Discussion then turned to the status of the motions on the floor. The committee could either withdraw the motions, ask the Senate to vote on the motions, or postpone the debate. Considerable debate resulted in a motion to postpone the discussion. The motion passed.

Announcements

Chancellor Boschini took the floor to thank everyone for their work this year on the Senate. He encouraged everyone to get “recharged” over the summer break.

Provost Donovan took the floor next to say a word about the role and importance of faculty. He claimed that the faculty is the “engine” that drives the university. He then thanked Chair Ferrandino for his help during Provost Donovan's first year in his position as Provost.

The Executive Committee then presented Chair Ferrandino with gifts to thank him for his service as Chair of the Senate.

Chair Ferrandino then passed the gavel to Senator Fort as he recognized former Senate Chairs Nadia Lahutsky, Peggy Watson, and Carolyn Cagle for their past service as Chairs. He invited Senators to stay for the closing reception.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Fairchild