

Minutes of TCU Faculty Senate Meeting

September 30, 2004

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

* excused absence

Senators absent: Bonnie Blackwell, David Cross, Don Nichols, Gene Smith, Molly Weinburgh

Guests: Provost Donovan, Amy Goodson (Campus Recreation), Bob Maninger (attending as a proxy for Ranae Stetson), Janelle Stecklein (*Skiff* reporter)

Chair Blaise Ferrandino called the meeting to order at 3:35 pm and welcomed all guests.

Approval of minutes from September 2 Senate meeting

The minutes of the September 2 meeting were approved without objection or discussion.

Old business

1. Presentation of honorary degree requirements from the Chancellor's office

Chair Ferrandino presented a new form letter that will be used by the Chancellor's office to respond to external requests for information about TCU's nomination and selection process for honorary degrees. The letter outlines the Senate-approved procedure for soliciting and evaluating nominations for honorary degrees (from internal and external sources).

This letter was developed in response to concerns (from the Senate Executive Committee and from within the Chancellor's office) about a lack of clarity concerning who is to receive and respond to such requests from external sources. From now on, the Chancellor's office will field all of these requests.

Discussion followed.

Senator Cagle asked how constituencies other than faculty (e.g., Staff Assembly) are to be informed of and enabled to participate in the nominations process.

Chair Ferrandino noted that many schools limit the nominations process to faculty, or even to the faculty within a nominee's area of expertise or accomplishment. Senator Grant concurred, stating that there seems to be a rationale for a "faculty only" nominations process since it is the duty of faculty to award degrees, including honorary degrees.

Chair Ferrandino (along with Senator Fort) pointed out that TCU and other institutions often give honorary degrees to people with no academic credentials. From this standpoint, the notion of “faculty only” may not be as compelling.

Chair Ferrandino thought it would be worth discussing this question with others in the campus community. He will contact the Chair of the Staff Assembly (Emily Burgwyn) and the Chancellor to ask their views.

2. Motion from the Senate Executive Committee regarding eligibility for honorary degrees

Chair Ferrandino presented the following motion from the Executive Committee: “Individuals in the full-time employ of TCU shall not, normally, be considered candidates for honorary degrees.”

He explained the background for this motion. Over the past several years there’s been a growing sense of unease within the Senate about our lack of a clear policy in this area. At the Senate’s request, he researched the honorary degree policies of several institutions (Baylor, Houston, Vanderbilt, SMU, Texas Tech) and found, as one might expect, that these institutions rarely award honorary degrees to their own full-time employees. He also spoke to Chancellor Boschini on this matter. The Chancellor’s advice was to reflect on our own needs and traditions and to try to craft a policy that’s “right for us.”

Discussion followed on the need for this specific provision, and on the proposed language of the provision.

Based on everyone’s comments and suggestions, Chair Ferrandino proposed a restated version of the original motion: “Full-time or part-time employees of TCU will not normally be considered candidates for honorary degrees.”

Further discussion followed.

A few senators voiced concern that the word “normally” would make this a meaningless policy. In this vein, Senator Young noted that it would be unlikely to deter nominations since nominators will probably be inclined to think that their candidate merits an exception to the rule. Others suggested that such a statement of “normal” practice would nonetheless be valuable. It would give Senators a clearly defined “norm” to guide their deliberations over honorary degree nominations in cases where nominees are in the employ of the University, while also providing flexibility to deal with exceptional cases such as the recent nominations of Jim Wright and Bob Bolen.

The amended motion (as stated above) passed unanimously.

New business

1. Ms. Amy Goodson (Campus Recreation) shared information about the TCU Wellness Program, emphasizing their upgraded staff and their new 12-week “changing habits to create healthy lifestyles” program which is available to all TCU faculty and staff and their spouses with current rec center memberships.
2. Provost Donovan rose to speak to Senators about the historic significance of the TCU Core Curriculum and to introduce Senator Ed McNertney, the new Coordinator of the TCU Core Curriculum

Provost Donovan urged Senators not to forget that this Core (unlike its predecessor, the UCR) is the *faculty’s* core. It is not under the control of any college. As such, it is an enormous step toward restoring responsibility for curriculum and other vital academic matters to the faculty.

He noted that Dr. McNertney was an “obvious good choice” for the Coordinator position based on his tireless work and leadership in helping to shepherd the new core over the past 2-3 years, and despite his own skepticism about the rationale for a new core. He explained that Dr. McNertney’s position is a faculty position (49% administrative and 51% faculty) and that he will report jointly to the Provost and to the Senate. He also mentioned that the Coordinator’s office is now located in the basement of Sadler Hall, room 16E.

In closing, he urged Senators to work actively within their units to “deliver” new courses to the Core.

3. Report from Senator McNertney on the TCU Core Curriculum

Senator McNertney reported that the Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values (HMOVV) Committee has continued to meet and to approve more courses for the “columns” of the core.

He noted that the HMOVV Committee had discovered one kink in the vetting process: namely, courses with more than one instructor. He is meeting soon with the chairs of several affected departments to try to devise an appropriate vetting procedure for these courses.

Senator McNertney was enthused to report that he and the Core Implementation Committee (CIC) had just had a very positive meeting with Provost Donovan and Larry Lauer (Vice Chancellor for Marketing and Communication) to discuss the creation of “educational materials” for the Core. Vice Chancellor Lauer was very excited about the core as a vehicle that will allow him to “sell academics” to prospective students and their parents.

Senator McNertney also reported a very positive meeting with Provost Donovan and the new “core liaisons” from each school and college on campus. One outcome of this meeting was a decision to send a letter (signed by Coordinator McNertney and the core liaison from each particular school or college) to each Department Chair, seeking help in generating courses for the core.

Senator McNertney reported that Catherine Wehlburg is meeting regularly with the Registrar to stay abreast of their preparations for the new core.

He also mentioned that writing emphasis courses don’t yet have a clear vetting procedure. A working group is being formed to try to resolve this. However, he emphasized that this is not a big worry for Fall 2005 since first-year students (i.e., the group of students to whom the new core will be offered in Fall 2005) won’t be able to take these courses anyway.

In response to a question from Senator Lahutsky, Senator McNertney said that faculty are encouraged to submit courses for the Core as soon as possible so that an adequate number and variety of Core courses might be approved and “on line” by February 2005.

Related to this, he urged departments to think of their contributions to the core as a two-stage process: (1) submission and approval of existing courses; (2) submission and approval of new courses.

And once again he reminded everyone that it’s only the incoming students in Fall 2005 who will be taking the new core. Transfer students, for example, will remain under the UCR until Fall 2007.

Chair Ferrandino extended a special thanks to the core liaisons for offering to do this important work, “over and above normal Senate duties,” to help get the new core up and running.

In closing, Senator McNertney expressed his thanks to the Senate and to the Provost for entrusting him with the role of Coordinator. He said he was honored to have the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

4. Report from Senator Linda Moore (TCU Representative to the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics) on the latest thinking within the COIA on a range of issues

Senator Moore presented “Notes from Academic Integrity in Intercollegiate Athletics: Principles, Rules, and Best Practices draft” – a set of COIA recommendations that’s now available on the Faculty Senate web page. She pointed out areas of agreement and disagreement on issues such as admissions, scholarships, curricular integrity, total time commitment, and season length and scheduling.

Since COIA is a nationwide coalition of Faculty Senates, Senator Moore urged all Senators (indeed, all faculty) to e-mail her with their questions or comments on the coalition’s latest set of recommendations.

Announcements

Chair Ferrandino announced that he would postpone discussion of “how to distribute documents to Senators in advance of monthly Senate meetings” until our next meeting. Meanwhile, all relevant documents for the November meeting will be distributed in the same manner we’ve used in the past.

At Chair Ferrandino’s request, Provost Donovan rose to say a few words about the next steps in the VIA (Vision in Action, strategic planning) process. He thanked Senators for their participation in the September 11 conference and said that the results of those discussions are now available on the VIA web site.

He also urged Senators to participate actively in the discussion and formation of their respective school or college plans. Each college is supposed to hold a village meeting” in the next few weeks to discuss these plans.

Finally, he noted that a special VIA committee on Graduate Education had been formed. Its members include: Lazelle Benefield (Nursing), Joe Butler (Music), Bill Cron (Business), Bonnie Melhart (Computer Science/Science and Engineering), Mike Slattery (Geology), Molly Weinburgh (Education), Dan Williams (English), and Melissa Young (Communication). The committee’s charge is to prepare a position paper within the next few weeks that will articulate an appropriate vision and goals for graduate education at TCU and describe a University program (product mix) strategy that can serve as a guide for the deans as they define the developmental paths (strategies/initiatives) for graduate education in their colleges/schools.

Adjournment

Chair Ferrandino adjourned the meeting at 5:05 pm.