

**TCU Faculty Senate Meeting  
December 2, 2004**

**Minutes**

**Senators present:** Joan Aker, Arnie Barkman, Donelle Barnes, David Bedford, Bonnie Blackwell, Carolyn Cagle, Dennis Cheek, Alan Dettlaff, Sharon Fairchild, Blaise Ferrandino, Andy Fort, Sally Fortenberry, Rob Garnett, George Gilbert, Elisabeth Gillaspay, David Grant, Tom Guderjan, Charles Hannon, Jack Hill,\* Jack Jones, Paul King, Nadia Lahutsky, Steve Levering, Suzy Lockwood, Ed McNertney, Linda Moore,\* Don Nichols, Robert Nielson, C.A. Quarles, Ranga Ramasesh, Dick Rinewalt, Magnus Rittby, Bill Ryan, Ellen Page Shelton, Gene Smith, Carol Thompson, Peggy Watson, Molly Weinberg, Keith Whitworth, Dan Williams, Stu Youngblood, Melissa Young.

\*excused

**Senators absent:** David Cross, Joel Mitchell, Joseph Butler, T.J. Walsh, Ranae Stetson, John Lovett

**Guests:** Melissa Canady, Provost Nowell Donovan, Raymond Brown, Janelle Stecklein (*Skiff* reporter)

Chair Blaise Ferrandino called the meeting to order and welcomed the guests.

**Approval of minutes**

October 28, 2004 Senate meeting were approved with no corrections or additions.

**Business**

1. Report on University Budget Advisory Committee

Chair Ferrandino gave background information on how this new committee was established last year. Since Vice Chancellor Carol Campbell was unable to be at this Senate meeting, Senator Mags Rittby, one of the Senate representatives on the committee, made a presentation on the work of the committee this semester. Senator Rittby first presented the time schedule of the budget process and then explained the guidelines for the development of the budget. Some of the issues being discussed are: a possible 8% tuition increase, a 3% merit increase, a 6% increase in fringe benefits. He also explained a new rule concerning endowment spending, called the “50-50 hybrid rule,” which will replace the former “rolling average” system that TCU has always used in determining its budget. The aim will be to bring endowment spending down to 5%.

Senator Rittby also pointed out that TCU is working towards creating a longer term budget plan, instead of its traditional year to year system. Planners are also trying to improve compensation for staff through the work of the Compensation Task Force. Finally, Senator Rittby said that discussions had taken place regarding the Campus Master Plan as well as

proposals from Ed McNertney, the Coordinator of the Core, for resources necessary for the new core curriculum.

Senator Ed McNertney took the floor to explain the proposals that he and Senators Rittby and Stu Youngblood had put together to assure that the Core needs would be put into the budget early; he emphasized the importance of getting new Core budgetary items defined now because there are so many other budget requests coming forward. Their proposal included a request for 30 new faculty lines.

In response to a question regarding how funding for the Vision In Action initiative fits in to the budget, Provost Donovan explained that requests totaling \$11 million incremental funds have been submitted. Deans have asked for 33 new faculty positions, some of which dovetail with Core requests. He pointed out that it would obviously be difficult to accommodate all requests, given that the budget increase is anticipated to be much less.

## 2. Report on FESSE from Melissa Canady

Melissa Canady, Director of Assessment, took the floor to make her second presentation of the results of the FESSE survey. She reminded Senators that at the last Senate meeting she presented the results concerning how faculty spend their work time. This presentation focused on the perceptions of faculty of student engagement activities compared to student experiences as reported on the NESSE, essentially a comparison between FESSE and NESSE on these subjects.

She reviewed the results in the areas of feedback to students from faculty, discussions about diversity, discussions with students of a different race or ethnicity than one's own, and conversations with students who have different religious, political, or personal values than their own.

Ms. Canady also reviewed the survey responses concerning the importance of co-curricular activities, active civic engagement, and passive engagement with current events as presented in the media, fundraising activities, and the importance of undergraduate leadership in community activities. Other survey issues presented were: the importance of undergraduates performing research projects with faculty members outside course requirements, the study of foreign languages, and the importance of study abroad experiences.

After presenting these survey results, Ms. Canady answered questions, mentioning how TCU responses compare to those of faculty in other universities. She invited Senators and other interested individuals to contact her if they have questions or would like further information.

## 3. Report on the Faculty Assembly

Senator Sharon Fairchild took the floor to report on the Faculty Assembly held on November 9, 2004. The Assembly took the form of a panel discussion on the progress and implementation of the new core curriculum. The members of the panel were: Daryl Schmidt (Religion), Larry Lauer (Vice Chancellor for Marketing), Vanessa Lanzarotti (Registrar's Office), Claire Sanders (History), Theresa Gaul (English), and Ed McNertney (Coordinator of Core Curriculum). Each panel member described his or her role and contributions to the development of the new core. The panel answered a number of questions from the attending faculty members. These questions pertained to practical issues, such as how to

submit proposals, as well as other areas such as inter-disciplinary courses, the role of service learning, advising, and assessment and evaluation of the core.

#### 4. Report from Senator David Grant, Chair of the Academic Excellence Committee

Senator Grant explained that he was making an interim report on the committee's work this semester. He first presented statistical information on the average GPA of TCU graduates over the past eighteen years. This information indicated that there has been a steady increase since 1986 and that the average is now over 3.15. He also presented statistics that reflect an increase in the percentage of students graduating with Latin honors.

Senator Grant next distributed information concerning the granting of plus and minus grades at other universities, which the committee members had investigated. Committee members discovered that, of the 120 universities that they investigated, 82.5% have some type of plus and minus grades. (The universities that were included came from the list of top universities as published in the *U.S. News and World Report*). Discussion ensued concerning the possibility of introducing such grades at TCU. Senator Grant reported that his conversations with the Registrar indicated that it is possible to do this at TCU with minimal difficulty. He reported that the members of the AEC had discussed their findings and that the committee would be working on a proposal to introduce plus and minus grades. Committee members will speak to Senators and other faculty to solicit opinions; they will also investigate ways that such grading systems are done at other institutions. The Senate can expect to hear more about this issue in the spring. Senator Paul King stated that this had already been tried for one year at TCU. He suggested the committee find out why it was abandoned in order to avoid problems that came up at that time.

Chair Ferrandino mentioned that many of his colleagues in his college were very interested in having these types of grades. He asked whether or not any universities in the survey used numerical grades instead of letter grades. Senator Grant said that they did not find any universities giving exclusively numerical grades. Professor Canady asked if moving to a plus/minus grading system would reduce grade inflation. Discussion ensued on grade inflation and its causes, such as the higher SAT and ACT scores of TCU students and smaller class size. Chair Ferrandino expressed appreciation to the committee for giving the Senate the opportunity to discuss these important issues.

#### 5. Announcements

Chair Ferrandino took the floor to make the following announcements:

**--Progress on the Core.** There have been many courses vetted and approved thus far. These courses can be viewed on the Core Web page at: [www.core.tcu.edu](http://www.core.tcu.edu). Chair Ferrandino reported that many faculty members have found the process to be rewarding and informative. Faculty seem to appreciate having the opportunity to explain in detail what they do in their courses as they propose them for the Core.

**--Executive Committee nominations.** Chair Ferrandino called for nominations. At the moment, the office of Chair elect will need to be filled; he asked Senators to send nominations to Dick Rinewalt.

**--Honorary degree nominations.** Chair Ferrandino reminded Senators that the official deadline for honorary degree nominations is in January. However, he emphasized that if nominations are submitted that late, the degree might not get awarded during the spring term because there won't be time for the Senate to approve it and send it forward. As a result, he encouraged people to make nominations before the holidays.

**-- Task force on Tenure, Promotion, Grievance.** The task force members have met with Shari Barnes of Human Resources to discuss the Conflict Resolution Policy. Work is ongoing. Provost Donovan has suggested that the Senate consider the Conflict Resolution Policy and the Tenure and Promotion Grievance Policy together, with an eye towards putting them together.

**--Academic Calendar changes.** Chair Ferrandino reported that Vice Chancellor Don Mills has called a meeting to discuss the proposals that were made concerning changing the Thanksgiving and Fall breaks. The proposals that were presented at the last Senate meeting are the ones that will be considered. Vice Chancellor Mills' office will be concerned with the logistics, and the University Council will have to approve any changes to the calendar. Chair Ferrandino encouraged Senators who may have other proposals to send them to Senator Suzy Lockwood, Chair of Student Relations Committee.

**--Emendation policy for the TCU Core Curriculum.** Chair Ferrandino distributed a draft of an Emendation policy for the TCU Core Curriculum that the Core Curriculum Committee has drawn up. He explained that it is being distributed now for Senators' consideration and that it will be brought back as a motion in January. He further explained that the Executive Committee, the CIC, and the Provost have been involved in the drafting of this policy. He explained how the various types of possible changes to the Core were broken into three areas, depending on the level of importance of the change. He further outlined the various parts of the policy, with examples of the kinds of things that may be considered less important or more important. He asked for Senators' input on this between now and January. Senator Ed McNertney explained the importance of having a way of evaluating and making changes.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Fairchild