

TSU FACULTY SENATE MEETING

4 February 2010

Minutes

Howard Beeth, Secretary

Members Present: Edieth Wu, Chair; Lalita Sen, Vice-Chair; Howard Beeth, Secretary; Alexis Brooks De Vita, Editor, *The Faculty Speaks*; Macaulay Akpffiong (Senator, Pharmacy & Health Sciences); Thorpe Butler (Senator, COLABS); Anna James (Senator, TMSL); Wei Li (Senator, COST); Emlyn Norman (Senator, COLABS); Andrea Shelton (Senator, Pharmacy & Health Sciences); Sara White (Senator, COLABS). **Total: 11.**

Members Absent: Demetrius Kazakos, Asst. Secretary; Rasoul Saneifard, Treasurer; C.J. Tymczak, Parliamentarian; Kiran Chilakamarri (Senator, COST); Daniel Georges-Abeyie (Senator, SOPA); Doris Jackson (Senator, Pharmacy & Health Sciences); Michael Sollars (Senator, The Graduate School); Johnnie Williams (Senator, JHJSOB); Zivar Yousefipour (Senator, Pharmacy & Health Sciences). **Total: 9.**

Agenda Items

Call to Order

Chairperson Wu called the meeting to order at 3:15p when a sufficient number of Senators finally arrived to create a quorum. She introduced Dr. Cherry Gooden, head of the university Ceremonies Committee.

Ceremonies Committee Report and Discussion

Dr. Gooden explained that our university has established a committee to examine current ceremonies, perform a cost/benefit analysis of them, and make recommendations to university administrators for final policy decisions. She said there was some feeling on the campus that there were too many ceremonies that were too poorly attended and too costly. Her committee is gathering information about how best to compile data about ceremonies from faculty and students—via email or from paper forms. She solicited Senators' suggestions.

In the discussion that followed, Senators considered how to collect data as well as the pros and cons of individual ceremonies. In addition, many individual Senators commented on current ceremony practice, including the following:

Faculty Speaks editor Brooks De Vita noted that the timing of graduation ceremonies meant that some students participate in graduation ceremonies who don't, in fact, graduate because the ceremonies take place before rather than after grades are submitted. She added that graduation ceremonies should certainly include distinguished student speakers.

Senator Butler complained that the plethora of ceremonies take valuable time away classroom instruction, a concern of some faculty.

Senator Norman suggested breaking one long, somewhat tedious graduation ceremony into smaller ones, such as one short joint ceremony followed by various college ceremonies.

Senator Li proposed that having food and a venue for post-ceremony celebrations would draw bigger crowds.

Dr. Gooden thanked Senators for their comments and promised that a survey form of some type would soon be distributed to all faculty in order to gather more data on the subject of ceremonies.

Chair's Announcements

Chairperson Wu distributed to Senators the results of the voting for membership in the Faculty Advisory Committee; the Rank, Tenure, Promotion, and Salary Committee; and the Faculty Hearing Committee. Voting for the Grievance Committee is done within the various colleges, and she asked Senators to inform her of the results of those elections. Discussion confirmed that the term of faculty elected to these committees begins at the time of their election, although the length of terms varies on different committees. At Vice-Chair Sen's suggestion, Chairperson Wu said that she would double-check the qualifications for all faculty to serve on the committees to which they were elected.

In a related discussion about the reputation among faculty of the Faculty Senate, Secretary Beeth said that it could be improved if the faculty community was better informed about the efforts and accomplishments of the Senate in its behalf. He emphasized the importance of regularly circulating email copies of Senate meeting minutes as well as copies of *The Faculty Speaks* newsletter to all faculty regularly, every month. Chairperson Wu agreed that this was a top priority.

When Provost Ohia arrived, Chairperson Wu introduced him and yielded the floor to him.

Provost Ohia & Rank and Promotion Standards

Provost Ohia began by discussing the overall economic climate in which the university functioned, which is not especially good these days. The State of Texas has mandated budget

cuts for all universities, including TSU. Further, university budgets are enrollment driven, and Spring enrollment figures are not yet in. Thus, Provost Ohia was not optimistic about such matters as faculty raises this year. Secretary Beeth wondered if faculty accomplishments this year could be credited on next year's faculty evaluation, perhaps in the form of awarding extra merit points. Editor Brooks De Vita was also concerned that faculty activity during years when no raises were awarded would simply go unrewarded. Chairperson Wu said that she thought that there was a provision for carry-over merit raises, but Provost Ohia said that this would be difficult to do. Nevertheless, he pledged that faculty accomplishments would not be forgotten and would be recognized in some fashion, perhaps in the form of "other rewards" in lieu of money.

Regarding the operation of the important Rank, Tenure, Promotion, and Salary Committee, Provost Ohia referred to a discussion document titled "Promotion and Tenure Standards/Organizing the Portfolio, 2010-2011", copies of which had been distributed to all Senators. Provost Ohia is of the opinion that the University RTPS Committee evaluate all applications independently and make its recommendation to the Provost, rather than functioning as "default system" used only by faculty to appeal adverse decisions.

Senator Shelton queried the Provost about the use of external evaluators in the evaluation of TSU faculty. The Provost pointed out that this is common practice at other institutions and is already being used by some TSU colleges. He said external evaluators could possibly be identified by individual faculty or by others—this has yet to be determined. In general, he believes that broad-based applicant reviews are more helpful and informative than strictly in-house evaluations. However, Provost Ohia admitted that standards do differ from one institution to another and that this would have to be considered to avoid unfair apples-to-oranges comparisons. He also said, in response to a follow-up question by Senator Shelton, that budget considerations would not affect tenure and promotion decisions this year.

On related matters, Vice-Chair Sen cautioned that faculty should not serve at different levels (departmental, college, university) of the same committee. Provost Ohia agreed, saying that faculty should exercise the right to recuse themselves in appropriate situations. In reply to a question from Senator Shelton, the Provost said there should be no prohibition for Senators to be automatically excluded from service on university-level or other committees unless there is an obvious conflict of interest. It was also noted that faculty serving on RTPS committees should be at least equal in rank to those whom they evaluated.

Visiting Professor Opolot from the College of Public Affairs mentioned that he had in the past chaired the University RTPS Committee. He found its rules and regulations imprecise and so lauded the efforts of current administrators to clarify its protocols.

Senator Shelton mentioned that some faculty were eager to participate in the Haitian relief effort. Provost Ohia supported such efforts but cautioned that state funds could not be allocated for this purpose, worthy though it is.

Chairperson Wu and the Provost concluded the Provost's visit with a long and technical back-and-forth about the proposed timeline for promotion and tenure review. She was concerned primarily that applicants' appeal time not be compromised. Provost Ohia said the proposed dates would carefully be reviewed and asked all in the room to forward any further suggestions directly to him.

Upon leaving, Provost Ohia thanked the Senators for their cooperation, and the Senate thanked Provost Ohia for his continuing efforts in behalf of our university.

After Provost Ohia's departure, Editor Brooks De Vita had a further question concerning committee appointments and how committee membership was determined. Chairperson Wu explained that policy for staffing university-level committees called for a slate of faculty to be elected directly by the faculty and that administrators then selected from the slate those faculty who actually would serve on committees.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as submitted, with one typo error noted for correction.

Parking Committee Update

Senator Butler informed the Senate that he had expressed faculty concerns re: the campus parking situation to the Parking Committee, which has elected a graduate student as chair.

Faculty Workload Committee Update

Senator Sen reported that the committee has met three times and tries to meet every two weeks. Progress has been hampered due to the fact that two college representatives—Professors E. Bun Lee from the School of Communications and Mammo Woldie from the College of Business—habitually fail to attend meetings. Notwithstanding, the committee is in the process of trying to compare the workload situation at TSU with that of other, comparable institutions.

Faculty Speaks Update

Editor Brooks De Vita accepted the congratulations of Senators for reviving the newsletter. She said that she looked forward to being able to email it directly to all faculty every month and to having it posted on the Senate's website. Secretary Beeth seconded the importance of the newsletter in connecting the Senate to its faculty constituency and keeping the latter informed about Senate activity.

Phased Retirement Committee Update

Senator Butler reported that the committee has entered active discussions with university administrator and CFO Jim McShan. According to Senator Butler, McShan's initial position is that to protect faculty retirement benefits, faculty should first retire and then go on phased retirement, odd though this may sound. McShan explained that retirement incomes are sometimes based on the average of the last five years of salary and that phased retirement at that time would sharply reduce a faculty member's salary and hence reduce faculty retirement income. Negotiations continue.

Old Business

Vice-Chair Sen reminded the Senators that the Committee on Evaluations, which administers the annual faculty evaluation of TSU administrators, needs additional volunteers to conduct these important evaluations in each of the colleges. She noted that Secretary Beeth and Professor James Opolot of the College of Public Affairs have offered their service, but more volunteers are required to conduct the evaluation, which must be done soon.

New Business

Senator Butler complained that students are increasingly self-registering on-line and taking courses without the required pre-requisites. Editor Brooks De Vita noted that the Retention and Graduation Committee is also working on this vexing problem. Vice-Chair Sen suggested that part of the remedy might be for all advisors to check the records of their advisees on Banner before registering them. Editor Brooks De Vita wondered if the university did not need paid advisors to handle all student registration. Senator Akpaffiong shared the fact that the College of Pharmacy did not have this problem and suggested that its registration system perhaps could serve as a model for the rest of the university.

The hour being late, Senators agreed to postpone further business and adjourned their first meeting in 2010 at 5:20p.