

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

August 23, 2011

Minutes

Present: A. Allen (President), G. Preuss (President-Elect), P. Lyons (Past President), J. Schmertz (Secretary)

J. Ahmad, C. Bachman, M. Benavides, C. Burnett, T. Chiaviello, N. Chu, G. Evans, S. Farris, V. Hrynkiw, P. Kintzele, P. Li, A. Pavelich, S. Penkar, R. Scott, A. Sikka, L. Spears, K. Switzer, B. Waller, K. Wright, Zafirris, V.

Absent: A. Gomez-Rivas, D. Shelley

The first 45 minutes of the normal Senate meeting time were reserved for an introduction of new senators and officers and an orientation to Senate business, including Robert's Rules of Order. At 3:15, the regular meeting was convened.

Report from Senate President Austin Allen

Allen summarized a Faculty Senate "President's report" that he had just sent to senators (this is attached to the minutes as "Appendix A"). There were two major issues FSEC (Faculty Senate Executive Council) dealt with over the summer. The first was concerns about the 4/3 courseload. These concerns had arisen as a result of a request from the provost over the summer for faculty to account for their research achievements in a way that required separating work accomplished in the "4" semester from work accomplished in the "3" semester. When FSEC met with President Flores and Provost Chapman, they were told the reason for the request was a reporting deadline to the Board of Regents. Both Flores and Chapman affirmed their support for the 4/3 courseload. The second major issue was concerns about a pilot project for online course evaluations conducted over Summer II. In order to receive their course grades, students had to complete the teacher evaluation, which created the undesirable possibility of one evaluation exerting influence on the other. The explanation given for this system was that it was a one-time strategy aimed at generating a large sample size. Since we appear to be moving to an online evaluation system soon, FSEC member Gail Evans was asked to provide faculty assistance and perspectives to IT.

Some new issues came up after FS President Allen sent out his agenda for the August 23 meeting. First, a set of tenure dossier requirements came down from the provost last week. This has created much anxiety, particularly among faculty coming up for promotion/tenure this year. Allen would like the item placed on the agenda for the next meeting of Faculty Senate.

Second, Social Sciences, English, and Mathematics have experienced "deep and sudden" cuts in the number of course releases that program coordinators receive for their work. (Other departments may have experienced similar cuts as well; Allen is currently trying to piece the

information together from the chairs.) Provost Chapman has stated that the late notice of these cuts was a result of miscommunication.

Farris asked for the course release issue to be put on the agenda for next meeting. We need to know exactly how and when the cuts occurred; “we need to track this so that it never happens again.”

Benavides noted that the tenure and promotion portfolio requirements recently sent down were very different from those she followed last year. Are the requirements in effect as of this year? Wright, who is applying this year, said he was just told by his Dean that they were. Waller noted that he was told otherwise. Lyons stated that different departments had heard different things. Allen said Provost Chapman had promised to talk with him this week about the issue. October 1 is the deadline for applications for promotion and tenure.

Please read and respond to the Strategic Plan. Faculty input is important, and there are many good ideas in it. It was sent by Provost Chapman last spring.

Senate Past-President Lyons promoted a conference in Austin on shared governance that is being co-sponsored by Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). He is encouraging Senators and FSEC to go. The event takes place Saturday, October 29 at the Grand Plaza Hotel from 8 AM-5:30. Topics include faculty handbooks and shared governance (topics of great importance to UHD), also 7 myths about academic tenure and freedom and government relations. Lyons noted that we are being faced with a “really big challenge” to shared governance at UHD. Registration fee is only \$10.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved with no changes.

Elections to FSEC

Allen called for nominations for Members-at-Large to join the current Senate Officers on FSEC (Faculty Senate Executive Council). FSEC meets on the off-Tuesdays when Senate does not meet, to aid the Faculty Senate President in putting together the agenda for Senate meetings. They also act on behalf of Senate during times when Senate does not regularly meet. Schmertz nominated Anjoo Sikka. Preuss nominated Bill Waller. Spears nominated Gail Evans. Benavides nominated Larry Spears. All accepted their nominations except for Spears. Preuss noted that Senate could vote by hand to approve the slate.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the slate. Sikka, Waller, and Evans were unanimously approved.

Election to UH-SCIP (UH Standing Committee on Intellectual Property)

We need an alternate for Faculty member Poonam Gulati on this system-wide committee. At the end of the year we will devise a system for replacing members for these 3-year terms. For now we just need someone to substitute for Gulati when she cannot attend. Steve London, who had nominated himself via email to Allen, was elected.

Discussion on CEC replacement (Credentials and Elections Committee)

Plamen Simeonov, who was elected to this committee, cannot serve this semester because he is in Hong Kong, and the committee needs to be physically present on campus to distribute ballots and count votes. Timothy Redl has agreed to step into his place for a semester. Allen asked for a vote to approve this substitution. Sikka objected that members are elected to Senate committees by full terms; Redl could only take over Simeonov's entire term. Lyons asked when Simeonov's term ended. Allen said he was not sure; when he originally called for nominees, he did not realize the position required two-year staggered terms for continuity. It was decided that Simeonov would serve a one-year term to enable others to work for two years, and that the other committee members would fill in for Simeonov this semester in his absence where needed.

Remarks from President Flores

Flores welcomed the Senate to a new year but warned faculty to expect "pain not only with parking but with the budget process." He mentioned Sikka, Waller, Lyons and Preuss and their work on the High-Impact Experience as an example of how the university can work together to achieve its goals.

Flores said that when UHD built the budget this semester, we didn't build in enough money. We built a budget that would put 1.8 million in reserve assuming we hit a 3.5% increase in student credit hours. We have taken a hit in our budget of about 10.1 million dollars in general revenue and employee retirement monies. Benefit reductions were cut by 1.8 million. We did not anticipate the benefits cuts; they came through on budget riders. We thought even if we didn't make the 3.5% SCH increase we would be okay because we had 1.8 million in reserve but it turned out that was how much the cuts were.

This all gets back to the importance of enrollment. Good news is credit hours per student are up. Last year at this time it was 9.8 SCH; this year we are averaging about 10.3. Students are taking more courses. We want to keep enrollment up, particularly at the graduate level. On the 20th day we will know if we made our 3.5% enrollment goal. If we do so, we will have made the necessary cuts. We need to make sure we retain our students.

Flores asked that as we work on class scheduling, thinking about January sessions, and making online offerings, we should look to building demand. He emphasized that he was not encouraging faculty to water down their courses or grade easier. He believes that over time as we implement our admissions policy, we will see better-prepared students and more rigor in our courses. If we are below 3.5%, we have to look at other cuts.

Schmertz asked what exactly happens on October 3 if we do not make 3.5% enrollment increase. Flores said he wanted to avoid forced staff furloughs; we have these on the table as a possibility but he does not want to do it. There might be other things that can be done on the faculty side. He is more interested in improving the big picture—enrollment, retention, graduation as a whole—than in smaller numbers like class sizes.

Montgomery (Vice President of Student Success and Enrollment Management) noted that UHD is still registering students, so the numbers will go up and down until Friday. We are contacting

students who have not paid. She said she would send out the enrollment numbers later the same evening to “the president’s cabinet.”

Sikka talked about various cuts that hit faculty over the summer (program coordinator course releases, ORC money, faculty development), a period during which the senate has not met. She asked what happened to Budget and Efficiencies Task Force recommendations. Were they fully implemented? There were other cuts recommended by them that did not impact the instructional aspects of the university.

Flores said that some measures recommended by the Task Force had been adopted, but nobody wanted to see “what happened on Friday” (the course release cuts). He said there was miscommunication, as these decisions were made earlier. He apologized to coordinators and to adjuncts who got bumped.

Schmertz asked if each department had the same proportional amount of course releases cut; what formula was used to determine which departments received greater or lesser cuts in course releases? Flores responded that Provost Chapman would be better able to answer the question if he were here. (Chapman was unable to attend the meeting.)

Wright asked Flores if the guidelines for preparation of the tenure and promotion documents were meant to be in effect for this year; he had been told they were but others had heard differently. Flores said he did not know. However, there has been discussion between the chairs and Provost Chapman regarding differences among departments in how things count toward tenure. Flores wants to make sure faculty members are not penalized for differing standards.

New Business

Allen asked to cut the discussion short so that Senate could move to the next agenda item, a resolution on shared governance. He explained that there was concern on both the Senate side and the Provost’s office about policy revision getting “gummed up” in the process. Chapman had presented some ideas about how Academic Affairs Council should function at an AAC meeting. However, since our shared governance policy states that the Senate and the President need to agree to make changes to the shared governance policy before changes can be considered, Senate needs to discuss whether it wants to “allow changes to happen.” He asked Senators to contemplate “opening up that discussion” and laying out some core values from the Senate side to guide future discussions.

Spears moved that Senate make the shared governance resolution the first order of business for the next meeting. Evans seconded.

Farris pointed out that the tenure portfolio was already on the agenda and more timely; she thought this should be the most immediate priority. Pavelich said he agreed with Farris. He pointed out that the resolution had been passed out last week and said he was ready to vote yes on it today although he didn’t agree with all of it. However, given the short amount of time allowed to new business, he was against Spears’ motion because he agreed the tenure issue took precedence.

Allen asked if Senate was ready to vote on Spears' motion to make the shared governance resolution the first item of business on September 6. Schmertz called the question. The motion failed, 20 to 4. This means that the tenure portfolio will be the first item of new business.

Senators were urged to share the resolution with their colleagues. Allen will send it out again.

Respectfully submitted,

Johanna Schmertz, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of English

Faculty Senate Secretary

APPENDIX A: President's Report

Presented to the UHD Faculty Senate

August 23, 2011

Here is my report to the UHD Faculty Senate for August 23, 2011. I do not plan to read these reports during Senate Meetings. I will distribute them to Senators as soon as I finish writing them up, and I ask the Senators to distribute them to their colleagues. At the meeting I will ask unanimous consent to include the report in the minutes, and provide highlights. I have given myself five minutes to do so. Senators should call for orders of the day if I go over ten minutes

I had hoped I could do so a few days before the meeting. But new issues pop up regularly, and that means some weeks I will need to wait until the last minute to get something out. This week is one of those weeks.

I. My Agenda for the Year

Since this report is my first, I should say something about my goals and priorities for the year. My primary goal is to move policy through the faculty side of the shared governance process. Over the past year, I have become quite concerned about the degree to which the policy writing process at UHD has become gummed up. I want to do all I can to get policy through on the faculty side of the process. I will be working with the shared governance committees on this issue, and I will be calling on you for help. This may require some committee work on our part as well, and I will be working hard to keep the Senate focused and informed.

II. Summer

FSEC continued to meet over the summer. Two issues stand out:

1. *UHD's continuing commitment to the 4/3 teaching load.* During the summer Provost Chapman asked faculty to provide an accounting of research activity over the past year, and asked that work be broken down according to what had been done in the three- and

four-course semesters. FSEC received a number of inquiries about the perceived redundancy of the request (since we already provide reports annually), and a few enquires as to whether the inquiry was being used to build a case against UHD's current work load policy. FSEC met jointly with President Flores and Provost Chapman. They related to us that the reporting was required mainly because of reporting for the Board of Regents, which had asked for up-to-date information on productivity. Both Drs. Flores and Chapman expressed their support for the 4/3.

2. *Online evaluations.* In Summer II, UHD ran a pilot online evaluation for all courses in anticipation of our moving toward an online evaluation system for all courses in the university. A number of faculty raised concerns about, among other things, the timing of the evaluation itself and the fact that students were required to click through the evaluation in order to receive their grades. We also had concerns about the small sample size. We again met with President Flores and Provost Chapman. Dr. Chapman explained that the point of the pilot was to test whether the technology was working properly and that the reason for requiring that students go through the evaluation to receive their grades was to ensure that the test had an adequate sample size. We found this explanation to be reasonable and asked that Senator Evans work his office so that we may address faculty concerns as the new system goes forward.

III. Current Issues

Since I sent out the agenda, two new issues have emerged.

1. *The New Rank and Tenure Dossier.* Last week, Dr. Chapman released new guidelines for putting together an R&T Report. I think everyone acknowledges the issue with the giant binders that are submitted, but faculty have raised concerns about what the smaller dossier leaves out, the fact that departmental R&T committees may be viewing substantially different files than what goes up, as well as the relationship of these new requirements to policy. All of these issues strike me as things that can be worked out. I have asked Senators to forward comments and concerns, will soon have opportunity to discuss the matter with Provost Chapman. I plan to put this issue on the agenda for our next meeting.
2. *Course releases.* The Departments of Social Science, English, and Mathematics have reported deep and, they claim, sudden cuts in the number of course releases. I became aware of these cuts (in Social Sciences) last Friday, although I readily admit to having known that course releases were on the table (I did not know of the timing or scale). These cuts have caused considerable anxiety. Over the weekend, I was contemplating swift action on the matter—I wrote a resolution. As I have been looking into the matter, however, I find that I need more time. I have asked the chairs to provide information on the scale and scope of their department's cuts, and that information is trickling in (as one would expect during the first week of school). I also have an explanation from Dr. Chapman. I am reluctant to act at this point because, quite frankly, I don't know exactly where to point, and I don't want to call anyone out incorrectly.