

**FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

15 January 2015
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Austin Hall

Members Present (19):

Irfan Ahmed (COBA), Nancy Baker (CHSS), Don Bumpass (COBA), Madhusudan Choudhary (COS), John Domino (CHSS), Diane Dowdey (CHSS), Karla Edison (COE), Randy Garner (CJ), Deborah Hatton (COFAMC), Richard Henriksen (COE), Mark Klespis (COS), James Landa (COHS), Paul Loeffler (COS), David McTier (COFAMC), Sheryl Murphy-Manley (COFAMC), Gary Oden (COHS), Lisa Shen (NGL), Stacy Ulbig (CHSS), Tony Watkins (COFAMC)

Members Not Present (12):

Helen Berg (COE), Tracy Bilsing (CHSS), Jonathan Breazeale (COBA), Donna Cox (COE), James Crosby (CHSS), Mark Frank (COBA), Joan Hudson (COS), Jeffrey Littlejohn (CHSS), Dennis Longmire (CJ), Diana Nabors (COE), Dwayne Pavelock (COS), Douglas Ullrich (COS),

Called to Order: 3:30 pm in Austin Hall by Chair Nancy Baker

Minutes Approved: Minutes for the December 4, 2014 and May 2, 2013 meetings were approved unanimously with minor revisions.

Senators welcomed Dr. John Domino, who was returning from faculty development leave.

Chair's Report

A written report (see Related Documents) was pre-circulated via email.

Faculty Evaluation System (FES)

A senator expressed disappointment with changes to the FES revision plan: it is disheartening to learn that that even though Provost Hebert had asked faculty to reflect upon the values and principles to be represented in the FES policy, the actual task of rewriting the policy has been taken out of faculty hands and assigned to two deans.

Dr. Baker reassured senators that the provost had asked Dean Edmonson and Lyons to tackle the revisions to make whole process more efficient. Senators and the general faculty body will have opportunities to review and provide feedback about the FES policy once a draft of the revisions is available. Instead of asking everyone to point out known issues with the current FES, the provost believed it would be more constructive for faculty to evaluate and comment on the proposed FES changes.

Furthermore, some of the provost's comments in the chair's report were meant to address specific FES concerns from the College of Education. Dean Edmonson had planned to begin a college-wide FES review, which generated some concerns about potential conflicts. However, Provost Hebert felt that the university and college-level FES revisions can proceed concurrently, since revision efforts would actually reinforce the same institutional values and goals.

A different senator expressed frustrations with some administrators' disregard of the FES process. Specifically, during last year's evaluations, one of the deans had decided that the FES established by the previous administration was not suited for determining merit pay, and opted to use a different method to assign merit pay increases for the college.

In the ensuing discussion, it was determined that the dean and the departments had followed the established evaluation criteria in determining faculty FES scores. However, instead of using FES scores as the determinant for merit pay increases, merit assignment in the college was based on the dean's assessment of each faculty member's scholarly contributions. Consequently, some faculty with higher FES scores received lower merit pay increases than colleagues with lower FES scores. The senator had raised the issue with the college administration without satisfactory resolution.

Another senator in the same college felt that some of the frustration is the result of growing pains from college reorganizations and leadership changes. It will take some time for a new college to develop its identity and adjust to the practices of each department and discipline. On the other hand, senators from a different college also experienced similar issues with their dean. In this case, merit pay increases were applied as a percentage of the faculty salaries – like across-the-board market adjustments – without regard for the FES scores.

Since the subject under discussion concerns the assignment of merit pay increases, a senator wondered whether the recourse should be handled through grievance filing or through communication with the provost. Dr. Baker would be happy to bring the issue to Provost Hebert's attention. The provost is aware of the general faculty's discontent with merit pay assignments and has asked the deans to look into a more consistent merit pay system. The provost has also been working on his own study to assess degree of correlation between FES scores and the amount of merit pay increases.

Therefore, it was decided that the senator who first opened the discussion will develop a recommendation for the consistent use of FES in assessing faculty performance and assigning merit pay increases across colleges. The recommendation will be reviewed and voted on by Senate at the next meeting. Dr. Baker will then bring the resulting Senate resolution to the provost.

In addition, one senator also reminded Senate and the provost that the Faculty Evaluation Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee had recommended that the revised FES policy be published one year ahead of application.

Last, there were some concerns that Provost Hebert had previously indicated he does not wish to dictate the way for colleges and department to determine merit pay increases. Therefore, some senators would also like to recommend specifically for the provost to meet with the deans to discuss the use of the FES and establish some mutual understandings and consistencies in FES applications.

Non-tenure Track Faculty Working Conditions

Members of the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee expressed disappointments with the Provost's recent decision to create an ad-hoc disappointment committee to create a policy for multi-year contracts for lecturers and clinical faculty. Senate had begun to examine this issue during the fall and had brought it to the provost's attention, yet Academic Affairs now seems to be taking the charge, along with several others, back.

Dr. Baker assured senators she would share these concerns with the provost, although this particular policy initiative is most likely due to time considerations, as it would be beneficial to have a policy in place as soon as possible. A member of the Faculty Affairs committee pointed out that requested data necessary to draft a policy recommendation was not supplied to the Senate until December 4th.

Compensation for Independent Studies

The Chair's report had noted that some departments in CHSS have been processing undergraduate independent studies in a way that compensates the department chair, rather than the faculty member actually supervising the students. A quick survey of senators indicated at least five departments from CHSS, FAMC, and COHS are following the same practice. Moreover, 8 of the 19 senators present were unsure of the actual policies in their departments.

Since faculty are generally not compensated for independent studies, the chairs should not profit from such work done by others, either. Therefore, the Provost has already asked Dean Zink to address this issue in CHSS. One senator pointed out that when the chair is taking credit for an independent studies in a department, the "teacher of record" on students' transcripts would not match the actual instructors for their courses. Dr. Baker will share this information with Dean Zink and also alert the provost of such practices in other colleges.

In addition to the independent studies issues at the undergraduate level, one senator also noted that when required graduate courses failed to make due to class size, junior faculty in some departments have been pressured into teaching multiple uncompensated "independent studies" for graduate students in place of the required course.

Other senators noted that some departments would give out "chits" to faculty supervising independent studies and these chits could be accumulated towards a future course release. A different senator indicated that a similar practice was used at his previous institution. However, a number of senators also pointed out inconsistencies in the actual use of chits, such as assigning an unrealistically short expiration date for chits so faculty are unable to accumulate enough chits to redeem them for course release.

A number of senators also felt that uncompensated faculty efforts are at the heart of the issue: students have to pay to take independent studies, yet faculty are asked to work for free. Consequently, senators would like to see some type of compensation given to faculty for each independent study.

Other senators also pointed out similar problems with uncompensated teaching overloads. Some senators recalled a survey conducted on this very topic by the Faculty Affairs Committee during

the 2012-13 academic year. Dr. Baker and chair-elect Lisa Shen will follow up on the FA study outcomes. (Note: The survey findings and recommendations are available through the Senate website: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/faculty-senate/minutes/12-6-12/>)

New Business

Final Exam Schedule

The exam schedule for spring 2015 has been updated to allow for more exam time slots, and .Dr. Baker thanked Senator Klespis for noting the changes to the Final Exam Schedule layout (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/calendars/final-exam-schedules.html>). Faculty are encouraged to visit the page and familiarize themselves with the changes.

Teaching Overload

A senator asked whether faculty who are teaching overloads would receive letters acknowledging the overload and amount of compensation. A quick survey of senators revealed inconsistent treatment of faculty who are teaching overloads. Dr. Baker will share this issue with the provost.

Family Medical Leave (FML)

An inquiry was made about the status of the FML policy proposal. After the last round of Senate discussion on the subject, the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee had withdrawn the report to consider additional recommendations from the Senate and the Federal Government. The FA committee will work on the report for the next Senate meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm