

**FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

6 November 2014
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Austin Hall

Members Present (21):

Irfan Ahmed (COBA), Nancy Baker (CHSS), Jonathan Breazeale (COBA), Donna Cox (COE), James Crosby (CHSS), Karla Edison (COE), Randy Garner (CJ), Deborah Hatton (COFAMC), Joan Hudson (COS), Mark Klespis (COS), Jeffry Littlejohn (CHSS), Paul Loeffler (COS), Dennis Longmire (CJ), David McTier (COFAMC), Sheryl Murphy-Manley (COFAMC), Diana Nabors (COE), Gary Oden (COHS), Dwayne Pavelock (COS), Lisa Shen (NGL), Stacy Ulbig (CHSS), Tony Watkins (COFAMC)

Members Not Present (10):

Helen Berg (COE), Tracy Bilsing (CHSS), Don Bumpass (COBA), Madhusudan Choudhary (COS), John Domino (CHSS - on leave for Fall 2014), Mark Frank (COBA), Richard Henriksen (COE), James Landa (COHS), Douglas Ullrich (COS)

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

Minutes Approved: Minutes for the October 23 meeting were approved unanimously with minor revisions (21 yes).

Chair's Report

Due to limited meeting time, this report was emailed to senators before the meeting (please see Related Documents). Dr. Baker asked senators for comments and questions about the report.

Family and Medical Leave Policy

One senator inquired about progress of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy review. The Faculty Affairs Committee (FA) had previously submitted a report regarding revisions to the FMLA policy for the last Senate meeting. Unfortunately, Senate did not have time to discuss the report.

Since the FA report included a number of questions about the current FMLA policy, Dr. Baker went ahead and requested clarifications on these issues during her most recent meeting with Provost Hebert. Therefore, Dr. Baker had intended for FA to revise its report based on the provost's responses, before asking Senate to discuss FMLA.

One senator asked whether the original FA report was shared with the provost. The answer was no. Since the report had not been reviewed in Senate, Dr. Baker only asked Provost Herbert to address questions raised in the report. A few senators then expressed interests in learning the provost's responses.

One of the proposed FMLA changes, as previously brought up in Senate, was for SHSU to offer a full semester of paid FMLA leave instead of the current 12 week unpaid leave. Therefore, some concerns noted in the FA report included the possible abuse of this policy and the cost of covering the paid leaves, such as its potential impact on merit pay increase.

Provost Hebert wished to assure faculty that the cost of covering the paid FMLA leaves is manageable and “insignificant compared to the budget for merit.” Based on the provost’s calculation, the maximum expected cost to cover full-semester faculty maternity leaves would be approximately \$50,000 (in contrast, at least \$450,000 is needed for 1% of merit pay increase).

In addition, the provost felt that while there is always the possibility of policy abuse by a few faculty members, these individuals would have been taking advantages of their colleagues already, with or without extended FMLA benefits. We should address such cases through other means, not by withholding benefits for all faculty.

A few senators noted the emphasis on maternity leave; what about paternity leave or elder care? Dr. Baker reassured senators that the provost and the president would like to see a more comprehensive policy for all FMLA needs. Maternity leave was suggested as a starting point, not the sole focus, for the FMLA policy revisions.

Specifically, after learning about the various issues raised in the FA report, the provost had suggested reducing the scope of the initial FMLA revision, such as focusing on maternity leave first, to make the process more manageable. Ultimately, Senate would make the decision on how to proceed with the FMLA revision recommendations.

One senator wondered how employee sick pool would factor into maternity leave and other FMLA needs. In the ensuing discussion, several senators indicated sick pool is an inadequate system for addressing FMLA leave needs, and would place new faculty at a disadvantage. On the other hand, another senator felt that sick pools and probationary period for new employees are standard practices in the corporate environment, which should work for SHSU as well.

A different senator pointed out that the lack of a clear maternity leave policy has been a detriment in hiring new faculty. More importantly, as Dr. Baker reminded senators, the proposed full semester coverage for FMLA leave would ensure a more stable learning environment for students by preventing rotations of professors in the middle of a semester and/or misuse of departmental faculty’s goodwill who take on these uncompensated overloads to help out.

The Faculty Affairs Committee will revise its report on the FMLA policy based on the Senate discussion.

Academic Policy 900417 (Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure)

The provost is forming a committee to rewrite policy #900417 and Dr. Baker had shared the proposed committee members in her report to the Senate.

A senator pointed out that a number of departments are currently reviewing their specific tenure and evaluation policies, and inquired whether timing of these reviews are of concern. Another

senator responded that departmental policies should be reviewed every 5 years, so such standard reviews would not be in conflict with the rewrite of policy 900417.

Senators expressed some trepidations about the membership of the policy revision committee. In particular, some senators believed deans who have not “lived through” the current policy may not be in the best position to revise it. On the other hand, another senator preferred the fresh perspective of a dean with less institutional history. A different senator felt that given the recent turnover of deans at the university, it would be best to include the more experienced deans on the rewrite committee, regardless of whether their experiences came from tenure at SHSU.

Several senators were also concerned about the uneven college representation on the rewrite committee, although others felt committee members’ disciplines should not be a factor in general university policy revisions. Nonetheless, a number of senators expressed support for including a committee member with a fine arts background to better address the assessment of creative accomplishment. Dr. Baker will share senators’ comments and recommended candidates with the provost.

Support for Adjunct Faculty

An inquiry was made about the progress of obtaining salary range data for non-tenure track faculty. A work order for this data has been submitted to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness by Karen Whitney from the Office of the Provost. Dr. Baker also confirmed that the faculty salary study will include examination of adjunct faculty salary at the departmental level.

Publishing of Student Comments

Dr. Baker corrected a previous report about this topic – the Board of Regents for the UT system, not TSUS, is interested in publishing student comments. Dr. Baker has also received confirmation directly from the TSUS Vice Chancellor Perry Moore that he does not approve of the practice.

Committee Reports

Faculty Affairs Report

Academic Policy 900417 (Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure)

The FA report on policy 900417 (please see Related Documents for full report) was created before the provost’s decision to appoint an independent committee of faculty, chairs, and deans to rewrite this policy. Senators Paul Loeffler and Stacy Ulbig have been nominated as faculty representative on the rewrite committee. Therefore, Senate proceeded with the FA report discussion and Dr. Loeffler and Dr. Ulbig will share the relevant discussion outcomes to the rewrite committee.

One issue raised in the FA report was the procedure for “expedited tenuring.” For instance, how early into their probationary period can a tenure-track faculty member request to be considered for tenure? While some senators suggested requiring a minimum probationary period of three years, others desired more flexibility. Those who preferred the three-year time frame felt it was

important for tenure-track faculty members to learn of their third year straw vote results before deciding whether to request early tenure reviews. On the other hand, some senators believed it would be best to keep the policy flexible, to ensure early tenure reviews can be granted to retain exceptional faculty members.

Another related issue was the approval process for early tenure requests. The existing policy requires a faculty member to obtain the chair and dean's approvals before proceeding. The FA report recommended adding the approvals of the DPTAC and the provost to the process. Senators agreed that approval from the provost should be included. Although faculty members should also be made aware that the approval to proceed does not signify a favorable tenure decision.

On the other hand, senators' views varied on whether the DPTAC's approval should also be included. Some senators believed that DPTACs should take on a more proactive role and participate in the approval process. However, others thought such practice would contradict the purpose of the DPTAC; DPTACs are called upon to evaluate faculty, not to decide whether an evaluation should take place.

Several senators thought faculty members should already know the DPTACs' assessment of their performance through annual evaluations. Moreover, as a department chair can refer to the DPTAC's annual evaluation reports to determine whether a faculty member is ready for early tenure review, the DPTAC's view is already included in the approval process. However, other senators pointed out that positive annual reviews do not necessarily indicate readiness for early tenure considerations, and annual evaluations do not assess a faculty member's holistic performance over time.

The policy's definition and treatment for collegiality was also revisited. Senators agreed that the existing collegiality definition is too general, but opinions varied on how to improve the way this category is evaluated. Some senators supported creating measurable operational definitions to evaluate collegial behaviors, while others felt that collegiality should not be quantified, and that the burden of proof for uncollegial behavior should fall on the DPTAC. Senators would like to see the Faculty Evaluation System policy (820317) and review policy for tenured faculty (980204) be brought in alignment with the revised policy 900417.

Lastly, questions were raised about the timetable for faculty who have received unfavorable tenure decisions to withdraw their application for tenure to avoid having "denial of tenure" appear on their permanent record. Dr. Baker will ask the provost.

*A motion was made to accept the Faculty Affairs Committee Report on the SHSU Policy on Tenure and Promotion (Academic Policy 900417).
Motion passed unanimously (20 yes*).*

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm

*A senator left before the vote.